

Talk it up Victoria



Renfrew Victoria Hospital

Your Community Healthcare Centre

Volume Five, Number Two

June 2006

Hospital's financial health sets the stage for good health care

Unflinching community support and years of responsible financial management have created a stable health care environment in Renfrew that is the envy of many other communities.

In an overall climate of financial uncertainty and ever-increasing fiscal pressures, Renfrew Victoria Hospital is one of the few hospitals in the province that has not had to reduce services or resort to deficit financing to manage its expenses. In fact, RVH continues to reap the benefits of healthy reserve funds that allow it to move quickly on opportunities to upgrade equipment and technology.

Expansions, upgrades and new investments have been a continual theme at RVH in recent years. From the \$10-million expansion of the emergency department and ambulatory clinics in 2001 to this winter's total renovation of the cafeteria, construction has literally taken place from one end of the hospital to the other.

Hospital Board Chair Kent Tubman says the ongoing developments are the result of a cooperative approach based on a common vision.

"Everyone involved with RVH, from the volunteer board members to the staff and physicians, shares a commitment to make this a first-class establishment," he says. "We work hard, we consider every decision carefully, and we always have our eye on the future and how each new project can add to the full picture."

"We are so blessed in this town to have such progressive people," comments Renfrew Mayor Sandi Heins.

"They help put the pieces where they need to be for things to happen," she adds.

"We don't just dream in Renfrew. It happens, because the approach is always focused on how we can make it happen."

"We have worked diligently over the years to manage our resources responsibly," says CEO Randy Penney. "Thanks to the incredible support of our community and the wonderful job our staff and physicians have done, we have been able to take advantage of provincial funding opportunities and maximize the benefits for the people of this area, including our patients and our staff."

This issue of Talk It Up Victoria will focus on the financial health of Renfrew Victoria Hospital – the investments we are able to make in your health care, the ongoing growth in hospital services, and how responsible management and strategic planning at RVH impacts on our community.

Quick notes

- Investments in building and equipment at RVH totalled:
 - \$2.15 million in 2006
 - \$1.7 million in 2005
 - \$1.25 million in 2004
 - \$2.45 million in 2003
- Software and technology support costs average more than \$100,000 each year.

"We are in a very good financial position. Because of that, we are able to seize opportunities when they arise."

– Bill Welsh, Chair of the RVH Finance Committee



The most recent construction project at RVH was the expansion and complete renovation of the cafeteria.

Health care needs continue to expand

When it first opened over a century ago, Renfrew Victoria Hospital provided 12 beds for the care of those with contagious diseases.

Today, RVH's care is delivered through 54 patient beds and a variety of outpatient services that includes everything from advanced chemotherapy to wellness programs.

"It's an ongoing challenge to plan ahead," comments Hospital Chair Kent Tubman. "Our goal is not only to keep up with the changes in health care, but to stay ahead of the game and be as prepared as possible for the future."

The difficulty lies in the fact that the future is largely unknown. Technological advances are taking us in new and uncharted directions that were unimaginable only a few years ago.

On June 10, six graduates of the Renfrew Victoria Hospital School of Nursing toured the hospital. They were celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their graduation, and they readily admitted that the current facilities bear little resemblance to the RVH they knew.

The nursing school and residence, for example, have been replaced by modern hospital expansions. The graduates guessed where their rooms might have been as they toured the new emergency and clinic area.

They wondered at the technology that forms the backbone of today's health care world. They reminisced about their early days in nursing, when they went to bed each night with sore arms from shaking countless mercury thermometers, aching backs from lifting patients, and tired legs from long shifts caring for as many as 12 patients in a single ward room.

"What's telehealth?," they asked as they passed the room where dedicated equipment allows today's doctors and nurses to consult via video with specialists in Ottawa or around the world.

Even the privacy curtains hanging from the ceiling brought back memories of earlier technology, when heavy screens had to be dragged screeching and grinding across the floor.

As these nurses made their way through their three-year educational program, they learned from Renfrew's eight or nine family doctors and the two or three specialists who came in from Ottawa when they were needed.

They were required to stand whenever a doctor or the director of nursing entered a room, whether they were eating their lunch in the dining room or in the middle of writing a report at the nursing station. Their white uniforms were "starched to within an inch of our lives", and they wore their white shoes and stockings with pride after they earned the honour by completing the first six months of the program.

