

Our People Story

.....
Spring 2021





Together, we do amazing things every day

For the fourth year in a row, we've been named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, one of Alberta's Top 70 Employers and one of Canada's Top Employers for Young People. And we're honoured that for the third year, we've been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers.

We're a diverse team of staff, physicians and volunteers working together to deliver quality healthcare to Albertans. To learn more about how we serve Albertans, visit ahs.ca.



**Alberta Health
Services**

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.



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Our People Story | Spring 2021

This AHS document

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Dr. Verna Yiu is President & CEO of AHS.

Together, we can rise to meet any challenge

It's been over a year since the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Alberta, and I would like to express how proud I am to lead such remarkable teams who have met every challenge during these extraordinary times. We've always known, even before COVID-19, how special our people are at AHS. By working together, we continue to accomplish so much every day as we support and care for Albertans. Our response to this ongoing pandemic underscores the importance of the work we do and how well we work together as a team.

We've looked out for one another and continued to be innovative, resilient and compassionate. Over this time, we have adapted and evolved to meet

this global threat. Most recently, with the launch of our vaccine rollout, I've watched staff and physicians go above and beyond to keep each other, our patients and our communities safe. Since the start of the pandemic, we've successfully launched Canada's first online assessment tool for COVID-19, which was later used nationally and internationally by other healthcare systems. We set up assessment centres, lab testing, contact tracing, supported high-risk groups, managed community concerns, outbreaks, procurement, staff redeployment, and standardized guidelines for both personal protective equipment, and infection prevention and control. We did all of this while continuing to live our AHS' values of compassion,

Verna's words

"This is going to be a challenging time for all of us. As an organization, we're making COVID-19 the top priority, and we will pause some other projects to give us capacity to focus on the pandemic response. During this time, I encourage everyone to take good care of one another. This will be a marathon, not a sprint, so please find ways to unplug, get rest and recharge. This is crucial. We need to all pull together in order to be at our best."

—Thanking staff at the beginning of the pandemic

"We have talked as a leadership team about how some days are just plain hard. Not every day will be an up day for every member of the team. Some days we need to support those around us who are stressed, tired, or simply at capacity. Other days, we need to let others help us. So if you're having an occasional down day, please take our support, and know that we are here for you, and for each other. Take strength from each other; share your up days, and let's be there for each other as we forge ahead."

—Offering support to staff during challenging pandemic times

"By learning about each other and celebrating our diversity as a province and as an organization, we can create an inclusive healthcare system that is welcoming and respectful of all cultures, traditions and beliefs. We all have a role to play in addressing racism and creating a workplace that is free of intolerance. Together, let's continue to build our commitment to nurturing and growing relations between AHS and Indigenous peoples."

—Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day

accountability, respect, excellence and safety.

We know that when our people are engaged in the work they do, patient care improves. And this pandemic has once again proven that. We make every effort to listen and respond to the diverse voices in our organization to support us through this challenging time and continue to create a place where our people feel safe, healthy, valued and included.

As we move forward into the coming weeks and months, I am extremely thankful for all of you. Thank you for being there for each other and your patients. We can look ahead knowing that the pandemic has tested our fortitude, our ingenuity and our humanity like nothing

has before—and we've emerged a better and stronger team.

I encourage you to take some time to read the stories here of the great care our people provide to Albertans and each other.

I thank you for everything you do each and every day. I look forward to continuing our journey, together.



—Dr. Verna Yiu
President and Chief Executive Officer

“Congratulations to Connect Care Wave 2 for a successful launch. You have worked tremendously hard to make this happen, and while we know every launch will be challenging, this one was under more trying circumstances than we could have ever imagined. Once again, we have just witnessed the power and resiliency of our AHS teams. You continue to prove you are innovative and passionate, and you rise to every occasion, time and time again.”

—Celebrating the launch of
Connect Care Wave 2, a shared clinical
information system that is being
rolled out

“We appreciate the hard work and dedication of the many staff involved in COVID-19 immunization planning and applaud your willingness to adapt to the quickly changing needs and priorities. The COVID-19 vaccine provides hope for all, and we thank everyone for your ongoing commitment to Albertans.”

—Thanking staff for their dedication to
immunizing Albertans

AHS Vision

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

AHS Mission

To provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

AHS Values

compassion accountability
respect excellence safety

AHS Foundational Strategies

AHS has four foundational strategies supporting our efforts to deliver safe, high-quality, patient and family-centred care to Albertans:

- **Patient First Strategy** strengthens AHS' culture and practices to ensure patients and families are at the centre of all healthcare activities, decisions and teams.
- **Our People Strategy** is about how we support each other and create a culture in which we all feel safe, healthy, valued, included, and able to reach our full potential.
- **Strategy for Clinical Health Research, Innovation & Analytics** generates, shares and uses evidence in the delivery of care to improve patient outcomes and to solve the complex challenges affecting the health system.
- **Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Strategy** focuses on making the right information available to the right people at the right time across the health system, so that providers and patients have access to complete information at the point of care and to learn from in the future.

Who we are

We are healers and helpers. We are listeners and learners. We are researchers and innovators. And we are there when you need us most. We are AHS and we are the heart of your healthcare system.

We do incredible life-changing work every day to improve the health of Albertans. Our people deliver services to those in our communities with knowledge, compassion and care. Whether it's supporting parents during the birth of their child or urgent medical care of a teenager after an accident, AHS is there to help.

As a high-performing healthcare organization, we dedicate ourselves to delivering safe, quality, patient- and family-centred care to 4.4 million Albertans in communities throughout our province. We live in various rural and urban communities working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We are comprised of over

106,000 employees, 13,000 volunteers and over 8,500 medical staff. We are physicians, nurses and healthcare aides. We are paramedics, porters and social workers. We are physiotherapists, cooks, volunteers, researchers and much, much more.

We work at 850 facilities across the province, including hospitals, clinics, urgent care centres, cancer centres, continuing care facilities, mental health facilities and community health sites. We have an extensive network of community-based services designed to assist Albertans in maintaining and/or improving their health. We share our knowledge, too, with students from colleges and universities across Alberta and Canada

who choose to receive their clinical and practical education alongside us.

We bring our own values and stories to the workplace based on our professional training and personal experiences. AHS Values and Competencies connect the rich diversity in all of us. It is these shared core values that provide us with a common understanding of what's important, and guide our actions and interactions in support of providing a workplace where we can bring their whole selves to work and provide healthcare that is truly patient focused and family-centred. We are AHS and we continue to provide the best care to Albertans, every day.

Our words



"What gives me the greatest pride right now is watching my high-functioning team do their best work. In Public Health, we've been

challenged over the past few months more than ever in responding to this global pandemic. I'm so thankful that we have a high-functioning team who can knock it out of the park when the pressure is on and the stakes are high."

—Jennifer Splaine,
area manager in Public Health



"Being a volunteer exposes you to the realities of the healthcare system. It's not just like what you see on Grey's Anatomy or any healthcare show. It's more

profound, more complex—but also more human than any of those shows portray."

—Richard Camacho, president of the University of Lethbridge Nursing Student Association, third-year Bachelor of Nursing degree. He gratefully credits his career trajectory to years of volunteering with the Friends of Chinook Regional Hospital



"We didn't really know what to expect (at the start of the pandemic). Every day we showed up to work was different, as everyone was learning what life was going

to look like in the pandemic. We had such a unique circumstance, because we were going to be enforcing the Public Health Act in a way we weren't used to. It all seems so normal now. It's hard to remember what the transition looked like, or what it was like before."

—Ryan Halford, protective services team lead at the Peter Lougheed Centre reflecting on when the pandemic first began



AHS is made up of faces and places—people with a passion for healthcare who work in five zones across the province.

OUR PRIORITY IS THE HEALTH OF ALL ALBERTANS

- AHS has five geographical zones of care—South, Calgary, Central, Edmonton and North.
- These zones help AHS provide decision-making at a local level, and enable AHS to listen to and respond to local communities, local staff, and patients and clients.
- Province wide services—including emergency medical services; population and public health; Indigenous wellness core; diagnostic imaging; and quality and safety—work in cooperation with the zones to deliver care.
- AHS works at providing more community-based resources and services for Albertans, including addiction and mental health, long-term care, supportive living, palliative care and home care.



“Providing the most effective, safe patient care is something I take very seriously, and I love the diversity of my role. As respiratory therapists, we have the privilege of working with patients during all stages of life. In any given day, we can treat newborns, children, youth and adult patients—sometimes all within the same day. Respiratory therapy is a very rewarding career.”

—Michelle Lynn Cyca,
educational consultant at
Rockyview General Hospital



“You are joining a great organization, the largest healthcare organization in Canada, North America and probably the globe. As you serve Albertans, this is one organization that will give you lots of opportunities for experience and growth that you will rarely find anywhere. The sky is your limit. Take the opportunity, enjoy and make the most of it!”

—Nathan Banda, site manager, nursing,
Drumheller Health Centre, on advice for
someone starting at AHS



“It was so comforting that AHS could accommodate students like myself so quickly. (Without a practicum) we faced a lot of uncertainty about our graduation and our careers.”

—Spenser Day, a University of Alberta
grad and freshly minted
speech-language pathologist

What we do

Healthcare is what we do. We are there for our communities. We are there for each other. And our resilience and strength continues to be shown throughout this past year, no matter what comes our way.

Environmental Public Health (EPH) teams continue to respond to COVID-19 and flood recovery in the North Zone.

As they provide COVID-19 guidance and information to municipalities and conduct building inspections for flood-affected businesses, AHS EPH teams are supporting North Zone residents.

“Our staff have gone above and beyond to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the late April flooding in Fort Vermilion and Fort McMurray,” says Ashley Yu, Manager, EPH North Zone—Northwest. “They have been working closely with businesses, community partners and residents to ensure they have the information and guidance that they need.”

Megan Bourassa, Manager, EPH North Zone—Northeast, adds: “Our staff have

worked so hard across the North Zone. It’s a testament to their dedication to protecting public health.”

