

Volunteer Link Spring 08

Four legged volunteers the cat's meow



Geriatric Pet Therapy volunteers.
Jamie Sifton and Ali



Spinal Cord Pet Therapy Volunteers. From left, Jennifer Alexander and Ruby, Liz Joffe and Miles, Sachie, Lisa Shiff and Sky, Lisa Burk and Chelsea, Anne Thompson and Lucy.

The Pet Therapy program at Toronto Rehab offers volunteers the chance to bring their four-legged friends along while visiting patients. Pet Therapy has been active at Toronto Rehab for several decades and currently occurs in the complex continuing care and palliative care programs, and the spinal cord and geriatric rehabilitation programs.

Pet Therapy enables volunteers to participate directly in patients' rehabilitation in a non-clinical manner. It is a very popular volunteer opportunity because it has an

immediate, positive impact on patients. Jennifer Alexander who visits spinal cord patients with Ruby on alternate Thursdays says, "Every time Ruby and I leave Lyndhurst Centre we are so glad we took the time to visit because it is very rewarding for both of us. Ruby always brings a smile to the patients' faces. I think she reminds some patients of their own pets, whom they might not have seen for awhile and it makes them feel good."

Research supports that Pet Therapy programs have significant impact on

patients including:

- Helping patients to feel less lonely, depressed or bored
- Reducing stress-induced symptoms
- Providing a welcome distraction from emotional and physical pain and illness
- Bringing out a person's nurturing instincts
- Making people feel safe, unconditionally accepted and happy

In addition, Pet Therapy provides former Toronto Rehab patients the

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Welcome Joanna Walczak to our team!



It is with pleasure that we announce that Joanna Walczak has been hired into the Volunteer Resources Assistant position at our BC location. Not new to Toronto Rehab, Joanna has provided office assistant support to the education department. Joanna is currently enrolled in the Business Management Program at Humber College. Joanna is, and has been an

active volunteer with several organizations and describes herself as a compassionate person who thrives to make a difference in people's lives. Away from work and school she enjoys spending time with friends and family, she rollerblades, camps, travels and plays sports. Please join us in welcoming Joanna to our team!

PROFILE Susan Williams



Why did you choose to volunteer at Toronto Rehab?

I had a stroke in August, 2004. I benefited greatly from the physio, occupational and speech therapies I received, as well as from the

support of my social worker. When I began to feel better, I wanted to do something useful in gratitude for the help I received during my recovery so I applied to become a volunteer and a placement was found for me at the Rumsey Centre.

What do you do at Toronto Rehab?

I facilitate a Peer Support Program on Tuesdays, primarily for stroke survivors, although other people attending the centre sometimes join in as well.

What is a typical shift for you at Toronto Rehab?

My shift runs from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. I greet people coming into the lunch room and explain to any newcomers that it is a time to talk informally about the experience of a stroke and recovery. Sometimes we encourage each other, other times we laugh together,

and we always share the ups and downs we have experienced as part of our recovery.

What is the best part about your volunteer work?

Absolutely the best part is the people I get to work with.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I have lived in Toronto all my life except for six years in Peterborough where I attended Trent University and then I worked at the university. I was an elementary school teacher in Scarborough and then I returned to university to become a librarian. During the four years prior to my stroke, I was the main caregiver to my parents. My father had severe cardiac problems and my mother had Alzheimer's.

Any hobbies/interests?

I have played the flute since I was nine. I am very fortunate that my stroke didn't damage the area of my brain that governs playing a musical instrument. Last summer, I began studying at the Royal Conservatory of Music and I am trying to improve the quality of my playing. I have taken up making jewellery, which I really enjoy. Since my reading skills have evolved well enough again to read a book, I have been able to enjoy this hobby.

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

The experience of having a stroke and making a good recovery has given me a tremendous ability to feel joy in every day.



Complex Continuing Care Pet Therapy volunteers. Sandra Gregson and Asia

Four legged volunteers

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opportunity to “give back” to Toronto Rehab for the care they received. Jamie Sifton, who was a patient in the Acquired Brain Injury stream of the Neuro Rehab Program, located at University Centre now brings his dog Ali in on Wednesday afternoons to visit with patients in the Geriatric Rehab Program.

The Pet Therapy volunteers and dogs at E.W. Bickle Centre for Complex Continuing Care quite often have difficulties getting passed the lobby during their visit, as people stop them and want to visit with the dog as soon as they enter the building. Pet Therapy dog, Asia, at BC starts to bark if staff and volunteer, Sandra Gregson, are in a conversation for too long because she is eager to start visiting with the patients. The dogs begin to get tired after about an hour of visiting and they try to visit as many patients as they can.

