

## **Deborah Vitt brings love of community, passion for social justice to Selkirk & District Community Foundation**



Vitt, right, with SDCF Chair Shauna Curtin, was 'thrilled', to be nominated to the board.

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Deborah Vitt has been a member of the Selkirk & District Community Foundation's grant committee for the past year, so in a sense she was able to dip her toe in the water, so to speak, before taking the plunge as a full board member.

That plunge, however, only comes after someone nominates you, and for Vitt, the fact someone thought enough of her to do that was quite lovely.

"I'm thrilled to be a part of it. And I was surprised, people use the word honoured often, but I was really quite thrilled, and humbled and honoured," Vitt said.

"It's pretty cool."

Vitt, the former Selkirk United Church Minister, who's still got a toe in that pool as well despite beginning the retirement process in 2017, is no stranger to volunteering and a proponent of it for the health and well-being of all involved.

"Volunteering is huge. Just huge," Vitt said.

"And volunteers are vital. Each one of us has a gift or skill that I believe is incumbent on us to discover what it is and share it."

Shauna Curtin, Chair of the SDCF, was as thrilled as her new colleague when she learned Vitt would become the newest board member of the Foundation.

"It's a pleasure to welcome Deborah to the board. Her reputation as someone who believes in her community and the people that call it home is widely known," Curtin said.

"And she's just a good person, someone who cares and wants to make the world, one community at a time, a better place. She's the perfect fit for what the Foundation stands for."

Vitt was the co-chair of the 55-Plus Manitoba Games in 2020 before the world ground to a halt due to Covid-19, and she handled the public relations duties when the Games took place earlier this year.

She was nominated for the Foundation by the Lord Selkirk School Division Board of Trustees, and Chair Lena Kublick praised Vitt for the many causes she's championed over the years.

"Throughout her life and in the different roles she took on, Deborah is a social justice advocate and believes strongly in having 'everyone's voice at the table'," Kublick wrote.

"Her diverse volunteer and work experience and personal commitment to equity brings that experience and voice to any organization Deborah is a part of."

A St. Andrews resident, Vitt and her partner Randy have two children, both of whom graduated from the Comp. Vitt volunteered on various parent committees at that time and now is immersed in her role as grandparent to four grandbabies.

Kublick said Vitt's passion for justice and inclusion of all persons was at the forefront throughout her career as a minister. She has been active in the United Church's decades long justice work toward reconciliation with First Nations persons and was involved in Affirm Ministry, supporting all gender identities and sexual orientation. She was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Selkirk United Church and felt strongly that the new building should be accessible to all.

Vitt said she was impressed by the Foundation because it's an organization that knows what it does well, but is always focusing on where it can improve.

"That's something that drew me to the Foundation, because in their mission and vision...they talk about what they do well, but I was really impressed that they identified their places of growth, they call it room for improvement," Vitt said.

"I felt that if a board is willing to name the places they can see where they need growth, I think that really appealed to me."

Vitt said her commitment to social justice will always be a big part of who she is, and she's looking forward to working with the board and discovering how it and the Tri S community can grow together.

"I look at the community like this great big table, and everybody's got a place at the table, but who's missing at the table and how do we invite them to get there and how do we extend the table," Vitt said.

"It's that whole thing around hospitality and that is for me, community. How do we listen to each other, how do we really connect and find ways to connect, especially with people who may not feel that their voices have been heard."

The Selkirk and District Community Foundation is a charitable organization that provides financial support to charitable causes and agencies in the region, which includes Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. Gifts from donors enable the Foundation to support countless groups and individuals in our community. The Foundation has given in

excess of \$3.4 million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations during it's 25+ years. For more details contact SDCF Executive Director Bev Clegg at 204.785.9755.