



WORK & CARE

A Balancing Act

A Visual Narrative Portraying Carers in Canada





WORK & CARE

A Balancing Act

A Visual Narrative Portraying Carers in Canada

IT'S NOT IF,
IT'S WHEN
YOU WILL
BE A CARER



WORK & CARE
A Balancing Act

Carers Canada · Proches aidants au Canada

Copyright ©2015 Carers Canada

Printed in Canada. Versa Graphics Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	2
About Carers Canada	4
Carers Manifesto	5
Inspiration	6
Resources	28
Appreciation	50
Balancing	68
Relationships	90
Thank You	112
Next Steps	116

*A CARER (also referred to as caregiver or family caregiver) is a person who takes on an unpaid caring role for someone who needs help because of a physical or cognitive condition, an injury or a chronic life-limiting illness.

FOREWORD

Across the country, millions of Canadians—parents, children, friends and neighbours—unselfishly commit themselves to care for those in their lives who need help because of a physical or cognitive condition, an injury or a chronic life-limiting illness. For those of us who are carers now and for those of us who will be carers in the future, the costs of caregiving will impact our lives emotionally, economically, socially and physically. Most of us will experience being a carer to someone we love, helping them to maintain their dignity and independence in their own homes or as members of our households.

Carers Canada (formerly known as the Canadian Caregiver Coalition) recognizes that the number of and demands on carers in Canada will continue to grow as our population ages and our health system becomes more dependent upon unpaid care. With more than 6.1 million employed Canadians currently balancing their work and caring responsibilities, the costs of caregiving will be felt by the individual, their families and their employers. Carers compromise their health, incur out-of-pocket expenses and face employment challenges in the absence of appropriate support. For Canadian employers, the loss of productivity from missed work days, reduced work hours or employees who must leave the workforce opportunities is a serious concern.

Our challenge is to instill a sense of responsibility in the public for a social issue that is largely silent and not broadly recognized. Collective actions are needed to better support carers in Canada. It is through recognition of the shared issue, finding common ground for action and building a sense of responsibility and engagement that we can make significant change happen. Carers Canada believes that we must uncover caregivers' stories and bring to light their contributions to raise awareness and ignite real change. This is why we have initiated our multi-faceted campaign, **WORK & CARE: A BALANCING ACT**.

We reached out to ten Canadian organizations that provide home care—an integral part of our health care system that depends on the active involvement of carers—and their employees who are also providing unpaid care. We posed the following two questions to their senior leadership and frontline staff.

“As a home care provider, how and why is your organization valuing and supporting your employees who are carers?”

“As you provide home care during your working hours and unpaid care during your personal time, how do you balance these two responsibilities?”

This book is a reflection of our conversations: the unique challenges employee carers face, the innovative solutions that home care organizations have implemented and the value they have received when supporting their employees. We hope that by capturing these poignant stories of dedicated carers and innovative leaders, we will stimulate awareness, build a sense of identity and cultivate engagement among our country's leaders and the public.

On behalf of Carers Canada, I am proud to share this journey with you in the hope of inspiring the necessary changes for a compassionate and caring society, one that fully recognizes and respects the valuable role of the carers.

I invite you to listen, learn and lead the change.

Kindest regards,



Nadine Henningsen
President, Carers Canada
Executive Director, Canadian Home Care Association

ABOUT CARERS CANADA

Established in 2000, Carers Canada (formerly known as the Canadian Caregiver Coalition)—is a virtual alliance of diverse partner organizations that work collectively and autonomously to identify and respond to the needs of carers in Canada. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for carers through advocacy and synergistic partnerships. Together, we strive to achieve our vision of “a Canada that recognizes, respects and values the integral role of carers in society.”

Over the past 15 years, Carers Canada has built a solid track record of successes, including the development of numerous policy papers, hosting national and international forums, and targeted advocacy. Carers Canada links stakeholders across our country of nearly 10 million square kilometres with a population of 35 million. As a proud founding member of the International Alliance of Carer Organizations, Carers Canada brings the voice of Canada’s carers to international discussions. Together, we reinforce the vital role of caregivers locally, nationally and globally.

Carers Canada is governed by four Signatory Partner organizations that ensure the collective interests of the partners are respected, that obligations are fulfilled and that the operational structure is effective:

Canadian Home Care Association, is a national not-for-profit membership association that advances excellence in home care through leadership, awareness, advocacy and knowledge.

CBI Health Group is a leading provider of home health services in Canada with a dedicated approach to delivering premium quality interactions with every client and customer.

CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l’Île-de-Montréal, created in 2004, offers health and social services to the community, including rehabilitation services and long-term care. CIUSSS’s mission is to improve the health and well-being of the population of its territory.

Saint Elizabeth is a national health care provider known for its track record of social innovation, spreading cutting-edge knowledge and delivering high quality compassionate care.

CARERS MANIFESTO

Carers come from different backgrounds, different age demographics and different income levels; there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges they face. Despite this diversity, during consultations with carers and carer support groups across the country, Carers Canada identified a number of common needs that must be addressed to effectively support caregivers. These universal priorities were incorporated into a Carers Manifesto, launched in 2008 and updated in 2014.

The Manifesto provides a foundation to facilitate collaborative action and ensures the value Canadians place on unpaid caregiving is acknowledged in legislation, policy and practice. Carers Canada encourages discussion of and reflection on the following five priority areas identified as critical to caregivers:

1. Safeguard the health and well-being of carers.
2. Minimize the financial burden placed on carers.
3. Enable access to user-friendly information and education.
4. Create flexible workplace/educational environments that respect caregiving obligations.
5. Invest in research on caregiving as a foundation for evidence-informed decision making.

“It’s not IF, it’s WHEN you will be a carer.”

—Nadine Henningsen

INSPIRATION

WORK & CARE A Balancing Act

Caregivers give, give and give, until they cannot give anymore. On a daily basis, carers assume challenging and often exhausting roles to ensure the quality of life for their loved ones, all while trying to balance their external commitments as best they can. Their silent acts of selflessness and caring can go on for a few months or many years. They often put their own needs last. So here's the bigger question: How do caregivers find the strength to keep going?

These stories reinforce the motivation of carers and show the inspiring reasons individuals take on the role of caregiving while balancing their paid employment.

The profiled employers recognize that the source of their organization's productivity is the diverse talents and commitments of their employees who deliver outstanding services to their customers and who ultimately help the organizations achieve their corporate goals. Caring for their employees is just the right thing to do; it is their way to return the favour and pay it forward.



CHRIS SZYBBO

President/CEO
CBI HEALTH GROUP

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“Work is one of those dimensions, but there are other dimensions in their life that we need to acknowledge, be sensitive to and that we need to support.”

Chris Szybbo sees it like this: An employer can have employees who attend to personal commitments and still be successful at work. “They have multiple dimensions to their life,” he says. “Work is one of those dimensions, but there are other dimensions in their life that we need to acknowledge, be sensitive to and that we need to support.”

Chris says that accommodating employees to ensure they can tend to their personal life doesn't inhibit the organization; it's crucial to its success. “The creativity that comes from that employee is enhanced. Their desire to still achieve all the things they are supposed to achieve, I think that's heightened. Their relationships to their colleagues are enhanced,” he says. “What does that do? That attracts more like-minded people who see value in this organization and who want to be in this kind of environment.”



NANCY LEFEBRE

*Chief Clinical Executive Senior VP,
Knowledge and Practice*
SAINT ELIZABETH

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We just see this as the right thing to do. We are out there working with and supporting family caregivers every day, why wouldn’t we do the same for our own staff?”

A culture of caring is a top priority for Saint Elizabeth. “Our culture is all about spreading hope and happiness, and it’s been happening in the organization for more than 100 years,” says Nancy Lefebvre. At Saint Elizabeth, part-time and full-time employees are eligible for flex hours, emergency leave, extended leave of absence and employee assistance programs, as well as innovative support programs, such as Caregivers in the Workplace and Tyze Personal Networks. “We just see this as the right thing to do. We are out there working with and supporting family caregivers every day, why wouldn’t we do the same for our own staff?” says Nancy.

“With caregivers, they don’t usually put their hand up and say that they are stressed,” says Nancy. It’s important to check in with people and when they do put their hand up, “We respond the way we should. We respond the right way. Our first response is always asking what they need.” Nancy believes that it’s important to find out what people need. “Start small, start by having conversations with employees and helping caregiver colleagues connect with each other. Once people start talking about it, things will evolve.”



EVELYN

Personal Support Worker
BAYSHORE HEALTHCARE
Caring for her father, who
has multiple conditions

INSPIRATION

“I believe there is a time for everything.
This is my time to help my father.”

