Diabetes sufferers learn to harvest healthy choices

Ten Peterborough-area diabetes patients spent the spring and summer cultivating the keys to their good health. Nurses from the Centre for Complex Diabetes Care at Peterborough Regional Health Centre helped patients as they took over a community garden, planting and harvesting organic fruits and vegetables. Community gardening has many recognized benefits, says nurse practitioner Jeanne Brown. “It has a positive impact on a person’s physical, mental and emotional well being, while providing increased access to economical, nutritious, locally grown food.” The gardens at St. Andrews United Church were full of beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and spices as part of the project. They provided patients with access to healthy food choices, while giving them a sense of accomplishment and ownership over their health. “It builds confidence, because you feel like you’re doing your bit,” says Brown. (The Peterborough Examiner, Aug. 1, Peterborough This Week, July 31)

Immigrant experience inspires RN’s debut album

RN Haniely Pableo explores her identity, as a Filipina immigrant caught between two worlds, in the songs off her brand new album. A self-taught poet and musician, Pableo moved across the world in 2006 as a 21-year-old nursing graduate, and says she struggled to feel comfortable in her new home. “When you go to another country, you think you know yourself, but you also start to form another identity,” says Pableo, who now splits her time between Toronto and London, where she works part time as an operating room nurse. “It can get confusing.” Performing under the name Han Han, Pableo developed a musical style fusing hip hop with Philippine tribal rhythms, and addresses themes of identity and culture in her lyrics. The result is her eponymous new album, released in September with funding from the Ontario Arts Council. On the album, Pableo raps in a unique blend of English and Philippine languages Tagalog and Cebuano. The album’s lyrics also explore the intense emotions from what Pableo calls a “typical” Filipina immigrant experience. “These songs are physically and mentally exhausting,” she says. (Huffington Post Canada, Sept. 3)

Nursing students aim to bring nutritious food to soup kitchens

An “eye-opening” experience at a London soup kitchen gave Western University nursing student Agata Pawlowski a fresh idea. During a placement at St. Joseph’s Hospitality Centre, she and fellow student Steve Trudell saw volunteers doing their best to create nutritious meals with a carbohydrate-heavy food supply, but the pair was struck by the lack of fresh produce on the menu. “Nutrition was something that quickly became apparent to us (at the soup kitchen),” Pawlowski recalls. Looking for a solution, the two nursing students visited local grocery stores and found that produce was usually thrown out the day before the end of its shelf life. That’s when they created the Feed People, Not
Dumpsters project to collect this nutritious food before it went to waste. “As opposed to putting it into the dumpster, bring it to soup kitchens…and put it to good use,” Pawlowski explains. So far, grocery stores have been hesitant to donate food due to liability concerns, but Pawlowski assures them the Donation of Food Act protects them from litigation when food is donated in good faith. She hopes some publicity – the project was featured by multiple news agencies – will help kick-start donations. “We need that one store manager to step up and be that leader and hopefully others will follow.” (CBC Ontario Morning, Aug. 11)

Flying nurse teams up with police to promote water safety
When emergencies happen on the waters of Lake Nipissing, semi-retired mental health nurse and pilot Stan French flies into action on search and rescue missions. But on the Civic Holiday weekend in August, French teamed up with North Bay police to prevent nautical tragedies before they happen. The president of BAYSAR, a North Bay search and rescue organization, joined local police to patrol area waters to see how many boaters were wearing personal flotation devices (PFD). “We want to promote water safety, (and) try and get people to wear PFDs,” French says. The 15-member BAYSAR crew piloted float planes and helicopters over Lake Nipissing, Trout Lake and Lake Nosbonsing as part of the Let’s See You Wear Your PFD survey. Current laws require everyone aboard a boat to have access to a PFD, but don’t require them to wear it. “The more people that recognize that they will not have time to put on their PFD if it’s sitting in the boat when an unexpected emergency happens, the better their chances will be of surviving,” French says. (BayToday.ca, July 31)

Starting a dialogue about suicide
Suicidal thoughts can leave people isolated and feeling “they don’t belong (or) they don’t have a purpose in life,” explains Elaine Santa Mina. To show them they’re not alone, Santa Mina joined RNAO’s Halton chapter for a Dialogue on Suicide Awareness, a community event coinciding with World Suicide Awareness Day (Sept. 10). Santa Mina, an RN who helped develop RNAO’s best practice guideline on suicide prevention, was the keynote speaker for the event, which drew health-care leaders, politicians and more than 90 community members. “We wanted…to acknowledge that suicide is happening, it is real, and start talking about it,” says Karimah Aldiina, president of the Halton chapter. Nearly 30 deaths every year are attributed to suicide in the Halton region alone. Local police receive at least one call per day related to suicide, Aldina says, adding that age, gender and medical history can be contributing factors. With such a pervasive issue, it’s crucial to bring awareness, she says. “A dialogue is the only thing that’s going to bring the awareness and change that we require.” (Halton Insider, Sept. 11)

Taking a gentler approach to dementia care
Faced with an increasing number of dementia patients, Norfolk General Hospital (NGH)
is taking a page out of long-term care’s playbook to care for this population. The *Gentle Persuasive Approach* – a strategy for identifying dementia that is typically used in nursing homes – is being taught hospital-wide at NGH to any staff who may come into contact with dementia patients. “The strategies and techniques help de-escalate situations. It really is the right thing to do,” says Leslie Gillies, director of NGH’s operating room and intensive care unit.

Ontario hospitals are seeing more and more dementia sufferers as the population ages, and are looking to prepare their staff. The *Gentle Persuasive Approach* includes eliminating the use of words such as “aggressive,” which can unfairly stigmatize patients with dementia. “You don’t want to label them,” says clinical nurse educator Sherry Chambers. “You want to understand them as a person. That helps you give better care.” Staff is also taught to be mindful of personal space, to redirect a patient’s anxieties, and to try to understand the root of negative behaviours. “Often their behaviour is a sign of an unmet need” such as hunger, thirst, or the need to go to the bathroom, Chambers notes. *(Delhi News-Record, Sept. 4)* See page 25 for news on a similar Alzheimer Society educational program.

### STUdENTS PARTICIPATE IN uNIquE PLACEMENT

RNAO invites students to participate in board of director and assembly meetings annually. The placement offers an up-close look at how the board makes decisions, and how home office makes those decisions operational. Attending in September were (L to R): Linna Feng (Humber College), Mercy Anuruegbue (St. Clair College), Sandrina Ntamwemezi and Telease Williams (both from York University).