"We could start IVs and the (Ottawa) Civic students couldn't," recalled Velma Beam with pride.

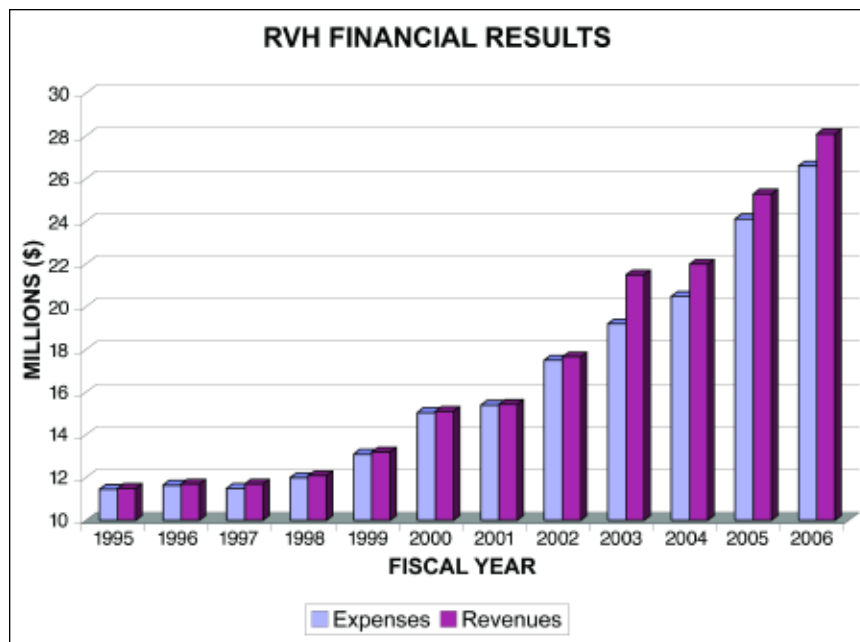
Those IVs did not include the automated pumps and multi-channel accesses used today.

"Our diagnostic imaging equipment consisted of our eyes and ears," they chuckled as they surveyed the portable ultrasound equipment and computerized images of today.

"It truly is a different world," comments RVH Foundation Director Barbara Symington. "And it is thanks to the support of the people in this area that we are able to bring every aspect of this new world of medicine to Renfrew."



Barbara Symington, left, and RN Barbara Patzer, right, chat with the graduates of the RVH nursing class of 1956.



This graph indicates the dramatic growth in the RVH budget in recent years.

Quick notes

- Approximately 400 people work at RVH.
- The hospital is served by 21 active local physicians and 48 consulting physicians.

"Our challenge is to stay on top of the game and remain the organization of choice for our patients, our staff and our physicians." – Randy Penney, CEO

Investments in action at RVH

Echocardiography

Marsha Currie-Mills can't hide her pride when she talks about the echocardiography equipment at RVH.

"We're top-of-the-line. This is exactly the same as the machine they have at the Ottawa Heart Institute," she says of the machine that produces a detailed image of the heart.

Just over a year ago, the hospital invested nearly a quarter of a million dollars in the equipment and other preparations necessary to re-establish echocardiography in Renfrew.

The investment included support for Currie-Mills, who took the initiative to undergo 30 months of education to become an echo technologist. As a lab technician at RVH for the past 23 years, she was ready for a change but did not want to leave the hospital.

"This has been my home for 23 years," she explains. "By taking the echo courses, I've got the best of both worlds – a new career with my RVH family."



Marsha Currie-Mills and the state-of-the-art echocardiography equipment at RVH.

It is the perfect example of how a combined commitment on the part of staff and the corporation can benefit everyone, especially the local patients who no longer have to travel to Ottawa for specialized heart diagnostics.

The operating room

"This is a well-equipped operating room," Dr. Lance Miller says of the RVH surgical suite.

"I know there are ORs in Ottawa and Kingston and beyond that don't have this calibre of equipment," he adds. "It's all the latest of the latest."

Place of pride is reserved for the operating table and light system, designed in France, manufactured in Germany, and installed at RVH at a cost of more than \$100,000. This purchase has paid off in terms of patient safety, efficiency and enhanced abilities for the surgical team. Other recent additions to the OR include the latest developments in scopes and sterilization equipment.

"These capital investments are enabling us to increase the level of care we give to our patients," comments Dr. Miller.

