

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

MESSAGES

- CEO's Message
- Co-Chairs Message

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Our Youth Advisory Council attends first Health Symposium at Six Nations. More on **page 7.**

Congratulations to all PFA Award Winners!



Read more about the lifetime achievement award recipient, along with other award recipients on **page 14.**



Thanks to Janice, new wayfinding signage has been installed at The Willett. More on **page 6.**



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Bonnie Camm, President and CEO Brant Community Healthcare System

As we welcome the spring season, I want to express my deep appreciation for the remarkable contributions of our Patient and Family Advisors (PFAs). Your partnership continues to shape the future of care at BCHS in meaningful and lasting ways. PFAs are essential to our commitment to person-centred care, bringing forward the lived experiences, insights, and perspectives that ensure our decisions reflect what matters most to patients and families. This collaboration is not only valued—it is foundational to our success.

Your voices are directly influencing the priorities outlined in our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, including advancing health equity, strengthening quality and safety, and improving the overall patient experience. Whether helping us reimagine care delivery, advising on policy and program development, or sharing perspectives that guide our culture of compassion and respect, PFAs are shaping BCHS at every level.

Your leadership is especially evident in our new hospital project, where PFAs are helping design a space that is safe, inclusive, culturally responsive, and reflective of the diverse communities we serve. This work will leave a legacy for generations.

Thank you to each of our PFAs for your dedication, insight, and unwavering commitment to improving care. Your contributions make BCHS stronger every day, and we are truly grateful for your partnership.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Harold Stahl

I'd like to begin with a brief reflection on the role of our Family Patient Advisors within the hospital's Strategic Plan—specifically our pillar, The Patients. This pillar is the foundation of where our PFAs make meaningful impact, shaping programs, sharing insights, and ensuring that the patient voice remains central to everything we do.

This year alone, our advisors have contributed over **2,000 volunteer hours** and participated in more than **60 committees and councils**. Your dedication continues to strengthen our organization and elevate the patient experience.

Patient Pillar

We will prioritize high-quality, person-centered care and improve patient outcomes.

Our Commitments

- Evidence-based standards — Adopting leading practices for patient safety and quality while maintaining the highest level of accreditation.
- Patient & Family Co-Design — Engaging patients and families to co-design the best possible care experience through the continued growth of our Patient and Family Advisory Program.
- Culturally Safe Indigenous Care — Advancing the Indigenous Health Service and developing an Indigenous Health Strategy to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis patients.
- Health Equity & Community Data — Understanding our community's health and equity data to respond to diverse needs and ensure culturally safe care for all.

How PFAs Bring This Pillar to Life

The Patient Pillar is where the strengths, stories, and lived experiences of our Family Patient Advisors and Youth Patient Advisors truly shine.

Your contributions support this pillar in countless ways, including:

- Wayfinding improvements
- Patient rounding participation
- Program co-design

Our role is to be that essential voice—the patient lens that helps us design improvements, deepen understanding, and ensure care remains person-centered and outcome-focused. Our current group continues to work diligently across councils and committees, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

A Message of Gratitude

To all our Patient & Family Advisors: thank you for generously giving your time and partnering with staff, physicians, and leaders across the organization. Your commitment directly strengthens healthcare delivery, safety, and the overall patient experience. You are vital to the success of the Patient Pillar of our Strategic Plan.

I leave you with this thought:

“Compassion isn't a weakness; it's the heartbeat of healthcare.” — Author unknown

MEET OUR PFAS



Laura Dickson - PFA for NICU, Pediatrics and Family Birthing Centre

What stands out to you most about your experience as a PFA? What has made your journey particularly meaningful or challenging?

As a Patient and Family Advisor, I have had the opportunity to ensure patient and family perspectives are included in healthcare decisions. It is rewarding to see lived experiences influence programs, policies, and services that improve care for others.

While navigating complex healthcare systems

can be challenging, seeing organizations listen to feedback and make meaningful changes makes the experience worthwhile.

How has your experience shaped your perspective on healthcare delivery?

My experience has reinforced that quality healthcare involves more than clinical expertise. Communication, compassion, respect, and inclusion are essential to the patient experience.

I have gained a greater appreciation for healthcare providers while recognizing the important role patients and families play in identifying opportunities for improvement and helping build a more responsive healthcare system.

Why is being a Patient and Family Advisor important to you personally?

