



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NHH community mental health team celebrates third season of a successful community garden planted by clients, for clients

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Monday, August 23, 2010 – The vision of the Community Gardening Group launched by the NHH community mental health team three years ago was simple: to help clients of the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team regain a sense of purpose and value by providing the opportunity to connect with nature and experience being “part of something greater.”

With the fruits of their third gardening season now ready for harvest, the participants are enjoying more than just fresh vegetables on their plates. The small program has inspired large pay-back in the form of enhanced self-esteem, a greater appreciation for the natural environment and the pride that comes from a successful commitment to something that takes time and effort to nurture and grow.

Aptly named the Victory Garden by the participants, the project has continued thanks to use of a small plot of land owned by the nuns of Villa St. Joseph in Cobourg. With some of the plants and equipment donated by the local Canadian Tire, clients in small groups meet weekly from May through October to plant, weed, water and pick.

Each year, a member of the ACT team assumes responsibility for the project. This season the task was taken up by the ACT team’s occupational therapist, Victoria Fung.

“It’s a win-win for everyone involved,” says Victoria. “In addition to providing access to fresh healthy vegetables to our clients—many of whom are without the expendable income necessary to purchase such luxuries—it gives them a chance for hands-on learning of gardening basics and a few hours of exercise and fun. The socializing that has come with this weekly group project is a real plus for these individuals, too.”

Participation is entirely voluntary, and open to all ACT clients who express an interest.

“We typically get five or six people out each week,” adds Victoria. “As the garden progresses, so does the participants’ self esteem. It’s really something to see, and I’ve enjoyed being part of it this year as much as they have!”

One of several programs offered under the umbrella of NHH’s Community Mental Health services, ACT is a voluntary program serving individuals between the ages of 18 and 65. It is a community based, client-centered service that fosters continuity of care for those with serious mental illness.

The ACT team works closely with the client and their natural supports to provide or facilitate the majority of the treatment, rehabilitation and supports the client requires to maintain wellness and success in the community.

ACT team staff include a program coordinator, occupational therapist, addictions specialist, social worker, vocational rehabilitation specialist, peer specialist, psychiatrist, and registered nurses.

The ACT team is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.

For more information on the Community Garden project, please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jjillard@nhh.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The acute care hospital delivers a broad range of services, including emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, complex/long-term care, rehabilitation, palliative care and obstetrical care. A variety of ambulatory care clinics are also offered at NHH. In addition to these, NHH also sponsors a Community Mental Health Centre and an Assertive Community Treatment Team. 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 close to 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East LHIN. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.