Celebrating Excellence

Nominations for the 15th annual Cornerstone Awards will be accepted from November 12, 2007 to January 11, 2008. Since 1994, Hamilton Health Sciences' prestigious Cornerstones have been awarded annually to exceptional individuals and groups in our community whose exemplary leadership and generosity have enhanced health care in our hospitals.

Any member of the community or staff member can submit a nomination. Nominees are judged on their exceptional commitment to the values of the hospital and health care in general. Contributions of individuals must go above and beyond what is expected of them in their professional roles in support of the hospital. Outstanding proven leadership, innovation and generosity are other attributes considered during judging.

You may download nomination forms on the Hamilton Health Sciences Internet or Intranet or pick up forms at all hospital information desks or at the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation office beginning in early November.

For more information about the Cornerstone Awards or for help submitting a nomination, please contact Lynda Henriksen at the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation office at extension 47007 or Melissa Macdonald in Public Relations at ext. 76090.

Save the date for the Hamilton Health Sciences gala: February 9, 2008

Journey through the four seasons of the Parisian calendar during Saisons de Couture—achicoisserie featuring spectacular entertainment and seasonal cuisine.

This annual gala has become one of Hamilton’s most-anticipated events, with proceeds to support the New Investigator Fund for seed research.

To purchase advance tickets or for further information please contact Michelle Houghton at extension 76871.

Safety at its best — Patient Safety Specialists Sue Anne McAlpine (right) and Carole Caron (back) review deaths and adverse events at Hamilton Health Sciences. They collaborate with physicians and other staff like Jane Garner, Nurse Practitioner, Hematology/Oncology ward at the Henderson (sitting) and Ann VanderBerg, Chaplain (left), to discover if an adverse event may have contributed to a death.

New role to improve patient safety and prevent future adverse events

Sadly, adverse events happen in hospitals everywhere. These unintended injuries or complications that arise from health care management errors can result in disability, prolonged hospital stay or death. Hamilton Health Sciences has implemented a number of initiatives to improve patient safety; reduce potential preventable deaths; and advance the overall quality of care across our sites. The newest initiative, which began in early October, is to review all adult deaths that occur at HHS to discover if adverse events and/or compromised quality of care played a part in the deaths and what can be done to address systemic quality issues and prevent future adverse events (Pediatrics has its own protocol for reviewing deaths).

Carole Caron and Sue Anne McAlpine are the two Patient Safety Specialists charged with the important role of reviewing all adult deaths in our Emergency Departments and inpatient units. Both have an extensive background in nursing and a great desire to improve patient safety.

“To advance patient safety, hospitals must take a non-punitive approach to discovering what went wrong in the health care system, rather than who did something wrong. It’s about what leads to harm and what can be done to prevent future adverse events (Pediatrics has its own protocol for reviewing deaths).”

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“When reviewing deaths and adverse events, Carole and Sue Anne focus on discovering what went wrong in the health care system, rather than who did something wrong. It’s a non-punitive approach to discovering what leads to harm and what can be done to redesign the system.

“This innovative initiative is just one small part of an amazing patient safety movement at Hamilton Health Sciences,” said Teresa Smith, Assistant Vice President Quality Patient Safety and Clinical Resource Management. “This initiative combined with our Patient Safety Triads, Patient Safety Leadership Walkarounds, Medication Reconciliation, Occurrence Reporting, and all of the other patient safety measures we’ve put into place, demonstrates Hamilton Health Sciences’ strong commitment to improving patient safety.”
On September 24, more than 70 social workers from Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Joseph’s Healthcare and St. Peter’s Hospital attended a conference called Social Work in Health Care: Leadership and Research Day. The conference was sponsored by the Office of Integrated Research at Hamilton Health Sciences, through the Health Professional Research Development Fund and was organized by HHS Social Work.

During the morning session, participants listened to speaker Karen Nelson, who is Chief of Social Work Practice and Director of Spiritual Care at the Ottawa General Hospital. Karen is also the Vice President of the Ontario Association of Social Workers. In the afternoon, workshops on evidence-based practice, qualitative research methods and social justice issues were offered.

