

Revealing our hidden gems



Think of a time you noticed a colleague taking the time to really listen to a patient or co-worker when a sympathetic ear was needed most. Think too when you saw a teammate devoting attention to small but crucial details, or offering a kind gesture.

These moments of compassion and commitment are the invisible currency circulating every day through care delivered across St. Joseph's, yet acknowledgement of these instances often gets lost in the hectic daily rush. Until now.

If you notice a jar of gemstones on a colleague's desk, you're seeing tangible recognition of that precious, valuable work. It's part of an employee-led initiative called #YouAreAGem, the brainchild of chaplain Helen Butlin in Spiritual Care and social worker Charmaine Dupuis to help build a culture of timely recognition and appreciation.

It's simple but powerful. Start with a jar and some gemstones available at craft stores and place your jar in a visible location. Add a gem to the jar, or give one to a colleague or team to add to the jar, to acknowledge a touching moment with a patient or colleague. Then take a moment to tell the individual how their virtues such as kindness, patience, generosity, advocacy, courage or perseverance made a difference to you, a patient or another colleague.

For your own jar, add a gem when you know you have had a positive influence in someone's day, even though humility may make us reluctant to acknowledge our own shining moments.

Through word of mouth, and Helen and Charmaine's spirited enthusiasm, #YouAreAGem is quickly being embraced by a growing number of teams and individuals at St. Joseph's, who are now taking the time to share how much they value their colleagues' work. Some people can be taken aback because they aren't accustomed to hearing appreciative words, says Helen. "But you can see their eyes lighting up when they get a compliment."

The value of this practice is immeasurable, say Helen and Charmaine. It helps staff recover from compassion fatigue and is an antidote to burnout.

"It's especially important for people like nurses, spiritual

care workers and social workers who are exposed to the pain and suffering of others in their daily work," says Charmaine.

Evidence shows that recognition and a sense of value in our work is "the number one mitigating factor that helps prevent burnout, lost work time and mental health crises that can come with repeated exposure to vicarious trauma," adds



^A group of St. Joseph's staff members who spearheaded an employee-led initiative called #YouAreAGem as a way to recognize colleagues. From left are Patricia Baruth, Carrie Noyes, Kalan Lynn, Helen Butlin, Amy Silva, and Charmaine Dupuis.

Helen. Hearing how colleagues and patients have positively influenced one another "really recharges your batteries."

#YouAreAGem doesn't have to be a team project. Find a trusted colleague, check in with each other, and develop the habit of seeing the gifts in others. Helen and Charmaine see it as a way to "pay it forward in a gentle way, colleague to colleague."

If you'd like to join in, or need some jars and gems, contact Helen (Helen.butlin@sjhc.london.on.ca, ext 65329) or Charmaine (Charmaine.dupuis@sjhc.london.on.ca, ext 65978). The project ends on Dec. 21, when participants will be invited to bring their jars of gems to an event celebrating the ways we care together. By that time, it's hoped that many more staff members will be in the habit of acknowledging the invisible care delivered at St. Joseph's.