



Our Compass

Compassionate care led by Catholic values

Winter 2011

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New Grey Nuns Dental Surgery Program brings comfort to vulnerable patients

Few people skip on their way to the dentist's chair. But for adults with complex health-care needs, even a routine dental visit can be terrifying.

Until June 2009, adults with serious illness or challenges such as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, and autism were given dental treatment in the operating room at the Stollery Children's Hospital. Results were positive and the word soon spread. Requests for service began flowing in from across Western Canada and the Northwest Territories, and quickly out-paced available operating room time.

So, in consultation with Alberta Health Services, Trevor Small, Director of Surgical Services, Grey Nuns Community Hospital fostered a solution: transferring the Dental Program from the Stollery to the Grey Nuns Community Hospital. The change would shorten wait times, and help ease the dental experience for vulnerable adult patients and their caregivers.

Last fall, the move was made official. Covenant Health was granted funding for the new dental program in September 2009, and has since served over 200 patients with excellent results.

Trevor takes pride in the successful new program and the commitment of his team. "Much like the Sisters before us, this is a chance to assist a population in need," says Trevor. "We were so pleased to build on the great work that Alberta Health Services was

already doing and create a program designed specifically for adults."

"Some of the patients are so fearful of hospitals that even walking through the door can be traumatic," explains Trevor. "Our priority is to ensure each patient feels comfortable."

This process begins where a patient feels most at ease, in his or her own home. By planning ahead, Grey Nuns staff and caregivers work together to anticipate complex needs, determine the specific care required and how to best reduce patient anxiety.

The new program is especially rewarding for Registered Nurse Bev Manchur, who is always prepared to go the extra mile to comfort her patients, and to help maintain their dignity. For example, one caregiver is always welcome in the operating room until the patient falls asleep before a procedure or in the recovery room. "If an individual doesn't want to wear a hospital gown, that's okay," she stresses. "And if patients prefer to walk around instead of sitting in the waiting room before surgery, then we walk along with them."

Bev credits the program's success to a focus on individual needs and excellent teamwork—involving nurses, anesthetists, dentists, porters and caregivers. The team has even arranged haircuts, immunizations, and basic grooming for these patients.

"It's very rewarding knowing that we're helping to alleviate a person's fears and turning an otherwise uncomfortable situation into a more positive one," says Bev. "At the end of the day, it's about working as a team to ensure our patients feel comfortable. It's about developing unique and special relationships. It's about maintaining trust."



Registered Nurse Bev Manchur is always prepared to go the extra mile for each patient of the Dental Surgery Program. "It's about maintaining trust," she asserts.



“The star of Bethlehem was a star of hope that led the wise men to the fulfillment of their expectations, the success of their expedition. Nothing in this world is more fundamental for success in life than hope...”

— D. James Kennedy

A Gift of Christmas Hope

A message from our President and CEO, and Board Chair

As leaders during a time of challenge and change in healthcare, we are often asked the rhetorical question: “How do you guys sleep at night?” This tongue-in-cheek statement underscores some deeper questions and fears: How can we believe so deeply in our role, when the system itself

is in chaos? How can we possibly make progress on our strategic directions? How can we achieve our vision?

The reason we do not despair? Because we have hope! This might seem like a flippant answer, but it is not. We have hope for the future and confidence in our organization for many solid reasons.

We have hope because we have made clear and measured progress on our strategic directions since we first came together as a provincial organization in 2008.

We have hope because our organization is built on solid footing: a 147-year tradition that was established by our resourceful, courageous founding Sisters, and a mission to “continue the healing ministry of Jesus.”

We also have hope because our staff, physicians and volunteers across the province have made a difference this year for Mae, Don, Linda, Doug, Hugh and thousands of others...and because we continue to help hundreds more each day.

Jesus came into the world over two millennia ago to bring us the very real gifts of faith, love...and hope. As a mission-focused organization, we believe that it is our task to share this sacred hope with our partners, residents, patients, families and with one another. In fact, challenging times are when we are needed most!

Thanks to your support, and a shared commitment to our strategic framework, patient safety and quality care—we have had a remarkable year. I invite you to take some time to celebrate this success, and one another.