Providing COVID-related guidance and information has become a significant focus for EPH since the pandemic was declared. EPH staff—who are trained to respond to a pandemic—work with businesses, public facilities and municipalities. Their work includes site visits to review operations and processes as well as business continuity plans as they give guidance with regards to measures that need to be taken to minimize transmission.

“Our teams have done a great job in ensuring businesses, public facilities and community partners have the most current and accurate information to protect the health of Albertans. Our staff

excel in adapting to, interpreting and communicating changes in information.”

Yu and Bourassa also credit their teams for providing ongoing EPH flood support in Fort Vermilion and Fort McMurray. (While Yu’s teams have been supporting Fort Vermilion, Bourassa’s teams have been supporting Fort McMurray.)

EPH teams in both communities provided a boil water advisory and flood-related guidance and information where needed.

Krista Park, a Public Health Inspector from Peace River, travelled to Fort Vermilion to help with a number of needs, including building inspections.

Fort McMurray’s downtown EPH office was directly impacted by flooding; its staff have been working from home and out in

Our words



“We use simple exercises that are effective. Participants can do the exercises anywhere, without the need for any fancy equipment. Within our eight-week program,

participants really see improvements in their cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, balance, flexibility and quality of life.”

—Andrew Holosney, exercise therapist, leads a class in the Alberta Healthy Living Program’s virtual exercise program on Zoom for residents across the North Zone



“I take pride in the quality of the services that we provide—paying on time and accurately—and our customer service. I believe that our employees are important.”

—Patricia Pohlen, executive director, HR Shared Services



“Being part of a great team of passionate people whose main mission is to help others and create safe workplaces (is my greatest pride). This could not be

timelier than it is during this pandemic where health and safety is at the forefront of everybody’s minds.”

—Dr. Mircea Fagarasanu, senior program director, Workplace Health and Safety



Krista Park, an AHS Peace River Public Health Inspector, captured this photo while on deployment to Fort Vermilion in response to spring flooding.

the community.

“When more than 10,000 Fort McMurray residents were evacuated from their homes due to flooding and were given shelter in local work camps and hotels, we also deployed EPH staff to those locations

to ensure physical distancing and appropriate measures were being followed to minimize any potential COVID-19 transmission.”



“Our goal is to share what’s happening across the province and across the networks, and to highlight the partnerships, collaboration and synergy happening within each network and the collective impact of this work for the people of Alberta.”

— Tracy Wasylak, strategic clinical networks chief program officer



“We help call people who need to quarantine, and we offer swabbing for sites with outbreaks. We also report newly symptomatic residents in group homes, shelters, day cares, schools, long-term care centres and designated and supportive living.”

— Mary Ellen Hartmann, a registered nurse with Health Link, serves as a clinical manager with the COVID-19 response team, which deals with people’s questions about the virus

WE PROVIDE PATIENT- AND FAMILY-CENTRED CARE

We provide comfort and caring, perform life-saving surgery and conduct groundbreaking research.

We welcome babies into the world, help people recover from serious injuries and illness, and support them through physical, emotional and mental health challenges—at every stage of life. And, when healing is no longer possible, we provide compassionate care and support.

We promote healthy living in communities. We immunize, and prevent disease, disability and injury.

We teach, learn from our colleagues and mentor and train students from universities and colleges within Alberta, across our nation and many other countries.

We engage with people, patients and families to gain meaningful input. We work at 850 facilities located in 145 small and large communities across Alberta providing virtual care and care in:

- Emergency departments
- Urgent care centres
- Acute care hospitals
- Mental health/addiction centres
- Corrections centres
- Cancer care facilities
- Continuing care centres
- Outpatient clinics
- Public health clinics
- Schools

In 2020, AHS staff:

- Assisted in 47,112 births
- Answered over 1.85 million Health Link (811) calls
- Attended 599,529 EMS events
- Administered more than 1.43 million seasonal influenza vaccinations
- Conducted 31,547 food safety inspections
- Saw cancer patients during 715,973 visits
- Conducted 5.7 million outpatient visit
- Conducted 125,193 individual home care visits
- Oversaw 1.65 million ED visits

Why we care

We are used to providing care to Albertans, but what happens when we become the patient? After a near-catastrophic injury Kevin Iwaasa saw care from the other side and shares how he became a better nurse because of it.

After a serious spinal injury, nurse Kevin Iwaasa has returned to work in Chinook Regional Hospital's (CRH) Intensive Care Unit (ICU) with a new understanding of what patients experience and how he can make a positive difference.

His ordeal began on a warm July evening in 2017 when Iwaasa—a critical care assistant head nurse for AHS at CRH—ventured out with friends for some mountain biking on a trail near Crowsnest Pass. The plan had been to ride, go out for dinner and then head home.

Iwaasa misjudged his speed as he reached the top of a jump. He rotated in the air and crashed to the ground head-first. His bike landed on top of him. After a grueling journey through the woods on a spine-board and a quick stop at the

hospital where he worked, he was taken to Foothills Hospital in Calgary. That's where a CT scan revealed a fractured spine, an injury that doctors say came close to severing the spinal cord entirely. He needed surgery—and there was no guarantee he would ever walk again.

Thankfully, the surgery proved successful—but it was merely the first step on Iwaasa's path to recovery.

"I spent 10 days recovering in the ICU which, for an ICU nurse, is my worst nightmare," he adds with a chuckle.

"But it was actually very good; I tell people all the time the experience was really positive for me. It made me a better nurse, made me understand some of the directions we're taking AHS—patient-and family-centred care, the priorities and how

it made a difference in my stay."

After experiencing life in hospital from literally a new perspective, Iwaasa began to appreciate the importance of being 'connected' to those supporting him—which is the number-one goal of the AHS CoACT program—designed to drive collaborative care and develop a culture in which healthcare professionals work with patients and families.

When discussing what mattered to him as a patient, Iwaasa singled out the check-ins and introductions. Being forced to lay flat on his back, and in a constant fog created by medication and a concussion, he adds that the emphasis on human interaction helped tether him to the world and reduced his sense of isolation.

It's now Iwaasa's hope that his

Our words



"By having standardized, high-quality data—information that is accurate and useful—we improve decision-making and support our healthcare staff, which ultimately improves the delivery of services for our patients."

—Rhonda Fur, program director, Activity & Workload Consulting and Analytics



"I was willing to share my story in the hopes it could help somebody feel change is possible, and I've gotten a lot of positive feedback. So it feels good. Clients often say to a counsellor, 'well, you don't know what I've been through,' and I can honestly say 'yes, I know exactly what it's like, because I have been there.'"

—Jody Tomm, AHS addiction counsellor with Community Addiction & Mental Health in Olds



"It's important we make Psychological First Aid training available more broadly because it provides healthcare professionals and others more confidence in their ability to help people affected by extreme events, like what we are going through right now. But it also provides participants with the opportunity to learn about how they can make changes in their own lives and reminds them they cannot forget about taking care of themselves."

—Diane McNeil, director of Promotion, Prevention and Community Initiatives for Provincial Addiction and Mental Health



Despite lingering pain, Kevin Iwaasa has returned to mountain biking after an accident that nearly left him paralyzed.

life-changing experience can benefit his colleagues, and in turn, their patients. He's delivered presentations to his colleagues at CRH and to trauma teams in Calgary, sharing his story as a way to reinforce that they're on the right track.

Ever the optimist, he says that the lingering pain in one arm and his back is

a constant reminder, not of what went wrong, but of everything that went right. It now reminds him of why he became a nurse—and that no matter how long he's in the profession, there will always be room to grow.



"When we surveyed patients, we were told that loneliness and boredom are the common COVID-19 related challenges they have to deal with. With this

concert series, we are hoping to reduce these feelings, provide connectivity and comfort, and improve patients' hospital experiences."

—Paul Wright, manager,
Patient & Family Centred Care



"Helping my clients improve their nutrition can lead them to positive outcomes in their lives. They may experience improved strength and mobility, have more energy to perform a favourite hobby, reach a goal or gain more independence. The highlight of my day is learning that a client feels stronger because of the changes to their diet."

—Andrea Andrews, a home care dietitian

THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE SHAPE OUR ORGANIZATION

We are driven by hope, compassion and a desire to help.

Our interactions with patients, clients and their families are meaningful and rewarding in countless ways. The importance of what we do is reflected in their voices:

- **Sharing the Love: Thanking Our People:** a website where Albertans can share their appreciation for teams on the frontlines and behind-the-scenes and where employees may visit to recognize the impact their hard work is having during the pandemic.
- **Thanks For Caring:** a website featuring posts of online messages of gratitude for care or support received from any person working in any role at any AHS site.
- **Because You Cared:** a video series in which Albertans thank their care providers.

We are fuelled by knowledge, discovery, science and evidence.

AHS is shaped by the health needs of individuals, families and communities, and with the input of patients and families, as well as local, provincial and Indigenous advisory councils.

Our roots can be traced to the first clinics and hospitals in the province. We stand on more than 150 years of advances and innovations in caring for people.

We rise to a global threat

March 5, 2021, marked the one-year anniversary of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Alberta. Alberta has been a leader in the COVID-19 response from day one and we couldn't have done any of this without the support of our people.

AHS employees and physicians have responded to the challenge with a level of commitment and teamwork that continues to be truly inspiring. Every single day our people work tirelessly, going above and beyond with compassion, and that has made all the difference. AHS is committed to supporting our people in the same way, by communicating effectively, keeping them safe and supporting their mental health and well-being. Together, we continue to rise to meet any challenge.



Communicating effectively

Amongst many competing priorities, communicating effectively and transparently with our workforce has been a priority. We are all in this together, and during this time of crisis, communication is critical. We need to reach everyone, from those on the frontlines to those working remotely. We set clear expectations for actions and share evidence-based information related to COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the importance of safe work practices including proper hand hygiene, physically distancing, and staying home when sick. Regular communication with leaders and managers encourages the modeling of best practices; reinforces messaging about their accountabilities for employee health, safety, and wellness; and supports leaders in accessing resources to share with their teams.

