

Toronto Grace honours outstanding achievement



Mildred G. Jarvis, President & CEO of Toronto Grace Health Centre, presents Susana Yan with an Outstanding Achievement Award.

By Stefani Venere

Toronto Grace Health Centre is filled with wonderful people dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the lives of patients and their families. The Grace introduced the Quality of Life and Outstanding Achievement Awards to acknowledge such people. Many staff and volunteers provide an exceptional blend of care beyond their normal job duties to further the Grace's mission and values of providing compassionate patient-centred care. "These awards represent a part of the commitment of caring with compassion and a sense of community that every Grace member brings to patients and their families," says Kathleen Macdonald, Chair of the Board for Toronto Grace.

The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes a specific event or process that demonstrates a commitment to furthering the Grace's mission and values. This may be an innovation that significantly improves a service and/or patient care, an action that raises the positive profile of the Grace, or an implemented idea that saves or generates funding.

Last year, a staff member received the award for her development of the cognitive/sensory stimulation room designed to create multi-sensory experiences for patients who are experiencing periods of wakefulness from a vegetative state, who are otherwise cognitively impaired, and who are behaviourally uneasy. This facility uses a variety of lights, sounds and surfaces to stimulate memory and response, and to intrigue, empower, calm, and relax patients with disabilities. Another Outstanding Achievement celebrated the

dedication and creativity of a volunteer for the development of the Grace gardens. She designed, planted, and maintained gardens that stimulate the senses and bring beauty and comfort to patients, visitors, and staff.

The Grace's Quality of Life Award pays tribute to a specific act of care, comfort, or com-

passion (outside of one's job duties) that demonstrates the Grace's core values of care and community and enhances the quality of life for patients. To a patient, the extra little acts of kindness have a significant impact on their experience at the Grace. Knowing how much self-image contributes to a sense of well-being, one

complex continuing care staff member won the award for contributing her own time, talent and supplies to provide regular make-up services for those that could not afford them. A member of the palliative care team received this award for transforming patients' experience at the Grace by taking his own time and money to secure books, magazines and special treats for patients. By doing this, he helps them to continue to enjoy life and live their last days to the fullest.

The third award recipient showed that the Grace's care and services extends further than the health centre walls. When a staff member saw that a patient, who returned to another facility for a brief stay, had left behind a treasured item that gave the patient great comfort, this staff member took his own time to bring the item to the patient. The patient was extremely grateful that staff would empathize with his dilemma and ensure his sense of comfort and security in

another place.

The final recipient was a staff member who helped to make the health centre feel like home to a severely disabled young patient. On the patient's 21st birthday, the staff member helped the patient and family celebrate by presenting them with a beautiful birthday cake. An act of care such as this is a broadening of one's job description and truly illustrates what the award is about. This patient may not have been able to verbally offer a thank-you, but her smile and her mother's joy showed how important it was that staff joined in the spirit of honouring her humanity. These awards signify the special blend of personalized care and compassion that makes the Grace such a wonderful community.

"We are truly proud of our culture of connectedness at the Grace, and these awards are the Grace's way of demonstrating our deep appreciation and encouragement for the special contributions that staff make to the quality of holistic care and service," says Glenn Yaffee, Human Resources Consultant.

Stefani Venere is a Special Events and Public Relations Coordinator at Toronto Grace Health Centre.



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