

# Volunteer Link Fall/Winter

## Education Article: *Reflections on Loss*

By Rev. Paul Stevens, CCC Chaplain



Rev. Paul Stevens

Loss is a universal experience. It can touch us at an early age with life changing impact and it continues through out our life time. Loss of self esteem, loss of freedom, loss of hope, loss of loved ones, loss of the past, the present and the

future. Loss appears in many shapes and sizes.

I sat with my wife's uncle Bill this summer during vacation in Nova Scotia. He is in his 70s. A brilliant mechanic with eyes that sparkled with fun. The effects of Alzheimer's disease over the past six years have stolen so much. He has lost much of himself which we used to see and love. We have lost avenues of communication. The occasional window of familiar words and smiles brings a rush of emotion landing somewhere between joy and sadness as we visit with Uncle Bill.

I think it is true that the more we understand about our own losses and how we respond to them, the deeper appreciation we have for those who also experience loss. Be careful however not to think that you know how I feel even though you have lost similar things. And be careful not to prescribe how I should feel or even how long I need to grieve my loss. Rather, accompany me,

be patient with me, hear me, offer me support that is characterized by love.

Loss can fill us with a lot of anger. Anger about the injustice of my experience, anger about my lack of choice about it all. Try not to be offended by my anger. I really do not want to hurt you. I just feel the anguish in my soul is too much to bear.

Many of you reading this reflection have chosen to volunteer your time and energy in a place and with people that others sometimes avoid. Remember that your very presence is an affirmation of the dignity of all people. Your choice to be involved is a compassionate act of grace which says to those who live here "you are valuable." Now you may find yourself reminded strongly of your own losses as you identify with families and individuals. You may find yourself overwhelmed at times by the trauma you see. You may even seek out someone to help you understand your own pain. However from these experiences emerge insight, wisdom and sensitivity which empower you to volunteer.

### Recommended readings:

*Living with Grief after Sudden Loss,*  
Doka, Kenneth J., PHA

*Full Catastrophe Living,*  
Kabat-Zinn, Jon, PHA

*Hope Springs from Mended Places,*  
Komp, Diane M., M.D.

## Education workshop

Volunteer Resources held its inaugural *Dorothy Aldridge Volunteer Education Workshop* on Tuesday, August 19, 2008. The workshop entitled *A Day in the Life of a Patient*, focused on helping volunteers to better empathize with patients by allowing them to ‘walk in their shoes.’ The workshop was organized to address volunteer feedback supporting educational opportunities as part of the volunteer experience.

The workshop began with a keynote speaker, Jamie Sifton. Jamie, a former patient of the Acquired Brain Injury Neuro Rehabilitation Program, and Pet Therapy Volunteer, acknowledged his own experience as a patient at Toronto Rehab and after leaving the hospital.

Cathie Percival and Ramona Bray, Social Workers in

the Neuro Rehabilitation Program focused on the emotional and physical barriers that patients face as a result of disability.

Sylvia Haycock and Tamara Schultz, Occupational Therapists in the Spinal Cord Rehabilitation Program identified physical difficulties patients have to deal with as a result of their spinal cord injuries or illnesses. In order for volunteers to experience first hand what it might be like to function with a disability (e.g. paralysis, loss of speech, etc.), they set up five experiential sensory motor stations.

The feedback from workshop participants was very positive.

## PROFILE **Olivia Klej**



### **How long have you been with Toronto Rehab?**

I have been volunteering at Toronto Rehab since March 2008.

### **What do you do at Toronto Rehab?**

I am the Unit Support Volunteer Leader at in the Complex Continuing Care Program at Bickle Centre. I help patients with many things, a few examples would include assisting them with their meals, transporting them to wellness programs and accompanying them for walks around the facility. Also, I socialize with the patients. If they need phone calls to be made or pictures to be put up I'm always here to lend a helping hand. I try my best to help them in any way I can.

### **What is a typical day for you at Toronto Rehab?**

I come in at 11:30AM, go to the nurse's station and see which patients need help with feeding. I then go

patient to patient on the unit to see where they need to go or what they would like to do. A regular day consists of feeding patients, socializing, helping patients with errands and making a trip to the gift shop to purchase something on their behalf.

### **What is the best part about your volunteer work?**

I enjoy the interaction with the patients and that they benefit and enjoy the company.

### **Tell us a bit about yourself:**

I am in my last year of Psychology, Law Crime and Deviance program at the University of Toronto. After graduation, I intend to get into public administration. Currently, I work at the YMCA and have a lot of interaction with children and children's programs.