Evelyn stretches her time to care for her husband, six kids and sick father. “I have to visit my father in between my clients and do whatever I need to do for him. It is like you are working all the time—24-hour care. Your mind is always on his needs, my family needs and work needs,” she says.

Despite its challenges, Evelyn finds the strength to keep her going. “When you love someone, you appreciate them and you want to help them,” she says. “I believe there is a time for everything. This is my time to help my father.”



CONNIE

Clinical Specialist

BECTON DICKINSON

Cared for her mother,
who had breast cancer

INSPIRATION

“My mom stayed with me in her remaining days...
I was exhausted, but it was the only way.”

Through Connie’s past experience as an intensive care unit nurse, she saw people die in a hospital all the time. “That wasn’t the route I wanted for my mother. So my mom stayed with me in her remaining days,” she says.

At the time she had a two-year-old and a six-week-old baby. “I was exhausted, but it was the only way,” she says. “You do what you have to do. You don’t think about it. It was very peaceful and the right place to be.”



NEDHAL

Financial Controller
CBI HEALTH GROUP
Caring for an older sister, who has multiple health conditions

INSPIRATION

“She is the priority in everything.”

In 2009, Nedhal’s sister, who is completely disabled and dependant, moved in with her and her husband. “When my sister came to my house, I welcomed her. But it was the hardest time because there was no plan for me to have something like this,” says Nedhal. “The impact was really huge—emotionally and personally with work responsibilities.”

Now, Nedhal’s health is also affected. But to Nedhal, her sister’s well-being is a priority. “Looking at her, I think it is not her fault. I just keep on going even though I have health issues now,” she says. “She is the priority in everything. I feel like I have to be strong because otherwise I will collapse.”

Through these difficult times, the support Nedhal receives from her co-workers at CBI Health Group has made a difference. “When I hear good words from colleagues, it helps a lot. Just hearing ‘Let me know if you need any help’ helps a lot.”



KRISTEN

Client Services Supervisor

CLOSING THE GAP HEALTHCARE GROUP

Caring for her 11-year-old daughter, who has a broken thighbone

INSPIRATION

“I’m a happier person and can make everyone else around me happier and I can be more supportive if I feel good. If that means waking up at 5 a.m. because that’s the only time that I get to work out, that’s what I do.”

Kristen believes that she can only be her best if she also takes care of herself. So, that is what she does. “I’m a happier person and can make everyone else around me happier and I can be more supportive if I feel good. If that means waking up at 5 a.m. because that’s the only time that I get to work out, that’s what I do.”

Having to take on the role as a caregiver for her daughter has also shown Kristen how supportive and understanding her team at Closing the Gap is. “We are here to do a great job for the company. But we all have life outside of work and the fact that they can support, that is fantastic,” she says. “The entire team is constantly asking how she is doing and understands that there are lots of things going on in my life right now. Because of the role that I have, I am able to flex my time,” she says. “The opportunity to flex my time has been tremendous.”



FE

Personal Support Worker
PARAMED HOME HEALTH CARE
Cared for her brother, who had
a life-threatening illness

INSPIRATION

“And what was most important to me was that I was able to take care of him. I could allow him to die with dignity beside me and with that, it didn’t make me feel guilty.”

When Fe found out that her brother was sick, she left Canada right away to take care of him. She found pride in being able to provide personal care for her youngest brother. “I am a family person, so for me, I wanted him to know that even though we were miles away from each other, we could still see each other,” says Fe. “He liked the way I took care of him. I told him that the personal care I was giving him was the kind of care I’m giving to all my clients here in Canada.”

Fe’s brother said something that has stuck with her: “I feel like I’m in Canada because my nurse is my sister from Canada. She is doing a good job, she knows what she’s doing and she’s so organized.” That was uplifting for Fe. “Hearing those words from my dying brother, it moved me and made me feel very happy,” she says. “And what was most important to me was that I was able to take care of him. I could allow him to die with dignity beside me and with that, it didn’t make me feel guilty.”



JIAYING

Personal Support Worker

PARAMED HOME HEALTH CARE

Cares for her father, who has colon cancer, and her husband, who has chronic back and knee pain

INSPIRATION

“I feel that caring for family members is very hard. At work, you care for your clients for a few hours. But with family, it is different—24 hours.”

Jiaying says being a caregiver, at home and at work, has helped her understand people better. “Working with people, you learn about the emotions. Now I am starting to understand sick people more,” she says. “I give them more patience.”

The difference between caring for patients at work and family members is remarkable for Jiaying. “I feel that caring for family members is very hard. At work, you care for your clients for a few hours. But with family, it is different—24 hours,” says Jiaying. “It is a full-time job,” she says. “It is different with family because you are very close with them. It is very personal.”



DENNIS

Personal Support Worker

SAINT ELIZABETH

Caring for his mother,
who has lost mobility

INSPIRATION

“It makes me feel proud that I am taking care of somebody who’s in distress and doesn’t have the mobility to do things.”

It’s hard for Dennis to see his mom’s health degrade. “I work at a long-term care facility in Cobourg. I see the older generation, and some younger generations, coming in with dementia, in a wheelchair and who physically can’t do things,” he says. “I deal with that at work. I never thought I would have to deal with that at home,” he adds. “It sucks to see your parents go downhill real quick.”

Even though it’s tough, seeing the difference he makes in the lives of the people he cares for is what keeps him going. “It makes me feel proud that I am taking care of somebody who’s in distress and doesn’t have the mobility to do things. I know some people, like my mom, will have a happy face on. Some of my clients at work do too. I know I am doing what needs to be done to make their life as easy as it gets. One day at a time.”



MONICA

Personal Support Worker

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Caring for her son, who has mild intellectual disability

INSPIRATION

“It really blessed my life because I can look back and see that I have touched someone’s life—that it makes a difference in somebody’s life and I made someone happy.”

Monica is a dual carer, balancing her roles as a personal support worker and caring for her son with mild intellectual disability. She believes in putting herself in the situation and readily making sacrifices to dedicate herself to her children and her health. “I set my own time and make my days shorter. I am home in the morning, I am home in the evening and I am home at night. I don’t really go out very often to different functions. If I can’t take my kids to the function, I don’t go. I stay home. I find the rest I need and the energy to make sure I can do it all,” says Monica.

It is undeniable that Monica genuinely loves taking care of people. “It is part of me to make sure that everybody is happy. My son is always happy because I am there all the time. The same with my clients—I don’t leave my clients when they are not happy. If they are happy, I am happy,” she explains. “It [being a caregiver] really blessed my life because I can look back and see that I have touched someone’s life—that it makes a difference in somebody’s life and I made someone happy.”

RESOURCES

WORK & CARE A Balancing Act

You only have a limited amount of energy. We all do. Rewards aside, caring for someone day in and day out while balancing other responsibilities can be overwhelming physically, emotionally, socially and financially. Without adequate support, carers who must balance job responsibilities, personal commitments and unpaid caregiving duties will inevitably be stretched to the breaking point.

How can employers help their employee carers excel at their work and care for their loved ones, without damaging their own health and well-being?

Employee carers and corporate leaders shared specific and tangible needs, community supports they have found to be helpful and gaps in the current system. Employee carers candidly shared tactics and strategies they use to care for themselves, to rediscover their own strengths and to overcome the underlying sense of guilt when they put themselves first and ask for help. As responsible employers, our corporate leaders spoke about the programs and practices they have implemented to ensure their employees can lead healthy lives at work, at home and in their community.



JUTTA SCHAFLER ARGAO
Vice-President, People and Quality
MISSISSAUGA HALTON CCAC

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“When you are recruited into our organization, part of our orientation is to familiarize you with what it means to care for patients, and for yourself, and for others, and have ongoing conversations about that.”

Jutta Schafler Argao says Mississauga Halton CCAC provides support to its employees in three ways. First, the organization nurtures a culture of care. “When you are recruited into our organization, part of our orientation is to familiarize you with what it means to care for patients, and for yourself, and for others, and have ongoing conversations about that.”

Second, Mississauga Halton CCAC offers robust benefits, including a variety of leaves. “We recognize that people need time away from work to energize, to re-energize, to pursue their interests and then to come back to work with that energy.”

Third, the organization offers flexible work arrangements. “We know from feedback we receive from our staff members that they really appreciate that,” says Jutta. “They will say to us that they are even more productive when they get that flexibility.”

Mississauga Halton CCAC gets feedback from its employees through an engagement survey every two years and a temperature check every six months on the health of the work environment, the strength of the communication in the organization, how employees feel about their leaders and their degree of stress.



