

Meeting demand for health care with innovation

How VON's home and community care transforms lives with the support of donors



With support from VON, Nova Scotians can get the help they need to age at home. PHOTO CREDIT: VON Canada

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More than 90 per cent of Nova Scotians want to age in the comfort and familiarity of their own homes. Multiple surveys have told us so. Common sense tells us the same. Having worked long and hard, today's retirees want to enjoy the benefits of their third act.

Aging at home is not without its challenges, but with appropriate supports many people are able to live safely in their own homes for the remainder of their lives. They might require help with meal

preparation, transportation, home maintenance or personal care. Or they might require ongoing or episodic community nursing to get them through periods of illness or disability.

That's where home and community care has the power to change lives. With effective supports, Nova Scotians can get the help they need at home and reduce their risk of entering hospitals or transitioning to long-term care sooner than necessary.

VON, a registered charity, is the largest not-for-profit provider of home and community care in Nova

Scotia, working behind the scenes to improve quality of life for older adults and people with health challenges or disabilities.

"VON has been of immense help over the course of my 43-year career as a family doctor," says retired family physician Dr. George Burden of Elmsdale. "They care for seniors and keep them out of long-term care facilities. They help recovering patients in their own beds and assist those who are terminally ill to pass peacefully at home."

Dr. Burden believes VON's services are crucial to a strong healthcare system. "They've been my eyes and ears for patients recuperating at home, monitoring vitals, dressing wounds, checking for infection. The keen eye of a VON nurse often spots issues before they become a major problem."

Since opening its first Halifax office in 1898, VON has stayed true to its belief that everyone who needs home care and community support should receive it, regardless of financial circumstances. What has changed is the demand on the healthcare system as a whole.

"Given the unique challenges of our healthcare system today and the population's increased desire to age in place, we are looking

at new tools and new models of care to help us keep up with the demands of an aging and growing population," says Carol Curley, VON's Regional Executive Director, North and East Zones. "Only by evolving and innovating can we ensure that as many Nova Scotians as possible are able to heal and age in place, surrounded by loved ones in their own homes and communities."

In addition to government funding, VON as a registered charity also relies on grants, donations and co-pay service fees. The organization is actively fundraising for new technology that will enable them to reach more people in need of home and community care.

VON Connect is a much-needed digital solution that will eliminate outdated, time-consuming paper-

and-pen processes. It uses software and electronic medical records to record information, provide referrals and track outcomes.

Complemented by new and innovative models of care, VON Connect will benefit not only clients and their families but also make life easier for VON staff and ultimately help to relieve some of the pressure on other areas of the province's healthcare system (primary care, hospitals and long-term care).

"VON in Nova Scotia does a fabulous job of taking pressure off an overburdened health system," says Dr. Burden. "I would urge everyone to support their efforts in keeping our population healthy, well and out of hospital or nursing homes for as long as possible."

DID YOU KNOW?

VON provides much more than home nursing care. The organization offers nursing clinics in Pictou, Yarmouth, Cape Breton, Halifax and Dartmouth, and delivers community support services across the province. Their Adult Day Programs support the health and wellbeing of Nova Scotians living with dementia and other disabilities. They deliver over 30,000 frozen meals each month to ensure isolated and frail seniors can remain well fed and in their own homes. To learn more about how VON Connect will benefit Nova Scotians, visit von.ca/von-connect.