We have every reason to look ahead with confidence and hope to a new year filled with even more opportunities to positively influence the health of Albertans and be of greater service to those in need.

May this Christmas season refresh and renew you, and may God bless you and your loved ones.

Merry Christmas!

John Brennan,
Board Chair

Patrick Dumelie,
President and CEO



We're making a difference!

Read the stories of Linda, Don, Mae, and other patients and residents we have helped this year in our Facts and Figures publication—available at CovenantHealth.ca

We're growing!

Read about the our new Villa Caritas, and new facilities planned for Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge in our 2010 Annual Report at CovenantHealth.ca

We're living our promise!

From our work at the front lines to decisions made by senior leaders, we're keeping our strategic framework in focus and keeping patient and resident safety and quality care at the top of our priority list.

Painting Brighter Days

Our Strategic Framework

Our mission

We are called to continue the healing ministry of Jesus by serving with compassion, upholding the sacredness of life in all stages, and caring for the whole person—body, mind and soul.

Our vision

Covenant Health will positively influence the health of Albertans and be of greater service to those in need by working together with compassion, quality and innovation.

Our values

As a Catholic organization, we are committed to serving people of all faiths, cultures and circumstances, according to our values: compassion, respect, collaboration, social justice, integrity, stewardship.

Our strategic directions

Live our mission and values in all we do

Build and engage our team

Continuously improve quality and safety

Respond to those in need

Engage and work with community

Mae Dory, one of many gifted and enthusiastic participants in a unique art therapy program at Youville Home.



She dips her brush in a sky-blue watercolor to put the finishing touches on her latest masterpiece. The intricate painting takes skill and concentration but nothing keeps Mae Dory's fiery personality from shining through.

"I've been working on this one about four times," she says, looking at her golden-haired, feather-winged angel. "They always give me the hard ones!" she laughs.

The resident art program has been running successfully for the last few years at Youville Home, the not-for-profit, long-term care facility in St. Albert. The program comes to life every Wednesday morning filling the recreation hall with at least 12 residents who are eager to work with their hands, socialize with friends and create something they are proud to call their own.

The art program challenges Mae to keep her fingers flexible, mind active and creative spirit alive. "I always say I am never coming back," jokes Mae with a cheeky smile, "but I'm here every week. It makes me feel like I accomplished something, I guess I do a pretty good job."

With her infectious personality, one would never guess Mae is in her nineties. Her younger sister Therese also lives at Youville Home and often comes to watch

her paint. Mae sewed clothes for her family as she grew up and worked as a seamstress for years. "I took a course in household economics. I was very good at the sewing, but the cooking," she whispers, "I only passed by the skin of my teeth!"

She paints and sews but Mae is also eager to show off the numerous cross-stitches she has framed in her bright room at the residence. Artistic ability is in her blood and Youville's art program is the perfect complement to keep skills at work.

Residents are not the only ones who have fallen in love with painting. Staff transform their work into cards and calendars. Sold in the gift shop and at local bazaars, proceeds are used to keep brushes, paint and paper stocked for more masterpieces to come. Cheryl Robertson, Manager of Therapeutic and Volunteer Services, adds, "the program allows for both self-expression and productivity. Just because someone is in a long-term care facility doesn't mean they can't be an important part of the community."

The art program builds on Youville's commitment to support resident's social needs and perfectly reflects Covenant Health's mission to care for the whole person – body, mind and soul.

New Playground enables Intergenerational Connections

By Colleen Moses, Activity and Volunteer Coordinator, St. Therese Villa

The volunteer-built Little Flower Playground was officially unveiled outside St. Therese Villa in Lethbridge on October 29, 2010. You may think it quite the oxymoron to have a playground located outside a designated assisted living facility. Turns out, it is quite the opposite.



Ann, recreation volunteer, and Maxine, entertainer, for St. Therese Villa were 2 of the 67 volunteers who assisted in the "Little Flower" playground build.

donor-directed donations and grants to the CRH Foundation. Covenant Health took responsibility to construct the playground. "We are happy this playground can now be enjoyed by families in Lethbridge," said Debra Ramage, Executive Director for Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation.

