

Celebrating
Seniors



2011

Award

A shining moment for senior volunteers

Celebrating Seniors

recognizes achievements of an active community

Some might think that with retirement comes a time to enter the "quiet years," but, as the recent Celebrating Seniors award recipients prove, there's a lot to shout about when it comes to being an active senior.

"[Celebrating Seniors] grew out of the idea that senior volunteer contributions are very important to our communities," said Holly Schick, executive director of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. "Our board and staff talked about how we could make those efforts more well-known in the province.

"We wanted a way to celebrate those contributions and honour these people."

The annual event, now in its second year, also provides an opportunity to make the public more aware of the ways in which seniors have helped to improve all aspects of life and work in our province, said Schick, who added that the major aim of the show is to raise the profile of these people in their communities.

Anyone 55 years of age or over can be nominated for the awards, and recipients don't need to belong to any member group or seniors' organization. Schick encourages people to nominate any seniors they know that have had a positive impact on their communities. Past recipients have come from a variety of backgrounds and professions.

"[There is] a real wide variety of individuals who have volunteered in their communities or are continuing to volunteer," Schick said. "Some people are coaches, advocates, they work in the area of fine arts, or to preserve and promote culture."

This year's dinner and reception featured a speech from Senator Pamela Wallin, and former Premier Lorne Calvert was the Master of Ceremonies. Lieutenant Governor the Honourable Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Honourary Patron, was also in attendance. Recipients were treated to a presentation detailing all of their achievements and activities.

The initial money for Celebrating Seniors was provided through a grant from Saskatchewan Lotteries as a way to show how, and how often, seniors impact their communities. Sponsorship from local businesses and supportive organizations has helped extend the scope of the event, but the focus will always remain on the individuals that make the world a better place simply by helping.

"Celebrating Seniors is about putting a positive face on aging," said Schick. "Seniors aren't just sitting back and relaxing, they're active and vitally involved in the life of their communities.

"People are living longer, healthier lives and they continue to make important contributions."

Active in all aspects of life

Sask Seniors Mechanism

connects with seniors and their issues

For over 20 years, the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism has been bringing together like-minded groups from across the province for the purpose of contributing to a better quality of life for older adults. What started as a way to assist seniors has developed into a network dedicated to encouraging, and ensuring, that older people live a dynamic life.

"Originally, the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism was a way to distribute grant money to groups that work on issues that are important to seniors across the province," said Holly Schick, executive director of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. "Over the years, the SSM has come to have a greater impact on issues that affect seniors and on communities.

"There are a lot of different groups that are working on issues important to older people, and by working together we can collaborate to have a greater impact and a stronger voice."

In September 1988, representatives from Seniors' University Group (SUG) and Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association (SSFA) met to discuss the possibility of bringing Saskatchewan seniors' organizations together. Six months later a workshop, with representation from 10 provincial seniors' organizations together with government departments and funding agencies, was held.

A decision was made to set up an interim board and conduct a survey "of the level of interest, support and commitment that various provincial seniors' organizations, agencies and institutions were willing

to give to the formation of the Mechanism". As a result, on Jan. 11, 1990, the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism held its inaugural meeting, where the board was formalized, permanent staff was hired and an office was set up.

The 10 founding seniors' groups were: the Canadian Association of Retired Persons; Fédération des aînés fransaskois; One Voice the Canadian Seniors Network; Royal Canadian Legion Sask Command; Saskatchewan Government Superannuates Association; Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association; Saskatchewan Seniors Association Inc.; Senior Citizens Action Now; Seniors' University Group Inc.; and the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism has assisted seniors with projects like their Fraud Awareness Tool Kit and is working on an Elder Abuse Prevention and Response Network, but it has also contributed to preserving the history of this province and its people through the Century Club. The club is for seniors 90 years or older, and its members are working on a book, Century of Memories, that will incorporate their collected memories and stories.

Schick said it is this collaborative approach that makes the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism unique, as SSM and its members strive to not only help seniors, but also to assist those who do the helping. "We work together on projects, advocate on behalf of seniors, promote an active life after retirement and deal with issues relevant to seniors," she said.