



e-connect

Our Vision: Healthiest people, healthiest communities, exceptional service.

Program connects participants with health careers

A Saskatoon Health Region initiative is inspiring young people to move into health careers.

"I wanted to see what the hospital is all about. I wanted my first step into health care," said Ally Beausoleil, 18, a participant in the Step Into Health Careers Employment Program.

"This program helped me become a better employee and a better person, and I got to realize what my short-term and long-term goals are," she said.

In the future, Beausoleil, a recent high school graduate who moved to Saskatoon from Edmonton, wants to become a nurse. As part of the employment program, she learned how to clean surgical instruments. She is now employed at Saskatoon City Hospital as a sterile processing worker.

"I realized this is a very important job. A lot is in your hands, so you have to be thorough with your work. I'm very grateful to have this job," she said.

Developed in partnership with CanSask, the Step Into Health Careers Employment Program is designed to enhance participation of a representative workforce, with an emphasis on aboriginal initiatives to reflect current and future demographics in the region.

The program is in alignment with one of the goals of SHR's strategic plan, which aims to increase the number of self-declared aboriginal employees from 2.7 per cent in 2006 to four per cent in 2010.

The program, an initiative of



From left: Ally Beausoleil, Kelly Lee-Pelletier and Amy Cook

Representative Workforce, Human Resources Services, is 18 weeks in length and provides 18 women and men with the opportunity to learn, receive work and mentorship experience and gain an understanding of how the health region works. Program participants must have their Grade 12 diploma or GED, comply with a criminal records check and have the required immunizations necessary to work in a health-care setting.

The program, which began in 2007 and has gone through two 18-week

cycles, focuses on the sterile processing technician certification, employability skills, basic computer training, Food Safe, Transfer, Lifting and Repositioning training, great customer service, SHR safety orientation, aboriginal awareness, First Aid and CPR.

Most of the training is delivered internally by SHR staff in the Sterile Processing Distribution, Occupational Health and Safety, Food and Nutrition and Information Technology departments.

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Continued: Program provided at no cost

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Program participants complete practicums at Saskatoon's three acute care sites in Sterile Processing and Distribution, Operating Room and Food and Nutrition. The physical space for the employability skills component of the program and the offices of the program co-facilitators, Kelly Lee-Pelletier and Allison Laughren, is located at St. Paul's Hospital.

"The Sterile Processing Technician Certificate provides qualifications for individuals, along with their Grade 12, to apply to become a sterile processing worker or operating room attendant," Lee-Pelletier explained.

"There was research done in terms of which areas in the health region were in need of more employees prior to the program starting."

Lee-Pelletier said the program targets aboriginal youth; however, all applicants are considered. In the first

program, 14 of the 18 participants were of aboriginal descent, while 12 of the 18 participants were of aboriginal heritage in the second program, she said.

During the first program, 12 participants were employed within Sterile Processing and Distribution in May 2007 – a month before the program ended – because of the need for additional staff in the area. Those people have remained employed with SHR.

During the second cycle of the program, which ended with a graduation ceremony at Saskatoon City Hospital on Feb. 15, 2008, 15 people graduated and 12 were offered employment within SHR, Lee-Pelletier said.

"The program itself is provided at no cost to the participants and is funded in conjunction with the health region and CanSask," she said.

"A living allowance is not covered; however, the program qualifies for

Provincial Training Allowance, which is a grant that does not have to be paid back."

Amy Cook, 35, was one of the February graduates. She said she enjoyed the program, and she was offered a job as an operating room attendant at Royal University Hospital upon completion.

"I met a lot of great friends through the program and learned a lot about life-skills training, how to act in a workplace and about conflict resolution," she said.

Cook is happy to work for the health region and to have a job in health care that is "fun and exciting."

"This is where I want to be," she said.

In March, the third cycle of the Step Into Health Careers Employment Program will begin in partnership with CanSask and the Dumont Technical Institute.

'There is no limit for somebody who wants to succeed'

Zlata Ferguson sees her future in health care, thanks to the Step Into Health Careers Employment Program.

