



Offering support at end of life

By: [Andrea Geary](#)

Posted: 06/13/2016 2:26 PM |

Mike Goldberg, Palliative Manitoba community outreach co-ordinator, stands outside the organization's office in Winnipeg's Deer Lodge Centre. He recently ran a training pilot project for health care workers and palliative care volunteers in Portage la Prairie.

Sunset Palliative Care volunteers are trained to be good listeners for people in their last weeks, days or hours of life.

Sunset's volunteer coordinator Aldene Moroz said dying people sometimes want to talk about personal issues with volunteers – issues that they might not feel comfortable sharing with their loved ones.

"They just want to express their feelings," Moroz said.

She's in charge of 26 volunteers. From her office in Portage la Prairie, she and the volunteers serve a large area within Southern Health-Santé Sud. There is no charge for their services.

"We've had clients in Marquette and Woodlands," Moroz said. "It's a very needed program."

Sunset Palliative Care was started in 1994 by a local doctor and his wife. With an increasing number of people opting to spend their last days at home, volunteers typically see clients in their homes but can also visit them in hospital.

Moroz said all volunteers are screened and take a six to eight-week training course that was originally designed by the Palliative Care Association of Manitoba (now called Palliative Manitoba).

Clients are referred by medical staff or family members. Moroz said she usually matches a client with more than one volunteer so someone is always available to see the client.

Some of Sunset Palliative Care's volunteers recently attended a workshop held by Palliative Manitoba, entitled the Rural Bereavement Project. Funded by the Thomas Sill Foundation, the pilot project is meant to educate volunteers and health care providers about loss, grief and bereavement.

Mike Goldberg, Palliative Manitoba's outreach co-ordinator, said 13 people attended the Portage workshop on May 24. This was one of nine sessions held across Manitoba.

Goldberg said one of the workshop's main discussions focuses on self-care for those working with dying clients or patients.

"We know that we need to take some time off for leisure, to recharge our batteries," he said.

He hopes that additional funding will allow Palliative Manitoba to extend the project to northern communities.

Palliative Manitoba also offers a toll-free service to connect dying people and their caregivers with trained volunteers. While this is primarily a phone service for people located outside Winnipeg, in-person visits are offered within the city.

The approximately 200 Palliative Manitoba volunteers are also well-trained, taking about 24 hours of instruction.

"That's a lot more training (in palliative care) than many people in health care get," Goldberg said.

Moroz said the bulk of their operational funding comes through donations and two annual events, one of which is a barbecue being held on Fri., June 17 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Portage la Prairie Co-op parking lot (2275 Saskatchewan Ave. W).

Like Goldberg, she also sees the need to educate health care workers about caring for those who are dying and dealing with their own and others' feelings of loss and grief. To address this need, Sunset Palliative Care sends eight health care workers to the annual Palliative Manitoba conference in Winnipeg.

The non-profit organization also organized fundraising to renovate and equip two rooms for palliative care patients at Portage District General Hospital.

Palliative Manitoba is involved in a fundraising campaign until the end of June. Through the Great Canadian Giving Challenge, every dollar donated to Palliative Manitoba online by any individual or organization will help them get a chance to win \$10,000 to support programs and services.

To reach Sunset Palliative Care, call 204-857-3746. For more information on Palliative Manitoba, visit <http://palliativemanitoba.ca/>

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/headliner/Offering-support-at-end-of-life-382739831.html>