

Home care is health care

VON supports the mental, cognitive and physical health of Nova Scotians

CONTRIBUTED BY VON

What does health care look like to you? Maybe it's a trip to the emergency room, a visit to your doctor or nurse practitioner, or a session with a physiotherapist.

Clients of VON (Victorian Order of Nurses), Nova Scotia's largest not-for-profit provider of home and community care, know that health care also includes the services that VON brings to those in need.

VON provides in-home care and community-based programs to clients of all ages; people experiencing chronic health issues, disabilities or medical setbacks.

"Whatever the client needs, our goal is the same," says Derrick Babin, VON's senior manager of community support services in Nova Scotia. "We want to provide them with supports that enable them to live each day in a meaningful way and in the best possible health."

IN-HOME CARE FOR COMPLEX NEEDS

Chris Roberts and Esther Blair are the parents of 23-month-old Elena, a curly-haired toddler who brings joy to those around her. At their 20-week ultrasound, the new parents discovered Elena had a congenital diaphragmatic hernia.

When Elena was born,

she was transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit. She was then put on artificial life support, developed a brain bleed, underwent dialysis and surgery, and spent months in hospital.

Today, despite the demands of caring for a child with complex medical needs, Chris and Esther aren't just surviving, they're thriving. Chris has a fulfilling career, and the couple makes time to eat well, exercise and fill their own buckets so that they can be the best caregivers for Elena.

VON's trained nurses provide in-home care, monitoring Elena's medical equipment and allowing her parents to sleep.

"We are able to cope with all this so well because of this ecosystem we have, where VON comes in and gives us that break we need," says Chris.

For clients who can't shop or prepare meals, VON's Meals on Wheels (MOW) program can make the difference between aging at home and going to hospital or long-term care.

"We deliver affordable meals to people who can't cook for themselves and might not have others to help with this essential daily task," says Babin. "These meals provide much-needed nourishment, increased energy and better health. And our friendly staff

and volunteer drivers offer a safety check for those who live alone."

VON client Alice was diagnosed with Huntington's disease, a neurodegenerative disorder. Her tailored VON care plan included in-home nursing, respite for her son (her caregiver) and a tailored MOW program.

At increased risk of choking, Alice was provided with ready-made, texture-modified food. The MOW team also worked with nursing staff to meet her nutritional needs, as the condition can require a calorie-dense diet.

WITH DONOR SUPPORT VON CAN SERVE MORE PEOPLE IN NEED

For clients who are mobile, VON offers further community supports, including a popular Adult Day Program (ADP). This thoughtfully designed program gives clients a safe environment to participate in therapeutic activities while staying socially connected to peers. It also frees up time for busy family caregivers.

VON client Linda, 78, had a stroke this past spring. Her speech and mobility were affected, but Linda was determined to get her independence back. Linda's daughter discovered VON's Enhanced ADP, suited to adults over age 55 who live with dementia, chronic illness,



Chris Roberts and Esther Blair with their daughter Elena Blair-Roberts. PHOTO CREDIT: Contributed (Lacy Hill Photography)

disability or social isolation.

Linda was nervous about interacting with a new group. "I knew that I wasn't the same as I was before," she says. "I was really worried about my speech and about speaking to a crowd." It does help me when people ask me questions, and I try to answer as best I can, and I am noticing a difference in my speech."

Today, Linda enjoys her visits and has seen great progress.

Linda also benefits from group exercises. "We all do exercises together. It's fun and we all laugh," she says.

Monique Natividad, ADP Coordinator, says that when Linda first came to the program, she used a walker and the elevator.

"Today, she arrived using

only a cane, and she took the stairs," says Natividad with excitement.

With donor support, VON — a registered charity — can make it possible for more Nova Scotians to access life-changing services like Adult Day Programs, Meals on Wheels and transportation to appointments.

"With these programs and services, our clients live on their own terms in the comfort of their homes, where they want to be," says Babin. "Home and community care is health care—we are proud to support the mental, cognitive and physical health and wellbeing of the people who need us the most."

To learn more about VON and the services they provide, visit: <https://von.ca/en>