



Care providers pitch to the safety ‘dragons’

By Helena Bryan

A health and safety twist on the popular TV show *Dragon's Den* is sparking innovation for B.C.'s care providers.

A lighthearted approach is sometimes the best way to handle a serious subject. That's the reasoning behind an event that took centre stage at the 42nd annual BC Care Providers Association conference in May, targeting more than 860 employers and 28,000 employees in the continuing care sector.

The Safety Den event is modelled on the popular TV show, *Dragon's Den*, where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to potential investors, or “dragons.” The event provides a vehicle to share ideas and promote discussion around health and safety in continuing care. The Safety Den's contestants compete for cash prizes for the most innovative submissions to reduce workplace injuries for continuing-care workers.

One of 12 health and safety associations in the province, SafeCare BC, which promotes healthy, safe,

injury-free workplaces within the non-government continuing care sector, came up with the idea of the Safety Den four years ago. The goal was to help reduce one of the highest injury rates — almost 10 percent of continuing care employees are injured annually — in the health care sector.

“The private health care sector tends to be fragmented,” says John Lam, industry specialist, Industry and Labour Services, WorkSafeBC. “With fewer resources for health and safety, it's difficult for an individual employer to share innovative ideas. The Safety Den goes a long way to spreading the word.”

Combining information and fun

This year's competition was the most attended at the conference, attracting 200 attendees, which was no surprise to Ken Donohue, SafeCare BC's director, communications and member services.

“It's about celebrating health and safety innovations in a way that blends information sharing with entertainment,” says Donohue. “It's a fantastic

opportunity to share great ideas that might otherwise stay within one organization.”

How it works is that competitors in the Safety Den have five minutes to pitch to four safety dragons, all selected from the continuing-care sector. “The dragons then have six minutes to ask questions and keep the presenters on their toes — in a fun way,” Donohue says.

After the presentations, the safety dragons deliberate and pick a winner.

Winner sets example for creating culture of safety

This year, Brocklehurst Gemstone Care Centre, a 130-bed facility in Kamloops, took home the \$1,000 first prize for its Safety Star program.

Based on the motto “Be aware, take care,” the program encourages employees to pledge to do what they can to create a safe work environment. Those who pledge become Safety Stars and can take part in decision making, inspections, and risk assessments. They are also expected to turn what they see on the floor — whether safe or unsafe — into teachable moments. In addition, being a Safety Star is recognized in performance reviews.

“The ultimate goal is to get every employee to pledge,” says Gemstone’s practice manager Shelly Cantelo. The first people to pledge were nursing staff and joint health and safety committee members who were given bright yellow lanyards for their keys, which helped bring attention to the Safety Star program.

Cantelo and care aide Colleen Cochran competed against two other finalists in the member category of the Safety Den.

“We wore green t-shirts and the yellow lanyards,” says Cantelo. “We also had balloons, poster boards, and a solid script. We were so excited to win that we literally jumped up and down on stage.”

Cantelo says the prize money will go into improving the health and safety initiative with input from employees.

Gemstone Care Centre wasn’t the only one to take home awards. Eden Gardens, a continuing-care home in Nanaimo, won the \$750 second prize for an in-house safety video library featuring employees. And, UBC master’s student Gauravjeet Singh won the \$500 third prize for his Minute of Mindful Meditation practice to reduce burnout and stay alert.

Hearts and Hands Conference underway



SafeCare BC hosts a popular annual Hearts and Hands Conference the only B.C. conference dedicated to health care assistants. It typically sells out early. The 2019 conference, underway in Langley on October 22 and in Victoria on October 24, features keynote speaker Teepa Snow, a world leader in dementia education and care. For more information visit the website at safecarebc.ca/heartsandhands.

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—Ken Donohue, SafeCare BC’s director, communications and member services

A new commercial category, added last year, also provided an opportunity for suppliers of innovative products to pitch to a large group. Commercial winners receive a Safety Innovation of the Year Award — and bragging rights.

Submissions a click away

Submissions for next year's Safety Den can be done quickly and easily online at safecarebc.ca. Look for details of next year's Safety Den this fall on their website. ☺



**I PLEDGE TO
"BE AWARE... TAKE CARE!"**

This is my commitment to safety. I promise to help prevent injuries to myself or others and I will always follow Safety Policies and Procedures. When I see a hazard or an unsafe act, I will stop and take action. I will report hazards and safety incidents - including any mistakes I might make – so that we all can learn and improve. Safety is everyone's job and it starts with ME.

Together we **CAN** be free of workplace injury or illness.

**A Brocklehurst Gemstone Care Centre's
Safety Star program pledge.**



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