A COVID-19 internal intranet site was established at the beginning of the pandemic, where staff received alerts when new COVID-19 information was added. The page is kept current with as much relevant information as possible.

At the start of the pandemic, Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS President and CEO, and Dr. Laura McDougall, AHS Senior Medical Officer of Health, sent a daily all-staff email update with links to videos, visuals, and compelling and engaging content to keep staff informed of the changing policies, guidelines, and protocols. Additionally, Dr. Francois Belanger, Vice President, Quality and Chief Medical Officer, and Dr. Laura McDougall, sent a daily email update to AHS medical staff. Later in the pandemic response, both email updates became weekly. These updates include resilience, wellness and mental health supports, as well as thanks from Albertans. The Provincial Medical Affairs team have also started a monthly Chief Medical Officer Physician Conversation Series dedicated to providing a personal connection and information for physicians related to COVID-19, and beyond. We also use social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) to keep our employees and the public as up-to-date as possible.

Keeping our people safe

Even before the first case of COVID-19 was detected in our province, AHS established strict health and safety protocols to ensure our workforce and patients were kept safe. This high standard continues throughout the pandemic.

Early in AHS' response, employees who had the ability to work from home within their role were asked to do so. They will continue to work from home until it is completely safe to return. In preparation for the post pandemic workplace, recognizing that our workplace will likely change, the Relaunch and Reimagine Steering Committee is researching best practices and expert advice to explore the potential for hybrid remote work models at AHS. For those who will return to the workplace, AHS has developed the COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook to support leaders and their teams as they prepare to return to or re-engage with the workplace.

Employees in roles requiring them to be onsite are being screened for COVID-19 at the beginning of each shift and half-way through the day. This assessment was developed in partnership with our Diversity & Inclusion team and was built inclusive

of multiple gender options, other than just male or female. Versions of the online COVID-19 self-assessment tool were developed for both healthcare workers and the public, and the tool was adapted across Canada and in other countries.

To keep our employees and patients safe at work, restrictions were placed on the number of family/designated supports and visitors patients could have. Virtual alternative options were developed to ensure connection and safety during this time. Our workforce has been creative in finding safe ways to help patients stay connected with their families during these necessary restrictions.

AHS established a Family Presence and Visitation Taskforce early on in the pandemic to provide direction on family presence at our sites. A guidance document was developed that continues to evolve and is reflective of the valuable

feedback we receive from staff, physicians, volunteers, family/designated support persons and visitors. Factors that contribute to the decision-making on family/support and visitation depend on public health measures, outbreak status, safety protocols and physical distancing available, and can vary site-to-site. In addition, at all of our sites, screeners are present at the entrances. They are responsible for screening all employees, family/designated support persons, and visitors with a COVID-19 assessment, and also ensure that safe PPE is provided to everyone who enters any AHS facility.

Appropriate use of PPE continues to be central to our fight against COVID-19 on the frontlines. PPE has been a priority for our workforce as it a key element in preventing the transmission of COVID-19.





Supporting mental health

The mental health of our people during this pandemic is also of utmost importance to AHS. We have made it a priority to promote the existing and new resources available to support employees with their mental health.

Resources:

- Our COVID-19 internal intranet site outlines the many resources available to support our workforce, including a resilience, wellness and mental health resource guide regularly updated as new supports become available.
- The AHS weekly all-staff emails regularly include mental health resources and supports.
- There is consistent and regular promotion of our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and the Alberta Medical Association's Physician & Family Support Program.
- Our people can use the EFAP Resilience App that offers the skills to proactively build mental health and get ahead of any adversity.
- Our people and Albertans can also subscribe to 'Text4Hope'. 'Text4Hope' is an evidence-based tool that helps people identify and adjust the negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours a pandemic might be expected to provoke.
- Our people and Albertans may subscribe to Togetherall; a free, online peer-to-peer mental health support network where individuals can discuss their lived and living experiences with mental health during the pandemic.
- Over the past year, a number of webinars were offered on various topics related to mental health.
- Our Work Safe Blog has had regular posts on a variety of mental health topics.
- The COVID-19 podcast series features a wide range of discussions and resources to support mental health based on feedback from staff and the public.
- The COVID Like to Chat Physician Wellness Zoom Room created a safe space for physicians to meet weekly and discuss wellness challenges. Learnings were captured in infographics which were shared with all frontline physicians via the weekly AHS medical staff email update. This initiative will be shared internationally at the virtual International Conference of Physician Health 2021.
- To help reduce the impact of school and day care closures, AHS temporarily updated our leave of absences policy to accommodate staff who were unable to work due to lack of child care and also asked leaders to be flexible in supporting their staff in the early days while they navigated alternate care options.



Sharing the love

Thanking our people

AHS wanted to thank our people for their unwavering dedication, hard work and compassion during this unprecedented time. We asked staff, physicians, volunteers, patients, families and all Albertans to share their thanks. And that they did. Hundreds of messages, emails and videos came pouring in from across the province, and they are shared weekly in the all-staff email updates and on our external page ahs.ca/sharingthelove.

We wanted our people to recognize the impact their hard work is having, and, hopefully, make their days a little brighter.



Our people continue to live our values and share their support for each other throughout this pandemic. These are just some of the messages of thanks from one healthcare worker to the next.

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Adaptable. Resilient. Collaborative. Dedicated. Creative. Caring. Are a few of the words that come to mind when I think of my colleagues at FMC Emergency Department. As procedures change with a greater frequency than they stay static, I am constantly impressed by my colleagues ability to quickly pivot and adapt their practice. When much is changing, the dedication to patient outcomes and sense of team has never waived. As we endure frustrations from patients and families for circumstances beyond our influence, our team has come together to bolster each other allowing us to provide the best possible support for our patients. As we have worn thin in this challenging time,

the positive side conversations, attempts at laughter and text messages of support sent after tough moments stand out. As with any family we have our moments, but in this challenging time I have seen friendships once lost rekindled, cups of coffee silently purchased for others, starbursts regularly distributed and many more actions of forgiveness, compassion and warmth. As a cohort this frontline interdisciplinary family is cohesive and truly a beacon for our community. Throughout this interdisciplinary family is a strong underpinning of cohesion, dedication to our patients. Thank you for the privilege of being a part of this family.

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I just wanted to share the awe and inspiration I felt (in March) at Health Link Edmonton as I did my first redeployment supporting the COVID-19 call centre. The whole atmosphere of Health Link was one of calm, friendliness, inviting (as a team member) and positive. This made my first day there feel very welcoming. I left with a better appreciation for the whole Health Link team of nurses and support staff in the role they play in making sure the public feels safe, secure and reassured in this time of uncertainty and anxiety. I was left with hope, pride and a sense of belonging as part of the broader AHS family. Hats off to all at Health Link.

“

Supporting our COVID-19 response is an amazing group of heroes who support our frontlines. AHS Information Management and Technology teams have worked tirelessly to ensure that our physicians, clinicians and front-line staff have the necessary clinical systems and technology required to take care of our patients. They have been instrumental from supporting assessment sites, preparing clinical systems for surge and patient care, technology required to support virtual care, COVID-19 lab test collection and resulting, along with much more. We thank all our IT teams.

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I've spent some time at the community assessment centres supporting teams and seen firsthand how amazing the nurses have been. Without these testing centres and the nurses collecting the swabs for COVID-19 testing, we would not be where we are with so many Albertans tested. Early identification/testing is key to controlling outbreaks. I've been so impressed with how many have stepped up to help out despite the fear even amongst healthcare professionals. They have acted with professionalism and compassion under very stressful conditions for the individuals and families that have been coming. These nurses deserve a medal! It's been an honor to work with them.

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I would like to share a shout out to Alberta Precision Laboratories. Team members in this department go in ALL nursing homes every day to collect blood from seniors who rely on this vital service. They then go to people's homes, these people are unable to go to the lab themselves. These wonderful and caring people are put into unknown and sometimes dangerous situations with every collection they perform. They keep coming back for more every day because they love their job and the people they work with. They are a unique bunch who most definitely deserve and need a shout out.

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“

On May 19, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced that they would be instituting COVID-19 screening of all international arrivals into Calgary and Edmonton. AHS staff stepped up to help with the airport screening, with staff being deployed from their departments to provide fellow Canadians with all the information they need to navigate COVID-19 and welcome them home with a smile. On June 30, most of the screening staff returned to their regular departments, with a few staff remaining at the Calgary International Airport. While most people enjoyed a physically-distanced Canada Day, screening teams were working hard at the airport, showing off their Canadian pride with decorated PPE. Both of AHS' airport teams have seen many Canadian citizens repatriated from abroad over the past four months. We share a “welcome home” with our fellow citizens. The smiles and sense of relief on their faces just adds to the meaning of Canada Day.

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Sharing the love *(continued)*

At the beginning of the pandemic, thanks and appreciation to healthcare workers came pouring in, and it hasn't stopped. These are just some of the messages from patients, families and many Albertans across the province.

“

Thank you all so much for fighting to keep us all safe and healthy, for sacrificing all that you do for that cause, for helping so many families stay strong, for doing the superhuman work that so many others can't, for everything that may go unappreciated. To all our frontline workers in every area, and in every capacity, a resounding THANK YOU!

”

“

Thank you to all the healthcare workers that have sacrificed so much with this terrible pandemic. You have worked and continue to work tirelessly to keep our communities safe. Your dedication and efforts are so very appreciated and really no amount of thanks can show you how grateful we should all be for keeping us safe and healthy and taking care of those that are not healthy. Healthcare workers including not just physicians and nurses, but also to our emergency responders, pharmacists, lab technicians, health professionals, administrative staff, home health aides, and everyone else are amazing! You are truly my heroes and the biggest hero is my mother who is a senior citizen still practicing medicine as a family doctor in these uncertain times. I haven't seen her in a year as she is doing everything she can to keep herself safe from any illness to protect those patients she sees on a daily basis. Thank you is just not enough.

