



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Volunteer Week event recognizes NHH's outstanding volunteers, celebrates fundamental importance of 'being with' others, to give and receive

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, April 14th, 2016—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 Tuesday, April 12th, volunteers were invited to the NHH Education Centre by NHH President and CEO Linda Davis for the hospital's annual appreciation event.

Among those present were volunteers who support the NHH Foundation, including the Chair of the NHH Foundation, Louise Stevenson, and Directors Jim Mills and Scott Fraser.

"NHH Foundation volunteers do so much for the community we serve," said Davis. "For the past fiscal year just completed March 31st, the Foundation is on track to provide NHH with more than \$1 million in community donations. That's \$1 million-plus in one year alone. Amazing. Thanks to these dollars, NHH has been able to make such key purchases as the cardiac and telemetry monitors, the new ultrasound unit for our Emergency Department and a reinvestment in new patient beds, to name just a few. Through the new Equipped to Care program, now underway, the Foundation's annual commitment to NHH is growing even larger and we are extremely grateful for this community support."

Also present were many NHH Auxiliary volunteers, including Pat Page-Hoisak, President. "The Auxiliary is made up of more than 300 dedicated volunteers who support each of our departments, from Emergency to Intensive Care," said Davis. "Auxiliary volunteers take shifts in the Little Treasure Shop, the Auxiliary's retail operation here at NHH, and they manage Petticoat Lane, the extremely successful thrift shop run by the Auxiliary on Munroe Street in Cobourg."

"Last fall I had the great pleasure of attending a very happy occasion with a large group of Auxiliary volunteers when their total donations—as added up since this hospital opened in October 2003—surpassed the \$2 million mark," Davis continued. "This is simply incredible support, and we are so grateful."

Auxiliary donations to NHH have most recently been put to use supporting the purchase of 20 new and much-needed wheelchairs and a new dishwasher for the food services operation.

Representing NHH's volunteer Board of Directors were Board Chair Jack Russell and Vice Chair Beth Selby. "Ontario's health care system is undergoing a significant transformation, as our government works to ensure it is sustainable for future generations," said Davis. "Hospital governance during this transformation is not for the faint hearted. Thank you to all our Board members and community committee volunteers for the many, many hours donated in the Board Room on this hospital's behalf, and your commitment to the patients we serve."

Reverend Dr. Ewen Butler represented NHH's network of volunteer spiritual care providers who support patients and staff at the hospital. NHH is supported by a broad network of spiritual care volunteers who generously make themselves available, as required, to patients, caregivers and staff.

Also recognized at the event, and in attendance, were some of 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. Recognized for their unique contribution to the hospital were Cathie Holmes and her dog *Menika*, Wanda Corey and *Matilda*, Joan and Brian Llewellyn and *Emma* as well as Sarah Holland and *Corduroy*.

David Sheffield, Community Director for Green Wood Coalition, in Port Hope, delivered the keynote address. Sheffield, who began volunteering his time with Green Wood Coalition in 2007, has been a staff member for the past 6 years, leading the Coalition's day-to-day outreach arm.

"Green Wood Coalition uses a community model of caring to walk alongside people who are hungry, homeless and hurting in Port Hope and the surrounding area," explain Sheffield. "A simple way to describe what we do at Green Wood Coalition is to use the word 'connect'. People become disconnected from food and they're hungry, they become disconnected from a roof over their head and they're homeless, they become disconnected from healthcare and they're sick. The role of Green Wood... is largely about re-connecting the disconnected."

Through a weekly community meal now serving more than 80 people, a creative arts program, a community garden and direct street-level support for addiction recovery and other health challenges, Green Wood's goal, Sheffield described, "is to work together to build a culture of trust. That way, we can work together to find solutions to daily challenges—and ultimately—provide hope in the lives of our members."

"As an outreach worker," he explained, "I often encounter the most vulnerable part of the population—those I would call domestic refugees from childhood trauma, abuse and neglect.... People who are often suffering the effects of their coping strategies, often attempting to become invisible to avoid the stigma of a society that blames them for their situation."

One story he shared was that of Sue Johnston.

Introduced to Sue in 2006, at one of the original community potluck dinners at Port Hope's Greenwood Tower Inn, where the Coalition traces its roots, Sheffield and his wife, Beth, joined Sue and others who called the motel their home.

By then, Greenwood Tower Inn had seen years of decline and was offering monthly accommodation to homeless individuals and families with few options. "It had a reputation among social agencies as being the worst, most concentrated case of poverty in Northumberland County," Sheffield explained. Some social agencies wouldn't even let their workers visit clients onsite, because of safety concerns about the property."

By 2006 Sue had been renting a room at Greenwood Tower for a decade, and she was mourning the loss of her long-time partner. Chronic alcoholism had distanced her from her children and she had never seen her grandchildren. "Add in the fact that Sue was an aboriginal woman who had lost any connection to her heritage, and she was a perfect recipe for marginalization."

In the years that followed, however, Sue would become like family. "Sue was intelligent, had a sharp wit, and she loved to laugh. She had lived a tragic story and she carried great pain inside her. But in spite of all of that, Sue always thought of the needs of others before her own."

Sue succumbed to the effects of a lifetime of alcoholism, but as Sheffield explained to the NHH volunteers, she lives on as a role model for his work today with Green Wood.

“We saw changes in Sue—but more importantly—we were changed by knowing her. Sue Johnston became our best teacher.” Sheffield summed up the lessons she taught him with this quote from writer Elie Wiesel:

*“Every person is a universe
With its own secrets,
With its own treasures,
With its own sources of anguish,
And with some measure of triumph.”*

“We do a disservice to Sue,” he continued, “and to ourselves, when we ignore the complex humanity of those who are making their way through this life, carrying a burden of trauma and pain—when we tag them with a simple label. Each of us is a collection of experiences, family heritage and circumstances, and no two of us look alike. And yet we all share this common humanity—a desire to live in peace, a need to find some meaning in the days of our lives—and the hope that we will be respected by those around us.”

“Green Wood,” Sheffield concluded, is about “being with” people. “‘Being with’ means spending time with people... listening without judging... and bearing witness.”

How we care for others is as important as what we do, Sheffield emphasized. “If we feed someone, while at the same time shaming them or making them feel inferior, we can reinforce one kind of poverty while trying to lessen another kind.”

“I can talk about things that are very sad,” said Sheffield. “But I have a lot of hope... hope that we can extend our roof of welcome and our table of generosity to include even the most vulnerable among us.”

It was a concept that resonated strongly with the hospital volunteers and a fitting conclusion to a celebration of volunteers and volunteerism who, in so many ways, put the needs of others before their own, and, in doing so, benefit the whole community.

For further information on Green Wood see their website, www.greenwoodcoalition.com

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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 or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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