With more than 30 years experience in social work, Karen Nelson has seen the health care landscape change over the years. This includes the impact of downsizing and restructuring in the 1990s, an increased focus on financial viability of every profession in health care, and shortened lengths of stay in hospitals. Each of these changes has affected the role of social workers and all health professionals in health care.

Karen presented the results of several studies that indicated the key roles of social workers are not fully understood. Although powerful advocates for patients and families, social workers have been slow to assert their own value. Often there are misconceptions about the overlapping roles of social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and clergy.

“If people don’t know what you do, you might find yourself left out of planning, funding and the organization of health care,” said Karen. “Social workers are involved in many aspects of health care. Our role in facilitating discharges by dealing with the psychosocial and resource issues makes us not only cost effective, but critical to quality care.”

“The presentation was excellent,” said Connie Belrose, a social worker at McMaster Children’s Hospital. “It was very good in terms of helping social workers become more assertive in our role and to be able to specify to other clinicians our role and the relevancy of it.”

Karen’s presentation also focused on the need to bring research into the practice environment. “We have not done enough to measure what we do. We need more practice-based research to see if what we’re doing is working or if we could do something better.” A research-based culture provides opportunities for teamwork, collaboration, mentoring and innovation.

She also stressed the importance of taking on leadership roles. “Over the years, there has been less opportunity for formal leadership roles, which is why I encourage everyone to take on informal leadership roles,” said Karen. We need to create our own leadership opportunities through projects, committees, mentoring and teaching.

“Karen’s challenge to Social Workers was to articulate the depth and scope of our practice not only through education and leadership but also by bringing research into the practice environment,” said Lori Issenman, Chief of Social Work Practice, Hamilton Health Sciences. “The role of Social Work in Health care is fundamental, not only to patient well being and safety, but also to the need of the hospital to provide efficient, effective and compassionate care.”

In September 2007, Hamilton Health Sciences Volunteer Association food service areas were designated as Eat Smart! certified and received the Eat Smart! Award of Excellence. Celebrations were held at the General, Henderson and Chedoke site food service locations. A celebration was held at McMaster University Medical Centre earlier this year in May 2007. Food service areas operated by the HHS Volunteer Association and certified as Eat Smart! include: Atrium Café (Henderson), Barton Bean (General), Corner Café (McMaster), Hummingbird Café (Juravinski), Marketplace on Main (McMaster), Marketplace on Victoria (General), and Evel Oasis and Wilco Coffee Shops (Chedoke).

The Eat Smart! program, an initiative of the Ontario government, is operated by the City of Hamilton as part of Ontario’s Healthy Workplace Cafeteria Program. For areas to be certified they must meet the standards of the program including: use of trans fat free oils for cooking; low fat mayonnaise; sour cream and cottage cheese; sandwiches made with whole and multigrain breads; and the daily availability of healthy meal and snack options.

In 2004 the HHS Volunteer Association began the Good For You program which identifies healthy choices with a green sticker. Items marked as Good For You meet the standards of Canada’s Food Guide for Healthy Eating. The goal was to develop a program that was easy for customers and offered a variety of different options for people on the go. The program has been very successful with new items being added regularly to expand the line.
Man's arm saved and rehabilitated at Hamilton Health Sciences

While riding his motorcycle on the Lincoln Alexander Parkway just two days after his 30th birthday, Joe Ciofani was thinking about how great his life had become. He was in great physical health, running 30 km a week, and he was enjoying his work as a tradesman. He had life right where he wanted it. Suddenly, he was forced to swerve his bike after he noticed the pot holes in the road ahead were quickly approaching. At the last second, he hit the rear brake and almost slid under a car. He twisted his bike to bring it back up, and his arm smashed through the windshield of the car, tearing it apart.

Joe was rushed to Hamilton General Hospital where surgeon Nick Strumus performed 10 hours of surgery to repair extensive damage to his arm. Joe needed 15 units of blood and five of plasma. "The list is short of areas that weren't damaged in his arm," said Nick. "He basically had one blood vessel left. But he wasn't dying so we had time to fix some of the damage, rather than amputate."

"I'm so grateful Dr. Strumus decided to try and save my arm," said Joe. "He could have decided it wasn't possible, but instead he said 'that's my job' and did what he could to repair it."