Feedback from the residents has been overwhelmingly positive. "The chance to connect with the children is wonderful. I've been watching them play right from my window," says a cheerful Harry Ruggles, one of 200 residents who call

"The chance to connect with the children is wonderful. I've been watching them play right from my window."

— Harry Ruggles

St. Therese home. Another resident, Mary Lyle, makes daily trips outside to pick up any garbage blown into the playground by the Southern Alberta winds.

As news of the newly constructed playground continues to grow, we look forward to not only connecting with the children of the community, but families as well. We can't wait to see what wonderful relationships will grow from this project!

Locating the playground in a green stretch just outside the facility has already provided entertainment for people of all ages—St. Therese Villa residents enjoy watching their grandchildren and children from the neighbouring community spend hours laughing and having fun in the playground.

As volunteer coordinator on this project, I can't say enough about how much fun we had. Over 65 volunteers donated 675 hours to help build the playground. Our volunteers included students, staff, people from surrounding community and our residents. Our youngest volunteer, Karson Pritchard, age six, had the honor of cutting the ribbon to officially open the playground.

As seniors age, the loss of overall well-being can create physical, mental and social exhaustion. Having the playground located on St. Therese premises allows our residents to surround themselves in a positive, fun, atmosphere. It also has the potential to alleviate stress, depression, and the daily worries of failing health. And I'm hopeful that we will be able to build strong intergenerational relationships between residents and the children who come to play.

The \$70,000 playground was a gift from the Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation (CRH) to the St. Michael's Foundation. Saturn of Lethbridge, a major sponsor of the playground, contributed \$30,000 towards the equipment, with the remaining equipment costs covered by



Trip *of a* Lifetime

Killam Health Centre team takes residents on a mountain adventure

By Patty Schulte, Recreation Therapist,
Killam Health Centre

The smell of fresh mountain air and the awe-inspiring sight of the snow-capped peaks. It all does a soul good.

The Rocky Mountains are a feast for the senses, drawing millions of tourists each year from across Alberta and around the world. For Wilhemina (Willy) and her husband Frank, a continuing care resident at Killam Health Centre, shared mountain vacations were a thing of the past—just one of many simple pleasures taken from them with the onset of his Parkinson's Disease four years ago.

Today, Frank requires 24-hour nursing care as do all of our residents. For most, the ability to see the mountains again in their lifetime is out of their reach. Families are simply not able to holiday with their loved ones on their own. But this is where we can help!

As the Recreation Therapist at the Killam Health Centre, it is my job to ensure the best quality of leisure life for our Continuing Care residents. I knew there was a way to make Frank and Willy's and other residents' vacation dreams a reality so, with help of my team, I planned a trip to William Watson Lodge.

Nested in beautiful Kananaskis Park, William Watson Lodge provides year round accommodations for Albertans with disabilities and seniors. I was so happy to get a reservation, because the demand is high. When I proposed the trip to our residents, Wilhemina—who still lives in her own home—was the first to phone-in and book. "Oh, the thought of having a holiday together again is so wonderful!" she beamed.

In fact, the anticipation was just as much fun as the actual trip. One of our ladies had not been on a vacation in over 30 years. She could not contain her excitement as she planned what to take, who her roommate will be, how much money to take for shopping, etc. The air was electric. The staff were excited too, demonstrating their true spirit of teamwork in preparing for the trip.

In the end, eight Killam Health Centre residents, three family members and four staff ventured out together by bus on September 16, 2010 for a 500 kilometer bus ride to the Lodge and four amazing days. The holiday included barefoot dips in the river, an old-fashioned picnic, a barbecue feast, evening games and skits, shopping and sightseeing. Every one of us came home with memories to last a lifetime.

"I'm very grateful to the staff for organizing this trip," explains Wilhemina. "It let us be a couple again....to be normal again."



