

AUXILIARY HISTORY

Mary Immaculate Hospital Auxiliary of Mundare

Sister Sylvia Nakonechny, SSMI, Administrator of Willingdon Hospital, recognized the need for an Auxiliary to Mary Immaculate Hospital of Mundare. She enlisted the help of Mrs. Vera Siracky, an employee of the hospital, who invited a large number of women to meet in her home on March 1, 1971. Twenty-one women responded and with Sr. Sylvia present, Mrs. Kay McKenzie from the Vegreville Hospital Auxiliary explained the need for such an organization. She stressed that providing patient comfort was of the utmost importance, a motto the Auxilians in Alberta and throughout Canada are committed to.

That evening the Mary Immaculate Hospital Auxiliary was formed with Vera Siracky elected as President, Violet Kully as Vice-president, Lile Fundytus as Secretary and Elsie Warawa as Treasurer. The Auxiliary members arranged to hold their meetings in the hospital on the first Monday evening each month excluding July and August. On occasion, they were hosted by a member in her home. Over time the meetings have changed times and dates. Presently, the Auxiliary meets on the 2nd Tuesday afternoon in the hospital boardroom.

Member Evan Osinchuk was appointed to attend our first Northeast Regional Hospital Auxiliaries Conference held on May 27, 1971 in Willingdon. Shortly afterwards, our Auxiliary affiliated with the N.R.H.A., and with the Provincial A.H.A.A. At that time there were more auxiliaries locally. Our records show members attending meetings in places such as Willingdon, Lamont and Fort Saskatchewan.

In February of 1972 and again in 1980, our fledgling Auxiliary successfully hosted the Northeast Regional Hospital Auxiliaries Conference. The luncheon menu was prepared and served by the Mundare Auxiliary to 163 delegates from the Alberta Hospital Association and the Auxiliary Association including 32 Mundare Auxilians.

Auxiliary groups rotated alphabetically every two years to serve on the Northeast Regional Executive for the conferences. Mundare's turn came in 1977 and 1978, with Violet Kully serving as Chairperson and Anne Koren as Secretary-treasurer.

Raising money to purchase equipment and tray favors for patient comfort (not provided for by the Government) is very important for every auxiliary. Our first fundraiser was a Strawberry Tea held on May 6, 1971 in the basement of the hospital. Tea and strawberry shortcake with whipped cream were served. A dozen aprons and numerous crafts were made by the Auxilians and donated to the Tea. Donations were also received from 180 guests making the tea a great success. The Strawberry Tea continues to be an annual event, with variations of raffles, baking ~~perogy, pie or craft sales~~. It continues to be a success as a fundraiser and for creating community awareness about the Auxiliary and its projects.

The second major fundraiser for the Auxiliary is a bake sale held in November. Currently the sale is held at the Basilian Fathers' Museum in conjunction with a luncheon provided by the Museum staff. Vast amounts of baking are donated by the Auxiliary and its community supporters. The sale is so popular that everything is usually sold out within the first hour.

In 2000, a new fundraiser was initiated called Light-a-Lites. The Auxilians and residents work together to cut out and decorate Christmas ornaments which for a donation, are personalized in "memory of" a loved one. The ornaments are hung on our "Memory Trees" that are on display in the hospital entrance during the Christmas season.

Fundraising is a continuing challenge that has taken many forms over the past 40 years. The Auxiliary's first raffle was held in 1972. The Auxiliary was honored when Mrs. Anne Strilchuk, wife of our dedicated pioneer, Doctor N. Strilchuk, handcrafted and donated a quilt for the raffle. In September 1973, Auxilian Mrs. Cassie Sorochuk of Hilliard, crafted and donated 3 quilts for a fall raffle.

The first big fundraising concession for the Auxiliary took place on June 11, 1972 at the Ukrainian Village owned by Mr. Frank Lakusta (now provincially operated). Mrs. Alexander Chmilar, a fabulous cook of our community, volunteered to cook 8 gallons of borscht comprised of vegetables she cut by hand. Not only was the borscht a best seller at 25 cents a cup, but thousands of perogies were sold as well.