CAROL ANNETT
Chief Executive Officer
VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“As an employer, I also find that when you are willing to give as much as you possibly can, you will get back tenfold.”

VHA Home HealthCare believes in listening to its staff and being accessible. “As an employer, I also find that when you are willing to give as much as you possibly can, you will get back tenfold,” says Carol Annett, CEO of VHA. “I think that it starts by being open, listening and trying to do what you can. It is not good enough if the leadership is supportive. It has to be colleague to colleague, ensuring that everyone understands that we look after each other.”

VHA offers its employees flexible hours, an employee assistance program and SPARK—an online community where staff can post quality improvement ideas for work and life. Carol says VHA also emphasizes being open and accessible so staff feel comfortable to voice their issues. “My future plan is to keep asking because it keeps changing...to truly listen and hear the issues of our staff,” she says. “We are all working to ensure that we have the healthiest workplace, and that starts at home.”



ANDREA

Business Writer

BAYSHORE HEALTHCARE

Caring for her seven-year-old daughter, who has type I diabetes

RESOURCES

“You just have to make yourself a priority. There is that saying, if you are not taking care of yourself, you are no good to anybody; I am really trying to do that.”

Caring for her seven-year-old daughter, who has type I diabetes, has given Andrea a new perspective on life. “When you have a child who is dealing with a disease, you don’t really take your health for granted as much,” she says. “You just have to make yourself a priority. There is that saying, if you are not taking care of yourself, you are no good to anybody; I am really trying to do that.”

To Andrea, leaning on others is an important part of caregiving. “Not being afraid to ask people when you really need their support. Letting go of the guilt because you feel that you need to do everything,” she says. “I find that my family is incredible...My family has really been supportive and they have become part of the care team with my husband and me.”

Luckily, Bayshore also understands that she must always be “on call” in case her daughter needs anything. “I get a lot of phone calls notifying me what her blood sugar level is. Or asking how much insulin they need to give her. Or there is cupcake at school. Or she is complaining of this or that,” says Andrea. “There is a lot of interruption that needs to happen at work. Bayshore has been supportive of that. Sometimes I am torn between my work and my caregiving responsibility, but I don’t worry about that working here. It helps relieve the pressure for sure.”



LEE A

Personal Support Worker Manager

CBI HEALTH GROUP

Caring for her father, who has
Alzheimer's disease

RESOURCES

"I know when I have a stressful day, I just take a look back,
take a deep breath and prioritize my day or evening."

Lee a takes time to plan her responsibilities to ensure she doesn't burn out. "I know when I have a stressful day, I just take a look back, take a deep breath and prioritize my day or evening," she says. "I pretty much work around what I need to do at home. That is the great thing about my job."

Although Lee a does get tired, she sees caring for her father as part of her day, not as a burden. "It is amazing because you sit back and wonder how do you do it. But you do it. It is just automatic," she says. "You are able to juggle that many balls in the air and heaven forbid I drop one, but so far, it has been going well."

CBI Health Group is part of the reason why Lee a is able to balance her life so well. "I have such a wonderful work environment where I am able to be flexible with my hours."



BOBBI

Manager, Media and Public Relations

MISSISSAUGA HALTON CCAC

Caring for her son, who has
type I diabetes

RESOURCES

“I have a great team and a great boss and they just picked up the work and said ‘don’t worry’ and off I went, took care of everything and came back.”

Bobbi’s son was 21 years old when he was suddenly diagnosed with type I diabetes and sent to intensive care while studying in Israel. “I called my boss. I was crying. It was so dramatic,” says Bobbi. “I said, ‘Is it OK? I need to go to Israel.’ My boss said, ‘Yes, you take as long as you need. The most important thing is your son’s health.’” The next day Bobbi left for Israel and stayed there for few a weeks to help set her son up with a doctor and dietitian. “My organization was very very supportive. I really just left my work. I gave details of my projects I was working on. But I just left. I have a great team and a great boss and they just picked up the work and said ‘don’t worry’ and off I went, took care of everything and came back.”

To Bobbi, the most important thing is to ask questions. “It doesn’t matter what condition the person you care for has, find out as much as you can about the disease and how you can help the person. I asked lots of questions—what does he need to do? What changes does he need to make? What groups does he need to go to?” she says. “You know they say information is power. The more questions I asked, the more information I got and for me, having that information—at least I felt equipped to help and hopefully be the best support that I could be for him.”



JUSTIN

Lab Automation Specialist

BECTON DICKINSON

Cares for his wife with multiple sclerosis

RESOURCES

“That was the moment—the realization that, hey, you have to take care of yourself too because there are all these people that need you, but you also need you.”

Though Justin cares for others, taking care of himself is a priority. “If you aren’t healthy, it’s very hard for you to find the energy to care for someone else,” he says. He eats healthy and goes to the gym three to five times a week. “That time is something that I won’t give up,” he says. “That’s how I recharge.”

Realizing that he didn’t want to be in his 70s with health problems and not able to help his three children, grandkids or wife was what motivated him to manage his own health. “That was the moment—the realization that, hey, you have to take care of yourself too because there are all these people that need you but you, also need you,” he says.

And his supervisors at BD are completely supportive. “I know that my manager and the entire organization supports me as I juggle the many priorities of work and life, especially in times when balancing the two becomes difficult. I know I can go to them and they will have full support for me and ask me, ‘What else do you need and what do you need me to take care of?’”



SALWA

Personal Support Worker

PARAMED HOME HEALTH CARE

Cared for her mother with dementia

RESOURCES

“I have always wanted to look after my mom by myself. Financially, I couldn’t. I needed to work.”

Salwa has found caregiving to be just as much a challenge as it has been rewarding. “I have always wanted to look after my mom by myself. Financially, I couldn’t. I needed to work,” she says. “ParaMed has been very flexible and understanding. That’s worth a lot.”

Caring for her mom has even helped Salwa in her job. “You see different techniques that work for my mom and I thought, oh my God, that might work for somebody else. You do transfer your skills and knowledge,” she says. “Caregiving has given me lots of strengths—to be able to look at a situation and say ‘OK, I have been there’ and know that it will pass.”

But she still wishes there were more resources available, such as respite. “There was really not much,” she says. “Even if there was, you couldn’t make it because you have to look after your loved one. It would be nice to have more support for home care.”



JUSTINE

Researcher

SAINT ELIZABETH

Caring for her grandparents with a range of chronic health conditions

RESOURCES

“As an employee of Saint Elizabeth, I feel very fortunate to have access to services and resources that can contribute in a positive way to the health situation of my grandparents.”

Justine lives and works about an hour and a half away from her family, and time is one of her biggest stressors when it comes to caring for her grandparents. Luckily, Saint Elizabeth has resources that have helped bring Justine closer to her family. “As an employee of Saint Elizabeth, I feel very fortunate to have access to services and resources that can contribute in a positive way to the health situation of my grandparents,” she says.

When her nonna was undergoing surgery following a terminal cancer diagnosis, Justine’s family created an online Tyze Personal Network to “stay in constant communication about her care and progress, and provide emotional support and encouragement to each other in a virtual way,” she says.

“This really helped me feel involved, informed and connected to my family during a very difficult time. There were upwards of 30 of us participating in the network at one point in time, and I think it brought us closer as a family during this crisis situation,” says Justine.

She has also used Saint Elizabeth’s Elizz caregiver coaching service to supplement her own knowledge of health care services. “This saved me a lot of time and energy researching these things on my own,” she says. “Elizz makes me feel more confident in recommending a service to my family members.”



PATRICIA

Executive Assistant

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Cared for her mother, who had Alzheimer's disease

RESOURCES

“I’m so proud to be part of VHA Home HealthCare. I really pride myself on that. VHA was able to support me through my caregiving journey and they were so understanding.”

When Patricia’s siblings weren’t able to get flexible hours at work to care for their mom, Patricia could. “I’m so proud to be part of VHA Home HealthCare. I really pride myself on that. VHA was able to support me through my caregiving journey and they were so understanding,” she says. “I wouldn’t be able to do it at any other workplace.”

Patricia was able to adjust her hours, and that made all the difference. “I was given flex time—either coming in a little bit later, leaving earlier, taking extra time during lunch to meet with the CCAC coordinator or doctor that would come to the house or any other appointments,” she says. “I was very lucky to have that flexibility here.”

Because Patricia had flexibility in her work, she was able to take care of her mom until the end. “It was such a huge honour to be able to care for her and provide all the resources so that I was able to keep her at home until her last day,” she says. “It gave me peace of mind and such satisfaction that she was at home and I was part of the solution to make that happen.”