Wilhemina and her her husband Frank enjoying some fresh air and sunshine on a group trip for residents of Killam Health Centre and their loved ones

Human Resources Policies and Procedures Spotlight on Exit Interviews

By Catherine Smith, Manager,
Human Resources

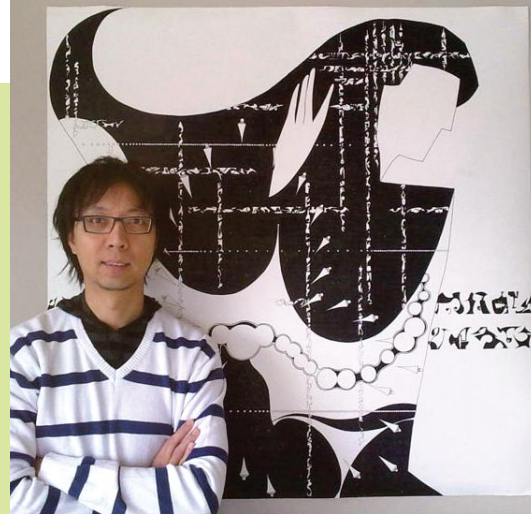
Take a look at Policy Number II-35 Exit Interviews. This policy requires Covenant Health to invite employees who are resigning or transferring to another department or site to complete a confidential Exit Information Survey online or paper. Employees may also request an in-person confidential Exit Interview. The new 2010 Exit Interview Survey link is <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22AWRMAL4ES>

What happens with the data? Information gained from an exit information survey or an Exit Interview will be used to identify employment trends and improvement opportunities in operations, working conditions, compensation/benefits, and employee relations issues.

Please contact Human Resources if you require further information. All Covenant Health Human Resources policies and procedures are available at <http://compassionnet.covenanthealth.ca/>

Art project gives residents skills, friendship and confidence

By Pollyanna Kwong, Recreation Therapist, Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre



Volunteer artist Erik Cheung stands in front of one of the art pieces produced by residents in the Ming Ai Unit at the Edmonton General.

The Ming Ai Art Exhibition, which ran from October 29 to Nov 12, is a collection of art produced by the residents of the Ming Ai Unit at the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre.

Artist volunteer, Erik Cheung, made the exhibit possible by using his creativity to develop art projects that represent love and family around the theme "We Are Here."

Creating the art allows residents to use their fine motor skills to accomplish some art masterpieces. With this accomplishment, comes confidence. As they work on their projects, residents also get the chance to have fun and socialize with others.

Each work of art is truly a masterpiece because of the challenges each resident faces. Most of the residents suffered strokes of different degrees and are restricted to their wheelchairs. Some of them can only move

one hand, and those who are slightly able to maneuver their hand may also find it hard to control scissors, let alone cutters. Some even find it difficult to hold on to a pencil.

This made planning very important. Erik had to break down each art project into very simple and easy steps. With every visit, Erik gave residents several small jobs that encouraged them to apply small motor skill exercises, such as: applying stickers or simple paper folding and rolling.

Some residents have been living at the unit for quite some time; this combined with their physical limitations affects their mental well-being and belief in their own abilities. It took much effort and encouragement at first to get them even to move their hands. Erik had to change tactics—instead of asking them to create the art, he asked for their 'help' instead! From then on, everything went smoothly.

The end result? Proof that residents gain in self confidence and assurance through art production. Given time, with more art projects, other residents can create something beautiful and gain confidence despite their physical limitations.

Thanks to Erik's talent, gift of time, and his commitment to this art project, residents at the Ming Ai unit have an enhanced quality of life.

This art exhibition was made possible thanks to the generous financial support of Edmonton Chinese Lions Club. Their contribution made a difference among our Ming Ai residents at the Edmonton General.



The Spirit of Christmas

Patrick Dumelie, President and CEO, serving up pancakes, and plenty of smiles at a Spirit of Christmas event at St. Leo Catholic Elementary School on December 10.

Four Edmonton Catholic elementary schools each received pancake breakfasts and a total of 617 shoe boxes including a toque and mittens and other small gifts—one for each child. This project was spearheaded by Grey Nuns bed manager Stephen Kasowski and his wife Debra.