At the Fall Festival held in the Ukrainian Village in 1973, teenagers were enlisted to sell hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, pop, etc. at the concession booth. The Ukrainian Village concession provided a source of income ranging from \$60 to more than a \$1000 over the years. It took great determination to work out of a vacated building that had to be cleaned even before the pot, pans, electrical cords, and food supplies etc. could be hauled in.

Throughout the years, the Auxilians also undertook catering concessions for several farm auctions around the Mundare area. They had to clean a place in a garage or shack to make room for the food booth, as well as carry the supplies in. On one such occasion, two Auxilians cleared a cache of guns that were stored on a stove in the summer house and wash the area before the hot dogs and coffee could be sold.

Because perogy dinners were so popular, the Auxilians held their first one in November, 1975 to assist the Sister Servants raise money for the chapel of the new hospital. The Auxiliary members helped the Sisters make hundreds of dozens of perogies which were sold during the Klondike Days in Edmonton.

In April of 1974 because the Alberta Hospital Commission insisted on costly

renovations to the Mundare Hospital which was built in 1928, there was a possibility that the hospital would be closed. The Auxilians, along with other organizational representatives, attended a meeting of the Mundare Town Council where it was unanimously agreed that the Provincial Government be asked to build a much needed new Health Care Centre in Mundare. Thus the Auxilians were thrilled when the sod turning of the new hospital took place on September 13, 1975. When the hospital held its official opening in November 1979, the Auxiliary undertook to help supply and serve the refreshments for the reception, as well as donating \$5000 towards furnishing the Boardroom.

The Auxiliary continued to extend a helping hand ~~to~~ whenever help was needed. In November 1975, in response to a request made by the newly formed Agricultural Society, the Auxiliary sponsored a perogy dinner, donating the proceeds to the Ag. Society. Auxilians also helped the community by canvassing for worthy groups such as the Red Cross, Kidney and Cancer Foundations.

Some of the many activities undertaken by the Auxiliary were:

- visiting residents of Lamont Senior Lodge and providing birthday cakes
- operating a stationary canteen at the hospital
- sponsoring poster contest themes: "Helping You Stay Healthy" and "What Does a Hospital Mean to Me?"
- hosting Blood Donor Clinics and educational presentations on Nutrition, Diabetes, Rheumatism etc as well as sponsoring workshops dealing with Grief and Pastoral issues
- sponsoring candy stripers for a brief time
- Awarding Nurse's Bursary starting in 1974 and given to 15 Nurses-in-training students
- assisting at the official opening of Mundare's Fr. Filas Manor
- helping with the Horizon Project, a Government funded recreational program for extended care seniors
- operating the Meals on Wheels program for 11 years
- donating quilts to the R.C.M.P. for Victim Services
- celebrating birthdays, playing bingo and organizing the weekly "Hymn Sing and Story Hour" at the Manor

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- operating weekly and special occasion bingos at the hospital
 - joining the residents for baking and gardening projects
 - making monthly monetary contributions to the Recreational Department of the hospital to purchase craft supplies, help fund field trips and to sponsor entertainment for the residents
 - assisting hospital staff with resident barbeques, Canada Day and special celebrations
 - Christmas caroling, distributing Christmas oranges and tray favors at the hospital, Sisters' Convent and Fr. Filas Manor.
 - providing stocking stuffers and Christmas gifts for the residents
 - laying a wreath every year at the Cenotaph (Mundare) Remembrance Day

Throughout the years the Auxiliary has been under the umbrella of Sisters Sylvia, Jacinthe, Dorice, Mary Nicholas, Eugenia and Jan (formerly Stan) who were very supportive and encouraged us in our work. In 1979 the Auxiliaries sponsored Sister Jan as a Queen candidate to raise funds for the newly constructed Mundare & District Agricultural Arena. Sister Stan was crowned Queen and the funds raised used to provide a skating rink that has benefited the people of Mundare and surrounding areas for nearly 40 years.