GURBAX

Personal Support Worker

SPECTRUM HEALTH CARE

Caring for her mother-in-law, whose legs are paralyzed

RESOURCES

“Because I’m trained in how to deal with that, I always listen and I always try to be patient and keep calm.”

Gurbax finds confidence in her training to be able to adequately care for her mother-in-law. “I have to move her from bed to chair all the time. If you don’t have the training, you don’t know how to use your body mechanics,” says Gurbax. “A sickness can make you a totally different person sometimes—attitude, behaviours. Because I’m trained in how to deal with that, I always listen and I always try to be patient and keep calm.”

If she’s feeling tired, it’s her genuine care for others that keeps her going. “It doesn’t matter that you feel tired, but when you see the client in the bed, you just forget everything. You just want to do everything to make them feel better. Even with my mother-in-law, if I come back home tired and she needs my help in the bathroom, I just don’t feel tired anymore. I take a deep breath and I help her. It is automatic. I know that’s what I need to do,” says Gurbax. “I feel I can keep going because when you make someone’s life happy, you feel good. You keep going. Even at work, I never ever book off my hours unless I really need that. Because I know they need us.”

APPRECIATION

WORK & CARE A Balancing Act

Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, spillover happens in all of our lives—from work to home and from home to work. Research consistently shows that an employer’s recognition of the employee’s family life is one of the most significant drivers of employee commitment. Seeking help and support along the way is not a luxury for carers; it is a necessity.

The anecdotes shared by our participants reinforce how creating a supportive workplace environment is a win–win situation for all. It counters the preconceived judgement that providing supports and benefits will result in people taking advantage of the system. In fact, employee carers enthusiastically shared their appreciation of their employers who provide supportive work environments to help them balance their multiple roles. It’s evident that the relationships and supports employees receive from work affect how they view the organization, and in turn cultivate motivation to excel rather than just doing the basics of what is expected. Corporate leaders shared how creating and sustaining a care organization results in high performing and engaged teams, and ultimately a clear competitive advantage.



STUART COTTRELLE
President
BAYSHORE HEALTHCARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“The cornerstone of homecare is continuity. By making sure we are that flexible employer, we are not only ensuring continuity of care for our clients, but we also see our employees do things that are well over and above—that is what makes me feel proud.”

Adopting supportive workplace practices was a no-brainer for Stuart Cottrelle, President of Bayshore HealthCare. “People are going to always bring a piece of home with them when they come to work. They take care of our clients at the most difficult time of their life—we need them there for that. But, we also need to make sure that they are supported,” he says.

To Stuart, it starts with culture and value of the workplace, as well as leading by example. “It is not just leadership from me, it’s leadership everywhere.” As a reward, a culture of caring permeates throughout his organization—it is a win-win situation. “The cornerstone of homecare is continuity. By making sure we are that flexible employer, we are not only ensuring continuity of care for our clients, but we also see our employees do things that are well over and above—that is what makes me feel proud.”

expectations:
at a time.

s individuals to
ionate people,



RIK LUNENBURG
Vice President
PARAMED HOME HEALTH CARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“You want to be there for your employees. They show up for work every single day. You want to give something back. Thank you for being here for me. It is my turn to be there for you.”

Rik Lunenburg recognizes that every staff member has individual needs and it’s a matter of finding out what works best for each employee. “If you don’t engage in the dialogue, you really lose out on the opportunity to develop a solution that works beneficially for both employers and employees,” he says. “It’s an investment in them and you get that back in droves,” says Rik. “You are more prone to see things like your retention go up. People become more loyal, people become more engaged.”

ParaMed conducts employee engagement surveys to make sure it’s operating according to its values. “One of the questions is around ‘does someone at work care for you? Does someone at work support you?’ That’s one of the ways in which we can actually put our finger on the pulse of, ‘Are we connecting with our staff to make sure that if they need help, they know to reach out for help?’”

Rik believes that supporting his employees says a lot about the organization’s culture and values. “You want to be there for your employees. They show up for work every single day. You want to give something back. Thank you for being here for me. It is my turn to be there for you.”



ROSALIE

Pay & Bill Manager

BAYSHORE HEALTHCARE

Caring for her mother, who has post-surgical dementia

APPRECIATION

“When I started at Bayshore, it was such an eye opener that all the resources were there and I had no idea what they were.”

Rosalie’s life changed dramatically a year and a half ago—her mother fell, broke her hip and went from being relatively independent to being not independent at all. “Today, we find our life has to be scheduled and organized to manage supervision of her,” she says.

Luckily, Bayshore has stood by her side. “When I started at Bayshore, it was such an eye opener that all the resources were there and I had no idea what they were.”

Bayshore has helped take care of Rosalie’s mom. The company has also allowed Rosalie to work from home and have flexible hours. “Bayshore was really amazing in terms of giving me time off,” she says.

Having a network at work has also been a huge help. “I am very fortunate that I have colleagues and peers that we can have open dialogue with and share stories and reach out for help,” she says. “Knowing that I had the flexibility with work, support of my husband, my extended family, neighbours on the street—that’s what made it OK to go on.”



JULIE

Strategic Account Manager

BECTON DICKINSON

Cared for her mother, who had pancreatic cancer

APPRECIATION

“It was amazing that I could focus on my mom and not be pulled in 15,000 directions.”

Two years ago, Julie’s mother was suddenly diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Julie immediately needed to alter her life to take care of her dying mother. BD was supportive all the way.

“It was amazing that I could focus on my mom and not be pulled in 15,000 directions,” says Julie. “I was able to be with her, very present, engaged and available to talk to her doctor and make sure I was aware of the care that needed to happen.”

Julie was surprised at her supervisor’s and team’s attitude toward her situation. “It was really ‘We are here for you. Do what you have to do. Family first.’” In fact, BD even gave Julie an award for best regional manager that year. “They applauded that I managed to do things and [be] a good daughter to my mother and be a good team member to my peers and my employees,” she says. “It is not just a tagline on a brochure with us. We mean what we say.”



MARCIA

Performance Management Consultant, Planning and Project Management
MISSISSAUGA HALTON CCAC
Caring for her mother, who has Alzheimer's disease

APPRECIATION

“If he sees me appearing to be not at my best, the first thing he would inquire is if my mom was OK. He would notice. He would say, ‘If you don’t want to talk about it, it’s OK. But I’m here if you need support.’”

On the days when Marcia’s mother was not at the Day Program, she used to have to go home several times over the course of the day, between her chores and errands, to make sure that her mom was okay. “When I turned onto my street, I would be relieved when there wasn’t an emergency vehicle parked in the driveway,” she says. “My mom is no longer living with me. I had to make a very difficult decision to move her into a home for her safety. But caregiving never stopped. My role changed. The concerns changed.”

Being supported by Mississauga Halton CCAC only made Marcia more committed to the organization. “My immediate manager knows what is going on with my mom. If he sees me appearing to be not at my best, the first thing he would inquire is if my mom is OK. He would notice. He would say, ‘If you don’t want to talk about it, it’s OK. But I’m here if you need support,’” she says. “It increases my level of engagement.”



LE QUISHA

Call Centre Associate

CLOSING THE GAP HEALTHCARE GROUP

Caring for her mother, who has multiple health conditions

APPRECIATION

“To work somewhere where they can understand that you have to be away from work to take care of someone else and not necessarily yourself, it is a really good feeling.”

Le Quisha is grateful to have a supportive manager at Closing the Gap and a supportive family while she cares for her mom, who has multiple health conditions. “To work somewhere where they can understand that you have to be away from work to take care of someone else and not necessarily yourself, it is a really good feeling,” she says. “It does pull me more into a family environment at work when you can depend on other people and other people can understand how you feel, how your family feels and are willing to be considerate to your situation.”

Le Quisha admits that being a caregiver can make your life difficult at times. But, it has also brought a sense of empowerment in being able to help someone who you love. “I have a strong bond with my family. I think of this as—you know it’s my mom. I only get one. I do as much as I can for her because I know she has done that for me over the years—being a kid, growing up and all that. It is very difficult at times but you just try to push through it,” she says. “I wouldn’t think twice to help her.”



NAHID

Corporate Billing & Payroll Manager

SPECTRUM HEALTH CARE

Caring for her mother and father with multiple health conditions

APPRECIATION

“My parents did not stop parenting me when times got hard, so I know that I will not stop caring for them, no matter how hard being a caregiver may be.”

Nahid has been with Spectrum Health Care for 16 years and she’s just as committed to the organization as it is to accommodating her. “I always meet my deadlines. In fact, I even try to meet them earlier if I can. The leadership team knows that the work gets done.” By the same token, Spectrum Health Care provides her with the flexibility she needs. “They have looked at many ways to make it easier for me to do my job while caring for my parents with remote working capabilities. So, I am very fortunate in that aspect.”