"What a wonderful event! I was more than happy to lend a hand," says Patrick. "Thank you to all of our team members across the province who make a big effort to meet the needs of our communities at Christmas and throughout the year." For more on this event, visit www.wcr.ab.ca



Gallup Survey Update

By Rebecca Purc-Stephenson, Organizational Development Consultant



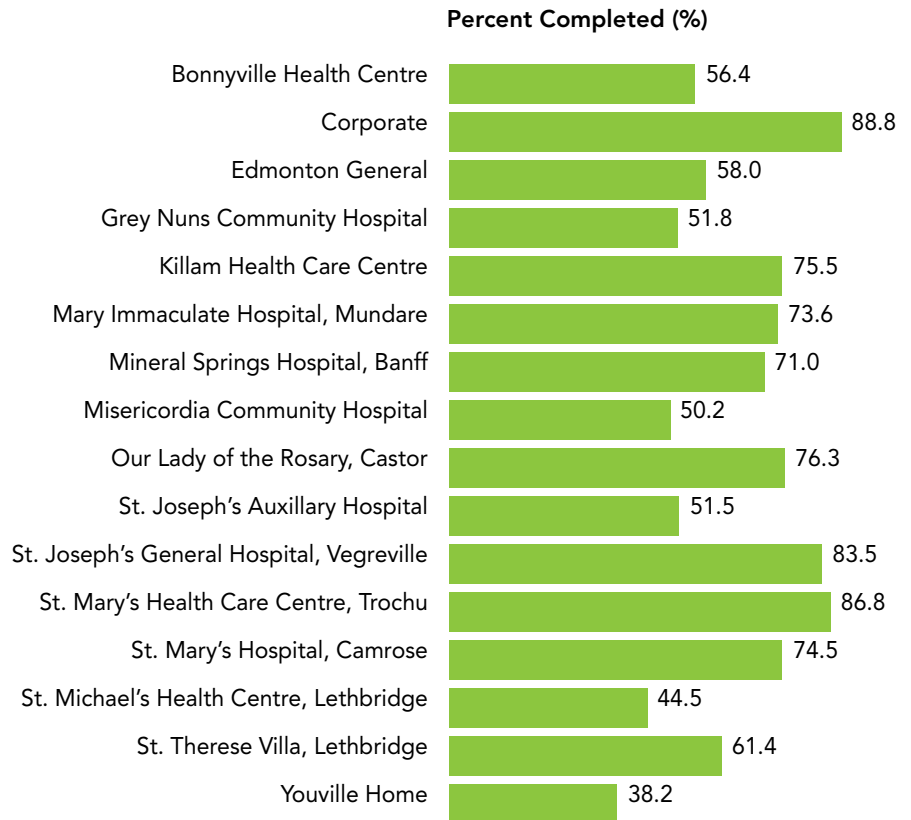
Thank-you for your feedback to make your work environment, and Covenant Health, the best it can be. As an organization, we did very well with 55% of employees participating in the survey, with individual sites ranging from 38% to 88%. This compares favourably to the 76% rate typically reached by healthcare organizations in Canada. Congratulations to the teams who had a 75% response rate or higher: you will get a Covenant Health tote bag within the coming weeks.

Turning feedback into action

With your team's results, leaders will create and implement action plans specific to your team. We will provide resources and support to help leaders: understand the information, debrief your teams, and create your team's action plans.

This winter, we will share the overall results of the survey across Covenant Health. With the results, the Senior Leadership Team will develop and share corporate action plans to address issues identified in the survey results that apply to the entire organization. Watch for details to come.

Participation by site



An Act of Kindness

St. Joseph's Auxiliary resident Ernie had a sticky wheelchair wheel, so he asked staff member Narinder Gusany if he would wipe it for him...so away Narinder went cleaning both wheels! Thank-you Narinder for living our mission and values.

CompassionNET.ca

Live in January 2011!
CompassionNET.ca, our new intranet, will feature policies and procedures, education opportunities, the staff directory, news online opinion polls and more!

The Butterfly

A lesson in compassion

By Grazia Poretti, Volunteer, Misericordia Community Hospital



I remember a day long ago, when I was 16 and a newcomer to Canada. I was riding a transit bus in Edmonton, and an inexplicable sadness overwhelmed me.

I felt alone, a stranger in a strange land. I didn't know even one of the locals, and I couldn't yet speak the language. I did not understand the customs of Canadian people. Yet I felt the need for someone friendly that would talk to me, bestow a smile...a word, a nod that would reanimate my youthful exuberance.

