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Export date: Fri Oct 30 3:09:16 2026 / +0000 GMT

HHCC turns annual report into community co-designed project

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

?One community, caring together.?

This has been the vision for Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) for the last three years, and most recently the local hospital exemplified it in a co-designed report.

Late last month, HHCC released their annual report, and from the interviews, to the graphic designs, and even printing, the publication was created entirely by volunteer community members.

?It's impossible to tell the story of what has occurred over the past year, which is what you typically see in an annual report, without incorporating the voices of the people that we support,? said Carla Kostiak, communications specialist for Headwaters. ?This report is truly a beautiful mosaic. Its different pieces brought in by different facets of our community, and to see it all together is like looking at a beautiful mosaic.?

Headwaters Health Care Centre each year releases a report, which updates the local community on the doings of the hospital, and is presented at their annual general meeting. The document usually includes information such as financial statements, and a message from the president and CEO, but since 2019 the hospital's communication team has been working to bring about more community involvement.

?Instead of it being static, we started sharing patient stories, and they build on our values of kindness, teamwork, passion, and courage,? explained Kostiak. ?Our patients, families, and caregivers are the heart and soul of everything that we do, every decision we make, every process we develop ? they are the center of it. In order to really hear their voices strongly, we need to make sure they're represented in materials like this.?

Wade Neal is a volunteer patient family advisor with HHCC, and was part of team helping piece together the stories sent in by patients and their families. But, before becoming a volunteer with the hospital, he was first a patient. In 2018, after years of living with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD), a genetic disorder, Neal began dialysis treatments three times a week and in November of 2020 received a kidney from an anonymous donor.

?My experience [at Headwaters] was so good that I felt it was my obligation to give something back to the hospital,? said Neal.

During a patient advisory meeting, volunteers were asked to be a part of developing the hospital's annual report, when the task of interviewing came up Neal said as a police officer with Peel Regional Police he thought it was the role for him.

With letters sent in from the community, Neal spent the time following up for details and helping expand the stories, which were then sent to the hospital's communication team for editorial.

?The message that I'm trying to get out, or part of my motivation to join the clinic is to raise the profile of the hospital,? said Neal.

Alongside the stories from patients, drawings of ?little creatures? can be spotting throughout the report. They're part of a concept created by Cara Ware, known as Little Heroes.

Ware, a local graphic designer, began volunteer design work for HHCC at the beginning of the pandemic, and said she jumped at the chance to work with them on the annual report.

?It wasn't even something that I needed to think about. The whole team are so compassionate, they're full of empathy for people and I have so much respect for the whole team, that when they asked me to do it, I just wanted to say [yes],? said Ware.

Creating the concept of ?Little Heroes', Ware recalls sketching initial designs for the report during the third wave of COVID-19, and not feeling emotionally ?right? about the drawings, and instead began sketching out what would become the Little Heroes.

?When we refer to frontline health care workers as heroes there's an element of reflection, you think ?they're so courageous and amazing' and they are. When you're still in the thick of it, seeing cases going up and down, you almost want to keep the frontline health care workers as they are; strong, compassionate human beings that they are, they don't need a cape,? explained Ware. ?These Little Heroes are meant to be these tiny, little innocent things that look up to the workers at Headwaters, because they just looked at them and thought ?I wish I was like you'.?

Ware added she hopes the drawings make people smile and connect.

When it came down to printing the annual report, Headwaters Health Care Centre turned to Orangeville resident Jeff Phillips.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Phillips' company, PTNR Production located in Vaughn Ont., donated signage for outside the hospital, thanking frontline workers, as well as much need directional signage. His company has also donated over 15,000 medical hoods and PPE to Credit Valley Hospital.

?It was a no brainer to help out, it was a tough year for everybody,? said Phillips.

He notes his connection to Headwaters goes beyond volunteering services ? welcoming a baby three months ago at the local hospital.

?To me it's very important to have a strong community hospital, and having a large group of volunteers shows the backing and support the hospital has. Volunteering the print for the annual report was small gesture I was happy to make,? said Phillips.

Being among the number of volunteers who helped co-design and distribute the report, Phillips said he hopes other community members are inspired to be a part of it next year.

?When you see people leaning in to do something like this, it might spark something in others so maybe come next year it can become even bigger,? he noted.

Having already grown in the level of community involvement since the hospital first introduced this style of annual report in 2020, Kostiak says HHCC will looked to build on it for their 2022 report.