

## Making a difference in people's lives

A LEADER'S PRIORITY.

CAROL TIMMINGS WAS 10 YEARS OLD when she almost lost two very important people in her life.

A devastating car crash left her brother battling serious head injuries for seven months, while her mother spent almost a year confined to a bed, many of her limbs encased in plaster casts. As the two recuperated side-by-side in a Kingston hospital, Timmings watched as a team of nurses provided round-the-clock care. She says the RNs were caring, knowledgeable and sympathetic to Timmings and her other siblings. In fact, she says they had a profound impact on her.

"I saw firsthand what a difference those nurses made to...the day-to-day recovery and care of my mother and brother," she says, adding she also saw "how incredibly family centred they were. From that point forward, I just had tremendous curiosity and admiration for nurses. It was what I wanted to be."

Timmings says she'll never forget their compassion, and has always tried to weave that same thoughtful, caring demeanor into her own nursing career, which began 30 years ago in acute care.

After graduating from Queen's University in 1980, Timmings began working on the neonatal intensive care and cardiology units at Toronto's

Hospital for Sick Children. She moved to adult medicine two years later, working part-time at a couple of coronary care units in other Toronto hospitals.

It didn't take her long to realize her true calling lay elsewhere. She yearned for the opportunity to promote health and wellness, which is why public health became her next career choice.

It's been almost 27 years

exciting projects that help her to grow and learn, Timmings accepted leadership opportunities early into her career. She quickly rose through the ranks at TPH – she was manager of the healthy aging program, regional director, director of healthy environments and director of planning and policy – until she arrived at the positions she holds today: director of chronic disease and injury

in 2012. She championed the initiative at the senior management table, and during its candidacy period, chaired the organization's BPSO steering committee. Though competing priorities threatened to sideline the initiative, Timmings kept the momentum going. Her dedication paid off. She says people galvanized around the BPSO initiative "...in such a way that I felt I was always surrounded by

equally committed, hard-working people who wanted...us to achieve this success," she says. "It's no longer an aspiration. It's a reality."

Timmings has a clear vision of what's next for TPH and its BPSO initiatives. The organization is in the process of signing on to NQuIRE (for more information, see page 15) and is mentoring other health units considering BPSO designation.

When it comes to her own future, Timmings muses: "I've been doing a

lot of thinking about that lately." She wants to stay in the health-care field, and is toying with the idea of pursuing a teaching role, though she also says she's open to any new leadership challenge. "I have felt really lucky to have had the career I have to date. I look forward to many more years of being able to make a difference." **RN**

### Three things you don't know about Carol Timmings:

1. She loves to sing, and was a wedding soloist for many years.
2. She is a breast cancer survivor.
3. Family and friends know Timmings for her love of rocking chairs. She has collected close to 25 over the years. Throughout university, she never used a stationary desk chair – she could always be found in a rocker.



since Timmings first took up a role at Toronto Public Health (TPH). She says she couldn't be happier with her decision. "It's just such a breadth of opportunity. I've found I have never been bored," she says.

She began her public health career working with children and families in their homes and schools. Professionally driven to make a difference in the quality of people's lives, and personally inspired to begin new and

prevention, and chief nursing officer. "Did I ever think I would be the chief nursing officer of the largest health unit in Canada? Probably not," she admits. "But I feel very privileged to be in this position and to have had the opportunities to both learn and lead."

It's no surprise Timmings was a key player in the designation of TPH as an RAO Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO), a milestone realized

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