

Beacon News

FOR BEACON COMMUNITY SERVICES
HOME SUPPORT CLIENTS



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What clients are telling us

On our recent survey, respondents evaluated CHWs:

- 94% find our CHWs caring
- 90% say they're punctual
- 91% say they're reliable
- 87% find them flexible
- More than 92% say they're courteous
- 88% find them skilled
- More than 89% say they are efficient
- 92% find them well-groomed

Thanks for your thoughts...

from Isobel Mackenzie,
President and CEO

Thanks to everyone who participated in our recent survey of home support clients. We asked what you think we do well and in what areas you'd like to see us improve.

We're very pleased that more than 97 percent who responded say we are meeting their needs and 90 percent rated their CHWs' performance as good to excellent. Many said we're doing a better job of regularly sending the same workers to you (only 3 percent of respondents say they are never visited by the same CHWs). However, others clearly feel we need to continue working on this. We understand that adjusting to new workers can be disorienting and tiring and we'll keep working to address scheduling challenges so this can be minimized as much as possible. Some of you also commented that we could do a better job of notifying you about scheduling changes: in the coming months, we'll work to address these concerns.

Overall, though, respondents highly rated Beacon's services. That means a great deal to us and, I can assure you, we'll continue doing our best to serve you.

All the best for a great summer,
Isobel Mackenzie

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Safety First | 2 | Beacon Welcomes New Board | 4 |
| Food Safety | 2 | Beacon Expands Payment Options | 4 |
| Walking Boosts Brain Power | 2 | Annual Report Available | 4 |
| New Tax Rules for Caregivers | 2 | Thrift Shops Take Prize | 4 |
| Health Highlights | 3 | Contact Information | 4 |
| Signs of Heat-related Illnesses | 3 | | |

Safety First! Food safety is important year-round. But it can be especially tricky in summer heat, when people enjoy picnics and barbecues, or microwave meals to avoid using a hot oven or stove. Hungry for safety? Follow the safety tips below.

To help avoid food-related illness:

- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Don't use recipes in which eggs are left raw or only partially cooked. (It may be time to retire Grandma's mayonnaise recipe.)
- Always marinate bbq meats and other foods in the refrigerator, never on the counter. Never put cooked food onto an unwashed dish that has held raw meat or seafood.
- Promptly refrigerate or freeze leftovers. Bacteria multiply rapidly between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F): don't leave picnic fixings or other foods out. Set fridges at or below 4°C (40°F); freezers should be set at or below -18°C (0°F). Use an appliance thermometer or a thermal strip to check freezer and fridge temperatures.
- When microwaving, make sure no cold spots are left in the food. Cover food and stir and rotate at least twice during the microwave cooking cycle
- Heat leftovers until the internal temperature is at least 74°C
- Defrost in the fridge, not on the counter. (If you're in a hurry, defrost in the microwave or under cold running water, changing the water at least every 30 minutes.) Cook immediately after defrosting.
- After opening them, always refrigerate summertime staples such as salad dressings and ketchup.

'Spic and span' kitchen helps keep food safe

Our parents may have finished up nightly dishwashing with a 'swish' of the cloth across dirty tables and countertops. But scientists now know that dishcloths can harbour bacteria that contaminates counters, stovetops and so on, as well as foods set on them. The safest way to wipe kitchen surfaces is with disposable paper towels. If you do use dish clothes or sponges, it's important to wash them often in the washing machine and store them in a sanitizing solution.

It's also important to use hot water and soap to clean work surfaces and utensils (cutting boards, counter tops, utensils, etc.) after each food item is prepared. For added safety, use a mild bleach solution (15ml bleach to 4L of water) for things that come into contact with raw meat products.

Walk to boost brain power

Walking helps strengthen your heart and muscles. Did you know it can also strengthen your brain?

Recent research shows that walking increases brain circuits' connectivity, helping memory, attention and other cognitive processes. University of Illinois researchers tracked adults aged 70-80 over a year of regular walking. There was no significant increase in brain 'suppleness' at the half-way mark but considerable improvement was noted at one year. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRIs) measured changes in brain function. Walkers also improved physical fitness, reaction times, and health.

Of course, before starting a walking program (or any exercise regimen), consult a physician. And remember to schedule walks only during the coolest parts of the day.

New tax rules created for family caregivers

As part of its recent budget, the federal government announced a new Family Caregiver Tax Credit. The 15 percent, non-refundable credit is available to eligible caregivers of infirm, dependant relatives, including to spouses and common law partners.

The government is also removing the limit on the amount of eligible expenses which caregivers can claim for financially dependent relatives under the Medical Expense Tax Credit. Previously, caregivers who incurred extraordinary medical and disability-related expenses for aging parents, for example, couldn't claim expenses above \$10,000.

Check with the Canada Revenue Agency or an accountant to determine your eligibility for these tax credits.



Health Highlights

Summertime Living

Tips to help you keep your cool

This summer started off with unseasonably cool weather but it may not stay that way. If we're hit with a hot spell, remember:

Eat and drink for summer. Avoid coffee and alcohol (they're dehydrating). Eat small, frequent meals. Avoid meals high in protein (they increase metabolic heat).