As the sole carer of her parents, she takes on all the responsibilities. “It is often a struggle trying to balance the personal care for both of them while at the same time addressing my day-to-day obligations. It is a challenge,” she says.

But for Nahid, caring for her parents make sense. “My parents did not stop parenting me when times got hard, so I know that I will not stop caring for them, no matter how hard being a caregiver may be.”



SANDRA

Nursing Supervisor
VHA HOME HEALTHCARE
Caring for her mother, who has multiple health conditions

APPRECIATION

“Even my staff would send me emails and say, ‘Hope everything is going OK with you. Thinking of you.’ That was wonderful. The support from VHA was great. I really felt it. I felt that support.”

Sandra knew she could rely on her co-workers when she was helping her mom, who has multiple health conditions, find proper care. “I have this pride about working hard and I thought I would drop the ball, and in fact I did. And so my colleagues were there to pick it up for me,” says Sandra. “That was so satisfying because work is important to me.”

Sandra says her co-workers genuinely cared and listened to her, which was more helpful than getting advice. “Even my staff would send me emails and say, ‘Hope everything is going okay with you. Thinking of you.’ That was wonderful. The support from VHA was great. I really felt it. I felt that support,” she says. “It’s not like, ‘How are you? How is it going? By the way, I need this report.’ It was felt support.”

Sandra says she feels close with her team and comfortable talking to them. “I think that helps because I was honest with people. Sometimes we feel that we have to separate work from our personal life. But everyone is going to see. Everyone is going to observe that something is happening.”

BALANCING

WORK & CARE A Balancing Act

Everyone has numerous roles to balance in life—all of which are interdependent and contribute to one’s whole being. In addition to being staff members, employees are also mothers, fathers, daughters, patients, caregivers, friends, community leaders, and more. Our changing demographics and socio-economic conditions are presenting new challenges to work-life balance. Millions of Canadians are balancing working and caring.

During our conversations, we posed two specific questions to employee carers: “What are some of the challenges you have faced?” and “How has your caregiving experience impacted your personal and work life?” The stories we heard reflect the tangible and intangible impacts of caregiving on their financial, emotional and personal well-being. These consequences have economic costs for carers, their families and their employers.



ANNA HRAPKOVA

Director of Human Resources
BECTON DICKINSON

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We always encourage leaders to have good conversations with their team and to support them to put their family and the health of their family first.”

For Becton Dickinson, one of the keys to supporting its employees is understanding what balance means to them. “Part of being a healthy adult is to have balance in your life and feel like you are doing a good job as an employee, spouse, parent, daughter or son,” says Anna Hrapkova, Director of Human Resources at BD.

One of the initiatives the organization is proud of is the Women’s Initiative Network, which helps women balance career and family. “We always encourage leaders to have good conversations with their team and to support them in putting their family and the health of their family first.”

At BD, support goes beyond policies and programs. “Through communication, we have created a culture where our values of treating each other with respect and doing what is right are guiding all our actions,” says Anna. “People know that we live our values and we take them very seriously.”



CONNIE CLERICI
President/CEO
CLOSING THE GAP
HEALTHCARE GROUP

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“The entire work world is stressed today. The entire health care field is stressed because of so many changes. We have to do our best to try to take care of each other. Supporting our staff is the socially responsible change we want to see as a new standard for all employers in Canada.”

Connie Clerici works with her staff to make Closing the Gap as supportive as possible because she understands that between family, jobs and caregiving, her employees are juggling many important responsibilities. “The entire work world is stressed today. The entire health care field is stressed because of so many changes. We have to do our best to try to take care of each other. Supporting our staff is the socially responsible change we want to see as a new standard for all employers in Canada,” says Connie.

FClosing the Gap provides benefit programs that include all the services the organization offers including full coverage of nursing, personal support workers and occupational therapists. “We created a benefit program for our employees that is in the 97th percentile of benefit programs,” she says. In addition, staff are also given flex time, access to catastrophic drugs and life insurance. To Connie, the cost of supporting carers is certainly well worth the value.



LORI LORD
Chief Executive Officer
SPECTRUM HEALTH CARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We implemented these practices to provide the flexibility needed by employees to be efficient family caregivers and still excel at their jobs.”

Spectrum Health Care embodies care, trust, responsiveness and safety. “It is our goal to ensure that all employees who are family caregivers feel supported by Spectrum Health Care and feel assured that the actions of their supervisors, managers and colleagues will reflect our four values,” says Lori.

Spectrum Health Care offers flexible schedules, support services through its employee assistance program and job protection for employees. All of the organization’s support is based on compassion and understanding. “Being a health care provider, we see firsthand the strain caregiving can have on family caregivers,” says Lori. “We implemented these practices to provide the flexibility needed by employees to be efficient family caregivers and still excel at their jobs.”



JANETTE

Executive Assistant to BD President

BECTON DICKINSON

Caring for her husband, who has an undiagnosed condition

BALANCING

“It impacts me because we don’t go out, we don’t socialize as much. It impacts him because he is not doing the things he used to before.”

Since finding out her husband is sick with an undiagnosed condition, Janette is not only caring for him, but also selling their house, moving to England and managing work. “It has been difficult to balance,” Janette says. “It impacts every element of your life. It impacts me because we don’t go out, we don’t socialize as much. It impacts him because he is not doing the things he used to before.”

Janette’s husband had to stop working and she had to quit her current position at BD. “I will become the breadwinner,” she says. Luckily, she doesn’t have to worry about work because BD is looking for a position for her in England. “I feel very very blessed,” she says. BD’s mantra is to take care of each other. “It’s not in their interest to get me a job. The fact that they do that is because they are really good people. It is in the bones of the company. This is what makes BD an amazing place to work.”

Janette also has access to flexible hours, wellness days, vacation and the option to work remotely. “BD is an amazing company,” she says. “I always feel that there is accommodation for you, whatever the reason.”



CHRISTINE

Vice President, Operations Home Health Ontario

CBI HEALTH GROUP

Cared for her parents with multiple health conditions

BALANCING

“I had the honour of holding their hands at the moment they both passed away.”

When Christine was caring for her parents who had complex health needs and who lived with her, she had to balance up to 70 hours a week in a new leadership position at work with the needs of her parents and her three children. “You get up and think, what is going to happen today? This is going on...I have to go to that meeting, I have to be back for this appointment. Then our kids—they were athletes so we had to get them to the games. It was always planning planning planning,” she says “It was constant juggling.”

Because of the type of role that Christine had, she was able to work remotely. “I had the flexibility in my work and the support from my company to be able to accommodate that kind of responsiveness to what [my parents] needed. But it was still a lot of priorities to juggle—huge!” Christine explained. “The interesting thing is that for caregivers, it is hard to accept certain kinds of help. I was fortunate in the sense that I knew the system in a way that others may not because of my health care background. But it was still challenging and I only took what I really really needed.”

It was clear to Christine that being able to work as well as physically being with her parents was important. “I had the honour of holding their hands at the moment they both passed away. My thing was there was no way either of them was going to be alone.”



JUDY

Call Centre Associate

CLOSING THE GAP

HEALTHCARE GROUP

Caring for her son, who has developmental delays

BALANCING

“Although it is very frustrating, you just find the strength knowing that you have to be responsible for a little one. It just comes to you. You just get the strength to take care of him.”

As a single mom with a full-time job who takes care of her four-year-old son with developmental delays, Judy has a lot to tackle. “It has been stressful working and also taking care of him. But I found a balance,” she says. “I am actually lucky with the flexibility I receive for work and an understanding supervisor who has made work a little bit more flexible to do, knowing that I have my son to take care of.”

Judy is sometimes able to work from home or leave early and make up her hours. “It has made things a little bit easier with this job because I can take some time off to attend appointments for my son.”

With so many responsibilities, Judy finds it challenging to take time for herself. “That is the hardest part. I don’t get that much time for myself,” she says. “Although it is very frustrating, you just find the strength knowing that you have to be responsible for a little one. It just comes to you. You just get the strength to take care of him.”



PARESH

Leader, Mobility Platforms

SAINT ELIZABETH

Caring for his father, who has Alzheimer's disease

BALANCING

“My wife and I, being in the sandwich generation looking after our parents, we also have to make sure we look after our children, and somewhere in the middle we also have to make sure we look after our financial security.”

According to Paresh, the balancing act comes with reducing social interaction, including family vacations, outings and holidays. Even though Paresh and his wife are caught in between the often conflicting demands of caring for children and caring for their aging parents, Paresh wants to make sure that they also take the time to plan for themselves. “My wife and I, being in the sandwich generation looking after our parents, we also have to make sure we look after our children, and somewhere in the middle we also have to make sure we look after our financial security.”

