

## SANTA MARIA FOUNDATION: CARING FOR THOSE WHO CARED FOR US



By Alison Bradish

In 2013 the Santa Maria Foundation (SMF) was established to ensure seniors were not just getting the basics but a quality of life suited to their stage of life. Now they are on a mission to educate the greater community about why a foundation is necessary.

Santa Maria Senior Citizens Home in Regina is a long-term facility that is part of Emmanuel Care, a group of Saskatchewan-based Catholic health organizations.

The care home was established in 1968 and was run by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Pembroke. In 1986 ownership was transferred to the Archdiocese of Regina until 2012, when it became part of Emmanuel Care. The home has served seniors from all backgrounds, regardless of their faith.

The facility has 137 private rooms and 6 double rooms. It receives funding from the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).

However, the SHA funding can only go so far, explains Joan Pratchler, chairperson of the SMF board of directors.

“There’s a certain level of funding the SHA provides for facilities like ours, but those are just the basics. But because we are a Catholic facility, we offer more, and our faith calls us to offer more than what might be just standard,” she says.

The mission of Santa Maria is to provide quality, compassionate and holistic care to residents inspired by the work of Jesus Christ and in the tradition of the Catholic Faith.

Pratchler points out that to fulfill this mission, money is needed to offer spiritual care, something that is vital to the vision of Santa Maria.

But there are also other things that add to the quality of life of residents that the SHA does not fund, and Pratchler says many people are not aware of this when it comes to senior care.

For instance, she uses the example of the Hospitals of Regina Foundation that raises millions of dollars for things that are important to the community but are not necessarily funded by the SHA granting formula. The SMF foundation hopes to do similar work for the community it serves.

Specialized wheelchairs, mattresses, sensory rooms for dementia patients, programming that augments care need to be funded by other means, and the SMF enables the care home to offer those services.

Even small improvements to modernize the facility, such as new wallpaper or décor, are not covered by SHA. But as Pratchler points out, these are details that help residents feel at home, creating an atmosphere where seniors feel valued.

Paul Ellis is also a board member of the SMF. He recalls touring Santa Maria and how a conversation about windows convinced him about the importance of supporting the foundation.

During the tour, it was explained there was capital project funding available to replace all the windows in the residents’ rooms.

“The windows were quite high. You couldn’t really stand there and look out the windows if you were in the room,” recounts Ellis.

“As a board, we thought, these windows have been here for decades. If we are going to be changing the windows, wouldn’t it make sense to put windows that residents could get light out of and see out of?”

It was explained to Ellis, and the other board members, that the grant Santa Maria was getting would only provide so much funding, and the cost of larger windows would exceed that amount.

The board agreed to find a way to pay for larger windows. It was decided a foundation was needed to support the things they believed a special care home needed.

“People seem to have the idea that yes, if we need to have really great neo-natal care, we are going to have to have a foundation to support that. For some reason, the idea of having a foundation for a special care home is off the radar,” says Ellis.

He says there is a perception out there that the government pays for everything. He acknowledges the government support but also the fact there is only so much in the pot for healthcare.

He hopes people will see the need to support senior care homes by looking at their own family and friends.

“We have people moving into these care homes, the teachers, the lawyers, the doctors, and the farmers and the like, who have built up our province and have supported that province all along. Here they are in a vulnerable situation, and they are moving into a special care situation,” says Ellis.

“I think it’s very important we respect those people and give them the best support we can at the later point of their lives,” he says.

Kelly Chessie is the Executive Director of Santa Maria Seniors Care Home.

“To care for people who once cared for us is an honour and a privilege,” says Chessie.

She says the foundation has been trying hard to raise awareness about its work. The first gala event was scheduled for November 2020, but that came to a halt because of the pandemic.

She is optimistic about future events but understands the need to get the word out about SMF.

She hopes those who have a heart for the elderly will be encouraged to support the foundation in any way they can, even if it is a small monthly donation.

Those interested in learning more about the foundation are encouraged to reach out to anyone on the board or visit <https://santamariaregina.ca/foundation/>.



Alison Bradish lives in Moose Jaw with her husband and two children. They attend St. Joseph's Parish. She earned Bachelor of Arts in Journalism at the University of Regina. She is naturally curious about local and world events. She writes from her home where she strives to bloom where she is planted. She often feels pulled to the topics of religion, education and politics.

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