

Caring - and aging - Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver NE LHIN's 'in community care' to fellow Northerners

National Volunteer Week is April 15-21, 2012

'In community care' is a growing area for health care investment so aging Northerners can be supported where they want to be – at home.

Across our region, the North East LHIN funds 71 community support services agencies to provide help like assisted living, adult day care, home care support, transportation services, and meal delivery.

In fact, the LHIN invests in 22 agencies so that close to 200,000 meals can be delivered to more than 2,500 Northeastern seniors. Health care and healthy eating are intertwined. In the NE LHIN region, we have an aging population that's growing in size more rapidly than that of the rest of the province.

During dozens of recent NE LHIN community engagement sessions, Northerners reported a lack of community support services across the region. This is often more pronounced in Northern communities which are prone to fewer human resources, a dwindling and aging volunteer workforce, and a higher percentage of seniors due to youth-outmigration. That's why the NE LHIN is helping Meals on Wheels get the word out that more volunteers are needed to help support this vital service for our region's seniors.

"Community support services are essential in helping to meet the needs of seniors in community," says Louise Paquette, CEO, NE LHIN. "This is especially important as health care delivery shifts to community-based and patient-centred, as described in *Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care*." The plan's goal is to build a local health care system that provides the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

As part of National Volunteer Week, Meals on Wheels (Sudbury) honoured its volunteers on April 18 with a thank you breakfast.

With supplemental NE LHIN support, an additional 3,000 meals were delivered to the growing number of seniors through Meals on Wheels (Sudbury) – by volunteers who themselves average age 70!

Services like meal delivery or home care enable a senior to live outside of institutions at home as long as safely possible, and help to decrease alternate level of care (ALC) numbers.

Meals on Wheels (Sudbury) has approximately 40 volunteer delivery drivers who deliver fresh meals each weekday to 120-150 Sudbury-area clients. In addition, frozen meals are delivered for use on weekends and holidays. Thanks to LHIN and community support, the agency is now serving 36,000 meals annually.

What's remarkable is that the agency's volunteers themselves average age 70, says Colleen Fraser, Manager, Administrative & Financial Services. Meals on Wheels volunteers are mainly drivers, although some help in the office and kitchen.

"I was looking for something to get me out of the house and I love what I'm doing now," says Sheila Kennedy, who volunteers her time to deliver meals.



Joanne and Ron Pettit are long time volunteers with Meals and Wheels in Sudbury

Anyone interested in helping Meals on Wheels (Sudbury), can contact Fraser at cfraser@sudburymeals.org.

FACTS:

- The NE LHIN is providing helpful "jar openers" to some Meals on Wheels (Sudbury) clients this week. Just as access to quality care is a priority for residents in the NE LHIN region, we know that many seniors in Northeastern Ontario live alone and need a little help to get through the day. The jar-opening devices will contribute to staying healthy and well in community and at home.
- The NE LHIN dedicates \$42-million to 'in community care' annually such as: assisted living – which includes helping seniors to live at home longer and more safely. For instance, having someone stop in to ensure they are taking their medication properly, or have the help they need to bathe; adult day care programs; home care support; transportation services; falls prevention programs; meals on wheels; and more.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact Cynthia Stables at the NE LHIN; cynthia.stables@lhins.on.ca or (705) 845-1887.

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