



Dornian and Watts with her latest piece in their home studio in St. Clements.

The art of giving during Endow Manitoba Giving Week

Every year when Endow Manitoba Giving Week rolls around, Janet Dornian and Miles Watts make sure they donate to the Selkirk & District Community Foundation.

This year, Giving Week runs from Nov. 12-17, and donations to the Foundation's Community Fund are stretched by funds from the Winnipeg Foundation and the Provincial Government.

Dornian and Watts like that aspect of it, and they like how the SDCF supports a wide range of community projects.

"When the community report comes out and lists all the grants it blows my mind," Dornian said.

“For us it’s just being so aware of what’s going on locally and all the really good stuff going on. And with the Foundation, you see where (your donation’s) going.”

Dornian and Watts are artists and their Steel Your Art Away studio in St. Clements is where they create the metal pieces that adorn not just their studio and home but the yards and homes of others around the world.

Dornian began working with steel years ago, at a time when the idea of a woman welding was an oddity. Watts is a carpenter, and together they create impressive works.

The arts community is a giving one, Dornian says, and when there’s things like golf tournaments and other fundraisers, local artists – themselves and others – donate their works to do their part. She says the people of St. Clements, St. Andrews and Selkirk are very giving.

“Everybody’s skill set, not just artists, everybody does something amazing and when you pull in all those bits in a community...all those little bits are so powerful,” she said.

“The Foundation brings it all together and disperses it back out, it’s a fabulous thing.”

With donating to the Foundation, they like that local organizations like Nova House, Inclusion Selkirk and the Food Bank, to name a few, are supported.

“When you see those little pockets, things like Inclusion...you can see locally the effect it has and it trickles down to make the community so much better,” Dornian said.

“When the community is healthy it’s good for everybody.”

Giving is in the couple’s nature. When Covid hit and everyone was in lockdown, they used their seamstress talents to help out where they could.

“When Covid hit and people couldn’t find any PPE, we had two sewing machines going here and we were making masks and gowns for Inclusion,” Watts said.

And later on, when they decided they didn’t need the second sewing machine, they donated it to Nova House.

“A lot of stuff that we don’t have use for anymore, we make sure it goes to Nova House because you can see everybody getting back on their feet,” Dornian said.

David Thorne, Chair of the SDCF, says Dornian and Watts are typical donors – they care deeply about their community.

“I know Jan and Miles, we’re friends, and I know their commitment to community,” Thorne said.

“All of our donors are much the same, they know that when we are able to support each other, we lift everyone up. Jan and Miles do their part year-round, and we’re appreciative of the fact that they donate during Giving Week as well. I say thank you to them, and to all our kind and caring donors.”

For Dornian and Watts, giving when you can just makes sense.

“You know what? It’s community spirit,” Dornian said.

To make a donation during the Giving Challenge, you can do so online at endowMB.org (click ‘Make a donation to my foundation’ to find SDCF); drop off a cheque at the City of Selkirk office at 200 Eaton Ave., in the outdoor drop box; call the Foundation at 204-785-9755 and a staff member will assist you; or visit the Foundation team at the Gaynor Family Regional Library on Saturday, Nov. 16 between 10am and 1pm, make a donation and enjoy a cup of tea.