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Holy Cross parish nurse Theresa Scholz.

Photo by Lisa Tallyn

Parish nurse mixes health and spirituality

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

Retired nurse Theresa Scholz has taken on the role of Holy Cross Church's first parish nurse, and she's thrilled with the job.

"I love it. I can help people. I can guide people. I really enjoy it," said Scholz, who has been the church's parish nurse candidate for about a year. She previously worked as a nurse at Peel Memorial and Georgetown Hospitals. "It's nursing one-on-one. It brings the spiritual aspect into nursing."

Father David Wynen, pastor of Holy Cross Church, said the "genius of the program is the connection of health to pastoral care."

"It's a very unique way to use a nurse's role," said Scholz, who is working towards her certificate in parish nursing through the Interchurch Health Ministries of Canada. The three-year program, includes classroom study and more than 100 hours of practical training each year.

The role of a parish nurse is to work as an integrator of faith and health, provide health promotion and education, serve as a health counselor, provide a referral resource, be a health advocate, develop support groups and train volunteers.

Some types of things parish nurses might do include interpreting the function faith plays in the well-being of individuals and communities, offering support and encouragement during times of crisis and celebration, focusing on health promotion and disease prevention, providing referral information, advocacy and co-ordination of services and facilitating congregational participation in ministry.

In Scholz's case, some of the things she does include home and hospital visits and blood pressure clinics. She also co-ordinates low-impact exercise programs, prayer shawl ministry and health information sessions. Her focus is on physical health improvement as well as emotional and spiritual health.

The parish nurse is part of the church's ministry team who encourages each individual's physical, emotional, spiritual and social well-being.

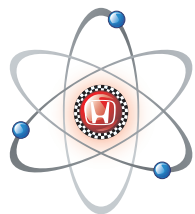
"Part of it is connecting the health knowledge with a pastoral response," said Wynen.

The church has established a Health and Wellness Committee that supports Scholz's role and promotes health and wellness to the parishioners.

Fatima Cabral, chair of the committee, said they recently conducted a survey of parishioners about their emotional, spiritual and physical health. The results revealed a need for more prayer and meditation and concerns about coping with stress, conflict, and a focus on healthy aging. As a result of the survey the church launched a monthly mass with a healing prayer and a monthly divine mercy meditation. Scholz and the committee also started a monthly blood pressure clinic and a twice-weekly low impact exercise program. The exercise classes, offered for \$3 each class, at times have 40 people.

Scholz and the committee are hosting a Healthy Aging Workshop Saturday (May 15) from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the church hall. Everyone is welcome to attend and admission is free. Speakers include Dr. Paul Zeni, registered dietician Kara McDonald, certified laugh leader Kathleen McAulay and retired CA Martin Hughes.

From 1:15-2:30 p.m. those in attendance can check out information booths and meet other health professionals. There will be reading material available to purchase and door prizes. There will also be a silent auction with all proceeds going to Interchurch Health Ministries.



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