The program is a recruitment and retention initiative within Representative Workforce, Human Resources, Saskatoon Health Region.

Ferguson, a wife and mother of two, was one of 18 participants in the most recent cycle of the program.

"I was looking for opportunities, not just for a job," said Ferguson, who moved to Canada from Bosnia in 1994.

"I like what I found in Saskatoon Health Region. There's opportunity for me to grow, and I can go as far as I want. I see in Saskatoon Health Region there is no limit for somebody who wants to succeed," she said.

Upon completion of the program, Ferguson — who was chosen by her peers to be their representative at the graduation ceremony — became employed as a sterile processing worker at Saskatoon City Hospital.



Zlata Ferguson

"I'm glad to be in the right place at the right time," she said, expressing excitement about her new career.

During the Step Into Health Careers graduation ceremony on Feb. 15, 2008,

the program participants were congratulated on their achievements.

Bonnie Blakley, Vice-President, Human Resources, Saskatoon Health Region, said the Region is fortunate that such a talented and committed group of people chose to participate in the program.

"Thank you for choosing us," Blakley said.

"I look forward to seeing you in the halls of our facilities," she added.

The program coordinators, Allison Laughren and Kelly Lee-Pelletier, would like to express their gratitude for all of the support they have received from senior administration, managers and supervisors, as well as from front-line staff and administrative support from Sterile Processing and Distribution, Food and Nutrition, Operating Room, Labour and Delivery, Occupational Health and Safety, Human Resources, Information Technology and Representative Workforce.

Turning situations into solutions

Recently I escaped the Saskatchewan winter when my husband and I spent a week in Jamaica. While there, we frequently heard the familiar Jamaican expression “no problem, mon,” which encouraged us to relax and take a break from the demands of our jobs and usual routines.

I also heard a variation on this expression from a young Jamaican man who escorted us on a snorkelling expedition. Although he lives in abject poverty, his frequently repeated philosophy was “no problems, only situations!”

Upon returning to Saskatoon, it struck me that this approach to life could be quite helpful for the health region as we consider the “situations” we deal with every day.

Let’s consider our “situations.” On the positive side, the people of our province share core values which cherish families, relationships and a sense of community. We are experiencing an economic boom. This means an improved quality of life for some members of our community and investments by government in enhanced health programs and infrastructure.

Within the health region, we are making progress on our strategic priorities (as summarized in my previous e-connect message). By and large, our patients and public express a high level of satisfaction with our care and services. Dedicated, competent staff and physicians care deeply about their work and the people they serve.

But not everything is so positive. The booming economy may exacerbate some of the economic and health disparities that exist in our community. Despite significant investments in new facilities and information technology, many of our buildings require major renovations or replacement. We are a long way from having an electronic health record. Many of our patients and clients wait too long to access our services. Sometimes those services are uncoordinated, inefficient and provider, not patient/family, centred. We experience significant shortages of nurses, physicians and other health professionals. Our overtime and sick time rates

are high, contributing to our first deficit in four years. Not everyone feels happy and engaged about coming to work every day.

These are situations we cannot ignore, but we can do something about them.

Upon returning from Jamaica I participated in a forum with CEOs from across Canada and the United Kingdom, where our U.K. colleagues shared their successes in improving their health system. I was particularly impressed by a presentation from Mark Hackett, the chief executive of the Southampton General Hospital. This large teaching hospital experienced many of the less positive situations we have now.

Between 2004 and 2007, the hospital underwent a dramatic and very successful transformation, using many strategies that are included in our strategic plan. By using a very focused and aggressive approach, they combined good ideas with the will to execute large-scale system change. We can learn from their experience.

What did Southampton do to significantly reduce operating costs, improve access and safety of their care, and reengage their workforce? Some of their strategies included:

- Focus on the patient experience;
- Investment in quality and patient safety, especially infection control;
- Early warning systems to identify when a patient’s condition declines;
- Extensive use of care protocols;
- Lean thinking applied to streamline care processes;
- Investment in information technology;
- Investment in physician leadership, with associated accountability;
- Enhancement of 24x7 services to increase clinical efficiencies and reduce the average length of inpatient stay from seven to five days. This included additional physiotherapy, occu-



pational therapy, speech language therapy and physician coverage for evenings and weekends;

- Additional critical care and step-down beds to enhance access and patient flow;
- Enhanced pre-op assessment and day surgery;
- Clarification of and focus on core services; and
- Realignment of services from three to two inpatient sites.