For more information on Pet Therapy opportunities please contact the consultants at Bickle Centre for CCC, Lyndhurst and University centres.

Volunteer Link Newsletter survey results

In early 2008 Volunteer Resources conducted a survey asking our volunteers for feedback on the Volunteer Link newsletter. We were thrilled that 160 of you took the time to respond. The summarized findings are below:

- 89% of our volunteers read Volunteer Link (i.e. 56% yes; 33% sometimes)
- The only distinguishing factor on whether or not a volunteer may be more likely to read the newsletter, was if they had received it by email
- 97% find Volunteer Link interesting (i.e. 58% yes; 39% sometimes)
- 83% felt the number of issues per year was just right (i.e. quarterly)

- 76% would like Volunteer Link to include education articles that would assist with their volunteering
- 71% would like Volunteer Link to highlight events and new programs/services of Volunteer Resources
- 42% would like Volunteer Link to include profiles of volunteers

As a result, Volunteer Resources will be changing the content to reflect what the majority of our volunteers would like to see. If you have a particular education article topic that you would like to see published in an upcoming issue of Volunteer Link, please forward it to Alison Caird, Manager, Volunteer Resources.

Violet Richardson Award

Shravana Tiwari, volunteer of Toronto Rehab's E.W. Bickle Centre for Complex Continuing Care was the recipient of this year's Violet Richardson Award which is to honour women committed to helping others through volunteer service. The award is given by Soroptimist International, a worldwide organization for women in management and professions, working through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women.

Convinced by her brother to join, Shravana has volunteered with the

Bickle Centre for CCC gift shop for 3 years, and has always approached her duties with dedication and responsibility. Tiwari, 18, is also involved with numerous causes through Parkdale Collegiate Institute where she currently attends, including the Queer Straight Alliance, and the Parkdale Organization of Women's Equity Rights. Next year Shravana will be attending university in pursuit of a degree in Business.

On behalf of Toronto Rehab, we would like to extend our Congratulations to Shravana!

Notice: Updating emergency contact information for all volunteers

This spring, Volunteer Resources will be contacting all volunteers to update their emergency contact information. This information may have changed over time so it is very important that it is updated in the event an emergency occurs while the volunteer is at the hospital. All volunteers are encouraged to talk to their Volunteer Resources Consultant if they know their contact information has changed. Thank you!

Volunteer Resources:
(416) 597-3422

Staff/Contributors:

Alison Caird,
Manager, Volunteer Resources,
ext. 3551

Lucy McIntosh,
Consultant,
Bickle Centre for CCC
ext. 2141

Karen Sacke,
Consultant,
Lyndhurst & Rumsey Centres,
ext. 6279

Joanna Walczak
Assistant, Volunteer Resources,
ext. 2243

Lynda Watson,
Consultant,
Hillcrest & University Centres,
ext. 3058

Newsletter Design & Layout
Dana Ginsberg,
Media Services

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Next Issue: July 2008



Cardiac Rehab Program volunteers show their team spirit. Pictured from left:
Paul Ko, Alvin Ramgobind, Michelle Vadori, Andre Prabhu.

130th Annual Garden Party

Saturday, June 21st, 2008

12 noon – 3pm

Bickle Centre for CCC

More information next edition of Volunteer Link

Welcome to our New Volunteers:

Tanya Alappat (LC)
Gloria Abarquez (BC)
Merllina Beia (BC)
Nichole Bernard (BC)
Lisa Burk (LC)
Tak Chan (BC)
Minata Doumbouya (BC)
May Fouadi (LC)
Stefanie Freel (UC)
Marcelle Fujimaki (BC)
Loreta Gacitua (BC)
Ruth Ann Gordon (BC)
Kadir Ibrahim (BC)
Nadia Khan (RC)
Sarpreet Khera (LC)

Erin Lawrence (UC)
Lily Lu (UC)
Melanie Masa (BC)
Melissa Mignot (BC)
Laxee Nithiyanthan (UC)
Natalia Nugaeva (LC)
Sara Salehi (LC)
Maxine Silberg (UC)
Catherine Suridjan (RC)
Victor Terris (UC)
Nancy Toran (RC)
Sheila Vadil (BC)
Perla Valles (BC)
Kelvin Xu (LC)
Christine Yen (UC)

Volunteer Resources Mission Statement:

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