

Partners in Care

Supporting health care together



Providence Health Care
**Patient And Family
Partner Newsletter**
June 2025, Volume 4, Issue 2



Email pfcc@providencehealth.bc.ca to submit story ideas, comments or questions.

Environmental Sustainability in Action Across Long-Term Care Facilities

Trees for Health Campaign Brings Green Spaces to Providence Sites

Providence Health Care's **Trees for Health** campaign has officially taken root, launching on April 29 with the planting of an **"Eddie's White Wonder" dogwood tree** at St. Vincent's: Langara. Supported by **Trees for Life** and its **Trees for Heroes** program, this initiative aims to plant up to 50 native trees across Providence sites, promoting sustainability, well-being, and honoring health care workers, patients, and residents.

Inspired in 2024 by Aggie Black, co-lead of the Environmental Stewardship Team, the campaign quickly grew into a formal initiative with support from St. Paul's Foundation and Providence's facilities management team. The first tree planting ceremony included a land acknowledgment and reflections from a Musqueam Knowledge Keeper on restoring growth to the area.

Residents and staff celebrated the event, recognizing the tree's deeper significance. With sustainability at its core, this initiative fosters greener health care spaces while honoring those who provide and receive care. Donations support further plantings, with each tree dedicated to a health care worker, patient, or care team.



St. Vincent's: Langara resident Betty Higgins, 93, adds soil to the newly planted dogwood tree.



The dogwood tree planted at Langara's front roundabout.



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Trees for Health Campaign Brings Green Spaces to Providence Sites

Holy Family Hospital (HFH) long-term care's Alvéole Bee Program is fostering **urban biodiversity** while bringing residents closer to nature. As part of this initiative, thousands of honeybees pollinate the surrounding neighborhood, supporting local ecosystems.

Launched as a pilot project last year in collaboration with Food Services and the PHC Environmental Sustainability team, the program continues to thrive. A dedicated beekeeper tends to the hive throughout the season, with monthly sessions allowing residents to meet the beekeeper and participate in engaging workshops. These visits are coordinated with the rehab program, ensuring interactive and meaningful experiences.



The **"From Hive to Honey Jar" workshop** was a resounding success last year, and this season, harvested honey jars will be sold at the residents' farmer's market. While initial challenges arose in integrating the program into existing activities, improved communication and community engagement are ensuring its long-term success.

"I loved the honey bee presentation. It was inspiring and at the same time I was AWED. I am just so grateful to God for what he has done through these bees. And the nutrition that is in honey, which I never knew about. It took my breathe away." –Normal, HFH resident

A truly sweet sustainability initiative!

Holy Family Hospital Earns Prestigious Sustainability Award

Providence Health Care's Holy Family Hospital has been recognized with the **Best in World Award** from the International Federation of Healthcare Engineering (IFHE) for its groundbreaking carbon reduction retrofit. The project successfully reduced carbon emissions by **75% between 2021 and 2023**, while improving occupant comfort and strengthening climate resilience.



Key strategies included window upgrades, solar photovoltaic panels for electricity generation, and a heat recovery chiller connected to a Thermal Gradient Header (TGH)—a holistic thermal energy solution that eliminates waste.

The ambitious initiative tackled four challenges: replacing aging infrastructure with hazardous refrigerants, expanding heat reclamation, improving energy efficiency, and adding cooling capacity to enhance climate resiliency. The biggest hurdle was completing the project in a 24/7 hospital environment, requiring a carefully staged four-phase implementation.

Holy Family Hospital's achievement sets a new benchmark for sustainable healthcare infrastructure worldwide.

“What Matters To You?” in Practice: The BC Home Parenteral Nutrition Program

The BC HPN Program provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary care to adults across BC who require long-term intravenous nutrition due to intestinal failure. Most patients rely on HPN daily and often for life. The program is based out of St. Paul's Hospital and supports patients through coordinated medical oversight, patient and caregiver training, supply management, and ongoing clinical monitoring via regular follow-up clinics every 3 to 6 months.

How has your team incorporated “What matters to you?” conversations into clinical care?

Our team actively incorporates “What matters to you?” into patient care by asking patients targeted questions through pre-clinic questionnaires. These questions, introduced formally in 2022, invite patients to share what is working well, what is not working, and what they would like to see done differently in their HPN care. We also ask for suggestions to improve the program and their clinic experience.

Prior to clinic visits, our team reviews these responses to identify recurring themes or individual needs. This process supports meaningful discussion during clinic appointments and allows us to follow up directly with patients or caregivers where needed.

For new patients entering the HPN program, we make a deliberate effort to understand their personal goals and priorities. This is a crucial step in tailoring care for individuals who must integrate HPN into their daily lives, often indefinitely. Asking these questions early helps us build trust, set realistic expectations, and align care planning with what matters most to each patient.



Rachel Garner (Program Nurse), Yoon Heo (Program Coordinator), Janet Broening (Program Dietitian).

