

Talk it up Victoria



Renfrew Victoria Hospital

Your Community Healthcare Centre

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This issue of "Talk It Up Victoria" presents Renfrew Victoria Hospital from the perspective of some of our patients. We are proud of the quality care provided by the RVH team, as reflected in these stories. Thank you for the community support that continues to make this level of service possible for Renfrew and area!

Babies are welcomed at RVH

Bringing a new life into the world is an exciting time, and deciding where to deliver that tiny bundle of joy can sometimes be a tough task for new parents.

Luckily for area residents, Renfrew Victoria Hospital's obstetrics staff are prepared and thrilled to be the first ones to meet the newest citizens of the Valley.

On April 28, 2008 little Miley Davidson was added to the list of the many babies born at RVH.

A week and a half after her daughter's birth, Krista Davidson says she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love it here," she proclaims during a return visit to the RVH cafeteria.

She's had three children in Renfrew, all delivered by Dr. Stephanie Langlois.



"My biggest fear was going into labour somewhere else besides Renfrew," she says.

While it is a normal and natural process, having a baby is also an exhausting and painful experience, and Krista doesn't sugar-coat the 19 hours of labour she experienced.

"This time I was asking for drugs," she says, explaining that she used a nitrous oxide gas mask for her pain management, as RVH does not offer epidural pain relief.

Krista says the nurses were supportive and encouraging and helped her through the difficult labour to see a healthy 6 pound 5 ounce newborn make her entrance on the second floor of RVH.

And she also enjoyed the nurses in the unit offering to take the baby during the night to allow mom to get some quality rest.

Krista has a suggestion for other anxious moms-to-be who may be considering making a trip into the city to deliver, just to have that epidural as an option.

"I wouldn't even think of it. The nursing staff and doctors are so great here, I wouldn't go anywhere else."

The level of understanding and nurturing care shown by the nurses in the maternity ward is outstanding in Gemma Robillard's opinion too.

She has three children—a set of twins and "a singleton". Since multiples are considered high risk, she was not able to deliver at RVH for her first pregnancy.

"We rushed into the hospital in the city like we were supposed to do and were greeted by 'we have no room right now, hang on,' upon our arrival," she recalls.

When her third son was born at RVH last June, she was able to stay close to home and experience childbirth the way she had always thought it would be.

"It was so refreshing to have such warm, personable nurses there to help you. Everyone was beyond friendly," she says. "I was convinced by a friend to try it here, and I'm so grateful that I did. Trust me on this, I'd pick Renfrew again in heartbeat."

Miley Davidson takes a good look at the RVH obstetrics unit from the vantage point of her mom, Krista's arms.

Education and health care go hand-in-hand

Two weeks before Christmas, Gloria Tait received some unexpected news about her health. After being sent to a specialist by her family doctor, her bloodwork results revealed she had unusually high blood sugar levels and she was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Luckily for the Castleford resident, her condition was caught in the early stages and she was immediately enrolled in RVH's diabetes education program.

"I had thought if you are a diabetic, you had to watch your sugar, but it's the carbs that can get you too," Gloria explains, adding that she's "never been a real big sweet eater."

Each of the participants in the three-week program is given a binder full of nutritional information, including a specific breakdown of the recommended daily intake of carbohydrates, sugar, salt, protein and fat. Throughout the course, diabetics share strategies and develop a plan to keep blood sugar from spiking to dangerously high levels.

While the patients' diet is a key component of the program, implementing a regular exercise routine—a simple 15-minute



walk every day—is also stressed. Information on proper foot care, eye care and dental examinations is part of the program as well.

Gloria has been following the program faithfully and using the tips given by the instructors, Registered Dietitian Donna Reid and Nurse Educator Jessica Fitzgerald.

They have been so helpful that she's successfully been able to avoid medication to treat her diabetes and has it under control simply by making the changes to her diet.

For example, she quickly found out that her former favourite breakfast of a bagel was one of the culprits in her rising blood sugar levels. Her body was converting all of those carbohydrates to sugar, thus causing a dangerous spike in blood sugar levels. Gloria has since traded in her bagels for whole wheat toast and makes salads for her lunch.

Now the information binder provided through the program goes everywhere with Gloria and writing down everything she eats has become part of her daily routine.

She admits she had never been a label reader in the past, but now she studies each item of pre-packaged food before placing it in her grocery cart.

Gloria has also learned that she doesn't have to be completely restricted from foods that she once loved. Everything in moderation is the key, along with having small snacks to keep blood sugar levels even, she notes.

In the process, Gloria has lost almost 30 pounds, and has gained a ton of confidence.

She goes to visit Donna or Jessica to be weighed in each month and to ensure she's staying on track. As part of the program, she also attended a follow-up class at the three-month mark and will do so again at six months.

An added benefit was the support from the dozen or so other participants in the session. "We're all in the same boat, so we were able to share with each other," she says, noting that the classes were very interactive.

