



**Left to right, SDCF board member Brandon Sutherland, and speakers Barb Ramsay, Jean Oliver, and Tammy Thompson.**

## **Health and wellness connects donors and recipients at latest SDCF ‘I Care About a Cause’ event**

There are a couple of things that are certain when it comes to both donors to and recipients of Selkirk & District Community Foundation funds and grants – they care about causes.

That was on full display at the Foundation’s third ‘I Care About a Cause’ event last Tuesday night. Original SDCF Board Member Jean Oliver took everyone down memory lane to the determination required to make the first large donation a reality.

Oliver offered insight into that donation way back when the province was establishing the health authority system in the mid 1990s. The Selkirk General Hospital had a Donation Fund, and under provincial regulations, the hospital was required to sign over all its assets to the new health authority.

“We dug in our heels,” Oliver told the crowd.

There was a noon deadline that all hospitals had to meet to sign the agreement and turn over all assets. Selkirk reps were to go to Gimli for the signing, but, Oliver says, they were not willing to include the money donated specifically to the hospital by local people.

“At five minutes to 12, we were still in Selkirk and we got the call from the province, they said, ‘ok, keep your money, just come sign the paper’,” Oliver said.

And with that, the hospital board quickly wrote out a cheque to the SDCF for \$100,000, then raced up to Gimli to complete the deal.

Oliver’s recollections were a highlight of an evening that included many. Held at the new Selkirk Regional Health Centre, a group of donors were brought together with organizations that have received Foundation funding. All of them were connected to health and wellness, one of the nine sectors identified in Vital Signs.

Donors to the SDCF often have a myriad of reasons why they donate and to which funds. Some remember fondly the opportunities afforded them by their local community club, some fulfill the dreams of loved ones, taken too soon, by donating to causes near and dear to them, others choose to donate because of experiences with a loved one who had medical or mental health issues.

The connecting thread in their giving is a sense of wanting to give back, because they care.

Ruth Konzelman attended and enjoyed the presentation, which featured Oliver, along with speakers Barbara Ramsay from Camp Stepping Stones and Tammy Thompson from The START Program, both of which have received Foundation grants.

Konzelman and her late husband Richard started their named fund to support health education in the region. Originally from Ontario, Konzelman, has lived in Selkirk for more than 50 years. Her husband was a dentist in town, and humbly, she says theirs is a small fund, but the results of their donations brought them joy over the years.

“We felt that it was an area that could use a little more help. It’s little projects, because it’s not a huge fund but it’s topped up by the community fund often, and it brings stuff like music to patients in a personal care home, even residents of the Mental Health Centre,” Konzelman said.

“We funded part of that, there’s a couple of new ones, like the Alzheimer’s café, with the caregivers and the patients interacting and getting them out. It’s little things and it all counts and it’s not the sort of thing that the province funds. Some of these small things make a big difference to people.”

Ramsay spoke about Camp Stepping Stones, an annual weekend that brings together kids who’ve suffered trauma, usually the loss of a parent. She shared the story of one child whose

application had been accepted – her mom had passed – and just before camp was about to begin, her dad passed as well.

She came to camp, met new friends and made memories of her parents, and the following week attended her dad’s funeral. Ramsay says her caregivers contacted them afterwards and said the camp helped her tremendously.

Thompson, The START Program Manager, told how the community mobilization program has evolved over the years and inspired new ones in other communities in the province. START deals with people experiencing a variety of challenges, including mental and physical health concerns, substance use concerns and involvement with police.

Originally aimed at teens, it now features three arms – START Youth, supporting those 17 and under and neurodivergent adults who are still in school up to the age of 21; Re-START for adults of all ages; and START Families, which works with perpetrators of family violence over the age of 18.

For Michele Polinuk, who attended with her husband Gary and mother-in-law Doreen Polinuk, all of whom have named funds at the Foundation, donating isn’t about how much money you have, it’s about making the choice to do so.

“We have to really be thoughtful with what we do with our money these days, costs have gone up everywhere, but you can never go wrong by donating to community, to projects that will help the community grow,” said Polinuk, a former SDCF board member.

“I donate to SDCF because the money stays in the community to help all ages through many programs and organizations. A person can donate in memory of, or in honour of to several Manitoba organizations, but by donating to SDCF, you can point your donation towards areas of interest that match the person.”

The Foundation also presented three cheques totalling \$66,573 to Averill Stephenson and Ted Lewis, with the Interlake-Eastern Health Foundation.