

News Release

Local Health Care Leaders Honoured for Improving Care Coordination

*City of Thunder Bay Integrated District Network Health Link Steering Committee
Inaugural Recipient of the North West LHIN Leadership Award*

Thunder Bay, December 15, 2015 - Yesterday, the North West Local Health Integration Network's (LHIN) Board of Directors presented the inaugural North West LHIN Leadership Award to acknowledge outstanding contributions to health system transformation in Northwestern Ontario.

North West LHIN-funded health service providers were invited to nominate individuals, teams, or organizations from across the region for the Leadership Award, introduced this year as part of the North West LHIN's 10th Anniversary celebrations and awarded at the organization's annual Open House event.

Joy Warkentin, North West LHIN Board Chair, was on hand to announce this year's recipient, the City of Thunder Bay Integrated District Network (IDN) Health Link Steering Committee, which was recognized for its Commendable Approach to Collaboration.

The Steering Committee, whose membership reflects a broad spectrum of health care providers and related organizations, is responsible for overseeing the Health Link program in the City of Thunder Bay. Health Links bring providers from numerous organizations and sectors together, such as primary care, emergency services, mental health and addictions, long-term care, and housing to better coordinate care for individuals with the greatest health care needs.

The Steering Committee's approach has been successful for a number of reasons. First, Health Link clients remain at the centre of care through the development of a Coordinated Care Plan. The Coordinated Care Plan outlines the goals that clients consider to be most important to their health and is followed by every member of the Health Link team to ensure clients are at the forefront of all care decisions. Another reason for success has been the creation of a Health Coach position, to offer personalized support as clients implement their Coordinated Care Plans.

In addition, the Health Link has produced significant cost savings for the health care system in the City of Thunder Bay, most notably through reductions in visits to the Emergency Department, hospital admissions, and avoidable ambulance trips.

At the same event, Arlene Thomson, Director of the Cardiovascular and Stroke Program at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, was acknowledged as a finalist for working tirelessly over two decades to establish a comprehensive cardiovascular program in Northwestern Ontario.

Quotes

“We are thrilled to honour the City of Thunder Bay IDN Health Link Steering Committee’s leadership. Their efforts to bring the Health Link program to life serve as an inspiration to others, and are a shining example of the person-centred, sustainable, and collaborative transformation that the North West LHIN and its partners are working to achieve.” – **Joy Warkentin, Board Chair North West Local Health Integration Network**

“On behalf of the City of Thunder Bay Health Link, we are honoured to be chosen as recipients of the North West LHIN Leadership Award. The success of Health Links is a result of the dedication of Thunder Bay health providers, working collaboratively to meet the unique needs of individuals with very complex medical and psychosocial situations. Our Steering Committee worked collaboratively to develop the business case, and to operationalize the model of the Health Link for the City of Thunder Bay. Coming together in this way has led to a better health care experience for patients, and has made a difference in the lives of many. To quote one of our Health Link patients: ‘It changed my life. I don’t know where I’d be without you people right now.’ Thank you to all of the City of Thunder Bay Health Link Steering Committee members for your commitment to improving health care for the people of our community.” – **Cheryl D’Angelo, Director, Community Care, North West Community Care Access Centre and Chair, City of Thunder Bay IDN Health Link Steering Committee**

Quick facts:

- The North West LHIN Leadership Award was introduced in 2015 by the North West LHIN Board of Directors as part of the organization’s 10th Anniversary celebrations commemorating a decade of partnerships in service to the people of Northwestern Ontario.
- The Leadership Award is presented to an individual, team, or organization funded by the North West LHIN for demonstrating leadership and contributions to health system transformation in Northwestern Ontario including collaborating with others to improve the health outcomes for the population served.
- Since the City of Thunder Bay IDN Health Link’s inception in 2014:
 - There have been 519 Health Coach interactions with Health Link patients to assist in the implementation of their Coordinated Care Plan, including working with Health Service and Primary Care providers as well as other social service agencies such as housing
 - Over 300 emergency visits and 25 admissions have been avoided for clients seen through the Health Link program and the Enhanced Care Team Clinic, operated in the Internal Medicine Clinic at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
 - 167 rides have been provided by the Canadian Red Cross for Health Link clients to get to medical appointments, helping to reduce avoidable ambulance trips and improve access to care

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For more information on the North West LHIN, Health Links, and the North West LHIN Leadership Award, please visit our website: www.northwestlhin.on.ca.

The North West LHIN is responsible for planning, integrating and funding local health services – hospitals, long-term care homes, the Community Care Access Centre, community health centres, community support services and mental health and addictions agencies. The North West LHIN and its Board of Directors are responsible for more than \$600 million of health care services delivered in Northwestern Ontario.

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