

## Ashley Guenette Health Care Aide Youville Home, St. Albert

An old proverb says a kind word is like a spring day. If that's the case, Ashley Guenette's kindness would be a flower garden in full bloom on Unit 5 at Youville Home.

Ashley holds a high honour in that she is one of few people nominated directly by the people cared for at Covenant Health.

"It is always a joy to have Ashley working on my wife's wing. I see her always working quickly and efficiently to meet the needs of all who are under her care," wrote Jim Kennedy. "Although all the staff are great, Ashley really is outstanding,"

Mr. Kennedy shares a story about how his wife Annemarie was scheduled to go out with her family last Christmas, but due to a virus outbreak, she had missed two weekly hair appointments and her hair needed a little attention.

"Fortunately for Annemarie, Ashley was her health care aide that day," said Mr. Kennedy. "Ashley washed Annemarie's hair and then went home on her lunch break to get a curling iron to finish the job. When we came to get Annemarie, she was all ready and looking beautiful, thanks to Ashley."

Bringing out the beauty and putting a smile on people's face is what Ashley loves to do. Her first career was in hairstyling, but she followed her dream to work in health care.

"Making people smile makes me happy," said Ashley. "I always try to help the residents feel at home, and I don't mind taking an extra few minutes to joke with them."

"I find that residents really want to do things on their own and remain as independent as possible so I always encourage them to keep active however they can. I remind them about their walking schedules and don't mind pitching in to get them moving."

## Bonnyville Community Cancer Clinic Bonnyville Health Centre

Some say a cup of compassion goes a long way and nothing proves it better than the care provided by the Bonnyville Community Cancer Clinic.

Established in 1996, this clinic is comprised of three physicians, three Registered Nurses, over 30 laboratory staff, five pharmacists, a manager and almost a dozen dedicated ladies' auxiliary members who provide chemotherapy, education and supportive care to cancer patients in Northeastern Alberta.

Highly organized and efficient, this team arranges for lab work to be processed the day before patients begin their next cycle of chemotherapy so when patients arrive at the clinic, physicians have an up-to-date measure of their blood work. Then they receive their next cycle of chemotherapy or whatever treatment is required to for their next step in fighting cancer.

The team provides the treatment and helps with whatever else the patient may need at the time when they are in the clinic. Often it is an empathetic ear, taking the time to listen to the patients concerns about the disease or getting them a drink or blanket to keep them warm while they wait. With pastoral care and social work resources in short supply, this team lives the mission by seeing the needs of the whole person rather than the disease.

“Administering the chemotherapy is one little part of what this team does,” said Bev Brace, Clinic Manager. “Often the staff will help patients get their affairs in order, help them with the day to day realities and being with patients through their highs and lows as they move through the stages of their disease.”

This type of compassionate care has spilled out to the community. Four years ago, a local woman teamed up with the hospital foundation to raise funds for the clinic to help make patients as comfortable as possible. The event has raised over \$100,000 to date and have been warmly embraced by young and old in Bonnyville.

And it touches the hearts of the team too—each day the team consistently witnesses the unbelievable strength, courage and bravery of over 900 visitors a year, and they gain immeasurably from walking with them.

## Debbie Blais Nurse Navigator for Breast Cancer Misericordia Community Hospital, Edmonton

For Debbie Blais, compassion is an integral part of health care and it is also an integral part of her. She feels compassion everywhere throughout her life and especially in the special care she provides to women with breast cancer.

Debbie's role is to support patients, often just days after hearing the news they have breast cancer to the time they meet their surgeon, throughout surgery and every week until patients attend their first appointment at the Cross Cancer Institute.

Each week Debbie connects with hundreds of patients at various stages of treatment to listen, answer questions, provide reassurance and empower women into becoming knowledgeable decision-makers about their own health and wellbeing.

“With 25-plus years of nursing experience, I find my role now to be the most holistic nursing of them all,” explained Debbie. “In my role as an educator in Healing Connections, I get to teach, which I love to do, but I also get to do some practical nursing as well, especially in the days following a patient's surgery.”

Debbie shares that it is an amazingly powerful experience to care for a woman who is feeling overwhelmed and afraid, and watch her regain her strength and knowledge about the disease to go on living and managing it with confidence.

“Debbie plays a phenomenal role. She's the right person to help people live with cancer and coach them through the process,” said her colleague Debbie Elliot.