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“

I wanted to show appreciation for your Lacombe EMS team. On April 15, I was in contact with (them and) they did a drive by with their ambulances honking and sounding their sirens for my niece's birthday, (physical) distancing style! This was so special. We want them to know how much we appreciate this. It shows they are working with their hearts and in this different and disappointing time, they are still doing whatever they can to help their community get through. We can only imagine how busy they must be and just the fact they took 10 minutes to do this will be something my family will never forget. When we look back and think about COVID-19, instead of thinking about how difficult and uncertain this time was, this is what we will think of. For that we can't thank you enough.”

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“

I got an asymptomatic test for COVID-19 done yesterday and I now have a newfound appreciation for our frontline workers and the healthcare system. I got my test results in one day. We are spearheading the world in fighting the pandemic and couldn't be more fortunate and proud to call Alberta home. I am proud to be an Albertan. Thank you so much!

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“

I was recently intubated in your ICU for almost two weeks due to COVID-19. I want to let all your frontline workers, from the cleaning and kitchen staff, porters, nurses, doctors, specialists, and everyone else that I may have missed, that I'm alive because of you. I was able to return home to my husband and son because of your expert care. The compassion shown to my family and myself was like nothing I've ever experienced. I just can't say enough good things about you all, and I hope you all stay healthy through this. We will mask, distance, and wash our hands faithfully in honour of the work you do.

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“

We have been living every family's nightmare, with a cancer diagnosis in the middle of this pandemic. You have stood beside us, provided us with not only the necessary medical needs but resources as well, and offered hope. I wish we could give each of you a hug, but know there is a circle of outstretched arms of Albertans reaching out in a virtual hug for all of you. Thank you.

”



We support our people

Now more than ever, it's important to keep people safe, especially those providing care to patients. See how AHS is committed to doing just that.

As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began, many at AHS began to look at trends across the world. In the pandemic's early days, numbers from other countries indicated healthcare workers faced a particularly high risk of infection.

With that in mind, Dr. Robyn Harrison and others from across AHS, including people from Workplace Health, and Safety and IT joined together to create the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing Dashboard. They planned to capture, analyze and share valuable data that would help keep provincial healthcare workers safe on the job.

What they found is that, since testing began, most AHS staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 are deemed to have been exposed outside the workplace.

The first confirmed COVID-19 case in Alberta came on March 5. By mid-August, 41,677 AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Public Laboratories healthcare workers had been tested. Of those, 345 (0.83 per cent) tested positive for COVID-19; but only 63 of those cases (18.3 per cent) were deemed to be from AHS, Covenant or APL workplace transmission.

"With the prevention measures that we have in place, AHS workplaces are safer than many may have expected," says Harrison, an AHS physician in Edmonton specializing in infectious diseases.

"The greatest risk for our healthcare workers is outside of the workplace." The dashboard is just one way that AHS is helping its front-line workers feel comfortable going to work, even during the

pandemic, says Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos, the medical director for AHS Workplace Health and Safety.

"It's about sharing open, transparent and accurate information about the risks to staff, and how they can stay safe," he says.

"This information is important because our front-line healthcare workers are the ones caring for COVID-19 patients, and we need to understand where the risks are."

One advantage for AHS is that it's a provincial system. "The fact that we're provincially integrated gives us great potential to harness large amounts of data and then to link that data," says Tsekrekos. Harrison agrees. "We knew we could report from Day 1 how many healthcare workers were getting tested," she adds.

While the results so far are reassuring,

Our words



"Taking care of ourselves allows us to do better in our jobs and take care of others. During times of crisis, taking care of our mental health and wellness, grounding ourselves and managing our stress is critical."

—Maribela Arruda-Block, program manager, Community Addiction and Mental Health. Since COVID-19 emerged in the province, a group of about 70 Central Zone staff start their workday with a 'mindfulness sit'



"I've been really excited for (Connect Care). I think everyone can kind of relate to the pain of not being able to find a patient chart or trying to interpret somebody's handwriting. Connect Care will help make sure everything goes smoothly; everyone's on the same page. It's time."

—Nicole Morin, dietitian at Devon General Hospital on the importance of Connect Care (new information management system) to improve the patient and staff experience



"This project improves the way EMS resources, including ambulances, are dispatched. It is more efficient, and allows for better coordination of all provincial EMS resources. While people who call 911 will notice absolutely no change, this allows us to be far more efficient in dispatching and controlling our EMS resources."

—Darren Sandbeck, senior provincial director and chief paramedic with EMS discussing the consolidation of EMS dispatch services across the province



Dr. Robyn Harrison—and others from across AHS—joined together to create the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing Dashboard, which gathers valuable data to promote pandemic safety.

“The dashboard is just one way that AHS is helping its front-line workers feel comfortable going to work, even during the pandemic,” says Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos, the medical director for AHS Workplace Health and Safety.

they do underline one thing: caution is still necessary as the province continues its relaunch.

“It reminds us that we need to be vigilant,” Harrison says. “It really highlights the importance of checking oneself for COVID-19 symptoms every day, and choosing to stay home and get tested when you have a symptom.”

Both are quick to acknowledge that

there are many, many others involved in the dashboard project.

“This is truly a team effort,” Harrison says. “This project reflects partnerships that have been carefully built over the past decade in Alberta. We are fortunate, and I am proud of the team and the work that we are doing.”



“I work with amazing people who are very dedicated, very caring and passionate about what they do and the clients we serve. Nothing is really more motivating than

knowing that you’re part of a system that helps patients get the care they need. I absolutely have to give a shout-out to my Knowledge Resource Service team for being so awesome.”

—Morgan Truax, director, Knowledge Resource Service



“We started with an advantage as one health authority, which was impressively leveraged by the critical care community during this unprecedented

pandemic. The crosstalk was rich, collaborative, and constant. This benefitted morale while also allowing for a degree of situational awareness with the capacity for resource redistribution and load levelling that is likely unparalleled worldwide.”

—Dr. Sean Spence, physician, Internal Medicine

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY RESOURCES GUIDING HOW AHS SUPPORTS OUR PEOPLE

Front-line Leader Advisory Council

This group of front-line leaders from across AHS zones and programs provides feedback on corporate initiatives, as well as input on issues concerning front-line leaders.

Alberta Clinician Professional Practice Council (ACPPC)

This group is a multidisciplinary forum for clinicians to share knowledge, experience and expertise that supports decision-making on key AHS programs.

Our People Strategy

This strategy is about creating a culture at AHS in which all employees feel safe, healthy, valued and included and able to reach their full potential.

Our People Survey and Pulse Survey

These two surveys help AHS leaders gauge, assess and continually improve workforce engagement.

Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committees

200 committees comprised of workers and managers from local AHS sites and programs promote health and safety in their workplaces.

Human Resources Contact Centre

In-house team providing support for HR inquiries by phone and through an online portal. Includes a team dedicated to resolving management-related issues for leaders.

Insite

Our internal website provides quick access to organizational updates, programs, resources, and learning opportunities.

We are diverse and inclusive

Take a look at AHS staff, physicians, volunteers and patients and you'll see all ethnicities, religions, ages, gender identities and sexual orientations. AHS continues to support diversity and inclusion in many ways, like the development of an Indigenous cultural space at a new rural hospital.

The Grande Prairie Regional Hospital (GPRH) Indigenous Engagement Committee first met in 2019 to guide the development of an Indigenous cultural space in the new AHS hospital taking shape here.

"Our overarching goal with bringing this group together was to ensure the new hospital is a culturally safe space for our Indigenous patients and families," says Stacy Greening, senior operating officer for Grande Prairie and co-chair of the committee.

Greening chairs the group with Len Auger, vice-president of the Grande Prairie

Friendship Centre. Auger works with various groups, including the Patient and Family Advisory Committee which reports to the Health Quality Council of Alberta, to advocate for greater awareness of issues facing all Albertans, including Indigenous peoples.

"The cultural space will be a comfortable gathering place for patients and families to hold traditional prayer or ceremonial activities," says Auger. "By building this space we're also encouraging cultural awareness. It's an opportunity to educate and showcase Indigenous history and traditions at our new hospital."

As work to develop the cultural space progressed, the group has sparked discussion about building greater cultural sensitivity among staff and expanding the Indigenous workforce in healthcare as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

"It quickly became clear that we needed to broaden our focus in order to effect genuine understanding and growth," adds Greening. "There's much more involved in creating a welcoming environment than just the physical surroundings."

Auger says encouraging workplace diversity in a measurable way builds

Our words



"Don't just wear your orange shirt for one day. Really do something to enact change in a positive way: smile, say hello, ask people how they are doing, or support people

who are doing something to better themselves. Support and advocate for the rights of Indigenous people and stand up to racism and discrimination. It only takes one person to make change happen."

—Geraldine Potts, mental health and addictions cultural helper with AHS, providing support to Indigenous patients and families



"By having diverse perspectives brought to the table—in a workplace where people feel valued and included—we not only come to better decisions, but we create a space where we all want to be."

—Marni Panas, program manager, Diversity and Inclusion



"I would advise anyone who feels challenged by the diversity or differences around them in our workplace to be vulnerable. Start by being very humble with any question you ask of someone who may be different."

—Karen Chinaleong-Brooks, senior patient engagement consultant, Strategic Clinical Networks™ and co-chair, AHS Ethnic Minorities Workforce Resource Group



Members of the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Indigenous Engagement Committee pose on the grounds after taking a tour of the new hospital last year.

mutual acceptance and helps patients and families feel welcome when seeking care. The Indigenous Engagement Committee includes Indigenous representatives from throughout the region — as well as the High Prairie, Peace River and Grande Cache areas — to bring together different perspectives and ideas on how best to honour Indigenous culture and history.

The need to elevate the roles of Indigenous Health liaisons and expand translation services to include more Indigenous languages have also been discussed.

