

## STORIES

- 1) Caring Hearts: Uniting Communities Through Support
- 2) Missing Persons Liaisons Support Families through Ambiguous Loss
- 3) Walk for the Missing Photo Gallery
- 4) January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month



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## 2023 Newsletter

### Caring Hearts: Uniting Communities Through Support

One of the most heart-wrenching challenges a community can face is the anguish of a missing person. It's in times of such adversity that the true strength of a community shines, as they come together to support those affected by these unimaginable circumstances. At

Caring Hearts, we are driven by an unwavering commitment to stand by families and communities in their time of need, to offer solace, guidance, and unity.

#### **Empowering Communities through Support Groups:**

A community is a network of intertwined lives, and when one person goes missing, the reverberations are felt throughout. Caring Hearts recognizes the profound impact of such events, and we are dedicated to aiding communities in establishing support groups. These groups are meant to serve as safe havens for families and individuals, fostering an environment of empathy, shared experiences, and emotional healing. Through educational initiatives, we empower these groups to extend their reach and provide the compassionate understanding that missing persons' families so deeply require.

#### **Guiding Families with Compassionate Counseling:**

At the core of Caring Hearts' mission lies the well-being of families whose lives are forever altered by the absence of a loved one. Our dedicated team of counselors specializes in offering guidance and therapeutic support to these families, helping them navigate the complex emotions and challenges that accompany such distressing circumstances. We understand that every family's journey is unique, and our tailored counseling approaches ensure that we provide meaningful assistance when it's needed the most.

#### **Honoring Indigenous Communities' Resilience:**

Indigenous communities possess a deep connection to their lands, cultures, and traditions. Caring Hearts acknowledges the unique challenges these communities face when dealing with missing persons, and we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. We collaborate closely with indigenous elders and community leaders to develop strategies that best support their people during these trying times.



By offering a range of culturally – sensitive therapeutic resources, we strive to ensure that no community member feels alone in their struggle.

As we reflect on the countless stories of strength and resilience we have witnessed, it's clear that unity and support are the cornerstones of overcoming adversity. Caring Hearts is humbled to be a part of these journeys, and we remain committed to fostering environments where compassion and healing flourish.

To our esteemed service providers and the families we serve, thank you for entrusting Caring Hearts with your stories, your pain, and your hopes. Together, we forge a path toward brighter days, step by step.

*Jennifer Yasinowski – Education Director, Caring Hearts*

## Missing Persons Liaisons Support Families Through Ambiguous Loss

Families of missing people live with ambiguous loss for months, years and even decades; not knowing exactly what happened to their loved one. Rhonda Fiddler is a Missing Persons Liaison with Regina Police Service Victims Services Unit and shared this message in an interview before Missing Persons Week in May.

She shared that families often appreciate the chance to gather and meet with people who truly understand what they are going through – even though their circumstances may be different. Ambiguous loss can occur when a missing loved one is both physically absent and psychologically present. Rhonda says anything can be a reminder of a missing loved one – it might be a favourite song they hear on the radio, the smell of a favourite food baking in the oven, the laughter, or even the hairstyle of somebody in a crowd of people.

As one of three dedicated Missing Persons Liaisons (MPLs) in the province, Rhonda provides direct support to families of missing people from Regina. The other MPL's are in Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

It is important to note that all police-based victim services workers are trained on how to help families of missing persons, so every family can be supported, no matter where they live.



“We liaise between the families and the investigators, keep the families updated so they know as much as they can about what is happening with the investigation,” Rhonda explained.

*“Just being available to families when those high stress scary situations are happening makes a big difference. Because our investigators are busy investigating, even if they want to, they cannot be available to families when families need them to be available.”*

MPL’s can identify resources for families based on their unique and individual needs, assist them in navigating media to raise awareness of their missing loved one as well as provide valuable information to keep families safe when sharing information on social networking platforms.

It takes a careful approach of genuine care and compassion to support people through the fear of having someone they love go missing. Rhonda says her motivation comes from getting a small glimpse of that terror when her own daughter went missing at the age of five. Thankfully, her daughter was found safe, unharmed and returned within a short time after police and neighbours joined the search. It’s a story she shares with the families, as a way of building trust and respect – but she knows she will never truly understand what it means to live around that fear of the unknown every day, perhaps for a lifetime.

Rhonda’s main advice on how to support families of missing people is to listen with genuine compassion, kindness, and empathy. If you know or meet someone who is going through ambiguous loss, then try listening to them talk about what their hopes and worries are, you don’t need to make additional comments or share your opinion.