Gloria Tait depends on her information binder and the support of the RVH diabetes education team to keep her in good health.

Clinical skills and compassion shine through in complicated emergency case

Lisa Plouffe admits to some doubts as she entered the RVH emergency department with her daughter, Natasha. It's not that they are unfamiliar with hospitals. Natasha is a cancer survivor and they are regular users of the health care system.

"CHEO is her home," Lisa explains. "She doesn't easily go to another hospital."

When the team in the ER diagnosed Natasha's problem as a blood clot that Thursday afternoon, Lisa learned they would be getting pretty familiar with their local hospital.

Natasha had to return every 12 hours for injections until she could be seen in the CHEO clot clinic the following Monday. The Plouffes were soon introducing themselves to staff providing x-rays, ultrasounds and lab services.

"They were all excellent," reports Lisa, noting that the quick diagnosis and good clinical care were matched with humour, patience and warmth.

The nurses listened to Natasha's concerns about their unfamiliarity with her shunt and reassured her about the care they were giving.

"She didn't hesitate about returning for her injections," Lisa says. "In fact, she was eager to see the nurses to share her stories about the bruising that was being left on her stomach."

And that first visit in May just might have lasting results for the Plouffes. Lisa is now looking into the prospect of getting some of Natasha's ongoing care handled in Renfrew, saving the drive to Ottawa for routine items such as bloodwork.

"She's a very complicated case, and the team at RVH weren't in the least bit afraid of her," she says with delight. "We were very impressed and won't be hesitant at all about coming back to Renfrew."

Orphaned patients depend on the emergency department for care

Paula Sansom-Beauregard and her husband, Eugene, left the big city life to give their children a small-town upbringing. Paula also left behind the same family doctor she's had since she was four years old.

They are now among the many residents in the area on more than one waiting list for a family physician. In the health care field, they are known as "orphaned" patients. As they play the waiting game, Paula and her family have been turning to Renfrew Victoria Hospital's emergency room for care.

"I didn't expect to get a doctor right away, but I also didn't expect that there wouldn't be a clinic," Paula comments. She was told that one local doctor's waiting list consists of three full pages of names of people who are all in the same boat as she and her family.

Two and a half weeks after moving here, both of Paula's children became sick. They made their first trip to RVH with what turned out to be really bad ear infections. The kids later came down with the chicken pox, which her husband also caught and needed care. Since moving to Renfrew in January, they have had to make seven trips to the ER.

"I was surprised by how quick we got to see someone. The wait time is phenomenal," comments Paula, recalling having barely finished registering her son at the admittance desk

before they were seen by a triage nurse. She's sure she would have waited quite a long time before being seen by anyone in the Calgary hospital they left behind.

Paula has been pleased that on four of the occasions she's been able to see the same physician, Dr. Steven Radke, who has been wonderful. Unfortunately, he isn't taking on any new patients right now.

While the situation isn't ideal, RVH physicians understand the need and do provide the care as any family doctor would in the emergency room.

Paula says she feels bad taking up their resources and time for things she would have normally gone to a clinic to have checked out.

"And it is frustrating because there's no follow-up care," she says, explaining that she goes in when the kids are sick, for example, but doesn't go back to see if the infection is cleared up.

Dr. Radke notes that the caregivers are also frustrated with the situation, which doesn't allow them to provide ideal care.

"We do the best we can," he says, "but you really want to be able to build that professional relationship and know your patients on a long-term basis."

Even if Paula, Eugene or one of the kids needs a prescription refilled, they have to head into the ER.

"And you can't get physicals. I'd hate to take up the ER doctors' time just to get the regular checks anyway," Paula notes.

"That's how you miss things like cancer," she adds, speaking as someone who has had stage four cervical cancer diagnosed through a regular check-up.

Until a doctor takes on the Beauregards, these orphaned patients will continue to visit the emergency room when necessary.

Overall, Paula is quite impressed at the level of care and speedy service provided by the small-town hospital in a place that she is now proud to call home.

"That ER is fantastic," she concludes.



Paula Sansom-Beauregard with her husband, Eugene, daughter, Paige, and son, Brett.

Support and comfort are at the heart of palliative care

Palliative care provides support and comfort to those who only have precious little time left to say goodbye.

One local family in particular has a newfound appreciation for the outstanding level of end-of-life care provided by all staff at Renfrew Victoria Hospital.

Barbara McCafferty woke up just days before Christmas to see her mother with a leg that had ballooned to twice its normal size and turned purple. Her mom, Beulah Wilson, had been living with Barbara and her husband for months in their Calabogie residence. Barbara, a retired palliative care nurse herself, had been providing home care for her mother, who had cancer. She took her straight to the emergency department at RVH where she was told Beulah would be admitted. Doctors soon gave Barbara the news that her mom would be moved upstairs, as the cancer could no longer be treated.

Beulah knew she was moving into the palliative care unit and her daughter remembers that she didn't want to go up there.

