



Sisters' legacy lives on through communication and quality care

Known for their spirit of hospitality, simplicity, and humanness, and prepared to minister to the sick, the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, opened their first hospital in Lethbridge—St. Michael's General Hospital—on June 1, 1929.

Through the hardship of the Great Depression's economic challenges, the Sisters cared for the sick, responding to the community's needs. In 2009, Covenant Health carried forward the Sister's legacy by responding to the community's growing long-term care needs, and opened St. Therese Villa. When it was first opened, St. Therese housed 200 supportive living beds, the largest number of beds in Alberta at the time.

Today, staff at St. Therese Villa carry on the legacy of the Sisters of St. Martha by serving with compassion while upholding the sacredness of life in all stages, and caring for the whole person—body, mind and soul.

Tracy Humphrey, Site Administrator, St. Therese Villa, believes it's this all-encompassing care and the site's innovations that allow the Sister's legacy to live on.

"We feel that we are continuing the legacy through the quality of work we do, and constantly working to do things better," says Tracy. She explains recent changes such as a moving from task-focused care to person-focused care and increasing methods of communication allow staff to provide the best care possible.

Operating with a person-focused care model, each staff member will now be assigned to care for a particular resident's needs, such as administering medication and bathing, instead of performing a single task for each resident. This allows for greater accountability, and gives the residents more continuity in their day.

In working to create happy and meaningful lives for each resident, staff are reinstating resident and family meetings, forming a family support group, and dedicating four volunteers to connect with new families to help them navigate the supportive living system.

Sister Josephine Keyzer is a physical embodiment of the legacy of the founding Sisters at St. Therese Villa, who acts as a confidant and support to residents and families in her pastoral care role. She says that communicating with residents allows staff to better address their needs.

"All staff—nursing, housekeeping, dietary and recreational seek to address the many and varied needs of the residents. These needs are as unique as the residents are. When you develop a relationship with the individual, you can be more attentive and responsive to their needs," says Sister Josephine.

According to Tracy, staff at St. Therese Villa will continue to be responsive to resident's needs by making ongoing improvements to their service delivery model, thus living forward the Sister's legacy of quality care.

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Sisters of St. Martha
of Antigonish