Do you know when your team started asking these questions?

While our team has always engaged patients in conversations about their goals and preferences, we began formally collecting this feedback in 2022 through structured clinic questionnaires and PAC (Patient Advisory Committee) meeting discussions.

What feedback have you received from patients, families, or staff?

We have received consistent feedback from patients and families that these conversations help them feel more engaged in their care. Many have expressed a strong desire for more in-person connections and opportunities to share experiences with others living with HPN.

One patient partner shared - "Being asked what matters to me makes me feel like I'm more than just a diagnosis. It makes me feel like I have choices, and that the team actually listens and wants to work with me—not just tell me what to do."

How has asking “What matters to you?” changed how your team approaches patient care?

Asking “What matters to you?” has deepened our understanding of patient priorities and helped us reframe our role—not as problem-solvers dictating care, but as collaborators helping patients make informed decisions that align with their values. It reminds us to respect patient autonomy and actively consider how to personalize care without compromising safety or clinical quality. These conversations have also fostered humility, reinforcing that the best care is not just clinically effective, but also meaningful to the patient.

Scotiabank Youth Transition Program, St. Paul's Hospital

The Scotiabank Youth Transition Program (SYTP) is a program offered at St. Paul's Hospital to help support young adults and their families with information and resources to help during their transition from pediatric to adult care. This transition can be a difficult time for patients and families as they experience a lot of changes related to health care delivery and increased independence as youth enter adult care services.

The SYTP works with many programs throughout St. Paul's Hospital including, the Virani Provincial Congenital Heart Disease Program (VPACH), the Bleeding Disorders Program, and the Cystic Fibrosis Program, to name a few. However, our goal is to support all patients and families during this transition.

From its inception, the SYTP has been designed and supported by patient and family partners. We were motivated to include patient and family partners by listening to their stories and hearing their innovative ideas for improving the journey through transitioning to adult care. Their involvement includes supporting the SYTP Working Group, creating and evaluating resources, questionnaires that support individualized learning, and facilitating workshops. Catherine, one of our patient partners spoke about the impact that the workshops have:

"I think the SYTP workshop has been fantastic. The young people who attend have an opportunity to have their concerns about transition heard and to be able to speak to people who have already been through the transition from BC Children's to St. Paul's Hospital. The workshop not only provides relevant, useful information, but it enables people with lived experience of chronic illness and transition to relate to the young adults and make them feel like they're not alone. It also provides the opportunity for parents to come along and ask any questions or queries, and I've seen firsthand the positive impact it has. As someone with lived experience of chronic illness and transition myself, I know that at 17 or 18, having the opportunity to speak to someone with my condition who'd already been through that major life transition would've felt transformational. Emma is fantastic, and her vision for the SYTP is one I wholly support. Cannot recommend the program enough." Catherine, patient partner.



Emma Iacoe (SYTP Program Leader) with patient partners - Breanna, Catherine, and Jovun

Patient and family partners have led the direction of the program model, and the resources created. Based on their input we have created more youth-friendly resources that better support the needs of the generation of youth, including resources that support technology use and social connection.

We have some exciting plans for the future of the SYTP program based on the inspiration of ongoing support from our patient and family partners.

These include an experience and story sharing podcast, a parent/guardian workshop and support network, and an "About Me" document – a document that allows patients to share information they deem as important to their care during the referral and transfer process.

Through our partnerships with patients and their families we have learned that creating diverse and inclusive governance leads to more ideas and better results. Our patient partners have stepped up in ways we didn't expect such as, leading in the creation and delivery of workshops, leading peer mentorship opportunities, creating resources and spearheading new initiatives.

Phones for Health: Bridging the Digital Divide in Patient Care



Social workers Alex MacKinnon, Jenny Hyman (Phones for Health Project lead), and Alex MacKinnon (Phones for Health Project lead).

In today's digital healthcare landscape, access to a phone is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. It's estimated that at **St. Paul's Hospital**, more than **800 patients annually** arrive without a phone, limiting their ability to schedule appointments, access housing, and receive vital social services. To address this growing gap, the **Phones for Health** initiative—led by social workers Jenny Hyman, Alex MacKinnon, Sarah Eisler, and clinical nurse specialist Vininder K. Bains—provides free cell phones and short-term plans to those in need.

Partnering with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society's Digital Inclusion Project, the initiative collects and refurbishes donated phones for redistribution. With initial funding from PHC's Knowledge Translation Challenge and Innovarium, along with **43 donated phones from SPARC BC**, the project launched hospital-wide on December 2, 2024. By March 31, 2025, 50 phones had been distributed, helping patients stay connected.

Findings show that **74% of recipients** needed some level of digital literacy support, with phone insecurity often linked to loss, theft, or financial instability. Patients received personalized education and printed guides tailored to their comfort level, ensuring they could navigate essential healthcare and social services.