The day itself was gray and somber. Winter was approaching. I could feel

Grazia first came to volunteer at the Misericordia Community Hospital in 1999 and has since donated over 2000 hours of service. "We are blessed to have her in our organization caring and giving to our patients and families," says Brenda Shim, Manager of Volunteer Services, Misericordia Community Hospital.

the first snowfall of the season in the air. People were wrapped in wooly garments, toques, mitts and scarves. These replaced the summer outfits of only a few weeks before. Aboard the bus, the passengers kept to themselves, in silence...distant.

Suddenly my reverie was distracted by something flapping against the window. A leaf? A piece of paper? No! The item was translucent and multicolored, like a jewel shining so brightly in front of my eyes. I was hypnotized by its brilliance. "But it is alive!" I exclaimed, with great surprise. It wanted to enter the warmth of the bus. I slid the window open to let it in, and my colorful jewel flies in. It was a butterfly!

Very gently, I enclosed it in my cupped hands. Between my fingers slightly open, I admired my precious prisoner. What colors of rainbow, of marvelous shades of greens, yellows, reds and shimmering blues. The wings, covered with a fine velvety dust, very delicate and fragile, yet stubbornly resisted the imprisonment.

What is this insect doing here on such a cold day...out of its season, distant from the fragrant air and the sun of summer? I knew I could not keep her a prisoner. This creature of God was born to be free and I must open the cage to let her fly, no matter what fate awaited her outside.

Evidently, my fellow travelers had witnessed this event for they surrounded me...becoming curious, fascinated. I can still see their faces beaming with smiles and I gently opened my fingers to show them my precious jewel, and to set the butterfly free. She rested a moment on the palm of my hand, gently unfolding her wings to reveal her splendor. In a moment, she vanished back outside through my open window.

How well I remember today the reaction of my companions. They applauded with such warmth and animated conversation—exchanging words, full of gaiety and laughter. I could feel fellowship with these people. I was no longer alone, or a stranger.

Prayer of Hospitality and Compassion

By Canaan Banana, Zimbabwe

Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of people;
Move my hands that they may feed the hungry;
Touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing;
Teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers;
Let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;
Give me the care that strengthens the sick;
Make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free.
In sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity,
we partake of your divine presence.

Source: With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 344



Sweet Dreams

Five tips to get the rest you need

By Fabiola de Pina-Jenkins,
Provisional Registered Psychologist, Catholic Social Services



Isn't it wonderful to be able to let your mind and body rest for the needed amount of time that is right for you?

Proper sleep can mean waking up feeling refreshed, alert, energized, coordinated, looking better, and in a positive mood. To maintain or enhance the quality of your sleep try some sleep hygiene practices.

For shift workers additional tools may be required. A recent article published in the Current Treatment Options in Neurology suggests sleep quality can be enhanced by modulating light exposure to stimulate relaxation and readiness for sleep by wearing sunglasses.

Creating darkened environments during a time span between change in light exposure toward darkness until the desired effect of a relaxed state is obtained helps the body to prepare for a restful sleep. The use of melatonin is an added aide to promote better sleep. Ask your doctor if melatonin is a right option for you.

Look for next issue's article:
Weak Funny Bones, No Laughing Matter

To schedule an appointment with an EFAP counsellor, call 1.866-420.1967 or 780.420.1967. Appointments available during the day, evening, and on Saturdays
www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca



Catholic Charities
Catholic Social Services
Sign of Hope

Employee and Family
Assistance Program

1. **Never "try" to sleep:** has anyone ever said to you that they will "try" to do something? What does that really mean? Trying is neither actually doing something or not! Worrying about not being able to sleep will increase your arousal. Find something relaxing, but not stimulating to do.
2. **Exercise in the late afternoon or early evening:** sleep is associated with a drop in body core temperature. Exercise elevates body temperature leading to a compensatory drop in temperature about 4 to 6 hours later. For those less athletically inclined, a hot bath can lead to a similar drop in temperature, but somewhat sooner, within 2 to 4 hours.
3. **Avoid stimulants and alcohol:** coffee, tea, chocolate, and nicotine too close to bedtime will disrupt your sleep. Although alcohol does help sleep onset, it is associated with a more disrupted sleep pattern as it is metabolized by the body.
4. **Don't go to bed hungry:** although a large meal near sleep time can be disruptive, so can hunger. Eat a light snack or try drinking a warm glass of milk, which is a natural source of tryptophan (so is Christmas turkey), an amino acid that induces sleep.
5. **Don't bring your Blackberry to bed.** (Unless you are on call, of course). Not only does this not help your sleep, we are seeing more and more couples starting to discuss this in counselling. Try turning off lights from your clock, cell phone or other electronics in your room. Create an environment that is conducive to sleep. For most people, a quiet, dark, and cool room is most beneficial. Experiment using calming music or background sounds to counteract unwanted noise that disrupts your sleep.