"For mom, moves were not good," she says.

Knowing she would be kept as comfortable as possible at RVH, Barbara says the move "was just a blessing. Mom was just as happy."

Part of the reason for her happiness was that two of the unit's nurses were from Beulah's native Beachburg. They made her feel right at home in no time, affectionately nicknaming her "Beachburg Beulah."

Describing her mom as a funny lady who loved being around people, Barbara knew Beulah was in the right place. She says there was a lot of laughter and good conversations in those final weeks before Beulah's death on February 7.

The devoted daughter spent her days and nights at her mom's side.

Noticing that she needed to have some rest herself, the nurses set Barbara up in the Ronald McDonald Room, a resting place where families can take a break and recharge their batteries.

Barbara also mentions that the housekeeping and dietary staff did top-notch work that really made a difference for everyone involved.

"I was so impressed. They don't get enough praise," she says.

Even the free parking provided by the hospital was appreciated by all of Beulah's family and friends. "We're proud to be able to donate so we can keep parking free. It was such a blessing to visitors."

Special mention also goes to Roxanne Nolan, RVH's recreation program director, who "got mom out and socializing".

She looks back fondly on the weeks her mother spent in the hospital, yet Barbara admits there were some stressful moments. Standing out in her eyes is the extraordinary support shown by Ann Marie Urbaitis, RVH's palliative care coordinator, who was always there to help her through those tough times.

"We couldn't have asked for better," Barbara says about all of the caregivers and support staff.

"It was just a wonderful experience. I can't say enough."



Beulah Wilson enjoyed visits with family during her hospitalization. With her here are her daughter, Barbara McCafferty, and great-grandchildren Cody and Taryn.

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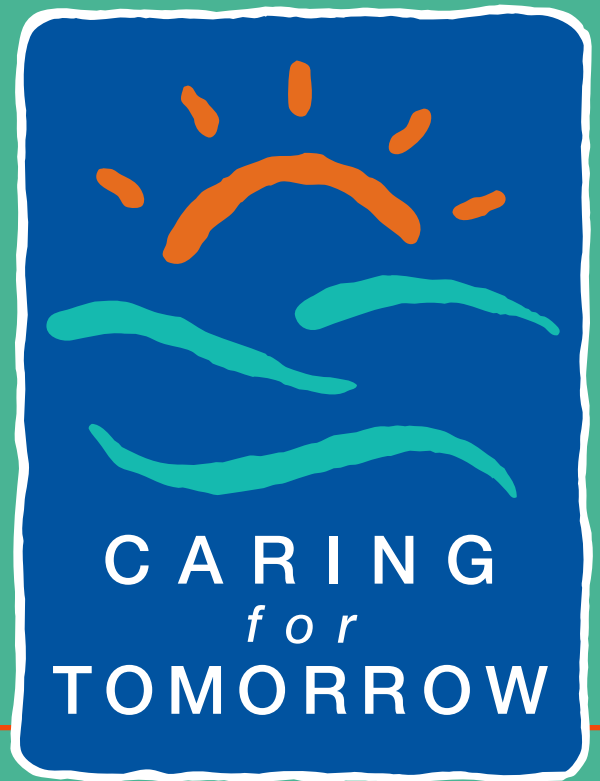
CARING *for* TOMORROW

News from the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation

If you would like to learn more about the various ways you can contribute to Renfrew Victoria Hospital, please contact us:

Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation, 499 Raglan Street North,
Renfrew, Ontario K7V 1P6

Phone: (613) 432-4851, ext. 263



\$30,000 raised “fore” RVH CT fund

The Caring for Tomorrow golf tournament celebrated its tenth anniversary with a great day on the course that took the 10-year fund-raising total over the \$270,000 mark. This year’s \$30,700 donation will be dedicated to the RVH CT fund. No provincial funding is available for this project, which requires an investment of over \$2 million for health care in our community.



Opera came to the Valley with glamour and fun

Renfrew's Kathleen Radke, right, was joined by Dayna Lamothe and Jean-Sébastien Kennedy to provide their Renfrew audience with a night at the opera this spring. The concert was a fund-raiser for the RVH CT fund.



Support for RVH comes from all corners of our community



In the past few weeks the RVH Foundation has received donations from, above left, the hospital auxiliary, represented by Janet Osborne, Ruth Stewart, Jean Sills and Doris Handford who presented a cheque for \$33,000 at the RVH volunteer luncheon; above, Domino's Pizza, who dedicated two Family Special nights to RVH this spring, enjoyed here by Dr. Stan Simson and staff members Kathy Manwell and Colleen Enright; and left, John and Rita Burnett of John A. Burnett Ltd., who donated \$5,000 to the RVH Foundation, accepted by Director Barb Desilets, at left.

RVH now has a monthly donor program making it easy for you to give today—Caring for Tomorrow
To learn more, call the RVH Foundation at 613-432-4851, ext. 263