

Celebrating Success

Helping More Seniors Receive Care at Home after Hospital

'Home First' improves access to high quality care and reduces ALC days

Mike Williams heard the warning calls 10 years ago about the so called 'sandwich generation' but didn't think too much about it. Now in his 50's, married with two children ages 9 and 12, and caring for his aging parents, he is living it and wishes he had taken more time to plan ahead.

Fortunately, with support from the Waterloo Wellington Community Care Access Centre (WWCCAC), Grand River Hospital, and long-term care, Mike has finally found some balance in his life.

Mike's mom has Alzheimer's and his dad has end-stage Parkinson's disease. He moved them to Waterloo so he could be closer to them but soon realized they weren't managing very well. He moved his dad George around to a few retirement homes but his care needs were quite high and he ended up in the hospital.

"There were times where I would work all-day, go and visit dad in the hospital, then go to my mom's and spend the night at her house because she couldn't be alone, and then rush home in the morning to see my wife and kids and get ready for work again," says Mike. "It was exhausting."

Mike moved his mom into an assisted living facility and started exploring options for his dad in anticipation of his hospital discharge. "You see your parents as invincible and they see you as their little kid," says Mike. "I wasn't ready to accept that my dad needed to be in long-term care but Selena, our WWCCAC Case Manager at the hospital, was patient with me and helped me to see things more clearly. My dad really did need 24/7 care."

Once he agreed that George needed long-term care, Selena helped Mike fill out all of the paperwork. She then suggested a program called "Wait at Home" where instead of waiting in hospital for a bed to become available, George could go home with enhanced supports from the WWCCAC and wait there.

Local hospitals, in partnership with the WWCCAC, have implemented the 'Home First' philosophy which makes going home the first option for patients in hospital where they can make informed choices about their future living arrangements. This helps patients to receive quality care in the most appropriate place, while reducing alternate level of care days in hospitals.

"To me this was a great idea. My dad wasn't doing very well in hospital. It was so loud and busy, he wasn't sleeping, there were no activities and he couldn't go anywhere," said Mike.

Given George's complex care needs, going home would be a challenge. Mike and Selena worked together with an assisted living facility to develop a care plan for George to go there upon discharge. As part of the Wait At Home Program, supports were planned for two months to bridge the time it may take until one of his chosen long-term care homes could offer accommodation.

"Dad thrived at the assisted living facility," said Mike. "He was happier, he was more active - a complete 180 degree change from being in the hospital."

After a month, George moved to Heritage Place Long-Term Care. "With dad at Heritage House, and my mom in assisted living, I feel like I actually have some balance in my life. Some days it is still hard for me to see dad in long-term care. He has days where he is lucid and will go downstairs and read a book by himself. Others, he doesn't know where he is and really needs that 24/7 supervision."

Mike's ultimate goal is to have both his parents in the same long-term care home when his mom is ready for that level of care. For now, he is thankful for the support and guidance he received from the WWCCAC.

"Selena is the strongest woman I've ever met," he says. "I am not an easy person to get along with, especially when I have a differing opinion. She helped me to see things from an outside perspective. She knows what she is doing and she worked really hard to make sure dad received the right care, in the best place for his needs."

-30-