What Makes a Team Extraordinary?

On a blustery Friday in early January, Dr. Veronique Boscart, CIHR/Schlegel Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Seniors Care, spent a double shift shadowing teams in the Village at St. Clair in Windsor. Though she’s a researcher, Veronique is a nurse first and foremost. She feels at home in the Villages working alongside team members, helping when needed or simply taking in Village life.

For the past few years, Veronique has been closely following several Village teams at the neighbourhood level, collecting data and information to evaluate Schlegel Villages’ Neighbourhood Team Development program. She’s spent many days observing these teams, and taking note of what makes them extraordinary.

“We all focus on quality of care or number of falls but at the end of the day we work together to provide the best possible care for people and it all centres around that team,” Veronique explains. “If you have a strong team or an extraordinary team, you can tackle the world.”

Her research and the data she is in the process of analyzing, aims to quantify the true impact of this kind of team development on the lives of both team members and residents. She sees strength all the time. In Windsor on that blustery day in January, she watched a subtle example unfold throughout the double shift.

A new neighbour recently moved in who had some cognitive challenges. He believed his five children were still in need of his care and was constantly seeking ways to get “home”. He’d try to borrow money for cab fare and would eventually resort to expressions of anger when he realized his demands and worries were not being addressed to his satisfaction.

As the day went on Veronique says “you could see the team members were starting to get worried, they could see how this was going to escalate.”

It was a housekeeper who first voiced the concern during an impromptu team huddle and the decision was made to redirect one of the team member’s time to sit one-on-one with the neighbour to see if any strategies emerged. He had two hours with him and created a full report to share with the team afterwards. He discovered the resident used to run a gym and the idea was proposed that perhaps there is a role for him alongside the kinesiologist in the village. If he can find fulfillment there, perhaps he won’t feel this need to get home as urgently.

The fact that the team was able to address individual challenges such as this shows its strength, and this example can only happen when teams have the tools they need to work together and problem solve collectively.

“Extraordinary teams don’t just happen,” she says. “You have to invest in them.”

As she continues to sift through reams of data related to relationships and perceptions among residents and families, team members and leadership, Veronique considers her hopes for the results.

“The most important thing I want to convey to the teams is: it matters,” she says. “All of the information we collect on a daily basis, all the MDS charting and all of the care plans you put into place, really matters.” It is through all of this information that teams can pinpoint solutions and track changes to see how their efforts pay off. There is no question in Veronique’s mind that a strong team creates a more positive environment for all who live and work in the villages.

The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.

Continued on next page...
On a blustery Friday in early January, Dr. Veronique Boscart, CIHR/Schlegel Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Seniors Care, spent a double shift shadowing teams in the Village at St. Clair in Windsor. Though she’s a researcher, Veronique is a nurse first and foremost. She feels at home in the Villages working alongside team members, helping when needed or simply taking in Village life. For the past few years, Veronique has been closely following several Village teams at the neighbourhood level, collecting data and information to evaluate Schlegel Villages’ Neighbourhood Team Development program. She’s spent many days observing these teams, and taking note of what makes them extraordinary.

“We all focus on quality of care or number of falls but at the end of the day we work together to provide the best possible care for people and it all centres around that team,” Veronique explains. “If you have a strong team or an extraordinary team, you can tackle the world.”

Her research and the data she is in the process of analyzing, aims to quantify the true impact of this kind of team development on the lives of both team members and residents. She sees strength all the time. In Windsor on that blustery day in January, she watched a subtle example unfold throughout the double shift.

A new neighbour recently moved in who had some cognitive challenges. He believed his five children were still in need of his care and was constantly seeking ways to get “home”. He’d try to borrow money for cab fare and would eventually resort to expressions of anger when he realized his demands and worries were not being addressed to his satisfaction.

As the day went on Veronique says “you could see the team members were starting to get worried, they could see how this was going to escalate.”

It was a housekeeper who first voiced the concern during an impromptu team huddle and the decision was made to redirect one of the team member’s time to sit one-on-one with the neighbour to see if any strategies emerged. He had two hours with him and created a full report to share with the team afterwards. He discovered the resident used to run a gym and the idea was proposed that perhaps there is a role for him alongside the kinesiologist in the village. If he can find fulfillment there, perhaps he won’t feel this need to get home as urgently.

The fact that the team was able to address individual challenges such as this shows its strength, and this example can only happen when teams have the tools they need to work together and problem solve collectively.

“Extraordinary teams don’t just happen,” she says. “You have to invest in them.”

As she continues to sift through reams of data related to relationships and perceptions among residents and families, team members and leadership, Veronique considers her hopes for the results.

“The most important thing I want to convey to the teams is: it matters,” she says. “All of the information we collect on a daily basis, all the MDS charting and all of the care plans you put into place, really matters.” It is through all of this information that teams can pinpoint solutions and track changes to see how their efforts pay off. There is no question in Veronique’s mind that a strong team creates a more positive environment for all who live and work in the villages.