The committee's success to date has also led to the creation of a separate frontline group to focus on diversity and inclusion at the GPRH and the existing

Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Hospital in Grande Prairie. Greening says the evolution of the Indigenous Engagement Committee will continue once the new hospital opens to the public, slated for later this year.

"This needs to be an ongoing partnership that continues once the new hospital is open," says Greening. "We've developed a robust team that influences how care will be delivered, fostering policies and procedures supportive of Indigenous patients and families as they travel through the healthcare system. Maintaining a committee like this over the long-term holds us accountable and helps ensure a better healthcare system for everyone."



"I get to work with people from different walks of life: from different countries to distinct parts of Canada. I think it's important to celebrate Pride to recognize that everyone is welcome here at AHS."

—Gargi Dake, a student in the radiology program at NAIT, she has been supporting patients and staff at the University of Alberta Hospital



"Commitment starts when we shift from talking to action. AHS investment in a diversity and inclusion team, an anti-racism advisory group with visible and active leadership support, and willingness to hear and act on the experiences of diverse employees is a sign the organization is moving towards an anti-racist and inclusive culture."

—Osayi Oke-Ifidon, senior advisor, Diversity and Inclusion

AHS HAS CREATED A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We have a dedicated diversity and inclusion centre of expertise that offers culturally sensitive education and resources to physicians, staff, leaders and volunteers on unconscious bias; intergenerational relationships; improving the experience for LGBTQ2S+ people; respectful workplaces; diversity and worldview; cultural competence, humility, safety and sensitivity; power and privilege, oppression and microaggression; and the social determinants of health.

We have a **Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Council** whose purpose is to help create safer, inclusive environments for everyone who is part of and interacts with AHS.

We formed an **AHS Anti-Racism Advisory Group**—a subcommittee of the D&I Council—to develop a consistent and comprehensive approach to AHS anti-racism activities. Members of the Advisory Group represent Indigenous, Black, People of Colour and Jewish workers from across AHS.

We support the formation of Workforce Resource Groups (WRGs) including:

- Proud Together LGBTQ2S+
- Women in EMS
- Ethnic Minority

We have a dedicated diversity and inclusion centre of expertise that offers culturally sensitive education and resources to physicians, staff, leaders and volunteers and who work across the organization to reduce barriers. Examples include gender-neutral washroom and reflection rooms, which provide quiet space for prayer meditation and reflection.

We offer resources to support, develop and grow our Indigenous workforce and education to build understanding of Indigenous history.

We are proud to have received recognition as one of **Canada's Best Diversity Employers** for the third consecutive year.



Our AHS vision—Healthy Albertans. Healthy Communities. Together.—and our core values, AHS CARES, are at the heart of everything we represent. They inspire, empower and guide how we work together to build healthy communities and support Albertans in leading healthy lives. We live our values together, because we are stronger together.

We live our values

compassion

accountability

We show kindness and empathy for all in our care, and for each other

"I'm very proud to be part of this team—celebrating 100 years of service in Alberta. Our program has been working with populations that have faced stigma and discrimination throughout the century. The people in our program are caring, non-judgmental and accepting—working towards normalizing sexual health as part of one's overall wellness."



—Jennifer Gratrix, interim director, STI Services (Sexually Transmitted Infections)

"We can now provide our patients who are seriously ill with a space that's bright, modern and comfortable where they can spend meaningful time with their loved ones during the most challenging time in their life."



—Murray Crawford, senior operating officer, Northern Lights Regional Health Centre in Fort McMurray on their new palliative care suites

"In the years I have worked on enhancing healthcare for Airdrie residents, it is apparent that we cannot do what needs to be done without healthcare philanthropy. As a community, we need to recognize what is needed and we need to come together to take care of each other."



—Michelle Bates, co-founded the Airdrie Health Foundation

We are honest, principled and transparent

"Taking accountability for our own behaviours and actions goes a long way to prevent bullying and harassment, builds trust with others and role-models respectful behaviour."



—Tara Foster, senior advisor, Employee Relations

"It's not just about teaching them how to operate the till. We're also teaching them the importance of being on time and calling ahead when they're going to be late. We make a full commitment to provide them that guidance and feedback."



—Cheryl Wallace, revenue supervisor in Volunteer Resources, on helping youth volunteers get READY for the real world

"We (AHS) can't do it on our own. We need people with lived experience to provide their input and feedback."



"Do we have it right? Do we need to make a shift in our programs?" Those are questions they can help answer. They help us be accountable in our goal to be truly patient-centred, and act as a pulse check."

—Susan Given, executive director, Addiction & Mental Health, North Zone

respect

We treat others with respect and dignity

"As a manager, you get to know your people at their highs and lows. It's important to me to see them in their personhood, mainly because work is really only one part of who we are. It's important for them to see me as a person, too."



—Jocelyn Magat, operations manager, Allied Health and Specialty Services, Facility and Supportive Living, Continuing Care, Edmonton Zone

...

"I love how we've been able to reinforce how our AHS values and core competencies can help us prevent harassment and violence and support respectful interactions with each other, our patients and their families. I believe in our strong, wonderful values."



—Peggy Mann, director, Prevention of Workplace Harassment & Violence, Workplace Health & Safety

...

"Talking helps us to recognize and normalize the many emotions and responses associated with stressors and feelings such as loneliness, financial stress and the uncertainty of COVID-19. These conversations can help us identify strategies that work for ourselves and others to manage and overcome these challenges. Talking about our challenges helps us to seek support."



—Jennifer Yelland, senior advisor, Employee Relations

excellence

We strive to be our best and give our best

"AHS' size, commitment to evidence-based care, and support of people to grow as professionals really helps us stay on the cutting edge of nursing. And our office plays a role in that. We are always thinking ahead to how the role and world of regulated nursing professions are expanding and supporting each other."



—Fadumo Robinson, associate chief nursing officer & CoAct Collaborative Care, Health Professions Strategy & Practice

...

"I've learned a lot about dealing with people and about being more sympathetic. People have tough days, and they're in the hospital for a reason. You don't always put that into perspective. You start to feel more sympathetic towards them. It's made me a better person."



—Christina Iskander, AHS volunteer

...

"By pursuing value-based healthcare, we will achieve our goals. But we're not setting out with the expressed goal of 'we need to cut costs'—we're now asking, 'how can we provide care that best meets people's wishes and needs?' The beauty is, when we do this, cost savings follow."



—Dr. Richard Lewanczuk, senior medical director, Health System Integration

safety

We place safety and quality improvement at the centre of all our decisions

"I'm proud to be a fit-test designate. To me, this role means I have a responsibility to ensure that staff feel safe and comfortable using their respirator appropriately to protect them from possible occupational hazards. It's just one important part of a multi-faceted approach to ensure the safety of our staff."



—Andrew Dique, incident response paramedic and acting supervisor, EMS Operations in Edmonton Zone

...

"Pay attention to the other basic measures that we've been hearing about. Don't go out if you're sick, make sure your hands are cleaned regularly and particularly before you touch your eyes, your nose, and your mouth. Also, cover your cough and, most importantly, as I've always said, stay home if you're sick and maintain that physical distancing."



—Dr. Mark Joffe, vice president & medical director for Cancer Care Alberta, Clinical Support Services & Provincial Clinical Excellence; chair of the AHS PPE Taskforce

We strive to be healthy

AHS encourages teams to stay balanced physically, mentally and socially. Although COVID-19 has changed how we do that, our message stays the same—for us to take care of others, we need to first take care of ourselves.

Staff and volunteers are really 'digging' wellness at the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Hospital this spring. Teams have adopted flowerbeds on the hospital grounds to plant some cheer and brighten the season for staff, patients and others who come across the blooms.

This is the second year for the initiative, organized by the QEII Wellness Committee, to encourage healthy lifestyles and workplaces for local AHS staff through fun activities.

"We try to promote a holistic view of wellness, not simply focusing on the traditional healthy eating and exercise," says Candice Edey, AHS Executive Associate at the QEII and member of the Wellness Committee. "Some of the events

we've supported (in the past) include a fun run, free group yoga sessions for staff, Wellness Expos in the cafeteria and we've helped with staff barbecues and Christmas events."

Entitled GROWing community, the flowerbed project includes community volunteers. Flowers were donated to the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Foundation by various merchants in the area, including Home Depot, Dunvegan Gardens, Echo Hill Farms, Rona, Home Hardware and Canadian Tire. Meanwhile, Costco donated water and snacks for participants. The gift plants include bright annuals as well as hardy perennials to ensure blooms return in the years to come.

Judy Christiansen, an assistant store

manager at Home Depot in Grande Prairie, says this is an easy initiative to support.

"It allows people to enjoy a project outdoors, so we thought it was a great idea," she says. "We were worried it wasn't going to happen this year, with everything that's going on. When we found out it was a go, we were quick to jump at the opportunity to be involved. We have a good group of people who like to help give back to the community that supports us as well."

The planting went a bit differently this year, with smaller groups tidying the beds and planting at different times over the course of a few weeks, rather than the large planting party hosted in 2019. Even with physical distancing measures in

Our words



"I make a conscious effort to get the flu shot, and support staff in my area to get immunized, by arranging a cart to come around. Not only do I want to protect our patients and myself from getting sick with influenza, but I also have several family members who are immune-compromised. Getting the flu shot helps protect everyone in my sphere, especially those who are caregivers."

—Raylene Pearson, admin support at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Research Innovation & Technology Development



"I have to be on top of my own wellness. Spending time with family and engaging with hobbies that take me away from work for a bit is so helpful.

We also have a very supportive team who is open to hearing us out on tough days."

—Katherine Shettell, family peer support worker



"I'm so excited that we have this opportunity to reach more people across the province—and provide quality services to a much larger healthcare community beyond Calgary and

Edmonton Zones. By making these changes at Pulse Generator, we've also acquired the ability to offer more variety, such as on-demand videos and more flexibility in the timing of fitness programming and classes."