*“Understand that they are going through something absolutely horrible, and when people are going through something horrible their days are going to vary. They’re going to have good days and bad days, so be kind and don’t judge,” Rhonda said.*

As for what the public can do, raising awareness online and supporting vigils or walks are simple ways to show compassion. “Even by just hitting share on a social networking link for a post about a missing person is helping those families – it takes one second to hit that button.” Missing Persons Week is also a good time to share resources about missing persons issues as well as prevention strategies and support services available to respond.

## **Photos from the Walk to Honour the Missing May 1, 2023**

Each year, Missing Person's Week (MPW) gives us a chance to reflect and show how much we care about the missing and their families here in our province. Saskatchewan Missing Persons Week took place from May 1-7, 2023. The theme for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary was “Never Forgotten: Honouring the Missing and Supporting Families”.

The week was launched on Monday May 1 with a news conference and proclamation by the Minister of Justice Bronwyn Eyre. Other speakers included the Minister for the Status of Women's Office Laura Ross and SK Association of Chiefs of Police Vice President Jamie Blunden.

### **A Walk to Honour the Missing**

The Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (SMPP) invited families of missing people from across the province to gather in Regina for the launch of Missing Persons Week. On Monday, families and the public were invited to participate in a **Walk to Honour the Missing**, which began at



Wascana Place and ended at the Missing Persons Tree. The walk was led by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty and Her Honour Donna Mirasty along with the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety Christine Tell. There were about 100 participants in the walk including family members, Indigenous and community partners, police agencies, government officials, and members of the public.



### **The Missing Persons Bench Dedication**

The walk was followed by a dedication of the bench and a ceremony. Previously, a bench had been installed, located at the Missing Persons Tree. The inscription on the bench reads "The Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership Dedicates this Bench To all Missing Persons – Loved, and Not Forgotten. September 2021." During the dedication, Elder Lorna Standingready smudged the bench

and offered a traditional blessing to families, police and partners who were gathered at the tree. His Honour Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty delivered a message to dedicate the bench to families of missing persons. Family members and others laid flowers with names and messages to honour each of the long-term missing persons in Saskatchewan around the tree. Their Honours also wrote a message to Unknown Missing Persons in Cree.

Dignitaries, police agencies and community partners like Search and Rescue connected directly with family members of missing persons at the ceremony.

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## Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership Members:

Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan  
Caring Hearts  
Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Women's Commission  
Métis Nation – Saskatchewan  
Regina Police Service  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police  
Saskatchewan Police Commission  
Saskatoon Police Service  
Regina Police Service  
Prince Albert Police Service  
Weyburn Police Service  
Moose Jaw Police Service  
Search and Rescue Saskatchewan  
Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)



Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions (STOPS) to Violence  
Weyburn Police Service  
Government of Saskatchewan  
Family Information Liaison Unit  
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General  
Ministry of Social Services  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Government Relations  
Status of Women's Office  
Saskatchewan Coroner's Service

***Follow the SMPP On social media for updates about events and services.***

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Twitter: [@SaskMissingPersonsPartnership](#)

Instagram: [@SKMissingPersonsPartnership](#)

YouTube: [Sask Missing Persons Partnership](#)

## Upcoming Event for Alzheimer's Awareness Month in January

The Alzheimer's Society of Saskatchewan is one of the founding partners of the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (SMPP). They share a mandate of building communities of support, and they provide tools and education to prevent people from going missing.

Statistics show that a large percentage of people with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia may become lost at some point during the progression of their disease. Nearly 60 per cent of missing person cases involving people with dementia occur in community settings.

As more people with dementia continue living in their homes for longer, more awareness and understanding is needed to support those living with dementia - and their care partners - so they can continue to live well in their own communities.

**As part of Alzheimer's Awareness Month in January, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is hosting:**

Understanding Dementia: A Community Presentation

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

7:00 – 9:00 pm CST

Online via Zoom

Learn more about the different types of dementia, risk factors, warning signs, and Alzheimer Society Programs and Services for people living with dementia and their care partners. For more information and to register, please visit: <https://alzheimer.ca/sk/en/whats-happening/events/understanding-dementia>  
Please watch the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's website or follow them on Facebook for details on other upcoming learning opportunities and events, including our:

- Evenings of Education (various dates)
- Spotlight on Research webinar (February 2024)
- Healthier Brains Community Presentation (March 2024)
- IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's (May 2024)



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