

## Autism Toolkits Create Calming Environment

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance has a commitment to continually improve health care delivery to our patients and we actively encourage patient and staff feedback to achieve this. Through purposeful patient, family and staff engagement, we can gain a better understanding of their experience within the Alliance. In the Fall of 2017, we learned through family feedback that we were not meeting the needs of patients with Autism when they accessed services within the Alliance. We knew this was our opportunity to get it right.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder that affects the way a person communicates and relates to the people and world around them. It can affect behaviour, social interactions, and one's ability to communicate verbally and each individual with ASD will experience these difficulties differently. In Canada, 1 in 94 children are diagnosed with ASD and there are approximately 100,000 individuals in Ontario on the autism spectrum. When an individual with ASD visits the Emergency Department (ED) requiring care and treatment it can be challenging with the stimulation of alarms, phones ringing, people coming and going, multiple voices, the physical exam, testing, IVs and bloodwork. The staff may not know how to help the



individual feel comfortable and calm while managing their care.

We worked with parents of individuals with ASD to learn how we can improve and meet their unique needs while building the knowledge, skill, ability and confidence of our staff. Doris Barkley, from Autism Ontario; Huron Perth Chapter, is a Registered Nurse and has a son with ASD. Doris spoke with staff across the Alliance about spectrum disorders and how to care for these individuals and their family. Doris helped us build "Autism Toolkits" to create a more calming environment. The toolkits consist of fidget toys, stress balls, tactile fidgets, ear-muffs and more, all designed to keep restless fingers busy, bodies relaxed and minds focused. Pictures of procedures help explain what to expect.

To date, the kits have been used in two EDs and an outpatient department with great success. With the help of the Stratford General Hospital Foundation, we are able to stock Autism Kits and place them in most departments across the Alliance.

Carolyn Martin, RN, Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance - St. Marys site, displays some of the contents of the autism kits which are available throughout the Alliance.

### A sweet draw on Valentine's Day!



The Volunteers of Stratford General Hospital/SGH Foundation draw (Licence # M780425). Winners - 1st Prize - \$1,000 cash | Klaus Springer. 2nd Prize - \$350 in President's Choice Gift Cards | Doris Chown. 3rd Prize - \$200 in Shoppers Drug Mart Gift Cards | Diane Uniac. **A BIG thank you to our first prize sponsor, Chartwell Anne Hathaway Retirement Residence.** Heartfelt thanks to everyone for your support of our Volunteers! Proceeds from this fundraiser will be used to purchase hospital equipment. L to R Back: Volunteers of SGH Manfred Mewes, Cheryl Elgie (VSGH Council Co-chair), Pat Willows, Chris Thomas, Pieter Van Meekeren, Charlie Peterson. L to R Front: HPHA Corporate Lead Volunteer Services Cheryl Hunt, Volunteer Brenda Mitchell, Kathleen Needles Sales Consultant Chartwell Anne Hathaway Retirement Residence, SGHF ED Andrea Page and HPHA CEO Andrew Williams.

### A Gift that's Priceless!



The CT Scanner Ribbon Cutting was a great day for all those who have supported—and continue to support our Foundation's efforts to keep Stratford General Hospital at the forefront of technology... and able to provide our patients with the very best of care. To date over 3,700 donors have given—making the purchase of the CT scanner a community effort! We can never say thank you enough! L-R: John Wolfe Board Chair, HPHA; Graeme Johnston Program Director, Diagnostic Services, HPHA; Cheryl Elgie Volunteers of SGH Council Co-chair; Dr. Keith Sparrow Radiologist, HPHA; Louanne Plain Manager Medical Imaging, HPHA; Hugh McDonald Board Chair, SGH Foundation; Andrea Page Executive Director SGH Foundation; Andrew Williams President & CEO, HPHA.

### Comfort and Care.



Local members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario visited the hospital with gifts for the children in our care. L-R: Melissa Harton RN and Kerri Hannon Manager, Maternal Child, EMG and Allergy Clinics. Representing the local WI's are L - R: Maxine Kernick, Jessie Scheuermann, Roberta Dundas and President Marlene Gibson St. Paul's WI; Marg Hislop President Perth South District; Elm Grove WI, President Louise Monteith, Irene Merkel, Elaine Thomson and Helen Dunseith.

### Making an impact on tiniest patients!



The Hearing Center's gift of \$1,200 supports our Special Care Nursery Teddy Bear & Friends Campaign! L-R: RN Loralee McNaughton, SGHF ED Andrea Page, Owner of The Hearing Center Sheri Hazzard and Shelly Gansevles Office Administrator.



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