### **Any hobbies/interests?**

I enjoy anything that involves the outdoors: hiking, jogging, etc. Anything weather appropriate.

### **What is something most people don't know about you?**

I used to do ballet and play the piano.

## Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner 2008

The joy of seeing familiar faces and the opportunity to meet other Toronto Rehab volunteers was one of the main attractions of the Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner held Tuesday, October 14. The event which drew almost 100 attendees recognized and acknowledged the services our volunteers provide to Toronto Rehab in helping to positively influence the patient and family experience.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of service awards and the Above and Beyond awards which are awarded to those who have given exceptional service to their volunteer placement. This year, Theresa Antonides, Joe Brunetti, Olivia Klej and Audrey Pankhurst were recognized for their exceptional volunteer service to the hospital.

Entertainer Judy Suke and her humorous "Let Laughter Lighten the Load" presentation left the audience laughing out loud and provided a light hearted end to the evening.



Volunteers Shirley Britt, Audrey Pankhurst, Katie Wong and Dorothy Headley receive a five-year pin from Mark Rochon, Toronto Rehab, President and CEO.

We truly appreciate the volunteers' dedication to the volunteer program at Toronto Rehab. Without volunteers, patients would not have access to important services at our hospital. Thank you volunteers! We are looking forward to seeing you at next year's dinner.

### Volunteers helped and had a fun evening

For many years volunteers come together in December at Bickle Centre to prepare for holiday celebrations for the patients. The Toronto Rehab Foundation finances the purchase gifts for all inpatients at all sites. The pot luck patient gift wrap evening on December 9<sup>th</sup> was spent preparing about 400 gift bags filled with goodies. These gifts are then given to the patients at their holiday parties. Thank you to everyone who came out and helped!

Celebrating **10** Years  
of doing *Everything Humanly Possible* to  
Advance Rehabilitation and Enhance Quality of Life  
1998-2008

### Toronto Rehab's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Toronto Rehab celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2008. Canada's largest teaching and research hospital specializing in adult rehabilitation, complex continuing care and long-term care, Toronto Rehab has a legacy of excellence that extends beyond a decade and is rooted in more than 350 years of collective service by its founding hospitals. Each year, Toronto Rehab's patient care, research and education programs make a difference in the lives of more than 15,000 people living with disabling injury, illness and conditions associated with aging. For more information, visit [www.torontorehab.com](http://www.torontorehab.com).

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## Supervisor of Volunteers Award 2007

Stacey Levine, ABI Rehab Therapist, Supervisor of Volunteers Award winner 2007 shows her certificate to Lynda Watson, Volunteer Resources Consultant

## Welcome to our new volunteers:

Jennifer Argiropoulos (HC)	Charles He (HC)	Bora Meraj (UC)
Asem Azouka (UC)	Donia Heider (LC)	Melanie Moore (UC)
Kathlyn Babia (UC)	Lorraine Heimstaedt (UC)	Michelle Nguyen (UC)
Kristen Bajus (UC)	Ayechia Hunte (HC)	Dominic Pierri (BC)
Siva Balaskantha (RC)	Kristel Josse (UC)	Ted Plummer (RC)
Allan Chalil (BC)	Oliwia Klej (BC)	Ravi Poojari (BC)
Michelle Chee (UC)	Jenny Kong Kam Wa (UC)	Maathury Ratneswaran (RC)
Nichole Chi (BC)	Amanda Lalande (BC)	Kaley Roosen (UC)
Iris Chin (UC)	David Lam (LC)	Natalie Saccucci (UC)
Allan Choi (UC)	Derek Lam (UC)	Adil Shaikh (LC)
Wenjun Dai (BC)	Clarence Lau (LC)	Moinuddin Sheikh (UC)
Emily Driver (BC)	Jordana Levine (RC)	Mandana Amir Shaghghi (LC)
Jannine Fallgher (BC)	Amanda Li (HC)	Nathalie Stechysin (BC)
Vanessa Garcia (UC)	Jenny Lin (RC)	Jonathan Tang (BC)
Vibhor Garg (HC)	Andresa Marinho (LC)	
Elijah Guitberg (UC)	Mehreen Mateen (LC)	
Yingbo Guo (HC)	Neil Matthews (BC)	
Olivia Hanson (HC)	Mehreen Maqsood (UC)	

### Volunteer Resources Mission Statement:

To promote meaningful volunteerism through real teams, important work and common goals.

**Choose Volunteers.**