—Joan Radford, managing director, Pulse Generator—Edmonton & Calgary Zone, on moving fitness programs online during COVID-19 for all AHS staff



Two members of the “Labenders” team plant annuals in a flowerbed at the QEII Hospital.

place, Edey says participants were eager to dig in and get their hands dirty.

“We felt it was important to go ahead with the flowers again this year. It offers a lot to a wide variety of people. The teams who are involved get the benefit of the outdoors and working with the plants and flowers, while everyone who walks past through the summer—the patients, visitors, Mackenzie Place residents—we all get to enjoy the view of beautiful flowers. It’s not your typical wellness event.”

As well as beautifying the grounds, GROWing commUNITY inspires friendly competition between teams. Festivities will culminate with the “judging” of the flowerbeds later this summer by members of the local Grande Prairie Gardening Club. The winning team will be awarded the coveted GROWing commUNITY trophy, provided by the foundation.



“Connecting with individuals through shared experiences really breaks down any barriers and gives them hope that they can recover and lead healthy, meaningful lives.”

—Suzanne Cunningham, a peer support worker whose work has largely been inspired by her own journey with mental health



“We’re not out of the woods yet (with COVID-19), and as we move forward, let’s raise awareness for mental health, emotional health and our well-being—and that some

days will be more difficult than others. Mental health supports are rarely as easy as the physical health support of casting a broken arm. There’s an ebb and flow of what we need and when we need it and, for me, what’s most important is acknowledging the journey to wellness.”

—Ann Harding, director of Child, Youth and Family Initiatives, Addiction & Mental Health, Primary and Community Care

RESOURCES HELPING IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

Wellness Champion Network

Staff can lead change for better health by being a Wellness Champion. The network now has more than 450 members. The objectives are to:

- Promote overall well-being
- Inspire people to stay active and make healthy choices
- Plan local and virtual wellness initiatives

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

EFAP provides 24/7 confidential and free services including lifestyle and specialty coaching, short term counselling, and other health and wellness supports covering a range of topics such as nutrition, lifestyle changes, grief and loss, legal or financial concerns, workplace issues, relationship issues, career and retirement planning, addiction, and mental health issues.

COVID- 19 Wellness Resources include:

- Self-care tactics
- COVID-19 care posters
- Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health resource guide
- Working During COVID-19
- COVID-19 Worker Supports: Physical Distancing at Work; Supporting your Mental Health; and Supporting You with Kids at Home

Work Safe Blog

This blog shares personal stories, ideas and concerns about workplace health and safety.

Respectful Workplaces and the Prevention of Harassment and Violence

A full range of resources, supports and training create a safe work environment, and promote respect and inclusiveness.

We are constantly learning

AHS is a learning organization, always striving to do better. Even during the pandemic, our innovative electronic clinical information system, Connect Care, launched to staff and physicians across the Edmonton Zone.

Connect Care is a revolutionary change in how AHS delivers care—and its second wave launched at 5 a.m. on Oct. 24.

Staff working in nine Edmonton Zone launch sites and the Connect Care project worked for months — and, in some cases, years — to prepare for the second stage of this mammoth undertaking.

“It’s been a long year and, once again, AHS has shown what they’re made of,” AHS President and CEO Dr. Verna Yiu said during the launch countdown address to staff in the final minutes before system implementation.

“The fact that we’re actually able to launch Wave 2 of Connect Care at all in 2020 is truly a testament to your resilience, not to mention your passion, your dedication, your talent, your expertise.”

In late 2019, the first wave of Connect

Care successfully launched at the Walter C. Mackenzie Campus and other sites across Edmonton Zone. Since then, many changes within Connect Care based on lessons learned and the new healthcare landscape presented by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a much different launch undertaking.

Despite undeniable pressure, leadership at Sturgeon Community Hospital in St. Albert, one of Wave 2’s nine sites, say staff were excited to go live.

“I think for the frontline staff, just talking to them as we rounded after the switch was flipped, they’re very excited and happy to see that they could actually get into the system,” says Wendy Tanaka-Collins, site director of Sturgeon Community Hospital in St. Albert. “I think all of the training and preparation they

were doing, and the playtime environment they were in, has really paid off.”

Highlights of this launch include significantly more virtual and remote support for end-users, with constant attention on continuing to provide safe, high-quality care to patients. A bright spot is the birth of the first baby using Connect Care’s Stork application. Baby Kiera was born to Ana and Viorel Hrinco only three hours after launch at the Sturgeon.

“The Zone has been managing multiple priorities and has experienced incredible pressure over the past two weeks,” says Carol Anderson, Chief Zone Officer, Edmonton Zone.

“As always, the (Edmonton Zone) teams have risen to meet challenges while keeping the focus on our patients, clients, residents and families. Implementing

Our words



“What keeps me motivated are my work and the organization. I find both so incredibly interesting and dynamic. There are always new things happening. So you’re just constantly having to pivot and change and adapt to new ideas and new projects and new mandates. I’m motivated by our very high level of engagement all the time. We never slow down.”

—Tina Giesbrecht, general counsel,
Legal & Privacy



“Several critical care areas reached out to us for training at the beginning of this pandemic. We did this work as efficiently and effectively as we could, given the urgency. We have many stories of immediate application of the learning in simulation being applied to the care of COVID-19 patients. We’re grateful the team has been able to help and support so many.”

—Mirette Dube,
simulation COVID-19 response team
lead and simulation consultant



“I would encourage (staff starting out in healthcare) to make use of all the wonderful resources AHS has to offer, especially when it comes to developing their leadership skills, including the many courses at MyLearningLink. Think about where you want to go, and then work with your mentor or manager to figure out the next steps to get you there. Remember to always keep the patient at the centre of care.”

—Danica Sharp, executive director,
Provincial Midwifery Services



Super users at Leduc Community Hospital prepare for the Wave 2 launch of Connect Care. Super users receive extra training on the Connect Care system so they can provide support to their colleagues in the early days after a launch.

Connect Care is a major undertaking under normal circumstances and this is magnified during the pandemic. I am humbled and inspired by the collaboration, determination and confidence the Wave 2 sites and the other zone sites and

programs have shown during the launch.”
The full Connect Care launch will see nine implementation waves in total, continuing into 2023.



“It helps us to be sure that we’re providing the services that our patients require. There’s a couple of things you can learn from the data. You can see trends. You’ll

know that, at certain times of the year, we’ll have more fractures. Or at other times, more mental health issues. With quality information and numbers, we’re able to prepare for that.”

— Carol McCarthy, program manager with Rehabilitation & Allied Health Services on the importance of Connect Care



“We shouldn’t order or perform a test because it is routine; it has to serve a purpose. Since 2014, our physicians in the Royal Alexandra Hospital ICU have reduced chest X-rays by 70 per cent by ensuring the test is ordered for patients only when clinically indicated.”

— Dr. Colin Peterson, deputy facility medical director and lead for quality improvement at Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH). With his support, RAH was recognized as the first hospital in Alberta to receive the Choosing Wisely Canada Level 1 designation

EDUCATION HELPS US IMPROVE OUR WORK AND OUR LIVES

President’s Speaker Series

These are discussions led by international experts and innovators in healthcare with AHS leaders, physicians, clinicians, staff and partners on a variety of topics.

Telehealth

This videoconference technology enables our workforce to connect across the province and helps us deliver information on health-related services.

Certificate programs

Certified instructors deliver a variety of courses such as basic and advanced cardiac life support, and neonatal resuscitation to specific groups of staff.

MyLearningLink

This is a 24/7 online learning and content management system that provides a single point of access to over 2,000 AHS learning opportunities on a variety of provincial or zone-specific topics.

Clinical educators

Healthcare providers are supported in their professional development with learning opportunities provided by clinical educators, certificate course instructors and clinical practice leads.

Simulation training

eSIM (educate, simulate, innovate, motivate) uses simulation to give healthcare teams the opportunity to practise a wide range of medical procedures on high-tech adult and child simulator mannequins, that breathe, blink, talk, and have pulses and vital signs.

Your Learning, Your Way

This advanced tool allows our people various flexible multimodal educational opportunities from beginner to master level.

We continuously improve

COVID-19 has challenged us in many ways, but it's also pushed us to continue to innovate and collaborate. Thanks to many great teams, this made-in-Alberta life saving device was developed for rural emergency care during the pandemic.

A new life-saving device has been deployed in the battle against COVID-19 thanks to the innovative teamwork of AHS along with corporate collaboration and generosity.

Physicians and staff at Provost Health Centre have been trained to use the Alberta E-Vent, a custom-made piece of equipment designed to automate the breathing of patients in respiratory distress. The ventilators, created in part through 3D printing technology, can provide short-term respiratory support, monitoring and treatment of adult patients for use if and when a conventional ventilator is unavailable.

Healthcare teams at rural sites such as Provost often don't have access to conventional ventilators. When they find themselves waiting for a ground or air

ambulance to transport a patient to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at a larger site, they may need to manually squeeze an airbag every six seconds for several hours.

"Physically, bagging is very tiring. One person can't do it for a long time, so healthcare workers take turns," says Brant Poirier, area director for Central Zone – South.

"It's very taxing on a team. At some rural sites, if a patient comes in at night, there are limited healthcare staff available. This unit squeezes the airbag automatically—so there's no fatigue."

Leading up the E-Vent, an AHS interdisciplinary healthcare team collaborated to identify innovations to manually support bagging for extended periods of time at rural sites without ventilators. To respond to this need, Exergy

Solutions—a Calgary-based engineering firm with a specialty in design, prototyping and fabricating—developed the E-Vent solution and donated 200 of the devices to AHS.

When Exergy first approached AHS with its idea, it led to the creation of a multidisciplinary group called the Ventilator Collaborative, which also brought together clinicians and industry representatives and involved a cross-provincial team of volunteers and collaborators.

Exergy's lab is located in the Life Sciences Innovation Hub, operated by Innovate Calgary. Teams from the University of Calgary, including the Advanced Technical Skills Simulation Laboratory and Schulich School of Engineering, offered support and resources for the mechanical design and testing of the project.