These are not new ideas. The difference is how Southampton actually implemented them.

So, I am adopting the philosophy that our problems are actually situations we can address. If we are prepared to build on our strengths while learning from and adopting leading practices from elsewhere, we too can succeed in transforming and care and work experiences and building a more sustainable, integrated health system. This will be challenging, demanding work. We have the ideas. Now we need the will and skills to successfully execute the changes that are needed.

“No problem, mon.”

Maura Davies

Maura Davies
President and CEO
Saskatoon Health Region

Dietitians offer nutrition tips

Following Canada's Food Guide is essential to eating a nutritious, balanced diet and maintaining a healthy body weight, says a Saskatoon Health Region registered dietitian.

"It's really just as simple as following the food guide," said Twyla Markham, Supervisor, Health Promotion Department, Public Health Services.

"There isn't any magic food or combination of foods. You should have a lot of variety in your diet and follow the food guide."

The food guide outlines the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives and meat and alternatives that females and males in various age categories should eat each day. The food guide is accessible on the Web at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.

Dietitians of Canada, a nation-wide association of dietetics professionals, recommends building up to 30-60 minutes or more of physical activity each day for most days of the week.

"If everyone was following the food guide and getting physical activity, we wouldn't have the rates of heart disease that we have. Statistics show one in four Canadians is obese. It's a scary statistic," said Markham.

Markham said breast milk is the best option for babies, because it ensures food security for infants and provides them with necessary vitamins and fat such as omega-3 fatty acids.

"It's biological fluid that is made for our offspring," she said.

"There are probably lots of constituents in breast milk that we don't even know are there. They're there for a reason.

"I used to teach formula feeding at the hospital when I was a pediatric dietitian, and I always used to say, 'There's a reason why breast milk has cholesterol in it.' We're always so scared about eating foods with cholesterol, but if your body never has it, it doesn't know how to deal with it."

Markham recommends exposing children to a wide variety of foods at an



Twyla Markham recommends following Canada's Food Guide

early age. She said it's important to be patient with kids when giving them something new to eat.

"Sometimes it can take up to 14 or 15 times of introducing a food before a child will eat it. You just need to be patient."

Markham is one of thousands of Canadian dietitians who will celebrate Nutrition Month in March. The campaign is organized annually by Dietitians of Canada. This year's theme is Spotlight on Food and Nutrition, with Canadian dietitians offering their Top 10 nutrition list:

- 1) Want to feel your best? Eat well and get physical!
- 2) Benefit from balance – challenge and support family members to achieve and maintain healthy weights.
- 3) Quality counts – whether at home, school, work or play, keep healthy food choices top of mind.
- 4) Give your food portions a make-

over – tune in to moderation in serving sizes.

5) Colour your world with vegetables and fruit.

6) Be a savvy shopper – get the nutrition facts on foods from the label.

7) Make meal time a family affair.

8) Healthy eating is more than a flash in a pan – it's a lifetime commitment.

9) Make www.dietitians.ca/eatwell your 'go to' place for trusted nutrition information and fun, healthy eating ideas.

10) Have a food or nutrition question? Ask a registered dietitian!

(Source: Dietitians of Canada)

For more information on Nutrition Month, please visit www.dietitians.ca/eatwell. For more information about Nutrition Month events in Saskatoon Health Region, call **655-4630**.

More employees using medical libraries

Saskatoon Health Region's medical libraries are busy places.

"The number of search sessions and downloads has been increasing every year," said Joanne Franko, Manager, Research Services Unit.

"Certainly the volume of requests we're getting for articles has been going up. The requests for literature searches are going up. We're getting busier all the time, as knowledge of the services available to support people continues to grow.

"For example, in this fiscal year, by the end of December, we had received 579 different reference requests and completed 213 literature searches."

