



Press Release

For immediate release

Étoile Santé for August: Aleksandra Evans, a Nurse who Speaks Five Languages

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI, September 3, 2015 – As part of the Étoile Santé (health star) campaign, whose purpose is to promote, recruit and make people aware of health professionals who offer French-language health services on Prince Edward Island, the PEI French Health Network (PEIFHN) is pleased to announce that the Étoile Santé for the month of August is awarded to nurse Aleksandra Evans.

Aleksandra is a nurse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown. Considering that it can be challenging to find qualified bilingual staff to fill positions, Aleksandra is a rare jewel: she speaks five languages. “I speak Polish (my mother tongue), English, French, Russian and German, and I understand Czech very well,” explained the August 2015 recipient of the Étoile Santé, chosen by the PEIFHN.

She was selected because of the way she was able to reassure a Francophone patient who was being released from the hospital and needed to take medications following a very set protocol. This patient was Aline Bouffard Cohen’s mother, and Ms. Bouffard Cohen is the one who nominated Aleksandra for the Étoile Santé campaign. “Aleksandra was able to communicate with my mother in French when she underwent tests. She is warm and receptive, and her French is really good. She was able to explain things to my mother and reassure her, while caring for her,” explained Aline Bouffard Cohen.

Aleksandra has only been working in healthcare for a few years. With a Masters in Economics specializing in Banking, she worked with numbers in her native country. That’s how she met her husband, a Canadian, who was teaching economics in Warsaw and was one of her colleagues. When the couple came to Canada and settled on Prince Edward Island in 2003, Aleksandra was pregnant. When her daughter was born a month after their relocation to totally new surroundings, she experienced such a strong disorientation that she fully understands the need for patients to be cared for, or at the very least reassured, in their mother tongue.

As a wife and young mother of two (her second child was born in 2006), Aleksandra needed to fulfill herself professionally. “I looked for a field where my language skills would be an asset, where there were openings, and where I could have a fulfilling profession. Nursing seemed to be the obvious choice. Furthermore, UPEI had just introduced an intensive 20-month program. I was accepted into the program and I did the training. I have been working as a nurse ever since, and I love it.”

Aleksandra Evans works on a float team, where nurses are not assigned to a particular unit. When she begins her shift, Aleksandra never knows where she will be needed. “It’s very engaging work. Every now and then, I get asked by colleagues to go to a patient’s bedside because they know that I speak several languages. A while back, I spoke to a patient of Lithuanian origin who had only been living on the Island a very short while. I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to help him because Russian is different than Lithuanian,

but we understood one another. It was great to be able to do that for someone,” concluded the health professional.

Finding French-language health professionals and accessing the services they offer remains a challenge in increasing French-language health services here in Prince Edward Island. It is crucial to make French-language professionals more accessible and visible in the community. It’s the raison d’être of the Étoile Santé campaign.

Aleksandra Evans’ contact information can be found in the directory of bilingual service providers at www.santeipe.ca/repertoire. People are encouraged to nominate health professionals who actively offer French-language health services in Prince Edward Island. For more information on the Étoile Santé campaign or to nominate someone directly on the PEIFHN’s Web site, go to www.santeipe.ca.

The PEI French Health Network is a non-profit organization that collaborates with various partners in order to improve access to quality French-language health services and programs for Prince Edward Island’s Acadian and Francophone population. The organization brings together representatives from target community groups, educational facilities, health professionals, health service managers and the provincial government. It is also one of 16 networks that make up the Société Santé en français. The PEI French Health Network is funded by Health Canada within the framework of the Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013-2018: Education, Immigration, Communities.

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Photo: Aleksandra Evans

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