As a communication leader, it is no surprise that Paresh sees the value in having clear communication with all involved. “In my mind, communication is key and it really starts at home with your family, your support, and extended family and everybody else. Next, and an equally important step, is to talk to your supervisor at work. Let them know of activities that are happening at home which may at any given point in time force you to make a choice.”

Fortunately, Saint Elizabeth is also understanding of Paresh's situation. “Having an organization that supports you with that really removes the stress level,” he says. “It is a huge plus point to have that flexibility and have your manager and supervisor be that much more understanding.”



MERRY

Personal Support Worker

SPECTRUM HEALTH CARE

Caring for her aunt, who has Alzheimer's disease

BALANCING

“I have my husband and my two daughters. First of all, we have a schedule. Everybody takes turns doing certain tasks at certain times. It balances everybody in the home.”

Merry's family makes an effort to relieve her of caregiving duties for her aunt who has Alzheimer's disease. “I have my husband and my two daughters. First of all, we have a schedule. Everybody takes turns doing certain tasks at certain times. It balances everybody in the home,” she says. Merry's family insists she takes time for herself, so every two weeks she has five hours to herself where she can get a manicure or go to the mall. “That is very helpful because you actually get a break from the whole situation. You need that,” she says.

Spectrum Health Care has helped a lot too. The organization works around Merry's schedule when she has to take her aunt to appointments. “Spectrum has been really supportive. The pressure is never there,” says Merry about working a certain schedule. Her aunt also receives care from a co-worker at Spectrum Health Care. “We were able to work together and find a way to get her up and down the stairs,” she says. “Because I had a co-worker with the same mind or thinking or training, they were able to work with me and my family to get over that bump.”



KAREEN

Manager, Client Services
SPECTRUM HEALTH CARE
Caring for her mother,
who has kidney failure

BALANCING

“I have had no problems doing what I have to do for my mother because the flexibility allows me to be a daughter first, and a caregiver first and still be able to put out the production and the service that I need to do here.”

When Kareen first started taking care of her mom, she was a single mother. “It’s something that you don’t plan for her. So it was a bit interruptive when she first came to live with me because now it is here. I never really had the opportunity to plan how I was going to have her needs fit into my routine. I quickly had to adapt and evolve.”

Luckily, Spectrum Health Care was willing to adapt with Kareen. “I commend the organization for the way that they operate and still allow a person to be a part of their organization and still care for someone at home,” she says. “I have had no problems doing what I have to do for my mother because the flexibility allows me to be a daughter first and a caregiver first, and still be able to put out the production and the service that I need to do here.”

Kareen understands the importance of caring for herself. “For almost nine years now, I have one day a week where I play volleyball,” she says. “Because mentally, I have decided that I need that break and I take it.”



SUSAN

Risk Management Associate

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Caring for her mother, who has a heart condition

BALANCING

“It is like I am pacing myself for a marathon. I don’t have any end point in sight here. I feel like I can’t burn myself out right away. I have to regenerate every day and just keep trying.”

Susan shares the challenges she is going through as she tries to balance her life and care for her mother. “I am always cancelling plans. I may just say to myself that I am going to have a nice quiet weekend because I want to rest. Suddenly, there is something wrong with my mother,” she says. “I just feel that I have to stop doing anything I was planning on doing and run to help her. In some way, that’s a challenge. An even bigger challenge for me is not to worry constantly when I am not there.”

Susan tries to find enjoyment in the little things in life to keep her going. “I try to exercise every day to stay strong. I eat well, I try to get a good sleep, I try to connect with my friends quite regularly,” she says. “It is like I am pacing myself for a marathon. I don’t have any end point in sight here. I feel like I can’t burn myself out right away. I have to regenerate every day and just keep trying.”

RELATIONSHIPS

WORK & CARE A Balancing Act

Human beings are innately social and are shaped by their interactions with others. In part, this is due to our inescapable desire to belong, to be engaged and to feel connected to those around us. This is true in our personal and professional life.

What does it mean then to put the “human” element back into human resources management? It’s about recognizing all aspects of an employee and addressing the nuances that exist in the various parts of a person’s non-work life. It means supporting a work–life balance that benefits the organization and its individual employees.

Corporate leaders shared employee engagement strategies and the importance of building strong relationships with their employees as a key component of doing business in a socially responsible way. Employees feel more satisfied, more productive and more fulfilled when they know that their employer recognizes and cares about them as a whole person—not just as a worker. Caregivers also shared the poignant and passionate bonds they have with their care recipients, and their strength and commitment that transcends normal expectations.



MIKE SALTER
HR Manager
GE HEALTHCARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We go out of our way to support someone who is struggling. We get tremendous loyalty in return. They want to stay with us and this helps build that commitment.”

The bottom line for GE Healthcare is that the organization cares for people. “Behind all we do there is a patient, person or even family member. Our business is to support hospital caregivers; our obligation is to treat our employees equally as well,” says Mike. “We go out of our way to support someone who is struggling. We get tremendous loyalty in return. They want to stay with us and this helps build that commitment.”

GE Healthcare offers its employees flexible hours, the opportunity to work from home, leaves of absence, an employee assistance program and daycare centre for their kids. “We found that by allowing people to work at home in these circumstances, we often get more work done and more productivity because they are in a comfortable spot. They can focus,” says Mike.

Most important is to have an open dialogue and find out what each employee wants and needs, according to Mike. “Sometimes you think that what they need is to stay at home, but often times in these situations they actually want to come to work and be able to get away from the constant caregiving,” he says. “You really have to understand what works for the individual.”



ANTHONY MILONAS
Chief Operating Officer
CBI HEALTH GROUP

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We offer programs on coaching to develop the softer skills and on having a supportive conversation rather than directive conversations.”

CBI supports its employees both formally and informally. “What we are trying to do is first create a culture of openness where you can have a discussion with anyone in the organization regardless of their level or title,” says Anthony Milonas about informal support.

Formally, CBI holds quarterly meetings with employees “to make sure that people understand the benefits that are out there,” he says. “We let them know that the formal policy does exist and to take the time off that you need to support a loved one at home.”

Managers can tend to start with an autocratic approach, but CBI philosophy is about breaking down the barriers between managers and employees. “You need to show your employees how much you care. We must reinforce and show them that we appreciate them with every interaction. If we don’t show them love, they won’t show our clients love.”

Twice a year, CBI also trains its senior leaders around coaching and development, and ensuring that their approach is clear. “We offer programs on coaching to develop the softer skills and on having a supportive conversation rather than directive conversations,” he says. “We give people flexibility to create an environment of success by giving them the ability to create their own goals with support and guidance.”



KELLEY MYERS
*VP, Human Resources &
Organizational Development*
VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



“We train our supervisors to be focused on what matters most to staff to create a space for conversation. We provide them with simple tools to have the dialogue with their staff about the challenge, and how to jointly arrive at solutions.”

Kelley’ goal as a Vice President of Human Resources and Organizational Development at VHA is to improve the quality of connection, trust and relationships between staff and their supervisors. “We train our supervisors to be focused on what matters most to staff to create a space for conversation. We provide them with simple tools to have the dialogue with their staff about the challenge, and how to jointly arrive at solutions,” says Kelley. “We are creating a supportive and nurturing environment. Through that, we are finding out a lot more about what is going on in people’s lives that is having an impact on their work.”

VHA also has its Heart of Home Care Award as a way to publically acknowledge and recognize caregivers and their incredible contributions. Annually, VHA holds a ceremony to honour colleagues, clients and family members who have passed away. “Through these programs, people know that we are supportive and they can come to us to share what is going on in their lives.”



JANET

Director, Community Partnerships

BAYSHORE HEALTHCARE

Caring for her father who has cancer and her mother with dementia

RELATIONSHIPS

“You are not alone. Others have been through this. Others are going through this and are there to help you.”

Janet says that she doesn't usually open up about her challenges. But, it has become very obvious to her work colleagues that she is dealing with health crisis within her family. “It has been very clear, in the middle of me facilitating a meeting where I had five emergency phone calls saying ‘EMS has arrived’ and dealing with the nurses. I have been stepping out constantly,” says Janet.

“Here at Bayshore, they always say, ‘Family first. Don't worry, step out,’” she says. Through the challenges, Janet finds comfort in going to work and being around her co-worker who is not only supportive, but who has also been there. “I will be honest, it is important for me to continue working and to work in a place that is understanding and supportive,” she says. “It has been insightful and helpful to build a real team environment and really positive workplace to feel that you are not alone. Others have been through this. Others are going through this and are there to help you.”