The program's impact extends beyond healthcare access—it strengthens **housing stability, social connection, safety, and daily functioning**. With a projected annual cost of \$29,760–\$32,640, sustainable funding is crucial for future expansion.

"This project is a step toward addressing digital health equity," says Alex MacKinnon, social worker. "By eliminating barriers to connectivity, we're empowering patients to engage with the resources they need for better outcomes."

Meet & Greet

Anja Lanz, Patient Partner



For this edition's Meet and Greet, let's get to know Anja Lanz, Patient Partner

How long have you been a patient/family partner?

I have been a patient partner for over 30 years, and a caretaker partner for the same time frame. I have been engaged in advocacy for patients and families before it was a cool thing to be involved in.

What is your favourite thing about being a patient/family partner?

By giving back to the healthcare community, I am healing those emotional wounds that were opened when I first became sick. These engagements also help others avoid going through the same agony, turmoil, and trauma, as I had to endure.

Tell us about a project or committee you were involved in as a Patient Family Partner at Providence health Care and how you were involved.

Patient advisor for the following: Lived Experience Research Advisory Committee (LERAC); Rehabilitation Centre Steering Committee; New Grad Nurse Orientation Program Research Project; Regional Medicine Program New St. Paul's Hospital; the Patient Connection Device Project (Formerly: Connected Patient Room Project)

What has been your greatest learning in the patient/family partner role?

The unique intersection of lived experience with the complexities of the healthcare system, and advising on system changes can be a very rewarding and humbling experience. Going through a very traditional and long term established system, and trying to make changes, can be a challenge, but when the break through happens and the light bulbs come on and the "AHA" moment appears, it is magic what results can be created with patient and family partner engagements.

If you had to describe yourself in three words, what would they be? Visionary, Insightful, Catalyst

What three items would you take with you to a deserted island?

A comprehensive first-aid kit, including water purification tablets and a sharp knife, fire starter (such as waterproof matches or a magnesium fire starter); a large, durable metal pot with a lid; a high-quality multi-tool with a good knife, saw, and pliers

What is the most interesting place you have ever traveled to?

L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, Newfoundland and Labrador - a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Canada. This site is the only North American site ever discovered that the Vikings came to North America before Columbus, so it turns our history lessons on its head.

What piece of advice would you give to your younger self?

"Trust your voice - your experiences and perspective matter more than you realize."

"You are stronger than your circumstances—keep showing up."

Trust your journey and don't be afraid to stand out.

What's one thing we'd be surprised to learn about you? I am passionate to learn from primal civilizations, especially their art and personal expressions that have survived thousands of years, and what these artistic expressions tell us today about our ancestors and about us.

Photo Gallery

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St. Vincent: Heather



On May 30, representatives from Host Nations, the Archdiocese of Vancouver, Providence Health Care, Providence Living, St. Paul's Foundation and Scott Construction gathered at the future site of St. Vincent's: Heather long-term care home for an Indigenous Ground Awakening ceremony and Catholic blessing.

Providence at the Park



Volunteers from across PHC gathered at Oppenheimer Park once again to connect with community members, foster relationships and work together to bring care services to the community. Over 500 community members visited the event and they were welcomed with smiling volunteers and resources, including: PHC's Food Services Team provided meals, Inlet Hearing offered hearing tests, Quick Cobbler donated shoes and more.

Sustainability Fair



Teams across Providence to advance planetary health initiatives, information, handouts and giveaways from partners and sponsors like BC Parks Foundation, CleanStart and the Binners' Project and delicious plant-based food samples provided by PHC Food Services.

Volunteer Opportunity/Announcement

Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation

The **Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation (KBNF)** is a Canadian non-profit dedicated to improving neurosurgical care in **West Africa**. Through education, training, and vital medical shipments, KBNF strengthens health care infrastructure while supporting frontline health workers.

KBNF collects **donated medical supplies** from hospitals across British Columbia, ensuring these essential resources reach communities in need. Volunteers play a critical role in Metro Vancouver by helping to **sort, pack, and load shipments**, directly contributing to better care overseas.

There are **many ways to get involved**, whether it's folding medical supplies, assisting with shipments, or supporting logistics. Every effort helps deliver life-saving equipment to West African hospitals and clinics.

To learn more or sign up as a volunteer, visit [their website](#) and be part of this meaningful global health initiative. Your support makes a difference!

Patient and Family Partner Handbook

The **Patient and Family Partner Handbook** is available to support patient and family partners, especially during the early stages of their partnership with PHC staff, or during orientation.

This resource offers helpful information about:

- The role of patient/family partners
- What to expect when collaborating with teams at PHC
- Tips for meaningful engagement, and
- Contacts and supports available

You can access the handbook on the PHC website [here](#).

Looking for a handbook to support work with research teams? Access the **Patient and Family Partner Handbook for Work with Research Teams** [here](#).

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