The medical libraries are part of SHR's Strategic Health Information and Planning Services (SHIPS) Department.

If SHR employees are looking for information on a topic to support them in their clinical or non-clinical work, the library staff can help them find what they need.

"The libraries can be used by anyone at any level of the organization to find information to support decision making," said Franko.

"We have ready access to more than 2,000 journals, most of which have full-text articles. We have access to more than 13 different databases to search. We have online access to more than 120 different medical textbooks.

"Last year, a whole set of resources related to consumer health and business was added, so we have access to journals like Harvard Business Review and a lot of newspapers."

Librarians and library technicians provide training to SHR employees on a variety of topics, such as how to do literature searches, how to use Google and how to work within the confines of copyright laws. They will also obtain journal and grey literature articles that people have identified they need in the course of their work. (Grey literature is information found on websites. It is 'published,' but not in referred journals).

By the end of December, the staff



From left: Amber Christensen, Joanne Franko, Chasity Berast, Colleen Haichert and Charles Wood

had provided more than 3,400 journal articles for people.

"We will do customized training programs," said Franko. "We will do general, broad sessions and we will also do individualized sessions."

Franko's unit includes two library technicians, Colleen Haichert and Chasity Berast, and two librarians, Amber Christensen and Charles Wood. They often post information to the medical library blog, which can be seen at www.shrlibrary.blogspot.com.

The blog has been viewed by people from throughout the world, including India, Brazil and the U.S. By the end of December, it had logged 1,800 hits.

"It is an extremely effective way to provide people with current information," said Franko.

There are currently two staffed libraries within the Region – the main library at Saskatoon City Hospital and a smaller library at St. Paul's Hospital.

"I was very fortunate as part of the expansion of the Rependa Centre at City Hospital to get this new space,"

Franko said. "At the same time, we also received provincial funding, which supports access to our electronic resources and other resource costs. That comes through a provincial project called Saskatchewan Health Information Resources Partnership (SHIRP).

"The goal of SHIRP is to provide every health-care provider in the province of Saskatchewan with access to a common set of electronic resources."

Franko's unit is also responsible for the staff library at Parkridge Centre, and shares joint responsibility with the University of Saskatchewan for the library at West Winds Primary Health Centre.

A staff library is planned for the new Humboldt hospital, she said.

Franko believes it's important for health-care facilities to have libraries.

"As an organization, we need to make sure that we're providing the best care to our clients, using the best available evidence to support decision making. Libraries are a critical component of this process," she said.

Bravo Awards to honour staff, physicians

Musician Amy Winehouse rocked the Grammy Awards, and the movie *No Country for Old Men* swept the Oscars, but awards season isn't over yet.

Saskatoon Health Region talent will be honoured on March 18 at the Bravo Awards ceremony at TCU Place.

The evening starts with hors d'oeuvres, a cake celebration and live music from *Joy of Jammin'*, followed by an awards ceremony for the 94 individuals and teams

nominated this year by their peers.

The Bravo Awards celebrate employees, physicians and affiliates of Saskatoon Health Region who bring the Region's values to life everyday by demonstrating excellence and making a difference in the lives of others.

The award categories are leadership, customer service, performance excellence, safe workplaces, healthy lifestyles, positive workplaces, quality, teamwork and philanthropy.



Join your colleagues at the Bravo Awards to celebrate and share in the outstanding stories that are being lived each day in the Region. Tickets are \$20 at any of the cashier offices at

Saskatoon City Hospital, St. Paul's Hospital and Royal University Hospital.

Individual award recipients will receive a complimentary ticket for themselves and one guest each.

Region celebrates Therapeutic Recreation Week

(Submitted by Janet Barnes, Senior Recreation Therapist, Older Adult Community, Forever . . . in motion, and Elaine Stobbe, Manager, Therapeutic Recreation Services, Parkridge Centre)

In celebrating Therapeutic Recreation Week, Saskatoon Health Region acknowledges leisure, recreation and play as integral components of quality of life.

Therapeutic recreation services (TRS) are provided to individuals who have physical, mental, social or emotional limitations that impact their ability to engage in meaningful leisure experiences. TRS staff support the goal of assisting the individual to maximize independence in leisure, optimal health and the highest possible quality of life.

