



Sisters' legacy carried through generations at St. Mary's Hospital

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul from Kingston, Ontario were living their mission of empowering the vulnerable through compassionate service, advocacy and networking, when they responded to an invitation from the Mayor and Council of Camrose to establish a hospital in the area.

In October of 1922, two Sisters arrived to choose a site with the Mayor, "a large block of land on Normal Hill," which the Sisters deemed as "very appropriate—sun and air, with quiet surroundings." This peaceful scene was a stark contrast to the trials the Sisters faced during their first winter in Camrose—temperatures dropped to 54 degrees below zero, with snow so deep doctors had to make house calls on foot—but the Sisters persevered, and in 1924, the hospital opened its doors.

The Sisters displayed their willingness to care for those in need immediately—they began accepting patients the evening of Nov. 12, 1924—the first patient had a ruptured appendix requiring an emergency operation. Three more patients were admitted the following day, two requiring surgery.

To accommodate the growing community, a new wing was added just five years later. A nursing school was opened, educating girls in the community to help sustain the hospital's operations.

Through inclement weather, burst pipes, crowded rooms and scarce clean drinking water, the Sisters provided compassionate care to those in need.

Today, St. Mary's Hospital carries on the legacy of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in many ways. One of the brick and mortar examples is the new chapel the hospital built in June 2012, which, according to Anna Radchenko, Volunteer and Foundation Coordinator, "is very much a part of the heart of St. Mary's and the St. Mary's Foundation Board, who made it possible with fundraising and support."

Services were previously held in a multi-purpose room, so the dedicated chapel with stained glass windows was cause for celebration. According to Keith Leibel, Facilities, Maintenance and Engineering Rural Northern Territory Manager, the chapel is a nice place to attend services and take a quiet moment of reflection.

Building the new chapel was an important project for Keith, who was an onsite liaison during the construction process. He is proud to live forward the Sister's legacy, just as his father Sebastian Liebel did when he worked with the Sisters at St. Mary's for 35 years. According to Keith, the Sister's legacy has had a significant impact on his life.

"The Sisters are truly the foundation for us to carry on their work. Just like the Sisters, my father went wherever a helping hand was needed, and I am proud to follow in his footsteps and do the same," says Keith.

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Sisters of Providence of
St. Vincent de Paul,
Kingston, Ontario