A patient also commended Debbie's outstanding care especially during an emotional time. Although the patient tended to reject the help at first, it did not phase Debbie and she was there when the patient needed her.

“Her availability, understanding, and knowledge about breast cancer continued to be a significant source of support,” said the patient. “So often, after wallowing in confusion, I would contact Debbie and with knowledge and encouragement, I would emerge with clarity and feel settled emotionally.”

Debbie inspires her patients and their families along with her coworkers as she aims to leave her patients, her clinical area, and the hospital better than she found it.

# Donald Inkinen

## Volunteer

### Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre

With every one of his actions, Don Inkinen consistently demonstrates extraordinary caring and genuine affection for his fellow human beings.

Scott Stewart first met Don a few years ago when he was faithfully attending to both his wife (a haemodialysis resident on unit 8Y) and his son (a resident on unit 4Y) at the Edmonton General. Even then, Don reached out beyond his familial obligations and purposefully cared for other residents.

“He would take time to talk with several of the residents and would patiently listen to their various stories and concerns,” said Scott.

When his wife and son passed away, he transformed his grief into a selfless service of others, becoming a volunteer for the very units which his loved ones were cared for.

“After my beautiful wife and devoted son passed away, volunteering took away the pain and suffering and now only joy remains,” said Donald. “As my darling wife always said, the greatest gift you can give someone is the gift of time.”

Don faithfully appears on the units each day, greeting staff and touching the lives of residents. He bakes bread on the unit every week, filling the entire space with the comforts of home with its warm, delicious aroma. He reads to residents and buys them special items to bring moments of pleasure and porters residents to unit events and appointments. He also alerts staff when something is wrong in a kind and gentle manner.

The greatest pleasure Don gets out of his service is the knowledge the residents are not going to face the day alone. For Don, he feels the worst thing to happen would be to face eternity alone. He says he gives because he can, and he has so much to be thankful for. He believes he gets way more out of his time and service to others than residents get in return.

## Dr. Marc Cherniwchan, MD Emergency Department Grey Nuns Community Hospital, Edmonton

Like so many of Covenant Health's physicians, Dr. Marc Cherniwchan is a dedicated professional who keeps up with leading-edge medical advances in order to achieve the best possible outcome for patients.

Yet for Dr. Cherniwchan, medical advances may begin as a science, but it is the human endeavours that make all the difference. His devotion, knowledge, zest for getting to the root of the illness and sincerity has touched the hearts of patients and staff.

"Many people trust him fully and have a great deal of faith in him because he takes time to do whatever needs to be done," said Tasneem Ali, RN.

Dr. Cherniwchan says his compassion has been inspired by his coworkers in internal medicine and Pastoral Care and their work motivates him to focus on having more meaningful interactions with patients, staff and everyone at the Grey Nuns. These relationships feed his passion for practicing emergency medicine.

"What I love most about emergency medicine is that it cares for and treats everyone from every walk of life, and in any medical situation—from childbirth to palliative care. In fact, we just delivered two babies in emergency in the last few weeks," adds Dr. Cherniwchan enthusiastically.

When he's not delivering babies, Dr. Cherniwchan also works as a psychology extender, devotes his time to working collaboratively with the Quality Assurance Committee and holds a position with the Alberta Medical Association, where he supports and nurtures his physician colleagues after they've experienced a crisis.

On top of all of that, he was a key player in the annual comedy rounds at Christmas, he's initiated the meaningful artwork hung by local artists on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, and he worked to improve understanding throughout the hospital by leading interdepartmental rounds so that physicians could get to know one another and put faces to names rather than pager numbers.

Yet, with all his dedication to research, quality assurance, his coworkers and the hospital community, perhaps Dr. Cherniwchan is "Most regarded for his thorough assessments and incredible ability to make sure every patient or staff member he meets throughout his day, feels cared about," said Shelly Buchan, Emergency Department Manager. "Simply put, his eye-to-eye contact, unhurried mannerism and quiet confidence are how Dr. Cherniwchan cares for the whole person, in mind, body and spirit."

## Environmental (Housekeeping) St. Joseph's General Hospital, Vegreville

St. Joseph's General Hospital's housekeeping team keeps the people we serve at the centre of all we do, with unwavering care and concern along the way.

"The cleanliness throughout the whole hospital is noticeable to everyone who comes through our door," said nominator Charlotte Ewanowich. "Whether it's the dialysis unit, the maintenance area, our kitchen or administrative offices, everything is spotless."