Our words



"Be prepared for change. We're always evolving. We're always trying to find the better way—the best practice way—in how we care for our patients. Be adaptable to change."

—Juanita Pilgrim, manager, Maternity/
Pediatrics, Northern Lights Regional
Health Centre



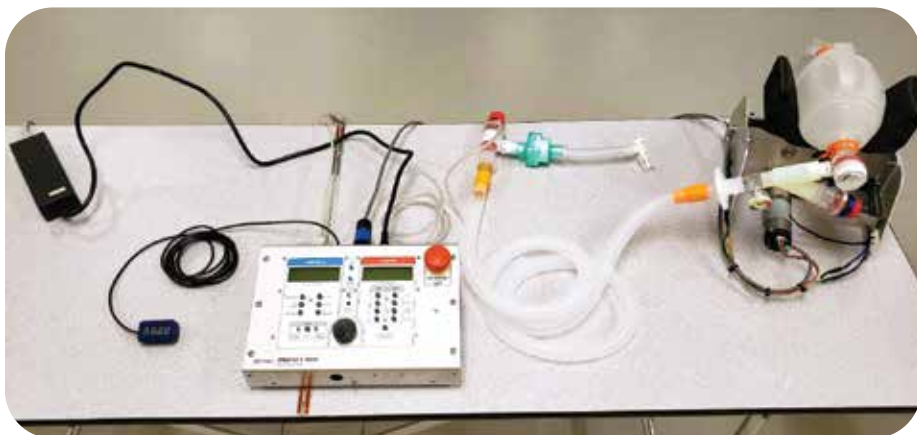
"I'm motivated by the challenge of overcoming barriers in ways that result in a win-win solution for all involved. I'm inspired by those who question the status quo and push the envelope to do things better, faster and more cost-effectively without sacrificing quality."

—Becky Wong, director,
Health System Access



"I'm proud to be part of a project that makes for a healthier environment for all. In addition to reducing utility consumption, costs and emissions, we have, most importantly, enhanced the quality and safety of the space for an improved patient experience."

—Harry Vandermeer, executive director,
Office of Sustainability and
Energy Management



Tubing, a control panel, and “hands” to automatically squeeze an airbag, comprise the simple and compact Alberta E-Vent—an invention designed to help healthcare workers better care for patients in respiratory distress. Photo supplied.

Many other companies played pivotal roles in the collaboration, including Logican Technologies, Catch Engineering, PLC Electronic Solutions from Vancouver, Global Power Technologies and Laser Equation.

Though not a true ventilator, the device may prove to be a great stopgap at rural

sites, particularly with COVID-19 cases across the province. Since the pilot in Provost, additional devices have been sent to Two Hills, Drayton Valley, Coronation and Castor.



“We can get rid of the paper charts, which sometimes get lost, and it will be good for the environment, too, because there won’t be so much paper wasted. It’s a really great step forward.”

—Melissa Bergen, healthcare aide at High River Hospital, reflecting on Connect Care



“I work with the AMH Recovery Supports team in Edmonton, specifically with our Pathways Adult Day Program. From the moment we received the news that our program would not be able to continue to operate in the way we are accustomed to (due to COVID-19), my team has not skipped a beat and continued to amaze me with their care and compassion for the clients we support. Thank you to the Pathways team!”

—Caitlin Spires, clinical lead recreational therapist

INNOVATIONS HELP US DO OUR JOBS BETTER

Connect Care

Connect Care is the bridge between information, healthcare teams and patients. Through a common provincial clinical information system, Connect Care allows the healthcare team and patients to have consistent information across the province and throughout the care journey. Once fully implemented, it will impact everyone who provides care within AHS, the non-clinical areas that support the front line, and will transform how we provide care.

Virtual technologies have helped many of our workers stay connected while working from home throughout the pandemic. Technology is also helping our clinical workforce to assess, diagnose and treat many patients outside of our bricks and mortar.

InfoCare

InfoCare is AHS’ online resource for information privacy and security matters. Resources include education and interactive tools, an easy process for reporting security incidents and privacy breaches, and a volunteer network of InfoCare Coaches to help mentor skills.

e-People

This centralized resource is available online to all employees. It supports Human Resources functions such as payroll, HR administration, time entry and approval, as well as pension and benefits administration.

We pursue excellence

One of our core values is excellence—we strive to be our best and give our best every day. In the case of this patient, our drive and innovation saved his life.

Alberta is home to the only stroke ambulance in Canada—bringing life-saving stroke interventions to patients and providing them with the best opportunities for full recovery—thanks to the University of Alberta Hospital Foundation's Brain Centre Campaign.

No one knows this better than Camrose resident and former teacher Steven Howrish. His life was changed in the winter of 2017 when he experienced a transient ischemic attack (TIA)—a mini-stroke caused by a small clot that briefly blocks an artery.

"I wasn't sure what was happening at the time, but a colleague noticed I was acting differently and decided to take me to the Daysland Health Centre to see what was going on," says Howrish.

It was determined Howrish required more comprehensive care, so the stroke ambulance was called. To save time, the Daysland ambulance transported him halfway and met with the stroke ambulance between the towns of Tofield and Ryley.

The customized ambulance is equipped with its own CT scanner, lab equipment and video and audio communication technology, which allows its specialized crew of five to consult with a physician at the University of Alberta Hospital.

Howrish remembers being put into the stroke ambulance and then seeing a doctor on the telehealth screen. His assessment determined he did not require the clot-busting drug tPA (tissue plasminogen activator), but the crew recognized the

complexity of his situation. So Howrish was taken to the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton for further testing. There he was diagnosed with a rare condition, one which affects cognitive ability and causes stroke-like symptoms.

A stroke can occur due to a blockage or clot in a blood vessel in the brain (ischemic stroke), or when an artery in the brain breaks open (hemorrhagic stroke). It can lead to paralysis, loss of muscle control, pain, difficulty with language and speaking, and trouble with memory and thinking—all of which makes timely care of utmost importance in determining patient outcomes.

"Early intervention is key in minimizing potential damage caused by strokes," says

Our words



"The people I work with (give me the greatest pride). The team I work with—who I report to, who reports to me, my colleagues across the People portfolio—we have amazing people. They're smart, compassionate, committed and creative—and they inspire me to do good work every day.

—Connie Shea, executive director,
HR Business Partnerships &
Ability Management



"Reducing unnecessary tests and procedures isn't just a benefit to patients, it also saves the health system financial costs, the time it takes to perform the tests, as well as staffing resources—all of which can be directed to the benefit of other patients."

—Dr. Kelley De Souza, orthopedic surgeon



"The real-time, whole team, patient-centred communication that's enabled by these virtual visits is incredibly effective and efficient. Using virtual tools provides patients' families more flexibility to attend visits with their loved ones and enhanced opportunities to be engaged in the care and decision-making process."

—Marie Webb, clinical nurse specialist
with the Rural Palliative Care Consult
(PCC) Team



Stroke ambulance patient Steven Howrish, third from left, thanks staff members, from left, Kalene Hoefels, Keelly Brown, Dr. Ali Nomani, Marilyn Gibbons Doyle and Rae-Ann Hanson for their service. With its own CT scanner, this specialized ambulance is the only one in Canada that provides life-saving stroke interventions right in the field to boost recovery outcomes for patients. (Pre-pandemic photo)

Dr. Thomas Jeerakathil, Associate Director of the Edmonton Stroke Program and a Professor of Neurology at the University of Alberta. “The time to treatment in the stroke ambulance is faster and can mean a difference in outcomes.”

Right in the field, the stroke ambulance team confirms and differentiates between the different types of strokes and provides

the best course of intervention on the spot.

As well, the crew typically arranges for about a third of patients to receive follow-up care closer to their homes and community, which eases the burden of long drives for loved ones and potential strains on urban hospitals. The stroke ambulance is part of a three-year pilot project which runs to March 2021.

WORKING TO BE THE BEST IN HEALTHCARE

Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs)

AHS continues to develop networks of people who are knowledgeable about specific areas of health, challenging them to find new and innovative ways of delivering care that will provide better quality, better outcomes and better value. To date, there are 16 SCNs and integrated provincial teams focusing on a range of conditions from cancer to addiction and mental health.

Research Challenge

This is a professional development opportunity for nurses, Allied Health professionals and other care providers to increase knowledge and skills to access, conduct and apply best-practice research. In it, teams work together for two years to design and conduct a small-scale study.



“In this age of COVID-19, it’s a huge advantage that patients don’t necessarily have to come in for a face-to-face visit. We can provide the same level of care remotely, minimizing

risk and inconvenience. Alberta is ahead of the pack and is seen as a leader in this area. The level of care we’re able to provide is second to none.”

—Dr. Derek Exner, Calgary heart rhythm specialist, on working with patients who have remotely monitored Cardiac Implantable Electrical Devices with access to 24-hour support and care—regardless of where they live



“My day is spent supporting families and their children. This includes service navigation and assessments, teaching, coaching, advocating for families and

providing counselling. It’s challenging work but very meaningful. I get to help people every day. I feel fortunate to work with amazing families, and it is a privilege to hear their stories.”

—Wanda Kosterowski, registered social worker at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital’s Autism Clinic



“I can’t wait to handle less paper, do less stapling! From a patient’s standpoint, I think that Connect Care is a wonderful move towards the future. Eventually when

the entire province is on the system, it will be even better. For patient care, it is a huge step in the right direction.”

—Alicia Burrows, administrative support for Health Information Records Management at Fort Saskatchewan Community Hospital

We're in our communities

COVID-19 changed many things. But it didn't change the care we provide. In this case, Smith getting the care she needed was just a phone call away.

Shortly after Terry Smith fractured her wrist in February this year, rehabilitation clinics around the province closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When the cast came off, my wrist was still pretty painful and I couldn't move it very much," the 78-year-old Calgary resident says. "I tried to do some things on my own, but it actually seemed like it was getting worse."

