

Collaboration between North East LHIN and Red Cross helps keep seniors moving in Sault Ste. Marie

September 8, 2017 -- Married couple Fred Gard (seated left) and Joan Gard (seated right) are 103 and 90 years old respectively and recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. Fred and Joan both live at Pathways Retirement Residence in Sault Ste. Marie and they are still able to get around town -- thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers at the Sault Ste. Marie and District Red Cross Branch and funding support from the North East LHIN.



“Independence plays a key role in a person’s quality of life,” said Kate Fyfe, Interim CEO of the North East LHIN. “The North East LHIN’s continues our important work with community partners to enhance transportation services and help Northern seniors get to and from the care they need.”

Currently about 20 per cent of the people living in Northeastern Ontario are age 65 or older, a rate that is projected to rise to over 30 per cent by 2031.

Improving care coordination is one of three strategic priorities identified in the North East LHIN’s strategic plan (2016-2019) and providing a range of transportation options is in keeping with this direction. North East LHIN support includes providing vehicles for health service providers to transport people, funding to community support service organizations to deliver transportation services, and innovative programs like **PATH – Priority Assistance to Transition Home**, which has helped more than 8,300 seniors safely transition from hospital to home in the past five years. PATH provides a resource to help ensure seniors leaving hospitals have access to the medication, food, and support services they need to begin recuperating at home. Due to the success of program, its availability was expanded from six to 24 northeastern communities in 2016.

Helping seniors like Fred and Joan stay on the move takes team work. The combined efforts of volunteer drivers such as Ken Maclean (standing, far left), and Connor O’Shaughnessy (standing, left), as well as Red Cross staff like Assistant Manager Mara DeFazio (seated in vehicle) and summer student Katie Lepage, (standing, far right) help to keep the transportation program running smoothly.

The specialized MV-1 vehicle used by the Red Cross team is designed to transport passengers in wheel chairs. The vehicle is a workhorse in the branch's transportation program, which helps local seniors attend medical appointments, get groceries, and participate in day-away programs.

In addition to the transportation program, the LHIN supports the Red Cross in a wide range of programs for senior including help with home maintenance tasks -- such as grass cutting, friendly-visiting and nursing support to high-risk seniors.

For more information, please contact Mike Ward, Communications Officer with the NE LHIN, at Michael.Ward@lhins.on.ca or 705-256-3002.

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