Hospital beds

Margaret Eady is an expert on hospital beds. She has spent the last three months in one, recovering from a fractured knee.

And this RVH patient gives the corporation's ongoing investment in beds two enthusiastic thumbs up.

"It doesn't matter which way you turn, you're comfortable in them," she says. "They're wonderful."

As she becomes more mobile, Mrs. Eady is finding new advantages in the hospital bed technology. Now, the important factor is making sure she is safe as she gets in and out of bed. The up-to-date beds at RVH pass the test, adjusting to a variety of positions and heights, all at the touch of a button. They also feature alarm systems to help staff monitor patients' movement and safety.

An ongoing commitment by the hospital means that there are currently no beds within its walls more than five years old. The nurses who care for Mrs. Eady and other patients are equally pleased with the regular investments that support their work, including patient lifts, the electronic beds and a hydrosound tub that also adjusts to help patients in and out.

"They're fantastic," comments RN Carlene Mahusky, adding with a chuckle, "It's better than cranking up those old numbers!"

Quick notes

- RVH has had a balanced budget for 16 consecutive years.
- RVH is considered a "peak performing" hospital in Ontario.

"It is important that the assets we do have are in the hands of experts who make sure the community's money is well-invested." – Jim Lemenchick, Chair of the RVH Foundation

The positive effects of good health care are felt throughout the community

How important is a good hospital to its community?

Here is what some of our recent patients and their families have told us:

- “In our experience, every request has been met with a smile and helpful assistance. Your staff goes beyond the call of duty each day they come to work at your hospital. They make your hospital different from others. You should be proud of them and cherish the wonderful community hospital they sustain.”
- “Not only does the staff at your hospital provide excellent medical attention but, perhaps more importantly, the staff here truly provide the ‘care’ in health care.”
- “I promptly became aware that the quality of care extended to all patients exhibited a high degree of professionalism, their maximum effort to comfort, and their department in doing so is ever present.”
- “Thank you all ‘ever so’ for the professionalism, support, openness and warmth I recently received from all of you. It is particularly important to recognize the time you spent with

me. I am only too aware how scarce and precious time is for those providing health care. There are so many more of us and so few of you.”

- “Everyone behaved in a most professional manner and yet we were always aware that these same professionals were very concerned about our mother and that they were doing everything they could to assist us at a difficult time.”
- “It all went like clockwork, one thing after another, in good order and with care. Everything was well explained to me... Everybody was friendly, courteous, and very professional, looking after me, treating me and carting me around.”

Local business leaders also believe in the positive impact of a good hospital:

“It’s everything,” says Helen Vincent, broker/owner of ReMax Metro City Realty Ltd. of Renfrew.

Whether her clients are seniors interested in downsizing their living quarters or young families buying their first home, a key consideration is health care.

“The first thing they ask is where’s your hospital?,” says the 22-year veteran of the business.

She adds that RVH’s reputation for quality care serves the community well.

“They’re a known commodity in a small community,” Vincent says, noting that regional services such as the dialysis program and oncology clinics make Renfrew the envy of many similar-sized communities.

“I certainly tell everybody about it. It’s a selling point,” Vincent concludes.

Mac Wilson, owner of Wilson Investments of Renfrew, reinforces Vincent’s opinion.

“It’s a big selling feature in our trade,” the local developer says.

Senior citizens interested in retiring from Ottawa to a less urban area make up a good portion of his client base.

“They will not come out of the city until they know there’s a good hospital here to serve them,” Wilson says, adding that he has no hesitation about giving RVH a glowing recommendation.

“The way it’s operated is absolutely outstanding. The hospital, in my estimation, is top of the top.”



Patient Margaret Eady gets some bedside care from RVH’s Sue Kasaboski.

Quick notes

- The annual hospital budget is \$28.5 million.
- RVH spends an average of \$80,000 per day.
- Eighty per cent of the hospital budget is spent on staff salaries that are circulated throughout the community

“Yesterday they planned for today, and today they are planning for tomorrow.” – Raye Anne Briscoe, Mayor, Township of Admaston-Bromley

