



**A 'positive face on aging' at first annual Celebrating Seniors volunteer awards**

In addressing the crowd at the first annual Celebrating Seniors volunteer awards banquet on Sunday, October 3, hosted by the Saskatchewan Senior's Mechanism (SSM) at the Hotel Saskatchewan in Regina, His Honour the Honourable Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan and the event's Honourary Patron, emphasized the importance of "positive, active aging."

Through volunteering, Hon. Barnhart said, Saskatchewan seniors boost not only their own health and well-being, but the health and well-being of everyone and the communities involved. The event capped the week-long Seniors' Week in Saskatchewan, September 27-October 3.

Tracy Thompson, program coordinator and your friend at the SSM said the promotion of "positive, active aging" is one of the SSM's raisons d'être.

"Keeping your mind and body engaged means healthy and active aging," she said. "Allowing people to contribute long after they've retired helps society put a positive face on aging, which is something that looks good to us."

While the SSM celebrates its 20th year in operation this year, this fall's banquet was the first of its kind. Part of the reason for the 20-year wait, Thompson said, was because the SSM felt it needed to establish itself as an organization first.

"Finally, we decided it was time to recognize seniors," Thompson, who is three years in her role with the SSM, said. "Seniors contribute a ton and we wanted to let them know that, as a non-profit ourselves, we really appreciate what they do."

Seniors do so much in a volunteer capacity, Thompson points out, that Statistics Canada places an economic value of nearly one full percentage point of the Canadian Gross Domestic Product on their time — equivalent to over \$1 billion in labour value.

But for seniors, attributing awards or a dollar value to their efforts is not even what volunteering is about. Today's seniors come from a time when it was still normal to help your neighbours, Thompson explained. This is a value they've carried through their entire lives.

"They didn't just start volunteering upon retirement — they volunteered from day one," she said. "So we know that in every nook and cranny of this province, there are seniors who are worthy of a nomination. As a result, everyone who was nominated (46 nominees in total) was a winner. It was really hard to choose."

Awards were presented in 10 categories, recognizing seniors in Saskatchewan provincially for all of their valuable volunteer contributions. Award recipients were chosen by a committee.

"It was a magically, wonderful event. Even when they didn't win, nominees walked away feeling like a winner because of all the recognition they received. They felt like royalty, many said to me." Nominees had their picture taken with Dr. Barnhart and enjoyed a retrospective of their volunteer work on the big screen.

Ultimately, Thompson said, the SSM's Celebrating Seniors volunteer awards intend to put a focus solely on our senior citizens, whose collective efforts at aging well make the province a better place. The awards ceremony will be back next year and nomination forms will be available from the SSM in the coming months. To be nominated, a person must reside in Saskatchewan, be 55 years or older, and be a volunteer.

"There are other awards that recognize seniors, but only through a senior's category. As a non-profit provincial umbrella organization, we figured it was high-time and a perfect opportunity that fits with our mandate," she said. "A nomination or an award shows they didn't just retire to sit on the couch. That's really important to them, and important in inspiring others, too."

**Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism: helping our seniors thrive well into the future**

For twenty years now, the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) has been improving the lives of seniors in Saskatchewan, creating awareness of the programs and services available to them and linking the various agencies who offer seniors-friendly programs under one "umbrella," which is the SSM.

"We work to bring together seniors organizations to work together on advocacy around seniors' issues and projects," explained SSM executive director, Holly Schick, an ordained United Church minister by trade. "We find ways to have a stronger voice for seniors and their needs and issues."

added the SSM is presently working to establish an elder abuse prevention network throughout the province.

The FRAUD CENT\$ tool kit is another means by which the SSM helps to protect Saskatchewan seniors, and is, "particularly directed at seniors and the types of fraud they might experience." The kit comes out in the spring of 2011. It was funded by New Horizons for Seniors (HRSDC). The tool kit will be a complete road map of how to start a community anti-fraud presentation group and will help show seniors how to avoid frauds and scams.

All in all, Schick says the SSM continues its work after 20 proud years because it truly believes seniors have a vital and consistent role

to play in a society that's constantly changing, whether through volunteer work or providing wisdom and guidance to the young.

"More and more, people are starting to realize that seniors are a major part of our society, a group of people that is a tremendous resource," she said.

The SSM is currently planning to compile stories and memories from the province's 9,000-plus seniors who are 90 years of age and older for a book entitled A Century of Memories, in honour the province's "Century Club," an association of seniors who have reached the age of 90 years and are determined to continue living in as full and active a style as possible to 100 and beyond.

"We also do that by emphasizing 'positive aging,' and by recognizing what a gift seniors are to our society," she said.

Now located on Cornwall Street, just south of Victoria Avenue in downtown Regina, the SSM isn't slowing down but only getting stronger. With the coming boom of senior-aged residents in Saskatchewan, the organization is preparing with a host of new programs and initiatives.

Most recently, the SSM hosted the first annual "Celebrating Seniors" volunteer awards gala at the Hotel Saskatchewan, adding a layer of prestige to the tireless volunteer efforts of seniors in Saskatchewan.

The SSM's flagship programs aim to protect seniors as they age and possibly become more vulnerable to increasingly-sophisticated financial fraud schemes, as well as physical, emotional, and mental abuse, often referred to as "elder abuse".

"Elder abuse takes many forms, such as physical or financial abuse — there's just a whole range of what qualifies," Schick said. "Abuse may also include omissions or neglect, whether deliberate or unintentional. Some people don't even know they're doing it."

To help inform seniors and their families about what constitutes abuse, the SSM offers copies of the Lay Person's Protocol Regarding Elder Abuse resource manual on its website, [www.skseniormechanism.ca](http://www.skseniormechanism.ca). Schick says the SSM is also working with partner organizations to produce the Elder Abuse Prevention Newsletter, in addition to its quarterly Grey Matters newsletter.

Schick maintains, however, that the SSM is not a counselling service in itself, but a shepherd that can put a senior in touch with the right resources.

"We can't so much give advice as we can help point people in the proper direction," she said, but

**Sponsors have played a significant role in the success of this event!**  
**Our sincere thanks to the following:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Platinum</b><br>All Seniors Care Living Centres<br>Preston Park Retirement Residence<br>College Park Retirement Residence | <b>Friends of SSM</b><br>Access Communications<br>Hotel Saskatchewan<br>Saskatchewan Federation of Union Retirees                       |
| <b>Silver</b><br>Pro AV<br>SaskTel Pioneers Chapter 59<br>Victoria Square Hearing  | <b>Decorations</b> — Peter Dielschneider<br><b>Photographer</b> — Dale Williams<br><b>Voice Overs</b> — Betty Pickering & Fred Anderson |
| <b>Bronze</b><br>Barker's Trophies Ltd   | <b>Harpist</b> — Cécile Denis   |

This event is a direct result of funding by:  


Saskatchewan's top choice for one-day bath remodeling



**BATH FITTER**  
[www.bathfitter.com](http://www.bathfitter.com)

"A beautiful new bathroom that fits our lifestyle to a 'T'."



**Bayshore Home Health**

A little home care help makes a big difference

Bayshore in Regina 352-7144  
 Bayshore in Saskatoon 652-3314  
[www.bayshore.ca](http://www.bayshore.ca)

**Elegance & Safety**

**\$500 off** Are you having trouble getting in or out of your bath tub? Reduce the chance of injury to the elderly with our tub to walk-in shower conversions.

a complete tub to Shower Conversion

Call **NOW** for a **FREE** in-home estimate

**1-866-373-2638**

WE INSTALL PROVINCE WIDE  
 Not to be combined with any other offer