After spending two weeks in hospital, Joe moved back to his parents' home. He couldn't work as a tradesman, play hockey, run or exercise at the gym anymore; he literally couldn't move his arm. "I couldn't even do simple things anymore," said Joe. "It was really hard psychologically. I had life by the horns, but then it was almost taken away."

Fifteen months later, Joe now receives weekly stellate ganglion blocks at the Pain Management Centre at Hamilton General Hospital. These injections in his neck block nerve impulses to his arm, which temporarily relieves pain so he can participate in physiotherapy in the Hand Clinic also located at the General.

Since his first surgery, Joe has had three more surgeries to reduce scar tissue in his arm. "Scars tissue is our enemy because the tendons won't glide if there is lots of scarring," said Tara Packham, Occupational Therapist in the Hand Clinic.

Everyday, Joe works to get the movement and feeling back in his arm and hand. However, there is only so much he can do until his nerves grow back. At a regrowth rate of 1 mm a day, it could be another six months before they have all regenerated.

"I try to keep the muscles active because if the nerve comes back, then the muscles will be strong," said Joe. Until recently, he also wore a Continuous Passive Motion (CPM) device to keep his joints moving and prevent scar tissue. "It helped because I didn't need to think about moving my fingers myself, the CPM kept them moving for me."

Joe has a lot of movement back in his arm, but still struggles to move some of his fingers. His next goal is to try to touch his thumb to all of his fingers, but for now he can only touch his thumb to his index finger and almost to his middle finger. "Joe has done extremely well, considering how damaged his arm was," said Tara. "He came in from day one saying 'I'm here to recover.'"

"I stay positive most of the time, but knowing how long it will take to get better can be frustrating," said Joe. "But everyone in the Hand Clinic always reassures me that things will happen and to be patient. They're excellent here. I have so much gratitude for everyone who has helped me at Hamilton Health Sciences. I can say thanks, but that somehow doesn't feel like enough."

A job well done

At the annual Canadian Association of Pediatric Health Centres (CAPHC), Ruth Lee won 2nd place for her poster entitled "Embracing safer process of care and medication practice through medication." The poster was co-authored by several of Ruth's colleagues at McMaster Children's Hospital. Linda Kostrewa, Program Director, McMaster Children's Hospital (left) and Ruth Lee, Chief of Nursing Practice, were two of the delegates attending the conference from McMaster Children's Hospital.

Finding strength — After coming to Hamilton Health Sciences for numerous surgeries and a great deal of therapy, Joe Ciofani’s arm is recovering from a motorcycle accident that happened more than a year ago.

Hamilton Health Sciences energy upgrades produce leaner, greener hospitals

Hamilton Health Sciences, the second largest hospital system in Ontario, is operating more efficiently and with less impact on the environment thanks to a pioneering energy conservation and infrastructure renewal program.

Publicly funded hospitals face a challenging array of priorities. They must provide top-notch patient care while controlling costs, keeping infrastructure up-to-date, and promoting environmental stewardship. "Our renewal program is reducing energy costs, and allowing us to use the resulting savings to fund infrastructure improvements," said Alan Olinyk, Director of Engineering. "It is streamlining operations, reducing our environmental footprint, and improving patient care."

The best-of-all-worlds solution is made possible through the expertise of Johnson Controls, a building efficiency company specializing in creating comfortable, safe and sustainable environments. Johnson Controls has a presence in more than 40 per cent of North American hospitals.

Hamilton Health Sciences' project is the largest collection of energy conservation contracts implemented by any Canadian hospital. Environmental improvements include building controls with energy management features, lighting upgrades, high efficiency boilers and chillers, and new air handlers with variable frequency drives that optimize energy use. The upgrades will save $48 million in energy over ten years, significantly cutting Hamilton's annual greenhouse gas emissions. The estimated impact of this change is the equivalent of planting 5.5 million trees.

Improvements will come at no long-term cost to Hamilton Health Sciences. Energy savings will pay back the project's entire cost within 10 years. Johnson Controls has guaranteed the savings based on its modeling of thousands of similar facilities world wide.

One of the project's components that is having a direct impact on patient safety is the replacement of medical air and vacuum systems to improve reliability in clinical areas. Upgrades to air handling units will include anti-microbial coatings that can reduce airborne infections within the hospital.

