



Sisters' legacy of mercy thrives at Killam Health Centre

The Sisters of St. Joseph travelled to Alberta from London, Ontario, and founded a hospital in Stettler in 1926. This, as well as their mission to serve those in need with simplicity and compassion, prepared them to provide health care for the community of Killam, Alberta.

The Sisters arrived in Killam in 1930, and moved into a brick home, which was renovated into a hospital. The hospital had nine adult beds, four bassinets and cribs, an operating room and a small delivery room. This home was the community hospital until 1961 when the Killam General Hospital was built.

Through the years, the Sisters conquered many challenges with their steadfast determination to provide a high standard of healthcare services. During the Second World War, staffing was difficult, and nurses often worked 30 to 40 hours without a break. The same commitment was present when a polio epidemic raged throughout Alberta in 1958.

The last of the Sisters of St. Joseph left Killam in 2003, but their commitment to care for anyone in need is carried forward by staff today.

In celebration of Pope Francis declaring a 'Holy Year of Mercy', staff created a 'Year of Mercy' wall. The wall is filled with quotes about how each department lives forward the Sister's legacy, and has photos of staff performing works of mercy.

Some of the photos are of staff demonstrating values which both the Sisters of St. Joseph and Covenant Health staff abide by; compassion, respect, integrity, social justice, stewardship and collaboration.

Geraldine Clark, Site Administrator, Killam Health Centre, explains that staff carry forward the Sister's legacy by ensuring each person is treated with dignity and respect, and given excellent healthcare services. Geraldine began working at the health centre when it was still operated by the Sisters. She says that if someone in the community needed help, staff would respond just as the Sisters would.

"I remember one Sunday evening, a man and his child came to the health centre to say that they had no milk or bread for breakfast. The staff gave them milk and bread. I told them to never turn anyone away, that whenever anyone needed food, to give it to them," says Geraldine. This commitment to service is carried on today in many ways, and is evident in the quotes on the wall of mercy.

The quote attributed to the Acute Care department reads, "We recognize that when patients and families come to the emergency department, they are not at their best. Mercy is exhibited when staff respond to their needs in a kind, helpful, compassionate and forgiving manner."

From being a calming presence, to preparing food with warm hearts, to maintaining the building with urgency and diligence, to committing to listen and hold hands with those that are sad or lonely, each quote on the wall represents the Sister's legacy of humanity and compassionate care alive in Killam today.

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Sisters of St. Joseph