

# Réseau Compassion Network



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**W**e have been entrusted by pioneering women to bring together people of all faiths, traditions and cultures to serve Manitoba communities wherever the needs are the greatest. With a spirit of love and compassion, we walk with the people in our communities, so that we can better understand their situation and their needs. By seeing the value in everyone, and by working together as a network, we find the good in our communities, and in turn nurture the hidden potential in everyone. We empower people, and find ways to prevent or alleviate suffering, areas where the needs are the greatest.

**The Network has done an incredible job of responding to COVID-19 with compassion, creativity and commitment to our community. We want to take this opportunity to thank each one of the organizations that form this Network and their teams who are making a difference every single day.**

## Creative Solutions for Unprecedented Times Compassion is Creative

We've all faced challenges at home and at work since the outbreak of Covid-19; health care and social services providers are no different. The pace of change in their workplaces has been tremendous with new guidelines posted daily near the beginning of the pandemic. They've been hard at work ensuring physical safety, but they've also stepped up with creative and compassionate ways to help ensure the people they care for are also supported spiritually and emotionally.

At the Dr. Gendreau Personal Care Home in Ste. Rose, that creativity involved a live barn animal. "We used to be able to get out and about and organize so many activities for our residents," explains Ashley Vandepoele, Care Team Manager. "Since we had to lock down, we've all been wracking our



**Staff are doing everything they can to create happy moments for residents, despite the fact that hugs are off the table for the time being.**

brains for how to provide entertainment and a change of pace for them. I happened to be bottle-feeding a small calf and since so many of our residents grew up on farms, we thought it might be a good idea for it to come say hello."

Residents were brought outside on a nice summer's day where everyone, including the calf, could socially distance. "It was a great way to spark conversation," admits Vandepoele. "They all have a lot of memories and stories about the animals they'd raised in their lives."

In Winnipeg, Actionmarguerite is a personal care home with three sites that was subject to a no visitation rule at the beginning of the pandemic. Their recreation support workers deftly shifted gears to accommodate family visits over Skype, through windows with the aid of cell phones, outside and, eventually, in



patient rooms again. That said, not every resident has the same needs and staff often discuss how to best support those they care for.

"We have an acquired brain-injury unit, where we care for people of all ages, many of them much younger than you would typically imagine in a personal care home," explains Charles Gagné, Chief Executive Officer. "As health guidelines loosened, it was decided that residents could have two designated visitors allowed inside to see them. We had one resident in particular who has a wife and two younger children. How could we allow one child to visit and not another? Health and safety is paramount during this pandemic, but so is compassion. We made an exception so that all three were able to visit their loved one."

Marymount, located in Winnipeg's North End, believes in finding the good of every young person who walks through its doors. Their semi-secure group home for young women experiencing complex mental health and addiction issues was also subject to a no visitation policy at the beginning of the pandemic.

"It's really hard for these girls when they aren't allowed to have family members come to see them," says Chief Executive Officer, Nancy Parker. "Our program uses a combined healing model [of traditional and western practices] and we

really leaned into those models to bring everyone through. We expanded on our land-based program, which gets the girls outside and gardening, and we re-decorated some of our spaces to include more traditional teachings."

Some personal care homes sought solutions to loneliness and isolation from within. At Résidences Despains, an assisted living complex in St. Boniface, programming was expanded by staff but they also called on the skills and abilities of residents. "The people who live here have a lot to offer to us and to each other," explains their Recreation Coordinator, Joëlle Brémault. "One resident taught classes on the enneagram, another on word games, for example. Getting residents to lead these activities has been really impactful."

At Villa Aulneau, another assisted living residence in St. Boniface, staff ensured the show went on... literally. The traditional variety shows that used to bring residents together were instead recorded and played on the internal television station. Since many of the residents are members of religious orders, it was also important to keep mass accessible. Daily services

were streamed onto in-suite televisions, as well.

"What we've seen is that these digital connections have fostered more friendships and support between residents," explains Drissia Jamaa, Recreation Coordinator at Villa Aulneau. "Life has to carry on, even during these difficult times, and activities like this are some of the best kind of therapy we can offer. Residents keep saying, 'That really gave me a boost.'"

We see more and more people getting involved and making connections to take care of each other. It's really wonderful to witness!"



Staff from Aulneau Renewal Centre operate a phone line to support our community.



Youville Centre offers supports in diabetes care and other services such as counselling and teen clinics.

## Keeping Connections Strong Compassion is Connection

The need for connection, education and support in our communities didn't stop when the pandemic began. Many of our organizations needed to pivot quickly to continue their work and naturally, they found that the need for their services has only increased since the arrival of Covid-19. While they'd all prefer to be working with people one on one, the switch to virtual or phone-based services has broadened their reach and bridged a gap for thousands of people across the province.

nator of Clinical Education & Training, Brendan Boehr. "We're also seeing people from all over the world join us; New York, Cayman Islands, United Arab Emirates and across the United States. It's been really important to us to have more Manitobans be able to access this training but to know we're also spreading our message of empowerment to people around the world is really rewarding for us."