"As a health care facility, we seek to provide the best patient care possible. This initiative demonstrates our commitment to that goal as well as to our shared environment and our future," said Murray Glendining, Executive Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Hamilton Health Sciences. "It is about doing the right thing for our hospital and for the environment."

Work on the improvements is underway at McMaster University Medical Centre, Henderson General Hospital and Chedoke Hospital, and energy upgrades to Hamilton General Hospital are expected to begin in the near future. Although the majority of the work will be completed by mid-2009, Hamilton Health Sciences is already enjoying energy savings.
Help contribute to this year’s United Way Campaign goal of $100,000

Empowering joint replacement patients at 10th Annual Day in Arthroplasty

The 10th Annual Day in Arthroplasty, a non-profit community education initiative hosted by the Hamilton Arthroplasty Group, and Hamilton Health Sciences’ Henderson Hospital, took place on Friday, October 12, at the Liuna Station Banquet and Convention Centre.

The aim of the conference is to empower people suffering from arthritis to make informed decisions about their own health care. The day is comprised of a series of presentations from all members of the health care team involved in caring for total joint replacement patients, including: orthopedic surgeons, anesthetists, geriatricians, nurses, and allied health professionals. Patients who have previously undergone total hip and knee replacement surgery also share their experiences and feedback.

Over the last nine years, the Annual Day in Arthroplasty has touched the lives of more than 7,000 people, with attendance growing each year. It is an opportunity for patients and their families to interact with the entire hip and knee replacement health care team.

“The Arthroplasty group at Hamilton Health Sciences is unique in many ways,” said Brenda Flaherty, Executive Vice President, Clinical Operations. “It is distinguished as being one of the best programs of its kind in the province, if not the country.”

“Commitment to patient education and innovation has a lot to do with this program becoming one of the best. As a pacesetter in its field, the Arthroplasty team is providing the highest standard of patient care while ensuring that our patients are both knowledgeable and well cared for at every stage of their treatment.”

The Ontario government has recognized Hamilton Health Sciences’ excellence in this highly specialized service and has provided support as Hamilton Health Sciences takes a leadership role in developing a larger, regional program.

Get in to it! – Hamilton Health Sciences’ United Way Campaign launched at all sites at the end of October. Jim Johnston, Plumber, picked up a United Way pledge form and snacked on a United Way cookie during the kick off at the Henderson.

November is United Way month at Hamilton Health Sciences. Each year, staff members show their commitment to the United Way in a variety of ways. This year, many staff participated in Red & White day and, as always, payroll deduction has been a popular donation option.

The United Way is celebrating 80 years of service, and in honour of this, our goal at Hamilton Health Sciences is to raise $100,000 for essential community services in Burlington and Greater Hamilton.

As an incentive to donate to the United Way through the highly successful payroll deduction program, each dollar contributed via payroll deduction will earn staff members a chance to win a $5,000 travel voucher or other great prizes such as paid vacation time, or free parking for a year. One digital camera at each site will be available for people who do not – we do miss that drop in our ocean.” said Paul. “For those of you who give, let’s try to make that drop a little bigger,” said Paul. “For those of you who do not – we do miss that drop in our ocean.”

Last year’s United Way Campaign at Hamilton Health Sciences raised $95,305 to support dozens of agencies affiliated with the United Way. In fact, Hamilton Health Sciences was awarded the “Quantum Leap” recognition for most improved contribution.

To donate through payroll deduction or to find out more about events at your site, please click on the United Way icon located on the home page of the Intranet, or contact your site administrator for more information. Also see www.uwaybh.ca for information on what the United Way does for our community.

The Insider welcomes comments and suggestions. Contact us at: publicrelations@hhsc.ca or (905) 521-2100 ext. 75387. Visit us online at www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HAMILTON HEALTH SCIENCES

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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Birthday bash – hundreds of staff members celebrated Hamilton General Hospital’s 125th Birthday on October 29. The special event was commemorated with, chili, birthday cake, a slide show, and a game of General Feud (a spin off of the popular game show Family Feud.) The Stroke Busters team won the game and won a free pizza party. From left: Dr. Brian VanAdel, Kirsten Marx, Shelley Maguire, Christine Cziraki, Carol Pereira, and Pati Leonard, General Feud host.