When Smith heard about the Rehabilitation Advice Line of AHS, she gave the toll-free number a call, and was able to get the rehabilitation support she needed.

"The person who took my call was just wonderful," Smith says. "She gave me different exercises to do and it was just

really helpful talking to her."

The Rehabilitation Advice Line started May 12 and gives callers guidance on activities and exercises to support physical functioning, and strategies to manage daily activities. It also provides links to rehabilitation services available for in-person or virtual access, and to supportive community organizations and resources.

"AHS is the first health organization in Canada to offer a service like the Rehabilitation Advice Line," says Katie Churchill, Senior Practice Lead with Health Professions Strategy and Practice, and a co-lead on the project.

"Having a virtual service like this really improves access to rehabilitation. So far it has been very well received—we've had

more than 600 calls since we started," she says.

Aside from helping callers like Smith recover from injuries, Rehabilitation Advice Line staff can also assist Albertans living in their homes with neurologic conditions, such as those recovering from stroke, as well as people with physical conditions and injuries.

Staff are also able to provide self-management advice and education to those recovering from COVID-19, who may experience issues with energy levels, muscle weakness, joint stiffness and difficulty with sleep or other problems.

"We get a wide range of people calling, including professionals," says Patricia Trainor, the occupational therapist who

Our words



"I'm someone who likes to encourage and inspire others, and with my role with the foundation, I feel like I'm able to encourage those working at the hospital while inspiring the community to support them in the important work that they do."

—Stan Burkholder, board chair with the Fairview Health Complex Foundation



"We have an amazing team which continues to find ways to connect with our communities, support our citizens, and provide a continuum of prevention and treatment throughout the pandemic. It is more important than ever for all of us to work together to strengthen our protective factors, build resiliency, and support each other to reach out for help when needed."

—Trevor Inaba, director with Addiction and Mental Health, Community



"The one thing that remained unchanged this year was the spirit and generosity of our people. This has been a tough year for all of us in many different ways. As always, our people continued to support those struggling during this time. These kind donations help improve the lives of Albertans."

—Charmaine Penner, director with Payroll and Time & Labour, HR Shared Services and United Way Campaign Chair



Occupational therapist Patricia Trainor had an opportunity to meet Terry Smith in person several weeks after providing assistance via the Rehabilitation Advice Line.

assisted Smith when she called about her wrist. “We have other occupational therapists, physical therapists, social workers and nurses from the community calling us looking for resources for their patients.”

Smith, who now enjoys better range of motion and strength in her wrist, has already recommended the Rehabilitation Advice Line to a couple of her friends.

“It was excellent,” she says. “I was very impressed.”



“Collectively, several of us began a coordinated resuscitation. As a cardiac surgeon I work daily with teams who are experts at reviving patients. But it

was truly special to work in the field with paramedics, firemen and my wife to respond to this emergency. I really feel the teamwork of this group saved (this man’s) life. It’s an example of knowing the importance of CPR—and remaining calm.”

—Dr. Corey Adams, a cardiac surgeon at Foothills Medical Centre, on saving the life of a man who had a heart attack while they were hiking



“Since autism is more prevalent than it was a decade ago, we need to recognize the strengths of our community pediatricians. In a collaborative

partnership, we are providing specialized training, with ongoing peer support, to capitalize on that strength for the assessment, diagnosis, and ongoing care for children with autism.”

—Dr. Lyn Sonnenberg, medical lead, Infant Preschool Assessment Services, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. She’s also leading the expansion of autism spectrum disorder diagnostic services in Alberta to include community pediatricians

WE ARE IN COMMUNITIES AROUND THE PROVINCE

Enhancing care in the community

AHS has enhanced care so it is provided in a person’s home or community to the greatest extent possible, reserving emergency departments and hospital care to address needs that cannot be met closer to home. By meeting the health and social needs of people in their communities, AHS has supported them to improve their wellness, independence and quality of life.

Health Advisory Councils

There are 12 Health Advisory Councils (HACs) across the province comprised of voluntary members who support the strategic direction of AHS by getting local feedback from community members on what is working well in the health system and areas in need of improvement.

Provincial Advisory Councils

There are four Provincial Advisory Councils (PACs), including Addiction and Mental Health, Cancer, Seniors and Continuing Care, and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity & Expression. PACs are made up of volunteers, subject matter experts and leaders. They consider and provide evidence-based suggestions to AHS, identify existing and emerging issues, and advise on ways to improve quality, access and sustainability of services.

The Wisdom Council

The Wisdom Council provides guidance and advice on health service delivery, program design and evaluation for Indigenous Peoples in Alberta.

AHS foundations and trusts

AHS partners with 69 foundations and trusts in Alberta, whose work makes a significant impact on local health delivery by funding needs, programs, renovations, research and education.

AHS United Way campaign

This campaign occurs every fall and offers employees, physicians and volunteers an opportunity to raise funds to help families in Alberta.

We celebrate our people

Recognition plays an important role in our workplace culture, especially during these unprecedented times. That's why we take the time to celebrate and connect with each other, even if it looks different in our new physically distanced world.

For years, technology has shifted how we connect with others; and that has never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our new virtual world poses some unique challenges; including how to safely celebrate our people and their achievements, milestone events and retirements.

Janet Kaplan, manager for senior's health in the North Zone, has worked with a virtual team for years and has tried to come up with fun and creative ways to celebrate and recognize staff. When teams are remote, it can be difficult to get to know all your team members on a personal level, especially if the team is large," Kaplan says. "I use interactive activities, group challenges, celebrations and meetings to get to know each other and also recognize

their accomplishments."

Sherri Tarr, Human Resources manager, recently celebrated her 30-year anniversary with AHS. Her team turned up the creativity to devise ways to celebrate her major milestone. An email asking for best wishes was shared around the team, with one member capturing their thoughts in a card. The card, along with a cake, cups, plates and utensils—as well as a plant and balloon—were dropped off ninja-style at her doorstep. At first, Tarr thought the gift had been dropped off at the wrong house, but soon found herself touched to realize it really was for her, as she read her colleagues' kind words and warm wishes.

"My colleagues felt bad that they couldn't plan a big party," says Donna Carter, who also recently celebrated her

retirement after a 30-year career. "But the virtual celebration, which brought together teammates from across the province, was just as meaningful. Everyone was able to join the hour-long call and exchange best wishes. I was honoured by so many and really didn't feel I missed out at all."

Recognition plays an important role in our workplace culture. In fact, it's integral to making everyone to feel valued, engaged and respected for the contributions they bring to the workplace. Recognition can be as simple as saying "great work on your project" or taking the time to share a note of thanks for help you received.

This excerpt is taken from the AHS Work Safe Blog written by Gail Ann Rawlinson, advisor in recognition services.

Our words



"Your passion and commitment is what builds healthy communities, and is the backbone of our organization. Today is a celebration of the important

career milestone you have reached. I'm honoured to work alongside so many passionate and talented people who do truly remarkable work, both on the frontlines and behind the scenes."

—Dr. Yiu, president and CEO, at the 2020 Long Service Awards, celebrated virtually with AHS staff and physicians who have been a part of Alberta's healthcare system for 40, 45, 50, and 55 years



"On the day I got that 10-year pin and a thank you letter, it made my heart sing. It was so lovely being appreciated."

—Rosemarie Gattiker, volunteer at Chinook Regional Hospital



"I was really happy that despite COVID-19 restrictions, I was able to (still connect virtually with staff), and for such a great cause supporting the United Way. It was even more special

as the winner is about to retire, so it was great way to connect with her and thank her for many great years of service. I look forward to doing this again next year—either virtually or face-to-face—but hopefully face-to-face!"

—Mauro Chies, vice president of Cancer Care AB and Clinical Support Services connecting with an ELT raffle winner in support of the AHS 2020 United Way campaign



A surprise 30-year anniversary gift basket was left on Sherri Tarr's doorstep from her team to celebrate this milestone in a safe and creative way.

WE CELEBRATE THE AMAZING WORK OUR PEOPLE DO, EACH AND EVERY DAY

President's Excellence Awards

Every year, the President's Excellence Awards recognize AHS employees, physicians.

Doc of the Week

A weekly feature in our physician all-staff email updates showcasing the people, faces and stories of physicians caring for patients across the province.

We are AHS

A digital celebration of our people where we share their stories and photos from the front lines and behind the scenes.

Long Service Awards

We recognize and celebrate our dedicated 40-, 45-, 50- and 55-year employees with an awards ceremony, feature videos and other online features.

Annual photography contest

E-card and print card collections are created from photos submitted by employees, physicians and volunteers and selected through employee voting. Submissions cover themes such as health, nature, landscapes and wildlife, flowers, seasons and travel.



"I wanted to reach out and ask that all of us at AHS take a moment to acknowledge all of the incredible unit clerks working in our acute care sites. These fine folks are

at the very front line of communicating/ managing changes to visitation, something we know has a very real impact on the patients and families we care for. I cannot express how appreciative I am to work alongside them. Thank you, unit clerks!"

—Tanya Harvey, registered nurse,
Department of Critical Care, Foothills
Medical Centre ICU



"My team here in Three Hills is truly unbelievable! Team members came together in many ways to prepare for COVID-19. It is not always about the pivotal role that

makes a difference; each small effort has made a huge difference in our preparation for COVID-19. I am truly honoured to acknowledge my team during Nurses Week 2020 and feel blessed to be part of the Three Hills acute care team."

—Ruth Wold, acute care manager at
Three Hills Health Centre



"While traditional formal celebrations and gatherings were cancelled in 2020, recognizing our hardworking teams became more important than ever. Our

organizational response to COVID-19 left us all needing and deserving acts of kindness and appreciation to keep us motivated during tough times. Our goal of making people feel valued never changed; we just had to get more creative about how we achieved that goal."

—Louise Poole, senior advisor,
Talent Management Strategies



Together, we do amazing things every day

We proudly deliver quality healthcare services and programs to Albertans every day. Learn more about us at ahs.ca.



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