Our Auxiliary has had many talented members who were willing to give of themselves in various ways:

1. Anne Semotuik sewed 30 mastectomy bags and caps in which were donated to the W.W. Cross Hospital.
2. For 3 years in a row, Anne Semotuik and Ada Danielson make 35 miniature braided paskas (Ukrainian Easter Bread) which were given to patients as tray favors.
3. Vivian Tanasichuk sewed 20 beautiful burgundy aprons for Auxiliary members to wear at their functions.
4. Over the years, members have knitted, crocheted or sewn, lap robes, flannelette nightgowns, slippers, mittens, scarves and toques
5. Maggie Feniak, presented hand-painted Easter (Pysankys) eggs to Queen Elizabeth when she, with Prince Philip, made a brief stop in Mundare on their way to Edmonton.
6. In celebration of the Provincial Auxiliary's 40th anniversary, Mrs. A. Chmilar embroidered the M. I. Hospital logo on a square cloth to be added to a quilt that the N.E. Regional Auxiliaries pieced together with squares sent in by the affiliated Auxiliaries of the Region

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7. In honor of the Auxiliary's 30th anniversary, a beautiful hospital logo, embroidered by Mrs. Alexandra Chmilar, was framed and presented to the Mundare Hospital along with a large banner with the Mary Immaculate Hospital logo sewn by Marilyn Mandiuk of "Quilts-to-B".
 8. Lillian Broda and Eileen Spallin crocheted over 200 tea cups and saucers for our annual Strawberry Tea and for the 2011 National Auxiliary Conference being held in Edmonton.
 9. Marcy Sereda, Wanda Ryan and Eileen Spallin have crafted hundreds of seasonal table favors for the residents of the hospital, manor and convent.

There were so many memorable moments and times:

-Five patients were transferred to our hospital from Vegreville Nursing Home due to a flood caused by the Vermilion River in 1974. With the co-operation of our high school, five students volunteered to help feed the patients during the students' lunch break. The students and patients truly bonded with one another.

-The first male member to join our Auxiliary - David Stanko who was great at selling raffle tickets.

-Presently, the only male member of our Auxiliary - Len Siracky coincidentally, is terrific at selling 50/50 tickets

-A favourite moment was presenting T-shirts to a dozen or more babies born in our hospital delivered by Dr. Ron Brown. The maternity program was terminated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons when it was determined that Dr. Brown needed to have another doctor to assist him.

-Winning first prize at the 1999 AHAA Convention for a Success Story describing our efforts to create the palliative care room at the hospital.

-In 1999 after Lakeland Regional had earlier downsized the hospital from 20 long-term and 10 acute beds to just 20 long-term care beds, happily, 10 beds were reopened making it a 30 long-term care facility.

-Receiving the "Provincial Volunteer Award" in 2005 at a reception held in Government House, Edmonton.

-Winning provincial recognition at the 2009 AHAA Convention and:

*first prize for our photo illustrating one of our dedicated Auxilians "Lending a Helping Hand" to a resident. The photograph went on to win first prize at the National Conference as well as the "People's Choice" Award.

*Winning second prize for our photo illustrating Auxilians "Fundraising" for the resident comfort funds and...

*earning an honorable mention for a Success Story about our Light-a-Lite Christmas fundraising campaign.

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-Again at the 2010 Convention, the Mundare Auxiliary was fortunate to be awarded 1st prize in the "Lending a Helping Hand" photo contest as well as second prize in the "Fundraising" category plus an honorable mention for a Success Story about our annual Strawberry Tea.

Sadly, on June 3, 2005, the transfer of sponsorship of Mundare's Mary Immaculate Hospital from the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate to the Alberta Catholic Health Corporation took place. However, we have courageously carried on, and as we reflect upon our past endeavors, we note that we have achieved so much to help bring patient comfort throughout these past 40 years.