Recreation professionals from the Saskatoon Health Region and affiliates joined together to celebrate Therapeutic Recreation Week (Feb. 3-9, 2008) at

two professional development events.

On Feb. 6, staff met at Parkridge Centre for networking, learning and energizing. This has become an annual event where staff celebrate achievements, network with peers, learn about new program initiatives and participate in an educational opportunity.

Monica Knight led this year's workshop on the theme of transformational change. Knight is an entrepreneur, community developer, speaker, facilitator, teacher and consultant. She moved from South Africa in 1995 to rural Saskatchewan and recently moved to Saskatoon.

Using song and dance, she helped the audience members become more comfortable with themselves and helped people understand the personal growth that can come from change.

The planning committee would like to thank the Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals who made

the event possible through a professional development grant.

On Feb. 7, therapeutic recreation staff from across Canada and the North West Territories linked into a Telehealth inservice from the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton, Alta.

Janis G. Smith (CTRS, RTC, Ph.D. candidate, University of Alberta) presented on her master's thesis. The presentation provided an overview of the popular change theories from findings of her meta-analysis of 150 behaviour change models.

This research provided the rationale for developing the model "Theory of Optimal Change."

The model involves eight distinct and interrelated constructs that health-care professionals can apply with their clinical judgment in assisting patients/clients/residents to move from poor health and well-being to optimal health wellness.

Protect yourself and others - get your free flu shot

Influenza season usually peaks between December and April. So if you haven't received your free flu shot, it's not too late!

Take the time to roll up your sleeves. You can get your free flu shot by calling Occupational Health & Safety at 655-1387.



First year of strategic plan nearing end

Saskatoon Health Region's strategic plan is like a roadmap for the organization, says Phyllis Goertz.

"It forces you to be purposeful about assessing your situation and determining where you want to go, what are the critical situations you must address to get there and actions to address those situations," said Goertz, project manager for strategic planning in the Corporate Planning Department.

"Strategic planning actually comes from the Greek word *stratego*, which was what the Greek general was called. The Greek general had to decide what the critical elements were in his battle plan, so to speak."

In the fall of 2006, the Region published its first-ever three-year strategic plan, covering the fiscal years from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2010. The plan includes the Region's vision, mission, values and strategic directions.

There are five strategic directions – transforming the care and service experience, transforming the work experience, partnering for improved health for aboriginal people, building a sustainable integrated system and fostering research, learning and innovation.

"Under each of the strategic directions are strategic goals," said Goertz.



"Underneath each of the strategic goals are objectives and action plans, which most people would consider as the operational plan. It's what we're going to do each year in order to help us meet those goals and those directions and the vision.

"The idea is that a strategic plan starts really big, and then breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces."

Goertz noted that the first year of the strategic plan will come to an end on March 31.

"Our job now is to look at what's happened in that first year in terms of the activities we have done and in terms of how those activities brought us closer to meeting those goals and directions and the vision."

Goertz said the Senior Leadership Team and the Regional Health Authority have reviewed an updated environmental scan and the progress in the first year. They have decided which strategic goals will be priority in the 2008/09 fiscal year. The next step is to take a look at all of the goals, with an emphasis on the priority goals, and decide on a process to determine what activities will take place in the next year.

About 1,500 people – including SHR employees from throughout the organization and representatives from the Region's partners – contributed to the creation of the strategic plan.

Goertz said every SHR employee has a role to play in implementing the plan. The vision of "healthiest people, healthiest communities, exceptional service" can help guide employees' work on a daily basis.

"You can say to yourself, 'What can I do that will transform the care and service experience for the people I am serving today?'"

For more information, visit the external web page http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/about_us/strategic_home.htm.

The InfoNet Strategic Planning pages will be updated in the near future.

e-connect: Telling our stories

What is e-connect?

- E-connect is Saskatoon Health Region's employee newsletter. E-connect publishes articles related to SHR's strategic directions.
- E-connect is e-mailed to all SHR e-mail users and is posted on SHR's external website.
- Please visit InfoNet to view our updated submission guidelines, new online submission form and new photograph consent form.

