

## Angels of 9Y offer compassionate care

By Camen Carvajal

They take under their wings terminally ill patients and their families. They attend to their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs with compassion, dignity and respect. They are called the angels of 9Y, an interdisciplinary group of professionals working in the Mel Miller Hospice at the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre, who are the recipients of the 2010 Covenant Health Mission Award for Compassion.

Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, nursing attendants, physicians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, unit clerks, chaplains, housekeeping staff, and volunteers work as a high performance team offering comfort care and ensuring the highest possible quality of life for patients who are at the end-of-life.

"Our team has the privilege to walk a journey with each patient and family that experiences a death of a loved one in our care," said Lisa Shirley, Unit Manager. "Often the death is related to an underlying diagnosis of cancer."

Opening their hearts to a mother or a father who is experiencing pain, sorrow, grief, fear, and loneliness, staff members live the mission of Covenant Health day in and day out. "I love my job—making a difference in somebody's life who may not see another day," said Florrie Rampersad, nursing attendant. "It is a blessing and honor to be at the patient's bedside when they take that last breath. God always gives me the strength and compassion to work with these patients and their families."

At the Mel Miller Hospice, staff go beyond the treatment of pain to comfort the spirit by attending to each patient's needs and wishes and creating a bright and uplifting space where they can listen to their favourite music, have a cup of tea with their relatives and friends, practice their favourite hobbies, or celebrate special milestones such as birthdays.

With their compassion, understanding and professionalism, staff members from 9Y are truly having a profound impact on people's lives. "They are not only our patients; we are like a big family," said Orvelyn Pascua, nursing attendant. "I often meet family members in the street who remember me and are so appreciative of the care we provided to their loved ones. That really touches my heart."

"Dad often told us that the care he got here was like an appetizer for heaven," said a family member.