SHELLY

Personal Support Worker

CBI HEALTH GROUP

Caring for her father,
who has dementia

RELATIONSHIPS

“I tell him ‘Dad, it has to be done. You took care of me all your life didn’t you?’ He had this puzzled face and he laughed and said, ‘I guess so.’ And I tell him, ‘now it’s our turn.’”

Shelly has been caring for her father full-time for about two and a half years. When her father fell last October, she had to change her work status from full time to part time, allowing her to choose the hours that she wants to work in a day. “I did find it hard to balance the two when I was working full-time. But now that I elect my hours to work, it is much better,” she says. “The company I work for is fantastic. They know my father’s situation.”

Shelly and her sister do everything they can to support their father. “We don’t believe in putting people in a [nursing] home in our family. We leave them at home as long as possible,” she says.

Sometimes Shelly’s father tells her not to work so hard. “I tell him ‘Dad, it has to be done. You took care of me all your life didn’t you?’ He had this puzzled face and he laughed and said, ‘I guess so.’ And I tell him, ‘now it’s our turn.’”



SARAH

Call Centre Associate

CLOSING THE GAP HEALTHCARE GROUP

Caring for her mother, who has cancer

RELATIONSHIPS

“My number one goal is to make her happy. If that’s what makes her happy, then I am happy.”

Sarah’s father passed away five years ago and since then, she has been taking care of her mother, who has cancer. “Everybody asks me, ‘how do you do it?’ I always tell them, at the end of the day she is my mother, and I owe her the world,” she says. “I want to be there for her like she has been there for me. That’s what keeps me going.”

Even though Sarah admits working full-time, living with her mom and bringing her to appointments can be difficult to balance, she only thinks about the positive aspects of caregiving. “My number one goal is to make her happy. If that’s what makes her happy, then I am happy,” she says.

Sarah says it’s helpful that her manager at Closing the Gap understands how much Sarah’s mom depends on her. “The fact that they are so flexible with me makes me want to be flexible with them,” she says. “I can’t lose my job, but I also can’t neglect my mother.”

Closing the Gap has a health and wellness week where every day the employees have access to yoga, a naturopathic doctor, healthy snacks and health tips. “You can tell they definitely care about our overall well-being,” she says. “Just last week, we all participated in a pedometer competition. They are constantly promoting healthy living.”



MELISSA

Call Centre Associate

CLOSING THE GAP HEALTHCARE GROUP

Caring for mother, who has cancer

RELATIONSHIPS

“Even though it is stressful and it can be hectic, having the support at work and having someone to talk to is really important.”

Melissa has strong relationships with her kids, best friend and manager who she can count on for support while she cares for her mom, who has cancer. “Even though it is stressful and it can be hectic, having the support at work and having someone to talk to is really important,” says Melissa. “That lifts a lot of the burden because I feel like I am not in it by myself.”

Melissa has three kids and her mom lives with them, which she admits can be tiring. “Having someone to talk to and having someone to listen just really makes it easier,” she says. “This whole thing brings to light that caregivers need the help and the attention and the time for themselves. If I am not OK, I can’t help anybody.”

Holmes feels comfortable talking to her manager and through this, they have built a professional relationship based on support and understanding. “She is very open and willing to help me with any issues that I have,” she says. “It’s like a weight off my shoulders.”



PATRICIA

Nurse

SAINT ELIZABETH

Caring for her mother,
who has multiple sclerosis

RELATIONSHIPS

“My motivation has always been my mom and my kids.”

Patricia, a mother of three, wants her kids to know that it’s possible to invest in her family. She’s been leading by example by balancing her work and taking care of her kids and her mom, who has had multiple sclerosis for 28 years. “About 11 years ago, I started caring for her. She was 44 at the time. It was a choice of either she had to go to a long-term care home or I would have to provide that care for her,” she says.

Eleven years ago, Patricia was not a nurse. She was a bill collector. “I wanted to give her the best quality of care. So, I went to school to become a personal support worker, then I did my RPN and now I am a RN.”

“My motivation has always been my mom and my kids. All of this has been an investment in my family,” says Patricia. “In the end, I know I have done everything possible to make sure that my mom gets the best quality of care and quality of life. That she gets to stay at her home and doesn’t have to go to a long-term care facility.”



MARY

Occupational Therapist

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Caring for her mother, who has multiple chronic conditions

RELATIONSHIPS

“It helps you keep going in the sense that you feel okay to work. You want to get up and go to work and do things because you feel supported.”

Every day is different for Mary. This is why flexibility is very important for her to help her respond to the unpredictable nature of caregiving, and make sure that she can care for her mom while meeting her work deadlines. “I really like the fact that I can control my schedule. That way as long as I meet the deadline and I do things within the time frame, there is still a lot of leeway. It may mean that I stay up late at night to get things done, but at least I can do that,” she says.

Mary admits that her supportive co-workers have also helped to lighten her caring responsibilities. “I’ve had colleagues say, ‘If you need some time off, we can cover for you.’ That’s really supportive and really important,” says Mary, adding that her manager always asks how her mom is doing. “It helps you keep going in the sense that you feel okay to work. You want to get up and go to work and do things because you feel supported.”

Mary’s family and friends have also stayed by her side. “Having a really supportive aunt and a really great husband who is always there to say, ‘What do you want me to do?’ That helps so much,” she says. “I feel like there are so many roles that I need to maintain—daughter, wife, friend and niece. Knowing that they are there to say, ‘Can we help in some way,’ helps.”

Mary feels that caring for her mom and asking others for help makes all her relationships closer. “It feels good,” she says. “It does bring us closer together—like we are working toward the same goal.”



SANDRA

Researcher

SAINT ELIZABETH

Cares for her mother, who has Lewy Body Dementia

RELATIONSHIPS

“My sisters and I are our mother’s advocates. We like people to see our mother as the person she used to be before her dementia—kind, intelligent and generous.”

About eight years ago, Sandra’s mother was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia, which means that now she has severe dementia along with physical decline. Sandra tried to combine her family’s care with her mother’s care, shopping for her at the same time, bringing her young ones to her doctor’s appointments, having her mother come to the kids’ school for events when her mom was first diagnosed. “Saint Elizabeth has been very supportive and I am lucky to be able to work flexible hours,” she says.

But even with flexible hours and family supports, managing a job and caregiving is a lot of work. “We would not have moved my mom into a nursing home if we could have afforded for her to have the care she needed,” says Sandra.

“My role has changed as a caregiver as my mother has moved to a long-term care facility,” she says. Sandra no longer has to provide the same kind of assistance with personal care and everyday tasks, but is there now to spend time with her mom, to make sure they are meeting her needs, and to emotionally support her as well as she can. “My sisters and I are our mother’s advocates. We like people to see our mother as the person she used to be before her dementia—kind, intelligent and generous,” says Sandra. “My sisters and I try to spell each other off so that we don’t spread ourselves too thin in caring for my mother.”

THANK YOU

Sharing your story sounds simple. But it is not. It can be difficult to share intimate moments of your life, especially with others whom you have not met. But, stories can be a powerful tool for healing. They are also be a method of communication and inspiring change.

We would like to begin by thanking all the caregivers who have generously shared their story—of struggle and of triumph. Their words shone a light on the realities they face as they balance personal life, caring duties and work responsibilities. By recounting their journey, these carers also help others see that they are not alone and to find strength and encouragement. These carers have taken time out of their busy schedule to make sure that the voices of caregivers are heard in the hope of bringing positive changes to the life of millions of carers in Canada.

Thank you to the home care organizations who have successfully fostered a carer-friendly workplace culture. We appreciate your collaboration and participation to bring awareness of the vital role of carers in our society. Thank you for bringing your employee carers together and for your coordination to ensure that our sessions ran as smoothly as possible. This book pays tribute to your acts of integrity and dedication to doing business in a socially responsible way. Your involvement is an example of how providing supportive work environments for your employees can make a big difference to the well-being of your workers, and also to your organization.

Lastly, thank you to our photographer, Abraham Latchin, for travelling with us and capturing the images of our participants. We appreciate your ability to make others feel comfortable in front of the camera, and most importantly, for capturing the personality and essence of each individual through your pictures.

Once again, thank you to all our participants for making our mission in bringing awareness of carers possible.

