

Headwaters Ontario Health Teams celebrates one year anniversary

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative celebrated their one year anniversary as part of the Ontario Health Teams (OHT) last Sunday (Dec. 6).

"It's been an incredible year in so many ways, and we are proud of how our community has pulled together," said Kim Delahunt, co-lead of Hills of Headwaters Collaborative, as well as president and CEO of Headwaters Health Care Centre.

Hills of Headwaters Collaborative in December of 2019 became one of the first of 24 teams approved to join the new Ontario Health Teams (OHT) model that looked to revamp the health care system across Ontario by organizing and improving delivery of health care. At its launch last year, the Collaborative consisted of a total of 36 different health care-related agencies and numerous local family physicians. The Province now had 42 teams that cover 86 percent of Ontario's population.

"From the first announcement about the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative one year ago, I have been impressed with the commitment and co-operation between the different community partners," said Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, in a press release for the one-year anniversary.

"We began with an excellent foundation of teamwork between all the services who provide patient care, and the work that is demanded of all our health service during the pandemic is proof that the Collaborative in Dufferin-Caledon is an effective team."

Launching months before the Coronavirus pandemic hit the Province, Ontario Health Teams have pivoted their focus to supporting community response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Collaborative had three key priorities to improve health care, including improving integration of mental health and addictions services across the community, creating an integrated palliative care team, and enhancing service and programs for individuals with complex health care needs.

In a press release from the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative on Dec. 7, the Collaborative noted the achievements they have been able to do in their first year.

According to the Collaborative, they've expanded access to mental health and addictions services with an Integrated Mental Health team, supporting providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, established a foundation for patients with complex needs, launched the Community Wellness Council, and improved the connection between primary and specialized health care.

The Community Wellness Council (CWC) consists of patients, caregivers and advisors from within the region and evaluate plans created by the OHT. The CWC was part of the making of washable gowns as a way to support frontline workers during COVID-19.

Bob Borden, patient family advisor and chair of CWC said the partnerships allows for active participation in co-designing for the work connecting the health and care systems in the community.