



## **NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Hospital celebrates National Volunteer Week with appreciation event**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, April 17th, 2015**—It's National Volunteer Week and Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is taking the opportunity to extend a heart-felt thank you to the hundreds of generous volunteers from across Northumberland who choose to share their time and talents with their hospital.

On Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, volunteers gathered in the NHH Education Centre for the annual celebration. Elizabeth Vosburgh, NHH's Vice President of Human Resources and Quality, opened the appreciation event, confirming that: "volunteers support patients and staff at NHH through a wide range of affiliations."

Among those recognized Thursday were the many volunteers who support the NHH Foundation, both through Foundation events or through donations. "The Foundation team works tirelessly for NHH and the community we serve," said Vosburgh. It has provided in excess of \$1.75 million in community donations to NHH in the last year alone, permitting such key purchases as the new cardiac and telemetry monitors."

Hospital equipment isn't all the NHH Foundation supports. On the day of the event a team was completing a new dry stone wall now gracing the main entrance of NHH, thanks to donations the Foundation secured from Landscape Ontario and the Rotary Club of Northumberland Sunrise. A garden and signage will complete the work in the coming weeks.

Bill Copland, who completes his two-year term as volunteer Chair of the NHH Foundation Board of Directors this June, was personally recognized.

"Thank you for your leadership, Bill," said Vosburgh. "The huge team of donors and volunteers you rally, supported by the dedicated Foundation staff led by Executive Director Rhonda Cunningham, do amazing work," said Vosburgh. "We simply wouldn't be the hospital we are without the NHH Foundation."

Also applauded were the 300-plus NHH Auxiliary volunteers and their President, volunteer Gayle Metson.

"Not only do the NHH Auxiliary volunteers donate endless hours to support patients and staff," said Vosburgh, "they've also—through their extremely successful retail and lottery proceeds—dramatically increased their capital equipment purchases this past year with their largest ever donation of more than \$275,000. We are so grateful for the Auxiliary's continued support!"

Representing NHH's volunteer Board of Directors were Board Chair Jack Russell and community committee volunteer Michael Parker. "Our volunteer Board dedicates hundreds of hours of support to the hospital each year, providing local governance and oversight," explained Vosburgh. "Thank you to all our Board volunteers for their commitment to NHH."

Reverend Bill Ball, Reverend Andrew Truter, Reverend Nancy Lester and Reverend Ewen Butler represented NHH's network of volunteer spiritual care providers who support patients and staff at the hospital. Vosburgh thanked the team, now 10 volunteers strong, and recognized Reverend Ball for his support establishing the unique collaborative model for spiritual care at NHH.

Also thanked at the event, and in attendance, were the dedicated volunteers (two- and four-legged) from the local St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program, whose friendly visits bring smiles to the faces of staff and patients alike each week.

Volunteer drivers who work with Community Care Northumberland transporting patients to and from appointments at the hospital were acknowledged for their efforts in the community.

This year's keynote address highlighted the contributions of one of the newest local volunteer groups at NHH and in the community: the 30 Volunteer Transition Coaches from the [Northumberland Partners Advancing Transition in Healthcare \(PATH\) pilot project](#).

Guest speakers **Kelly Robinson**, a YMCA Northumberland employee and Volunteer Transition Coach Coordinator for the Northumberland PATH project, and **Pam Russell**, one of 30 Volunteer Transition Coaches, spoke eloquently about the unique role of the new Transition Coach volunteers, and the model they are testing in Northumberland to support seniors with multiple chronic conditions as they journey through our complex health-care system.

"Transition coaching and advocating" was one of five unique PATH project elements undertaken by NHH, YMCA Northumberland and the 10 other Northumberland PATH partners thanks to a unique pilot opportunity awarded to the community in June 2012 by The Change Foundation.

With the support of the Y and the PATH partners, Kelly oversees a team of 30 Volunteer Transition Coaches (VTCs) who work alongside local patients and caregivers involved in the project. Though they range in age, the vast majority are themselves over the age of 65— "seniors helping fellow seniors."

At the direction of the seniors they coach, the VTCs offer guidance and support with the technology elements of the PATH project, namely smart phone and related web tools. These tools are now being used successfully by local seniors to document their own health history, monitor key indicators related to their chronic conditions, access personal health information and communicate directly with their health care provider.

Other key roles performed by the VTCs include patient advocacy, connecting and communicating, educating and facilitating access to community services. In every case, and perhaps most important, the VTCs provide support and encouragement.

"With this role they are filling a gap in our community, and as some of them working with two to three patients at a time, they have now supported over 60 patients caregivers in west Northumberland," said Robinson.

Referring to the technology component of the PATH pilot, Robinson noted that the VTCs have proven to be "a critical people part of the project that has allowed the 130 seniors participating to feel more comfortable using the technology, staying with the technology and, in the end, experiencing success with the technology."

Pam Russell, who spoke to the role of Transition Coach from the perspective of a volunteer, echoed her support for the initiative and her wish that it will someday "be available to all the residents of west Northumberland and maybe even the province."

Drawn to the pilot project through a desire to keep herself busy after retirement and to make a difference for seniors after experiencing her own mother's challenges late in life—challenges that weren't alleviated by the tools PATH has now made available—Russell agrees with PATH's goal of enabling seniors and caregivers to take better control of their healthcare needs.

"In working with three PATH clients over the past year, I have witnessed firsthand the tremendous increase in empowerment that takes place when you take time to share knowledge of the local healthcare services that exist in our community."

Encouraging those who have not yet visited to take a look, Russell said: "the PATH Aging Well website ([www.pathwaytoagingwell.com](http://www.pathwaytoagingwell.com)) is a gold mine of information!" As a PATH coach, Russell works with her clients on the public side of this site (available to all in Northumberland and beyond, with information, resources and tips on aging well) as well as the secure side visible only to those seniors and healthcare providers registered in PATH.

"We work one-on-one with clients to help them input their medical history – medications, allergies, medical procedures, and family health history in one secure portal. They can set up and record regular monitoring for a number of issues, from chronic conditions, such as congestive heart failure, to their ability to perform daily activities. And all of this information is available to review with their care providers on their smartphone device at each visit."

One component of PATH's [www.pathwaytoagingwell.com](http://www.pathwaytoagingwell.com) website that Russell urged everyone to review, no matter what their age, was the "aging well" section. A collection of resources related to aging, the planning tools available on the site serve as very effective thought-starters for necessary, but difficult, end-of-life discussions and decisions. As the site explains, by having a plan as we age, and sharing it with our family and caregivers, we can all be better prepared to respond when difficult situations and health events arise in our later years.

"To all of our volunteers, and on behalf of everyone here at NHH, thank you for your dedication your hospital," concluded Elizabeth Vosburgh. "Thank you for your grace and humour... and the support you provide to help us do our job."

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**About Northumberland Hills Hospital** – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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