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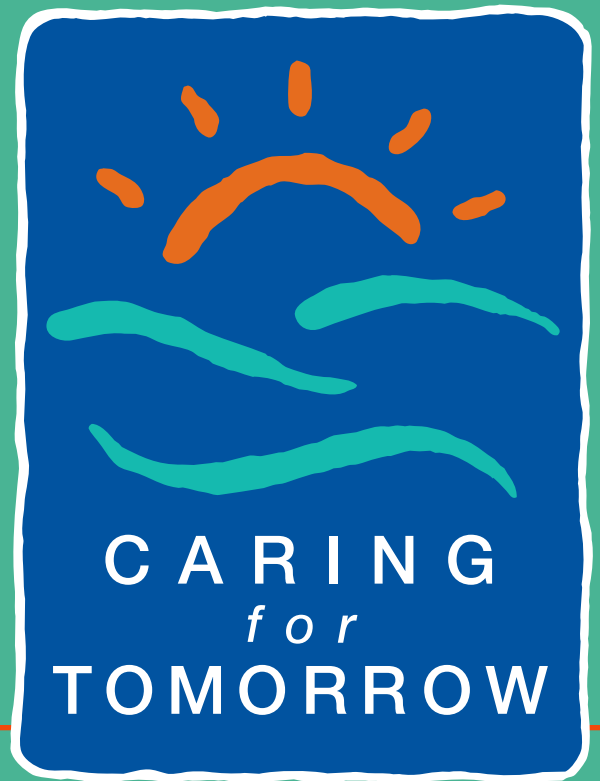
CARING *for* TOMORROW

News from the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation

If you would like to learn more about the various ways you can contribute to Renfrew Victoria Hospital, please contact us:

Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation, 499 Raglan Street North,
Renfrew, Ontario K7V 1P6

Phone: (613) 432-4851, ext. 263



Celebrating the commitment of our volunteers

In April, Renfrew Victoria Hospital officially paid tribute to the many volunteers who contribute to our quality of care.

We are pleased to share these photos of that special event, when 120 people gathered for a luncheon to receive recognition for their good works.



The annual RVH volunteer luncheon gives us a chance to say thank you for a year full of good works and kindness. Our volunteers are obviously a happy group, as these photos indicate.

Photos by Pam Coulas.

While every volunteer at RVH stands out from the crowd, we would like to share the stories of two local women who have made exceptional commitments on our behalf.

Chip Troke

Chip joined the RVH auxiliary in 1947, about two years after it was officially formed, when women were going door-to-door canvassing for new members. It cost her a quarter for her yearly membership at that time.

Although she was already active in eight different organizations in the area, a previous six-month hospital stay made the RVH cause near and dear to her heart.

“Those nurses were so kind to me,” she recalls. “You get to be like one of the family when you’re there so long.”

When Chip joined the RVH auxiliary, she made a decision to devote her volunteer energies exclusively to it and her church. It is a decision she has never regretted.

“I know I made a difference,” she says.

She took on a variety of jobs over the years, but is best remembered by many people in town for managing “Boutique Victoria”, the consignment shop that raised funds for the auxiliary.

Patients may remember her as RVH’s own “Santa”. Chip collected jewelry and other items donated by the auxiliary members and delivered something to each and every patient each Christmas.

“Some of the patients had never owned any jewelry,” she recalls. “It was difficult for them to believe this was a gift from the auxiliary.”

Chip’s own favourite memory might be her all-night sewing session to complete new drapes for the nurses’ residence. The goal was to complete them in time for one of the auxiliary’s gala teas. The fabric arrived the evening before tea day. At one in the morning, Chip burned out the motor on

her sewing machine. Her husband happily loaned her one from the Hydro shop, and Chip was delighted to find it had extra power.

“I really went to town then,” she recalls with a chuckle, proudly noting that the drapes were finished at 8:00 a.m. and installed before the tea was poured.



Anna Nichols

Like Chip, Anna has fond memories of the charity balls once hosted by the RVH auxiliary.

In fact, she first became involved with the hospital in 1961 when she was invited to convene the ball. They were always gala events, with live orchestras, evening gowns, elbow-length white kid gloves, and tuxedos for the men.

Anna says she was happy to be involved and, like Chip, quickly decided to devote her volunteer efforts exclusively to the hospital. That commitment took many forms over the years, including two terms as president of the auxiliary and more than 20 years as a town appointee on the hospital board. Other tasks Anna has taken on include working in the RVH tuck shop and serving as vice-chair of the first fund-raising campaign of the RVH Foundation.

“It’s a very gratifying thing to have been involved in so many different aspects,” she says.

“You felt like you were doing something,” she adds. “The progression of our hospital over the years has been wonderful.”