



Selkirk's Memory Café provides a safe space for people living with memory issues to interact and socialize.

Memory Cafés making big difference for those living with dementia

If you are or have taken a read of the Selkirk & District Community Foundation's community report, then we've already connected with you, and that's what we're always aiming to do.

This summer's report, entitled 'Connecting with...' shares stories of some of the great connections the Foundation and its donors have made over the past year, including a grant to the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba to set up a Selkirk Memory Café.

The grant of \$2,729 isn't one of the larger grants given, but its impact will be huge.

The café will run every other week for two hours over a six-month period. Much of the funding came through the Richard & Ruth Konzelman Fund, and for Ruth, the cafés are an important part of health care.

"Some of these small things make a big difference to people," Konzelman said.

"Like the Alzheimer's café, with the caregivers and the patients interacting and getting out. It's little things and it all counts and it's not the sort of thing that the province funds."

Memory Cafés began in the 1990s in Europe primarily to be a social gathering place and opportunity for people with memory issues to make friends and interact without fear of embarrassment or being misunderstood. Selkirk's Memory Café became just the third in Canada.

In Selkirk, the cafés provide an inclusive space where people living with dementia and their loved ones can engage in the community and connect with other people dealing with dementia.

The program is facilitated by an ASM staff person along with volunteers and café staff who have completed dementia-friendly training.

Shauna Curtin, SDCF Chair, said it's hard to imagine a better connection than one that brings loved ones together.

"I really love the idea of the Memory Café," Curtin said.

"So many families are touched by dementia and to provide a safe and supportive space where they can get together and enjoy time together is such a good thing. It's another example of the good the Foundation and its donors are doing in the community."

For Konzelman, being able to give back to the community is important. She and late husband created the Richard & Ruth Konzelman Fund to support health education, knowing through experience how important the health system, and mental health in particular, is.

“I’ve been a resident of Selkirk for over 50 years. I was brought up in Ontario and I never thought I would end up in a small community,” she said.

“My husband practised dentistry here for all that time. This community has been really good to us and this is a way of giving back.

“We felt that it was an area that could use a little more help.”

The report also profiles other programs that received grants, including the Lord Selkirk Education Centre’s Bike Repair program.

The 10-year-old program is back this year after a COVID-19-induced two-year hiatus, and is once again connecting older students trained in bike repair and maintenance with younger students to pass on the skills. And if kids don’t have bikes, the program gives them out.

Lockport School will be replacing its 40-year-old high jump equipment with help from an SDCF grant and the Lord Selkirk Comp’s Community Stadium will upgrade its audio system, both with grants from the Western Canada Games Legacy Fund, which was created with surplus money from the 2003 Games.

There’s a story on the enduring legacy of Thomas Sill, who helped get the SDCF established 29 years ago with a grant and this past year the Foundation in his name granted another \$1.3 million. And work on a second Vital Signs Report is set to begin shortly, and you can read all about it in the ‘Connecting With...’ Community Report.

In 2023/24, the Foundation granted \$682,448 to 133 projects, including scholarships and bursaries.

“Every year when we put out this report, I marvel at the amount the Foundation is able to give out, to connect with the community, in so many fantastic ways,” says Bev Clegg, Executive Director of the SDCF.

“We’re grateful to our donors from our communities of St. Andrews, St. Clements and the City of Selkirk. Their commitment is what makes everything work and keeps us Here for Good.”

You can read the report at sdcf.ca

