



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

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

**Do you have a positive attitude, a few hours of free time each week and an interest in playing board games, telling stories or doing arts and crafts? If so, then NHH has a volunteer opportunity for you!**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, July 31st, 2014**—The successful Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is looking for volunteers willing to contribute several hours a week with senior inpatients at NHH.

### ***What is HELP?***

Delirium (acute confusion) and functional decline are common complications for many older hospitalized patients. In recent years, research conducted by Sharon K. Inouye, Professor of Medicine at Yale University, has shown that these negative side-effects can be avoided or minimized through a series of simple but deliberate “interventions”. Hospitals across Ontario, including NHH, have established versions of Inouye’s HELP program and it is now widely known for its success in preventing delirium and functional decline in hospitalized elderly patients.

Grouped into four separate categories, the interventions—designed for each patient by health professionals and an Elder Life Specialist and carried out by a team of assigned volunteers—include a Daily Visitor Program, Therapeutic Activities Program, Early Mobilization Program and the Meal Assistance Program. By applying these interventions to minimize hospital-associated deconditioning, patients are better prepared to return to the independent routines they enjoyed before landing in hospital.

### ***What do HELP volunteers do?***

Recruited through the NHH Auxiliary and guided by NHH’s Elder Life Specialist (ELS), HELP volunteers work with a variety of inpatients on specific interventions customized to individual needs to help avoid delirium and functional decline.

Visits occur in either the morning or afternoon. HELP volunteers are expected to commit to one 3- to 4-hour “shift” a week for a minimum of six months. Typical patient assignments include visits to offer support and help orienting with hospital surroundings, participation in specific therapeutic activities such as a game of trivia or discussion of current events, companionship during mealtime and encouragement to stay as physically active as possible.

### ***What difference can HELP volunteers make for hospital patients in our community?***

HELP volunteers at NHH have a unique opportunity to make a real difference in a patient’s life. Supported by the ELS, HELP volunteers:

- maintain older patients’ physical and cognitive functioning during their hospital stay;
- maximize patient independence at discharge;
- help patients prepare for the transition from hospital to home; and
- help prevent an unplanned readmission.

“The NHH Auxiliary is continually recruiting volunteers for many areas of service,” explains Gayle Metson, NHH Auxiliary President. “The HELP opportunity is something unique. It isn’t for everyone, because we are not all comfortable getting to know patients this directly. For those who do find it appealing, it’s a chance to really get to know a patient and their family, have a direct, tangible impact on their care and, as the program’s name says, HELP!”

Best suited to those with patience and a passion for working with older adults, prior experience supporting or caring for seniors with chronic conditions is not required. You do not have to have experience in a health care profession to make a difference. The opportunity to volunteer is open to all those who complete the NHH Auxiliary’s orientation program and satisfy requirements for criminal and/or vulnerable sector checks and immunization.

Interested volunteers are invited to contact Linda Smith, Director of Volunteers for the NHH Auxiliary, at 905-372-6811, ext. 4630 or by email at [lsmith@nhh.ca](mailto:lsmith@nhh.ca). Media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Gillard at [jgillard@nhh.ca](mailto:jgillard@nhh.ca) or 905-377-7757.

**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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