OUR FAMILY CARERS:

ANDREA, *caring for her daughter and a Business Writer at Bayshore HealthCare*
BOBBI, *caring for her son and a Manager, Media and Public Relations at CCAC Mississauga Halton*
CHRISTINE, *caring for both of her parents and a Vice President, Operations Home Health Ontario at CBI Health Group*
CONNIE, *caring for her mother and a Clinical Specialist at Becton Dickinson*
DENNIS, *caring for his mother and a Personal Support Worker at Saint Elizabeth*
EVELYN, *caring for her father and a Personal Support Worker at Bayshore HealthCare*
FE, *caring for her brother and a Personal Support Worker at Paramed Home Health Care*
GURBAX, *caring for her mother-in-law and a Personal Support Worker at Spectrum Health Care*
JANET, *caring for both of her parents and a Director, Community Partnerships at Bayshore HealthCare*
JANETTE, *caring for her husband and an Executive Assistant at Becton Dickinson*
JIAYING, *caring for her father and husband and a Personal Support Worker at Paramed Home Health Care*
JUDY, *caring for her son and a Call Centre Associate at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*
JULIE, *caring for her mother and a Strategic Account Manager at Becton Dickinson*
JUSTIN, *caring for his wife and a Lab Automation Specialist at Becton Dickinson*
JUSTINE, *caring for her grandparents and a Researcher at Saint Elizabeth*
KAREEN, *caring for her mother and a Manager, Client Services Peel Branch at Spectrum Health Care*
KRISTEEN, *caring for her daughter and a Client Service Supervisor at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*
LEEA, *caring for her father and a Personal Support Worker Manager at CBI Health Group*
LE QUISHA, *caring for her mother and a Call Centre Associate at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*
MARCIA, *caring for her mother and a Performance Management Consultant at CCAC Mississauga Halton*
MARY, *caring for her mother and an Occupational Therapist at VHA Home HealthCare*
MELISSA, *caring for her mother and a Call Centre Associate at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*
MERRY, *caring for her aunt and a Personal Support Worker at Spectrum Health Care*
MONICA, *caring for her son and a Personal Support Worker at VHA Home HealthCare*
NAHID, *caring for her parents and a Corporate Billing & Payroll Manager at Spectrum Health Care*
NEDHAL, *caring for her sister and a Financial Controller at CBI Health Group*
PARESH, *caring for his father and a Leader, Mobility Platforms at Saint Elizabeth*
PATRICIA, *caring for her mother and a Nurse at Saint Elizabeth*
PATRICIA, *caring for her mother and an Executive Assistant at VHA Home HealthCare*
ROSALIE, *caring for her mother and a Pay & Bill Manager at Bayshore HealthCare*
SALWA, *caring for her mother and a Personal Support Worker at Paramed Home Health Care*
SANDRA, *caring for her mother and a Researcher at Saint Elizabeth*
SANDRA, *caring for her mother and a Nursing Supervisor at VHA Home HealthCare*
SARAH, *caring for her mother and a Call Centre Associate at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*
SHELLY, *caring for her father and a Personal Support Worker at CBI Health Group*
SUSAN, *caring for her mother and a Risk Management Associate, Best Practice Champion at VHA Home HealthCare*

Our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved caregiver. May your cherished memories bring you moments of comfort and strength now and in the days ahead.

OUR LEADERS:

STUART COTTRELLE, *President at Bayshore HealthCare*

Bayshore HealthCare is one of the country's leading providers of home and community health care services and a Canadian-owned company. Its services are purchased by government care programs, insurance companies, workers' compensation boards, health care organizations, the corporate sector and the public. The company's goal is to enhance the quality of life, well-being, dignity and independence of Canadians of all ages. Bayshore HealthCare has been a recipient of Canada's Best Managed Companies award since 2006.

ANNA HRAPKOVA, *Director of Human Resources at Becton Dickinson*

BD is a leading medical technology company that partners with customers and stakeholders to address many of the world's most pressing and evolving health needs. More than 45,000 associates in 50 countries strive to fulfill the company's purpose of "Helping all people live healthy lives" by advancing the quality, accessibility, safety and affordability of health care around the world.

JUTTA SCHAFLER ARGAO, *Vice President of People, Quality, and Planning at Mississauga Halton CCAC*

Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) connect people across Ontario with quality in-home and community-based health care. Caring for more than 600,000 Ontarians annually, CCACs provide information, direct access to qualified care providers and community-based services to help people come home from hospital or live independently at home. Their vision is outstanding care—every person, every day.

CONNIE CLERICI, *President and CEO at Closing the Gap Healthcare Group*

Closing the Gap Healthcare Group is a fully accredited and award-winning Canadian business that provides community-based rehabilitation therapy, nursing and personal support services of an exceptionally high quality. Nearly 1,500 staff members provide services in homes, schools, long-term care homes, hospitals and clinics throughout many parts of Ontario, as well as in Nova Scotia, in both rural and urban areas.

RIK LUNENBURG, *Vice President at ParaMed Home Health Care*

For over 40 years, ParaMed Home Health Care has delivered exceptional quality health care and support services to clients in Ontario—not just in their homes, but in hospitals, clinics, assisted living centres, long-term care homes, schools and offices. It is their mission to support individuals to "get better" through their service excellence, passionate people, shared leadership and continuous learning. Their vision is to enrich lives through health experiences beyond expectations: one person, one community and one organization at a time.

MIKE SALTER, *HR Manager at GE Healthcare*

GE Healthcare provides transformational medical technologies and services to meet the demand for increased access, enhanced quality and more affordable health care around the world. GE works on things that matter—great people and technologies taking on tough challenges. From medical imaging, software & IT, patient monitoring and diagnostics to drug discovery, biopharmaceutical manufacturing technologies and performance improvement solutions, GE Healthcare helps medical professionals deliver great health care to their patients.

NANCY LEFEBRE, *Chief Clinical Executive Senior VP Knowledge and Practice at Saint Elizabeth*

Saint Elizabeth is a national health care provider that has been opening the door to new possibilities and care experiences for more than a century. Recognized as Canada's largest social enterprise, they employ 8,000 people and visit 18,000 clients every day. Through the Saint Elizabeth Research Centre, their Health Career Colleges and the Saint Elizabeth Foundation, they are helping to make the future of health care brighter and stronger.

LORI LORD, *Chief Executive Officer at Spectrum Health Care*

Spectrum Health Care is Ontario's leading provider of home health care services. They offer a range of health care services that include: nursing, personal and home support, foot care and corporate wellness clinics. The motto at Spectrum Health Care is "Always With You." Their goal is to provide their patients with exceptional health care services by accommodating their patients' needs with flexible schedules.

CAROL ANNETT, *Chief Executive Officer at VHA Home HealthCare*

KELLEY MYERS, *Vice President of Human Resources & Organizational Development at VHA Home HealthCare*

VHA Home HealthCare—a not-for-profit charity—has inspired Ontarians to create possibilities for more independence since 1925. VHA's professional team of over 2,000 caring, compassionate people support clients and their families in eight Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) regions. They are proudly accredited with Exemplary Standing by Accreditations Canada, an RNAO Best Practice Spotlight Organization designate, and a founding member agency of United Way Toronto.

CHRIS SZYBBO, *President and CEO at CBI Health Group*

ANTHONY MILONAS, *Chief Operating Officer at CBI Health Group*

Founded in 1974, CBI Health Group (CBI) is one of Canada's leading providers of quality health care and rehabilitation services. CBI currently employs almost 10,000 clinical and support staff that deliver comprehensive healthcare services through more than 250 facilities. Our services include: community and hospital-based rehabilitation clinics, home health, neurodevelopmental treatment, assessments and medical services on behalf of individuals, third party funders and governments.

NEXT STEPS

WORK & CARE: A BALANCING ACT is only the beginning.

Carers Canada's goal is to increase awareness and understanding of how supporting working carers can positively impact employers and employees.

Currently, 3 out of 10 employees in the workforce have taken on a caring role for a loved one while balancing their paid employment. Fifty percent of employee carers are between the ages of 45 to 65, in their peak earning years with valuable skills and experience. Given the changing demographics, shrinking labour market and economic climate, there has never been a more important time to focus on the benefits of retaining skilled workers.

Through this project, Carers Canada has heard and observed the extraordinary results when organizations embrace new ideas, challenge the status quo and create a trusting and compassionate workplace. We invite all of you to join us in our continued plan to ensure equal opportunity for all working carers in achieving financial and physical well-being through three key actions:

1. Increase awareness of working carers and the business benefits of supporting these individuals.
2. Recognize corporate champions who have embraced carer friendly policies and programs.
3. Support employers and employee with practical advice and strategies to develop 'carer friendly' workplaces.

WORK & CARE: A BALANCING ACT is a catalyst to stimulate corporate social responsibility and positively impact working carers and their employers. **Together, we can make real change happen. Collectively, we can make a difference.**



WORK & CARE A Balancing Act
A Visual Narrative Portraying Carers in Canada

