

Sask. Hospice and Palliative Care Association making a provincial, national impact

In a recent interview said highlighted that the Association has a mandate to advance Palliative Care issues through networking, education, advocacy and research. There is a 12member volunteer board of directors that oversees this provincial wide association, and they are looked at by associations from other provinces across Canada for their innovative ideas.

"Our role as an association is just to support the ongoing changes and to support those service providers, and trying to keep people connected."

One of the SHPCA's highlight annual event is a provincial conference for both professionals and general public. Their 2013 conference is entitled Out of the Shadows: Extending the Boundaries of Hospice Palliative Care. The conference will be hosted in Regina on June 13-14, with keynote speakers world renown palliative care physician Dr. Ira Byock and MP Olivia Chow, wife of the late Jack Layton who is a huge supporter of Palliative Care. The two-day event also features a series of other sessions led by other renown specialists. This keystone event is designed to provide the most recent information for service providers ranging from physicians, nurses, long term care workers, spiritual care providers, volunteers, and occupational therapists.

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"We want to keep everyone working together as best as we can," Carlson added. "There's so many communal experiences that can be shared to the benefit of all. And there's so many resources that can be shared. And we really see our role is as the great connector in Palliative Care. We really see ourselves as pulling everyone together in what is a very, very challenging field of work. To provide them whatever kind of support that they feel that they need. Mainly we do that through education because we're not direct service providers."

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As part of their mandate, the Association offers information to the provincial government to aid them in Palliative Care decisions.

"Our goal is really to partner with the government and to help provide them with information, and solutions, for Palliative Care. Because of the challenges of Saskatchewan - with the rural communities and the two city centers of Regina and Saskatoon - Palliative Care is difficult to decide how to deliver. We have to be conscious of that and work with the government to come up with creative solutions."

Obviously, Palliative Care isn't going to look the same in every region of the province.

"There's a real role for us to help educate the government and to help them come up with appropriate solutions in collaboration with our membership that will serve the residents of Saskatchewan better."

To fulfill their educational mandate, the Association distributes a quarterly newsletter, and maintains a comprehensive website www.saskpalliativecare.com as a huge resource for members and the general public. The website is a hub of resources and information, and they continue to develop it and promote it as a way to connect the province.

Carlson was pleased to announce Swift Current has been announced as the host community for the inaugural Sunset Gala on Sept. 21, a new fundraising and awareness initiative for the Association.

There are a series of exciting components to this evening gala at the Living Sky Casino. SaskTel Max Local on Demand has agreed to sponsor a tv production on Palliative Care which will debut at the Gala. The production will focus on experiences of individuals involved in Palliative Care, sharing the perspectives of families, volunteers, and physicians in order to give a personal and intimate look at Palliative Care.

Saskatchewan artist Joe Fafard has generously commissioned a piece of artwork for the Gala. He will be doing a numbered five year series, and the first piece of art he is creating specifically with a Palliative Care theme, will be auctioned at the Gala.

Rachel Meilke from Hillberg and Berk in Regina, is a major event sponsor and will be creating a unique jewelry item for an auction.

Local businesses are also lending their support to the live auction.

The Association is in the midst of unveiling a fundraising raffle over the coming months, with the grand prize a 2013 Dodge Dart donated by Art and Linda Stenson. The second prize of a Flaman Treadmill donated by Flaman Fitness. There is also an early bird draw for \$1,000 cash.

Twenty per cent of proceeds from the raffle and the Gala will be utilized locally, supporting local Palliative Care programming. The remainder of the funds will support SHPCA provincial initiatives.