A Gift for You



A 2011 Covenant Health pocket calendar has been published, and copies have been shipped to every site across the province—a gift for every employee, physician, and volunteer.

The calendar features photographs from a 15-foot wide legacy quilt that was created by Lethbridge artist Amy Dodic. Commissioned by Covenant Health's Community Boards, the original quilt was presented to the Covenant Health Board of Directors at the Annual

Community Meeting. "I was glad it was such a terrible summer," says Amy with a smile, since she worked on it virtually every day.

The pocket calendar, and the legacy quilt, celebrate the roots of Catholic healthcare in Alberta and our continued commitment to this sacred work.

Did you get your calendar? Contact your site administration today or Mandy at mandy.morrison@covenanthealth.ca

Awards & Achievements

Dr. Ahmed Meer receives AMA award

Congratulations Dr. Ahmed Meer, Chief of Staff at Killam Health Centre, who has been awarded the distinction of Member Emeritus of the Alberta Medical Association (AMA). The award recognizes significant contributions to the medical profession, seniority and long-term membership.

"Dr. Meer is a wonderful doctor," says Geraldine Clark, Executive Director, Killam Health Centre. "He is professional and is always ready to do whatever it takes to make a rural facility function. He has been here through all of the changes in health care over the past 40 years, always ensuring that our facility has physician coverage even if it means giving up his own time to do so."



Pressure Ulcer Prevention Poster Award

Congratulations Marlene Varga, Kathleen Luman and Mary Jo Harland Gregoire on winning the award for the "best poster" under the stream of public policy at the Canadian Association of Wound Care Conference in November. They were recognized for their review of the Pressure Ulcer Awareness Program at the Grey Nuns Community Hospital.

"This is a significant recognition of all the hard work that the wound care team has done over the past four years," explains Karen Macmillan, Senior Operating Officer, Grey Nuns. "They are truly making a difference with patient care."

In keeping with their commitment to best practice and life-long-learning, the authors donated the \$250 honorarium they received to a staff education fund.



Senior Leader Achievements

Congratulations to Sheli Murphy, Vice President Rural Health Services, and Gordon Self, Vice President, Mission, Ethics and Spirituality on successful completion of their doctoral studies. Sheli Murphy has a combined Masters of Science in Nursing and in Business

Administration in Health Care Management and has recently achieved her PhD in Leadership and Administrative Management from Greenleaf University. Gordon Self was recently granted a Doctor of Ministry, with a focus on organizational ethics and discernment from St. Stephen's College, at the University of Alberta.



THANK YOU retirees

"You made a difference, each one of you, in your own way...keeping our facilities clean and running smoothly, caring for our patients and residents, making nutritious meals, helping teams reach their goals, keeping our budget in line, and mentoring colleagues. In so many ways each day you contributed to our efforts to care for people when they needed us most. You gave of yourself, and in turn, you ensured that the spirit of the Sisters lives on in our work.

And through all your hard work and commitment, you have helped shape who we are today. I extend the gratitude of the Board and Senior Leadership Team to all of you being honoured here tonight—for your dedication, thoughtful and innovative ideas, commitment to quality, and compassion to those in need."

— Covenant Health Board Member Shirley McClellan addressing retirees at the Covenant Health Milestones banquet on October 21, 2010

Keep your Ho Ho Hope

Tips to manage holiday stress

By Michelle Benson, Occupational Therapist at the Grey Nuns Hospital



Michelle is an Occupational Therapist, currently working on the Cardiac Rehab Team at the Grey Nuns Community Hospital. This multidisciplinary team provides advice to cardiac clients on lifestyle modifications such as diet, exercise and stress management. Michelle's role is to provide education on stress management, relaxation techniques, and activity modification.