At Aulneau Renewal Centre, a bilingual organization in St. Boniface, helping clients create and achieve a positive vision for their lives is the goal. When they had to stop offering in-person services in mid-March, they had a wellness phone line up and running the next day.

"We said to ourselves, 'This is what we do. We help in tough times. So we have to close our doors, now what?'" remembers Therapist and Team Lead, Rebecca Martin Ilunga. "This wellness line has helped hundreds of people who needed some extra support. Though every call was different, there have been some themes. We hear a lot of fear, anxiety, and so much loneliness. That's been the biggest impact we've been able to make, even in a small way; to help fight the isolation that a lot of people have been feeling. We listen, we encourage, and we suggest some coping tools."

Sara Riel, another organization in St. Boniface offering support to those struggling with mental health and addictions, has also been hard at work converting and expanding their services to meet the needs of the community. Their Seneca Warm Line provides peer support 24 hours a day. The service used to average 125 calls per month during their evening shift, but that number leapt to over 800 per month with the new 24 hour format.

"Many of our callers have stated that they are just so thankful to have us there, and that sometimes, we are the only connection some individuals have during the day," says Executive Director, Tara Brousseau Snider. "We've also created a telephone line to support managers in the work place so they have the capacity and tools available to be strong advocates and allies to those working on the front lines during Covid-19."

At Centre de Santé Saint-Boniface, a Francophone primary health centre, the change to virtual and phone visits has facilitated easier access for some patients.



Staff and residents at personal care homes miss the opportunity to engage without protective equipment but are making the best of their situation.

"While we'd love to be seeing everyone here in person, we know that's not safe right now. But some of our clients are actually really pleased to be able to have some flexibility in how they receive services," says Communications Coordinator Linh Tran. "For those with mobility issues, or who have difficulty securing transportation, being able to have a quick chat with their doctor or other health care provider over the phone has been easier for them. We're doing everything we can to make sure people aren't heavily impacted by the changes we've had to make to respect health guidelines."

As group activities switched from in-person to online for Youville Community Health Resource Centre, their staff worked hard to adapt on the fly. A common refrain from all of the members of the Compassion Network is the ability and willingness of staff to work hard to keep connections strong in the community.

"It takes lots of planning to change everything we're doing from one day to the next," admits Executive Director Toni Tilston-Jones. "But our staff has been extremely flexible and professional. It's been challenging but it brings us together in a different way. We're determined to continue these services the best we can!"

Michelle Quennelle, Executive Director of the Ste. Rose Health Centre, echoes those sentiments. "We're all making the most of what we have for right now," she says. "This has been so difficult for patients and family members, especially those in palliative care. But we're doing a lot of talking, amongst staff and with families, and we're all supporting each other. We're a small community and we're doing everything we can to take care of each other and keep each other safe."

## Successes in the Time of Covid-19 Compassion is Commitment

While health care and social services providers have faced some incredible challenges in the past six months, some of our member organizations have also managed to score big wins for their causes and their communities. A pandemic can't stop the passion fuelling the work of these organizations!

At Centre Flavie-Laurent, a charity in St. Boniface that strives to provide dignity to those living in poverty through the distribution of no-cost material goods, space is always an issue. After years of planning, they were able to secure 301 Archibald Street, which will nearly double the square footage they have at their current location on Marion Street.

"We're still fundraising to be able to complete this transition," admits Gilbert Vielfaure, the centre's Executive Director. "We've raised \$800,000 of the required \$1.5 million, but knowing we've got the location secured is a huge step forward for us. It means we can serve more people, wel-



Centre Flavie-Laurent accepts community donations for distribution to those in need.

come more volunteers, and make a bigger impact in our community."

Over at the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation, all in-person fundraising events were put on hold and they became one of the first non-profits in Winnipeg to host a virtual gala. Their Rosé Soirée became the Rosé Soir-in. Food was delivered by 529 Wellington and Piazza Di Nardi, and an all-star musical line-up was streamed into homes across the province.

"It was a bit of a risk to take, being the first ones to try something like this," admits Jessica Miller, the Foundation's Director of Communications. "But it was so well received by our community and we sold out quickly. It turned out to be an incredible event, thanks to our partners in the hospitality industry and all the artists who shared their talents with us. Plus,

we've had lots of other organizations reach out to ask for advice, and it's been great to help others. We're all interested in spreading the good!"

### NETWORK MEMBERS

Abri Marguerite | Actionmarguerite | Aulneau Renewal Centre | Centre de Santé Saint-Boniface | Centre Flavie-Laurent | Despains Charities | Gestion Providentia | Marymount | Sara Riel | St. Amant | St. Boniface Hospital | Ste. Rose Health Centre | Winnipegosis & District Health Centre | Youville Centre



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