How can we help you?

If you would like to:

- add your e-mail address to our distribution list,
- submit a news idea to e-connect, or
- pass on feedback or ask a question

Please e-mail:

ecconnect@saskatoonhealthregion.ca

Pilot project benefits clients, boosts staff morale

(Submitted by the Optimizing Skin and Wound Committee as printed in Health Quality Council's Qreview)

Many hospital patients and nursing home clients in Saskatoon Health Region are healthier – and happier – as a result of a pilot project to prevent pressure ulcers.

That same initiative left participating staff feeling empowered in their jobs and excited about improvement.

Following the release of the Saskatchewan Skin and Wound Care Guidelines in April 2006, the Region formed an interdisciplinary committee to standardize skin and wound care across its facilities. In September of that year, the committee launched a pilot project with the goal of reducing by 50 per cent the number of pressure ulcers among patients at one acute care site (St. Paul's Hospital 5th Medicine) and residents of three long-term care sites (Wynyard Golden Acres, Central Haven, and Sherbrooke Community Centre).

All sites implemented the Saskatchewan Skin and Wound Care Guidelines pressure ulcer prevention algorithm and diligently used the Braden Risk Assessment Scale© on

admission, and regularly thereafter, to assess clients' risk of developing pressure ulcers.

The project achieved impressive results: Three out of the four participating pilot sites halved the number of pressure ulcers experienced by their residents. The fourth site had very low incidence of sores to begin with, so it was tougher for them to achieve and sustain the target 50 per cent reduction. Follow-up data, collected in fall 2007, showed that the other sites had all held their gains.

Janice Seeley, Quality Services Consultant in Saskatoon Health Region and pilot project leader, says use of the Braden Scale was one of the keys to the project's success.

"It helped staff identify who is at high risk for pressure ulcers," says Seeley. "Interdisciplinary teams at the sites then decided on an ulcer prevention strategy for those residents."

The special care aides and licensed practical nurses played a critical role, adds Seeley, since they are the ones who used Braden subscales to assess clients for ulcer risk factors such as moisture, nutrition, and degree of physical activity.

Paulette Thomson, a special care

aide at Wynyard Golden Acres, says it has been very rewarding to see how the prevention of pressure ulcers can improve residents' quality of life.

"When our residents are comfortable, they are happier and more likely to participate in activities."

SHR plans to spread the program across its acute care, long-term care, and home-care sectors. Sustaining the program, says Seeley, will require three things:

- Establishing where in the Region the skin and wound care program will live – complete with the necessary authority and accountability along with ongoing monitoring and measurement ;
- Establishing policies to support the integration of skin and wound care leading practices across the Region; and,
- Consistently applying a standardized pressure ulcer risk assessment tool on admission.

"Staff felt empowered and excited when they saw the first set of results," says Seeley. "Successfully improving care by implementing best practices certainly benefits our clients, but it is also a morale booster for front-line staff."

SPARC receives \$100,000 cheque

Since 1976, the Elks and Royal Purple have provided more than \$2.1 million to the Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehab Centre (SPARC), which is housed in Royal University Hospital.

Dr. Lynne Brewster, pediatrician, auditory-verbal therapist and SPARC program head, said the program is family oriented.

"Our main objectives are to assist parents and help them cope with their child's hearing loss and to develop effective communication strategies with their child," she said.

Cochlear implants, which cost about \$20,000

each, do not return hearing to normal, but offer children many benefits.

The SPARC program promotes universal newborn hearing screening and early identification and provides comprehensive diagnostic and rehabilitation services.

SPARC also conducts research into more effective means of working with children with hearing loss and their families, and helps teachers and other professionals understand what it means to have a hearing-impaired child in their program.

Members of the local Elks lodges and the Royal



SPARC program head Dr. Lynne Brewster receives a big cheque from Debbie Waldon (left) and Al Edwards

Purple raise \$100,000 annually for SPARC. Their major fundraising activity is an an-

nual walk-a-thon that is held in a different Saskatchewan location each year.