

Q&A

with Judy Assman-Neiser CEO, Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation

By Angela Cowan

How long have you been involved with the foundation?

A Since 2013.

What areas do you serve?

A The Region served by Northern Health—from just south of Quesnel to the Yukon border and Valemount to Haida Gwaii, representing approximately 290,000 people.

What is the foundation's mission?

A One direction our donors are moving us towards is equipment to support early detection and more accurate diagnosis. Having this available in the North means less travel to the lower mainland for what should be routine tests. Even though we have directed funding to the purchase of extensive emergency cardiac assessment and monitoring equipment this remains a focus. This is much needed throughout the region, and through our donor's generosity if we can supply the equipment we have a better chance of attracting and retaining these specialized physicians and healthcare workers. Orthopedic and surgical equipment was also a main concern – hips, knees, shoulders and wrists. This has been addressed with new equipment to reduce wait times and have people recovering

quicker from less invasive surgery. Both ENT (ear, nose and throat) and Obstetrical equipment was funded in Quesnel that helped to bring an ENT and an OBGYN specialist to that area. Prince Rupert Hospital received a pediatric colonoscope and Smithers Bulkley Lodge received a new tub for seniors in care. The list throughout the region is extensive. Even remote places such as Dease Lake and the Stikine have received funding through the Foundation.

Are there any specific goals you're working towards?

A Respiratory equipment throughout the area is one area of focus. In excess of \$500,000 is needed to fund ventilators and BiPap equipment for the region. Additionally, we are looking to fund equipment that will focus on diseases and cancers associated with the gall bladder and pancreas. These conditions are both on the rise and while we don't know why, at least having equipment to detect sooner and more accurately will help. Mental health and wellness as well as care for seniors and pediatrics and cardiac are always top of mind as well. Our goal is to fund state of the art equipment where services and space exist within the system.

Judy Assman-Neiser at the Festival of Trees.
Photo courtesy the Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation.



The Healthcare Foundation is funding a fetal heart monitor this year for the Dawson Creek and District Hospital, valued at \$32,000.

How can people best find out more or become involved?

A We hold three annual events for specific causes: Our annual Festival of Trees is in its 26th year and runs from November 22 to December 1, funding a variety of surgical and diagnostic equipment; an 11-hour Radiothon during Spirit Day, the first Thursday in May, supports Mental Health and Wellness; and our PG Cougars Alumni Charity Golf Tournament, held in July, supports cardiac equipment for the North.

These are just a few examples though; there is always a need for corporate and individual donors to step up and make a difference, and we take pride in helping donors align their passions and funding with the needs of the region. Our goal is to make sure your contribution is honoured. We truly value every gift no matter the size, and ensure that 100 per cent of donations are directed to the area and region the donors wish to support. Without the generosity of those who support us, we would never be able to make a difference, and we're extremely grateful!
spiritofthenorth.ca 