Christmas is truly a magical time of year. However, for many, Christmas also represents a time of stress. The stress may be due to all the busyness associated with the Christmas season: parties, shopping, cooking, and family gatherings.

There may be unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves or on our families to create a perfect Christmas. We may feel financial pressure to purchase gifts that may be beyond our budget in an effort to show our love. Finally, Christmas can also be a time that we embrace the party season and abandon our healthy habits: foregoing exercise, getting less sleep, eating unhealthy or irregular meals, or having a few too many glasses of Christmas cheer. All of this can contribute to people feeling exhausted and overwhelmed at what is supposed to be a happy time of year.

While many people are feeling the effects of too much activity at Christmas, some people are feeling more alone than ever. For those who do not have a family or who are away from their family, Christmas can be a time of stress due to loneliness and social isolation. Being alone becomes amplified when others around us are with



their families and friends. Think of those in hospitals or nursing homes, those recently widowed, divorced or bereaved. Holidays can emphasize the stigma of loneliness. More than at any other time of year, Christmas can be a reminder of what we don't have in our lives, of what is missing.

So, as the world continues to focus on perfection, we need to ask ourselves what really is a perfect Christmas? I recall one especially stressful Christmas when I said to my family "I went to a lot of work and we are having a good day and I mean it!" If you can relate to this maybe it's time for all of us to reflect on what truly makes our Christmas Merry!

Here are some tips to help you reduce stress and anxiety at Christmas:

Count your blessings: Focus on those you love and what makes your life worth living. Focus on what you have instead of what is missing.

Remember the true meaning of Christmas: Concentrate on only your favorite holiday traditions and let go of those that are less important.

Check your list twice:

Write your to-do list, prioritize, and eliminate half.

Find some time for yourself: Read a book, take a hot bath, meet a Friend, or do something you love.

Plan a special day or event: If you are alone, reach out to others by organizing a day for others who are alone, volunteer at a Christmas event, or seek out organized events.

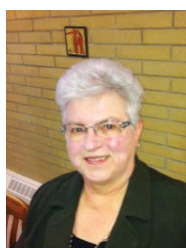
Avoid crowds: Do not shop during peak hours, shop on-line, and don't procrastinate.

Stay within your budget

Stay healthy: Don't abandon healthy habits — eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep.

Relax and take a deep breath: Slow, deep breathing can help to calm your body and your mind.

50 years... and loving it!



50 of anything is a lot, but five decades of service as a nurse is a rare achievement. One of our team members—Licensed Practical Nurse Jeannet Sadownyk from St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital in Vegreville —reached this impressive milestone this fall.

Jeannet first joined the St. Joseph's team on September 5, 1960—fresh from her training at the Calgary School of Nursing Aides. She has been with the facility ever since. "She continues to adapt to the ever changing world that we find ourselves in," stresses her colleague Marcia Spanier.

What are the most important lessons she has learned along the way? Jeannet is quick to explain it's that "clients always come first.... we must ensure that families and clients are comfortable, informed and satisfied with their loved ones' care." Jeannet also highlights the importance of hand

hygiene and how it can dramatically affect the client-nurse relationship. Jeannet continues in her role, and is a well-loved member of the St. Joseph's family in Vegreville. "I love my job and my clients, and that is what keeps me going," she notes. Congratulations Jeannet!

Show Your Colours CONTEST Winning Entries



Greatest distance from provincial office in Edmonton:
Zamizar Panganiban,
Finance team
(Grey Nuns)



Silliest photo: Submitted by Dave Sayko, Operating Room Service Attendant (Misericordia)

Most creative:
Killam Health Centre



Largest Team photograph:
Misericordia Community Hospital -
Hug the Hospital Team

The individual winners each received \$100 Earls Restaurant Gift Certificates from the Caritas Hospitals Foundation. The winning teams will be presented with special trophies to display at their facilities. Thank you to everyone who participated.



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Our Compass is a quarterly publication for Covenant Health employees, physicians and volunteers. It is also available by email to outside partners and friends by request.

We welcome your comments and suggestions:
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