Being a PFA allows me to turn personal experiences into positive change for others. Patients and families offer valuable perspectives that help healthcare organizations understand what is working well and where improvements are needed. It is also a meaningful way to give back and advocate for compassionate, patient-centred care.

How do you hope to use your experience to support improvements in care for others?

I hope to use my experience to help healthcare organizations better understand the needs and priorities of patients and families. By sharing my perspective and listening to others, I can contribute to meaningful improvements in care delivery.

If my experiences help make healthcare more accessible, responsive, and supportive for even one patient or family, I will feel I have made a meaningful contribution.

FEATURED YAC: EDWINA PAN



What stands out most about your experience as a PFA?

What stands out most about my experience as a Patient and Family Advisor is how personal and meaningful it feels. My journey through the mental health system began long before I stepped into this role, and for years I often felt invisible—like “just another file” moving through a system where I was dismissed or misunderstood.

Becoming a PFA has been powerful because it represents the opposite of those experiences. For the first time, I've been invited to use my voice not as a patient in crisis, but as someone whose lived experience

has value. While revisiting difficult memories can be challenging, it also feels purposeful. It's an opportunity to help improve a system that once failed me and to reclaim something I lost along the way.

How has your experience shaped your perspective on healthcare delivery?

My experiences taught me that effective healthcare depends not only on clinical expertise, but also on compassion, timing, and genuine human connection.

I learned that access without empathy is not truly care. I waited months for appointments that often left me feeling worse than when I arrived. At the same time, the Early Intervention Program at BCHS showed me how life-changing healthcare can be when providers truly care and patients feel supported.

These experiences shaped my belief that healthcare must be relational, not transactional. Small moments—like a phone call I almost ignored—can become turning points in someone's healing journey.

Why is being a PFA important to you personally?

Being a PFA is important to me because it allows me to turn difficult experiences into something meaningful. For years, I felt unheard and discouraged within the mental health system. Now, I can use those experiences to advocate for others, especially youth and individuals from immigrant families where mental health is often stigmatized or misunderstood.

It's important to me that people feel seen, respected, and listened to—particularly during moments when they may feel most vulnerable.

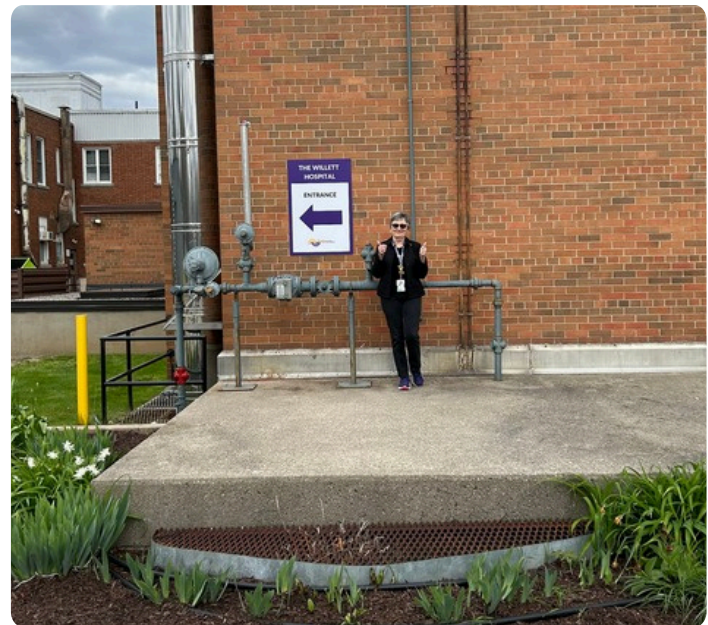
How do you hope to use your experience to support improvements in care for others?

I hope to help create a system where young people feel safe, respected, and believed the first time they reach out for help—not years later. I want to advocate for care that is compassionate, accessible, and centered on genuine human connection, so that fewer people feel alone or dismissed while navigating the mental health system.

WHILE WANDERING THE WILLETT



Janice visited The Willett on Boxing Day for an X-ray after a fall, wanting to confirm a possible shoulder fracture and determine if surgery was needed. Viewing the experience through her Patient and Family Advisory lens, she noted areas for improvement from the moment she arrived—particularly the lack of clear signage directing patients to the entrance, which caused some confusion.



While in the waiting room, Janice recognized the Clinical Director (Elke) and Manager (Lori) and felt confident she could share feedback directly, given her existing working relationship with them through the Post Acute Quality Council and Falls Committee. In early January, Janice connected with the leadership team and participated in follow-up conversations and meetings.

