

# HALTON HEALTHCARE SERVICES

## *Caring for Ourselves As Well As We Care for Our Patients*

Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) is a modern, progressive healthcare organization serving the rapidly growing communities of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. HHS takes pride in providing quality, compassionate healthcare services to the 250,000 residents served by their three hospital sites: Georgetown Hospital, Milton District Hospital and the Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

In order to meet the demands of their growing communities, Halton Healthcare has undertaken a number of exciting initiatives to make the hospitals a great place to work.

Bonnie Harrow, Vice-President, Support Services at HHS, says the hospital embraces a philosophy that creates a supportive work environment that nurtures the mind, body and spirit. For example, this philosophy plays out in how they are creating a learning environment, in supporting continuing education for staff. "For approved courses," Harrow says, "we will pay 100 per cent, and it's paid up front. We've even helped staff complete their master's degree."

Lorraine Rohm, Manager of Recruitment for HHS, says, "Staff are encouraged and supported to develop professionally through financial support for continuing education. We recently made an arrangement with Ryerson University to provide many of our diploma RNs (registered nurses) with the opportunity to get their BScN (bachelor of nursing) degree. We cover the cost and it's available on site."

Within the mind-body-spirit philosophy, Harrow says a recent example of "body" was the hospital's decision to create better lounge spaces where staff could unwind within the hospital. "We are in the process of redesigning all the lounges," she says. "We're painting, cleaning up, and putting in new lamps, comfortable furniture, fridges and microwaves, and in some cases aquariums."

And Halton Healthcare addresses its staff's "spirit" through Kailo. Pronounced

"Ky-lo," this wellness initiative was developed at Mercy Medical Center in Iowa, U.S. The word Kailo is an Indo-European word meaning "to be whole or of good omen."

Anna Rizzotto, Kailo Co-ordinator at HHS, says, "The traditional model, based on biomedical factors, doesn't work as well as we think. A model that focused only on healthy eating, exercising and quitting smoking doesn't include the psychosocial factors, a large determinant of health. With Kailo, the assumption is that you are as healthy as you are happy. And what makes people happy is having positive self-esteem, a sense of purpose, good relationships, and fun. When our lives feel balanced, we naturally gravitate toward healthier behaviours."

The wellness initiatives, since they started this program, have been a phenomenal success. Rizzotto says, "We had a craft club; this was pure play, a break from work. People loved it because we didn't ask anything from them. We decided, why talk about reducing stress? Why not just do it?"

On another day, they held a "Death by Chocolate" program. "It was a snowy day," she recalls. "We thought no one would show up, but 450 staff members came." She explains that "these are people who are giving all the time and it's important for them to nourish themselves in more ways than one. You can't give what you haven't got," she says.

Rizzotto says that employee satisfaction

surveys are showing improvements and she's convinced that this is due, at least in part, to Kailo. Last fall, they conducted an employee survey, one year after they implemented Kailo, and learned that 50 to 68 per cent of respondents felt that Kailo had made a difference to their learning, their work-life, their home-life and their overall health and well-being.

Rizzotto explains that there are hospital-wide Kailo sessions, called "Kailo Breaks"; "Kailo to Go," a series of short programs that can be taken to an individual department; and "Kailo for One," which is on-site counselling for individuals. Some examples of other programs are mini-massages, 15-minute massages that are rotated throughout the departments; a wellness library; "First Aid Baskets" that get delivered to units experiencing extreme stress; and the coffee cart. "Some of our staff members are so busy," Rizzotto says, "that they find it hard to get off the unit just for a cup of coffee."

In the fall of 2005, shortly after they had implemented the Kailo program, HHS received a Healthy Hospital Innovators Award from the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), as well as the National Quality Institute's Progressive Excellence Program, Level One Certification. They received the award for their commitment to a healthy and safe workplace, one that promotes employee involvement as well as open communication.

Evidence of this philosophy of caring can be seen in every aspect of the way they operate. The hospital recently learned that the Ontario government will transfer 50 acres of land to them, to enable them to build a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital in north Oakville. Bill Bailey, Vice-President, Redevelopment, says "it's not often a hospital is given the opportunity to build a hospital on a large greenfield [undeveloped land] from the ground up."

The first step they took was to "bring together the community, patients, staff, doctors, funders, volunteers and others in a series of focus groups, to engage them in the process so we can build a hospital to meet their needs," says Bailey.

In planning for the new hospital, the hospital's Board of Directors developed a vision and series of guiding principles for the project. The outcome of the community focus groups affirmed that these principles were in sync with the community's thoughts for their new hospital. Bailey explained that people expressed an interest in single patient rooms, as they're more conducive to healing and more inviting; a welcoming entrance with lots of light; plants and greenery, accessible parking, and a soothing environment. "The physical environment has to support your care model."

Work on the new hospital is expected to begin by the end of 2010 and it should take approximately three years to construct. A number of projects are also underway at HHS's Milton District Hospital, including a \$3.5 million project in the Diagnostic Imaging Department. At Georgetown Hospital, the Emergency Department waiting room was recently refurbished and further improvements are expected in the future.

The vision for Kailo sums up Halton Healthcare's philosophy well: "Caring for ourselves as well as we care for our patients." It is this philosophy that helps to create a work environment where people want to come and work.



Courtesy of  
Halton Healthcare  
Services



[hr@haltonhealthcare.on.ca](mailto:hr@haltonhealthcare.on.ca)



Halton Healthcare

[www.haltonhealthcare.com](http://www.haltonhealthcare.com)