The list of equipment the Auxiliary has acquired is outstanding! Some of the items purchased are:

- 6 Hi-lo beds (the first one bought in 1974 cost approximately \$450 - cost increased to \$3,380 by 2004)
- Hi-Lo bed stereo
- Mini-Echo Sounder
- Hydraulic Verso Lift
- X-ray film dryer
- X-ray viewer
- Diathermy machine
- Portable E. C. G.
- Cardiac Arrest Machine
- Geriatric Chair
- Exercise bicycle
- Patio Table & Umbrella
- Resusci-Annie (\$2,350 in '82)
- Pixel Chair Lift
- Donation towards Hospital Van
- \$3000 towards a Hydraulic Lift
- \$2000 towards the TV room renovations
- individual lift slings for each resident
- Physiotherapy Equipment
- I. V. Monitor Pump
- Over the bed tables
- Infusion Pump (\$2500 in '88)
- Several TV's
- Large Aquarium
- Mist Croup Tent
- Hyphenator
- Barbeque
- Infusion Pump
- Pediatric bed
- Fireplace insert & Ceramic Angels
- Karaoke Machine
- Flotation Chair
- a Bingo Machine
- spinning wheel & shadow boxes
- wheelchair pad covers for every resident

By far the most outstanding project was furnishing a much needed Palliative Care Room. From our low membership there were 6 able-bodied Auxilians who undertook the almost impossible task of canvassing the Town of Mundare, the outlying areas and delivering personal donation requests to businesses in the Town of Vegreville. In 1997 the canvassing came to a near standstill while the Hospital upgraded an appropriate room to be stipulated as the Palliative Care Room. This included plumbing, fixtures, and wiring renovations. Finally, in spite of the difficulties, we resumed the task of acquiring the necessary funds for a remote control bed, at a cost of \$11,000, and another \$3,500 for a table, chairs, a sound system, window coverings and other amenities. Fortunately, contributions from 'Memorial Donations' made it possible for us to reach our goal and beyond.

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On March 25, 2001 we celebrated the Official Opening of the Palliative Care Room with a ribbon cutting ceremony, presentations and a reception for Government, County and Local dignitaries as well as many guests.

During the past 40 years our Auxilians have always strived to support one another through difficult times, illness and death. We have lost many members over the years but their memories will always live on with us through generous donations their families have made to the Auxiliary. Many of the major items that have been purchased have "In Memory Of" plaques. We will always be grateful to them for their continued support.

We were ever so grateful when three of our Auxiliary members, who were injured in a motor vehicle accident near Vegreville, were spared their lives. We visited, encouraged and helped them as much as possible. We also extended support to a member, who had a fire in her home, by sponsoring a benefit tea. And just this year we came together with the community to hold a chili supper for three businesses who suffered severe fire losses.

Very importantly, we also celebrate happy occasions, ie. weddings, anniversaries and birthdays. In 2007, our Auxiliary bylaws were changed so that we could honour dedicated members with a MIHA Lifetime Membership award. Those awarded were: Violet Kully; Nellie Kitt and Victoria Kokotailo, founding members since 1971 and Annie Kornicki, a member since 1973 and Gwen Polomark a member since 1978.

One of our most dedicated members, Violet Kully, has worked tirelessly over the years serving as President, Vice President and Secretary for the Mary Immaculate Hospital Auxiliary as well as President and Vice President at both regional and provincial levels of the Auxiliary. Violet was awarded a Provincial Lifetime Membership in 2008.

The list of Presidents who have served includes Vera Siracky, Violet Kully, Lile Fundytus, Yvan Osinchuk, Nellie Kitt, Anne Kornicki, Edna Bendara, Sue Rocheleau, Lillian Broda and currently, Margaret Brehaut.

Mary Immaculate Hospital Auxiliary can be proud of our faithful commitment and diligence for all of these years, bringing sunshine through our visits, bingos, and ever so cute tray favours for Easter, Christmas, Father's and Mother's Day. No matter how many ^{of} few the members (in 1977 there were 33), we have persevered to achieve "Patient Comfort" for all. We can't rest on our laurels. We need to press onward to continue to reach out to the sick, lonely and dying.

I quote: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." 1John 3:18