Be sun smart. Use sunscreen (minimum SPF 30; 15 SPF for lips). Use hats or umbrellas to provide shade. Stay indoors during peak heat (10 a.m.- 4 p.m.)

Create cool. Open windows. Close curtains. Turn off unnecessary lights. Visit air conditioned stores or other public places. Soak feet in cool water. Run cold water on insides of the wrist, or apply a cold cloth to the back of the neck and forehead.

Pace activities. Avoid walking, gardening etc. during peak heat.

Dress appropriately. Wear light-weight, light-coloured cotton-type clothing. Put long hair in a bun or ponytail.



Don't sneeze at hayfever

Many people decide to 'take something' (like over-the-counter decongestants and antihistamines, or natural or homeopathic vitamins, supplements or teas) to relieve summer hayfever. But this decision shouldn't be taken lightly.

It's a good idea to first check with a pharmacist or doctor to make sure the product (even a "natural" one) won't negatively interact with other medicines. These professionals can also help you figure out if you're suffering from hayfever, a summer cold, or another ailment with similar symptoms.

For good health, drink up

Inadequate intake of liquids can lead to mental confusion, result in balance issues and falls, and even intensify or reduce the effects of some medications.

To stay properly hydrated, drink healthy liquids (water is best) at regular, scheduled intervals.

Don't wait until you feel thirsty! The process of dehydrating can already be underway by the time a person feels thirst, especially if the person is very young, elderly, or ill.

A hot fact about aging....

Did you know we become more sensitive to heat as we get older?

As people age, their sense of thirst decreases and they produce less sweat, reducing their ability to cool off. As well, some medications or illnesses can interfere with the body's ability to reduce heat.

Enjoy summer but keep in mind that (especially for the frail, elderly or very young) heat can lead to serious problems -- dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, even death. So stay cool!

Recognize and treat heat-related illness

Heat-related illness comes in stages.

The first is usually painful muscle cramps. Treat by stopping activity, cooling the body, and taking more fluids.

The next, more serious, stage: heat exhaustion, which may include headache or dizziness, weakness or exhaustion, nausea, and/or cool, moist, pale skin (though it may be red right after physical activity). This can generally be treated the same as heat cramps.

In later stages (heat stroke), symptoms include:

- High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105 degrees)
- Moist skin or the victim may stop sweating and have red, hot, dry skin; the victim may vomit
- Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness
- Rapid, weak pulse ; rapid, shallow breathing

Call 9-1-1 if someone has signs of heat stroke or refuses water.

Beacon welcomes new Board

At Beacon Community Services' recent Annual General Meeting, members of our non-profit society elected three new volunteers to the Board of Directors: Geri Hinton, Jo-Anne Kahan and Chuck Rowe. They will replace three retiring directors (Glenn Gallins, Don Laughton and Doug Macfarlane).

Geri is a retired registered nurse and, formerly, a CEO of a not-for-profit care agency and a director for BC's Office for Seniors. She chairs UVic's Centre on Aging Advisory Board and is a member of the BC Ministry of Health's committee on Dementia Protocols in acute care and emergency.

Jo-Anne is a lawyer whose professional background includes serving as office manager for an extended care facility. She currently also chairs the Independent Living Housing Society's Board of Directors.

Chuck previously worked as executive director of the Royal Jubilee and Victoria General hospitals, as well as site administrator for the Saanich Peninsula Hospital. He was also the Vancouver Island Health Authority's vice-president of human resources and executive director for Central Island and has volunteered with United Way of Victoria for over 30 years.

The new directors join current volunteer Board members Board Chair Bob Cronin, Vice-Chair Penny Thomsen, Treasurer Keith Rolfe, Secretary Sue Wilson, Member-at-large Ian Boorman, and directors Peter Kappel, Sue Hodgson, and Detlef Beck.

Welcome to all three!



Beacon Bulletin Board

Beacon expands payment options

For clients who personally pay for all or a portion of their Beacon Community Services' home support, account management has never been easier. Clients can now arrange to pay the monthly bills online through their bank website, by preauthorized withdrawal from their bank account, or by using a credit card.

"Clients wanted simpler, more convenient payment options," explains Bob Boulter, Beacon's vice-president of finance. "We responded with these methods. Feedback has been very positive and we expect more clients will take advantage of these options for managing their account."

Family caregivers report the payment methods are especially convenient: those who don't live with the client no longer need to worry about bills and cheques being mailed to and from various addresses, and possibly overlooked.

To register for one of these easy payment options, call one of our customer account representatives in the finance department at 250-655-5330 or email us at homesupportbilling@beaconcs.ca

Annual Report available

We're very proud of our home healthcare services but also of Beacon Community Services' many other services and programs. Highlights are in our 2011 Annual Report, which is online at www.beaconcs.ca

Beacon thrift shops take prize

For the sixth straight year, Black Press readers recently voted Beacon's Peninsula thrift shops number one in the category of consignment or thrift stores on a "best of" survey. Thanks for your support!



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