Because of their compassion for our patients, this team goes beyond their assigned responsibilities. Regardless of how many times that day they've mopped up a patient area, or scrubbed down a room, the hard work and pride this team takes in making St. Joseph's safe for everyone is remarkable.

This team goes about their work with delight and always takes an extra moment to talk or visit with those in need. They also cheerfully help direct families and visitors if they're not sure exactly where they are going. This forward-thinking attitude is pervasive and serves the whole hospital well.

"Team members will do anything for patients," said Randy Ropchan, the Team Lead. "In fact, it seems that many patients often confide more in the person cleaning their room than their physicians, primarily because the patients willingly share their worries or concerns with the housekeeper or often have to ask them for help if they've dropped something and need a hand picking it up."

Listening carefully and showing empathy, the housekeeping team goes well beyond the mop and pail.

For example, recently this smaller site was near capacity and emergency was extremely busy. Realizing the needs of the vulnerable people in the waiting room, and seeing that one patient was being moved out of emergency, a housekeeper looked ahead, anticipated the need and asked if she could go ahead and clean up that patient area so the area was ready to receive the next patient.

"Our success is measured by the simple things," concluded Randy. "Regardless of all the extra things we do, I'm most proud of the team when visitors comment that this is the cleanest hospital they've ever been in. And this is a 1963 facility which still has a lot of original flooring. Boy, can it shine like a new penny!"

## Rev. Jim Culham Chaplain Our Lady of the Rosary Hospital, Castor

“When Jim moved to Castor five years ago, he had big shoes to fill,” said Marilyn Weber, Executive Director. “He became the first dedicated Chaplain at Our Lady of the Rosary Hospital in Castor after the Sisters departed.”

Jim has a special way with people and readily shares his personal gifts of music and song. He leads church services at the hospital and sing-a-longs with the long-term care residents. Not only does Jim support patients and residents who are in the hospital, he visits people in their homes and is a daily visitor to the local coffee table, where he connects with the community through “his coffee shop ministry,” added Marilyn.

His compassionate work finds him doing errands for people or residents who cannot do them themselves. He even drove a resident to a specialist appointment in Red Deer, as the resident didn’t have any family to take them.

Jim proclaims this compassionate work for older people is exactly what he discovered he wanted to do when he grew up. At seventy-some years young, Jim says that the closer he gets to his own eternity, the more he enjoys encouraging others on their own journey.

A retired social worker, Jim is invaluable in assisting families, patients, residents, staff and physicians in making appropriate care decisions in many difficult situations. His positive disposition and friendly greetings make everyone feel important.

In addition to his day-to-day pastoral care, Jim also travels to China every year to teach English and spread the Good News.

When asked how he does everything with such empathy, Jim grows quiet and shares that compassion is about feeling—feeling another’s heartbeat or feeling what they feel.

Jim certainly feels there’s a difference in a faith-based hospital. After serving in a similar capacity in Red Deer and also currently sharing his time in Hanna, Jim knows that people in Castor and those at Our Lady of the Rosary Hospital anticipate and welcome his visits.

## Nenita Sharkey Health Care Aide St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital, Edmonton

Everyday, Nenita Sharkey puts the Golden Rule into action on the palliative care unit at St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital.

“When I talk to patients and care for them, I just put myself in their shoes,” says Nenita. “I often think, if I was near the end of my life, what would I want? How would I want to spend my time?”

And that's how Nenita provides her steadfast compassionate care to patients and their families.

Nenita also shows the upmost compassion for others with her fun loving attitude and cheerful disposition. She is an attentive listener and is often smiling and spending time with patients.

“Nenita always goes above and beyond to comfort the elderly and frail. She knows her role and does excellent assessments,” said Marilyn Snow. “She always aware of her patients' needs. For example, if she's washing them and finds that the patient is short of breath, Nenita will report it immediately and get the patient the care they need.”

Thinking about the needs of others also makes Nenita a great mentor for new staff members. She's an excellent role model and very good coach. She can anticipate questions and knows where to direct new staff to get more information if she doesn't know the answer herself. Her love for palliative care and skills are also shared with students as well.

For the past 13 years, Nenita has reflected the power of love, hope and caring commitment to her faith as she encourages others through their workday. She promotes self-care as much as possible and always praises others for a job well done.

St. Joseph's Palliative Unit is blessed that Nenita has chosen our hospital to share her gifts in caring for others at the fragile phase of the end of a person's life.