

Learning at the Teddy Bear Picnic

Written By **MIKE PICKFORD**

For the past 24 years the Headwaters Health Care Auxiliary has been doing what it can to take the scare out of hospital care for local youth.

On May 26, the group, made up of community volunteers, did it once again as they hosted their annual Teddy Bear Clinic at Headwaters Health Care Centre. The event has become one of the region's premiere spring events since its launch back in 1994, helping to familiarize children from across the region with our local hospital.

Dozens of kids brought their favourite teddy bear, doll or stuffed animal along for a routine check-up at last month's event, with hospital physicians on hand to offer their support. The overall goal of the Teddy Bear Clinic is to reduce the potential anxieties children may have regarding routine medical and surgical procedures.

"The Teddy Bear Clinic helps take the scare out of hospital care," says Susan Fletcher, President of the Headwaters Health Care Auxiliary. "By making the teddy or toy the patient, children learn what it is like to visit different hospital departments in an interactive and stress-free manner. We are thrilled so many children were able to join in the event this year."

Approximately 200 teddy patients were registered, given a wrist band and a health card and triaged before receiving treatments such as injections and x-rays – everyday realities for some kids in hospital. Children left knowing that their teddy would be just fine and that the hospital could be considered a place where caring people support the healing process, said Ms. Fletcher.

The day kicked off at 10 a.m., sparking a busy three-hour period where dozens of "patients" were admitted, treated and discharged. While the clinic served as the main attraction, the Auxiliary organized a raffle, face painting and a special visit from the princesses of the Land of the Glass Slipper. The Orangeville Fire Department and EMS were also on hand to speak with children and their parents about safety.

With a volunteer force of roughly 240 members, the Auxiliary is an important and valued member of the Headwaters Health Care family. The group's goal is to provide support to patients and assist the care team in a variety of departments, including the information desk, emergency, ambulatory care and E Wing. The Teddy Bear Clinic serves as one of the Auxiliary's primary fundraising events in its continued effort to provide funds for much-needed equipment at the hospital.

With this iteration of the Teddy Bear Clinic done and dusted, Ms. Fletcher already has one eye set on next year's milestone celebration.

"We look forward to hosting the event again in 2019 when the Headwaters Health Care Auxiliary Teddy Bear Clinic will celebrate its 25th anniversary," Ms. Fletcher shared.

For more information on the Headwaters Health Care Auxiliary, visit www.headwatershealth.ca/auxiliary.