They were receptive to her feedback, expressed appreciation for her insights, and demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the patient experience. During a recent visit, Janice observed that new outdoor signage had already been installed—an early example of her feedback being put into action.

Janice values the opportunity to collaborate with such engaged and responsive leaders and is grateful for their continued efforts to enhance the patient experience at The Willett.

"I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Elke Hilgendag, Clinical Director of Willett, and Lori McMorrison, Clinical Manager, for taking the time to discuss several suggestions I shared during a recent visit to Willett Urgent Care as a patient. Their commitment to enhancing the patient experience was evident, and I truly appreciated their openness to feedback and willingness to implement positive changes." - Janice

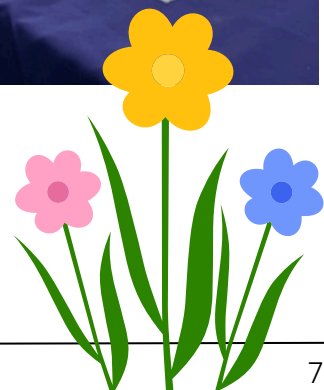
YAC ATTENDS HEALTH SYMPOSIUM ON SIX NATIONS WITH BCHS



On May 7, the youth attended their first Health Symposium on Six Nations alongside members of the Brant Community Healthcare System Patient Experience, Redevelopment, and Indigenous Health teams.

This year, the youth created bracelets featuring QR code charms that linked youth to mental health services offered by BCHS, as well as additional community resources. More than 55 bracelets were distributed to youth between the ages of 9 and 16, and supplies quickly ran out. The initiative was a huge success and generated significant interest among participants.

The youth recognize the importance of peer-to-peer advocacy and are planning to continue expanding the program throughout the 2026–2027 year.

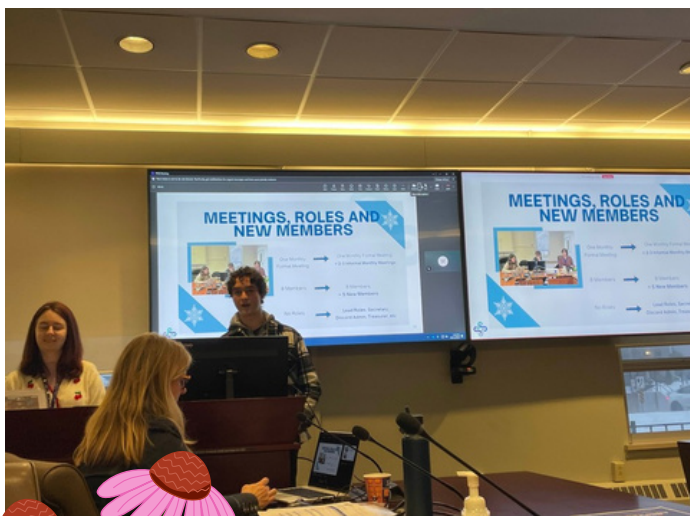


YAC HIGHLIGHTS



First Informal Meeting:

The Youth Advisory coordinated their first informal meeting to get to know one another and talk about future projects they would like to work on together. To break the ice, the youth worked together on an escape room challenge at the "Escape Key" to build collaborative, problem solving skills and to have fun!



PFAC Presentation:

Many of the youth are involved in the Patient Advisory Council (PFAC) where patient and family advisors come together to discuss important topics improving in patient experiences. In May 2026, Will Harmes and Edwina Pan presented at PFAC to discuss the many projects that the youth have been working on and are upcoming.

YAC HIGHLIGHTS



Valentine's Day Booth

In February 2026, the Youth Advisory Council team came together around Valentine's Day to raise funds for the outpatient mental health unit. During the fundraiser, items like crocheted roses, keychains, hearts, paintings, cards, and sweet treats were sold.

For the first fundraiser exclusively ran by youth, over \$170 was raised and all items were sold out. All proceeds went towards a new smart TV on the outpatient unit to conduct orientations for the early intervention program.



YAC HIGHLIGHTS



Bracelets Update

A significant ongoing project the youth have been working on is bracelet making for several events and pop-up booths held throughout the year.

Over 250 bracelets were made and were given to people at the following events: Six Nations Health Symposium, Mental Health Week, Pride in the Park, YMCA, Brantford Collegiate Institute, and Tollgate.



A POT OF GROWTH

Each flower blooming from this pot of growth represents one of our PFAs – whether it's their favourite flower, a bloom they feel reflects their personality, or their birth flower. Together, they symbolize the unique voices, experiences, and perspectives our PFAs bring to BCHS, while also representing their continued growth, advocacy, and role in helping shape positive change across our organization.



PROGRAM GROWTH BY PFAS AND STATS



MCFN Patient Experience Resource

A Patient and Family Advisor member from Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) created a patient experience resource for the community, including Six Nations.

Essential Care Partner Program

Patient and Family Advisors are supporting the implementation of the Essential Care Partner program at Brant Community Healthcare System.

ED Wayfinding

Patient and Family Advisors joined ED walk-throughs to share patient feedback with the redevelopment team.

Patient Experience Rounding

Patient and Family Advisors connect with patients to gather real-time feedback.

Expecting Patients Parking

A Patient and Family Advisor member recommended parking for expectant patients.

Translation Services

Patient and Family Advisors supported promotion of translation services and outreach to Muslim communities.



ADT Alumni Group

Patient and Family Advisors started an ADT alumni group in the Fall of 2024 to provide ongoing mental health support for outpatients.



Patient and Family Advisors plant the seeds of change by sharing lived experiences that grow into meaningful improvements for patients and families.

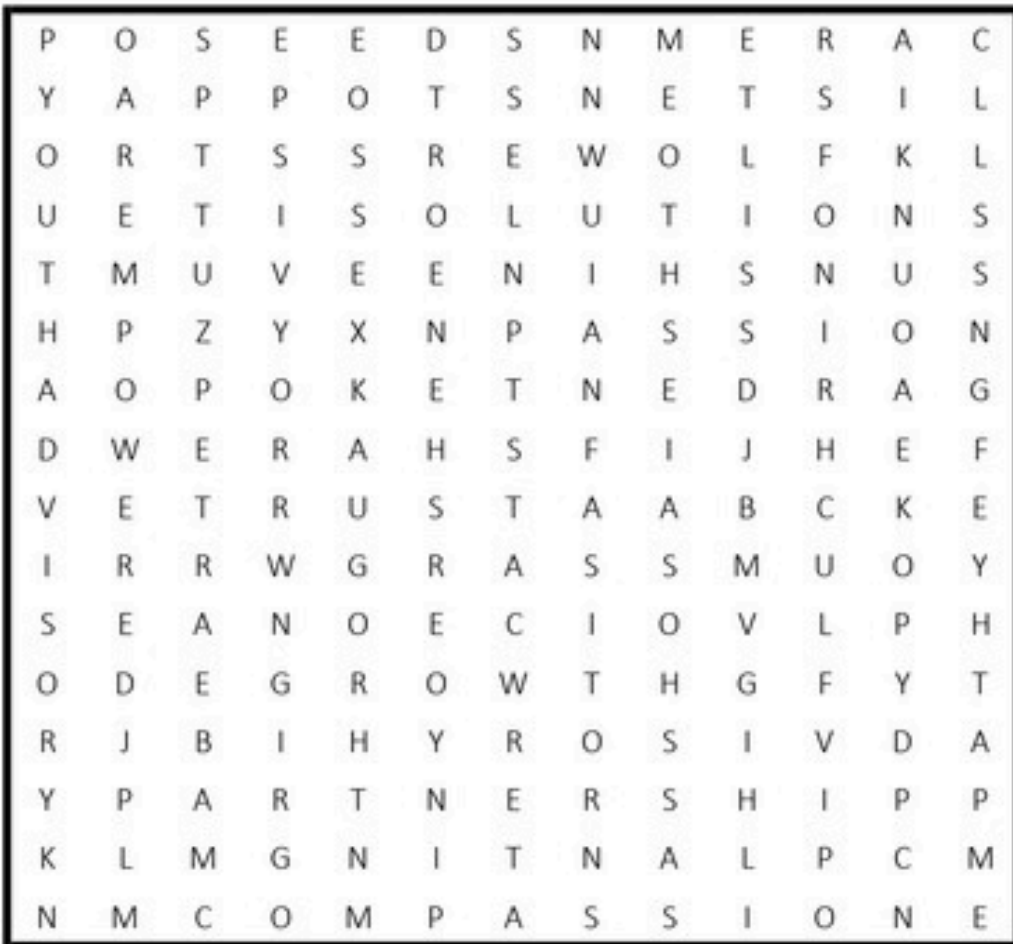
WORD SEARCH



The first 3 people to solve this search can submit their answers to Sara.Fretz@bchsys.org for a chance to win a **Tim Horton's gift card!**

FIND THESE HIDDEN WORDS:

- SHARE - CARE - LISTEN - EMPOWERED - COMPASSION - TRUST - VOICE - GROWTH - EMPATHY
 SEEDS - PLANTING - POTS - BEAR - FLOWERS - POKE - SUNSHINE - GARDEN - GRASS
 PATIENT FAMILY ADVISORY - YOUTH ADVISORY - PARTNERSHIP - SOLUTIONS - PASSION



Words can be forward, backward, across, diagonal, or twisted.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

This year's awards theme, "Rooted in Kindness," recognizes how PFAs have brought our values into action.



Bold Ideas & Innovation Award

Anthony (Orazio) Caltagirone

This award recognizes a PFA who brings forward innovative ideas and meaningful solutions to improve the patient and family experience. This individual demonstrates leadership and collaboration by supporting positive changes in care delivery, encouraging others to share their voices, and championing patient and family involvement in decision-making processes that enhance person-centered care.



Excellence in Patient Experience Award

Janice Kucharew

This award recognizes a PFA who is dedicated to improving quality, safety, and the overall patient experience at BCHS. Through collaboration with staff and healthcare teams, this individual contributes ideas and solutions that enhance care and services, while demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement and creating meaningful, positive change for patients and families.



Trusted People-Centered Care Advocate Award

Nancy Young

This award recognizes a PFA who is a strong advocate for patient and family-centered care, consistently ensuring the voices of patients and families are heard and respected. Through honest, compassionate, and respectful communication, this individual builds trusting relationships with patients, families, and staff while championing meaningful engagement and collaboration in care decisions.



AWARD RECIPIENTS

Equity and Compassionate Champion Award

Angela DeMontigny

This award recognizes a PFA who demonstrates compassion, inclusivity, and a strong commitment to equitable, patient-centered care. Through empathy, active listening, and advocacy, this individual helps ensure all patients and families feel heard, respected, and supported, while championing a welcoming environment and speaking up for underserved or underrepresented communities.



Lifetime Achievement for Patient & Family Advisors - Anna Maynard

This award celebrates a PFA whose long-standing dedication and commitment have made a meaningful and lasting impact at BCHS. Through leadership, mentorship, and ongoing contributions to improving care, programs, and policies, this individual has helped strengthen the patient and family experience while inspiring others through their passion and service.



Congratulations
to all the
recipients of
this year's PFA
Awards!

PFA FEATURED RECIPES



Harold's Cherry Trifle

This cherry trifle is the perfect summer dessert – light, sweet, and always a crowd-pleaser at picnics and gatherings. For the best flavour and texture, be sure to prepare it at least 12 hours before serving.



PREP TIME
15 MIN



COOK TIME
12 HRS



SERVINGS
15 PEOPLE

Ingredients

- 1 angel food cake (store bought or homemade)
- 2 packages small vanilla instant pudding
- 500 g sour cream
- 2 cans cherry pie filling (250 g each)

Note: When making the instant pudding, use only 1/2 the amount of milk required.

Instructions

1. Prepare the vanilla pudding according to the package directions, using only half the recommended amount of milk.
2. Once thickened, mix the pudding together with the sour cream until smooth and well combined.
3. Break the angel food cake into bite-sized pieces.
4. In a large trifle bowl or serving dish, layer the ingredients starting with angel food cake, followed by the pudding mixture, then cherry pie filling.
5. Repeat the layers until all ingredients are used, finishing with a layer of cherry pie filling on top.
6. Cover and refrigerate for at least 12 hours before serving.

PFA FEATURED RECIPES



Anna's Glazed Strawberry Pie

This fresh strawberry pie is the perfect summer dessert – sweet, refreshing, and sure to bring all the summer vibes on a hot day.



PREP TIME
10 MIN



COOK TIME
20 MIN



SERVINGS
1 PIE

Instructions

Ingredients

- 1 baked 9 inch pie shell
- 4 cups (1 qt) strawberries, hulled
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- ½ cup water
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Whipped cream or whpped topping

1. Dry berries thoroughly with paper towels. Arrange 3 cups of berries close together, with points up in the pie shell.
2. Mash remaining berries in a small saucepan; stir in a mixture of sugar, cornstarch and water. Cook and stir over low heat until thick and clear.
3. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.
4. Stir until slightly cooled, then spoon over berries.
5. Chill for 6-8 hours then garnish with whipped cream.