

Danielle Geddes

Showing up and wanting to help is one quality that Danielle Geddes projects in her workplace at the long-term care home. In November, she was reassigned to the long-term personal care home known as St. Paul's Residence. She is a compassionate person who assists the residents in completing daily tasks that occupy their day. These things vary from person to person, but Danielle is there to assist. She also enjoys her secondary role teaching health care students how to best perform regular tasks that can bring quality into a resident's life.

Occupational Therapists spend their day finding solutions that make a difference in living a full, complete, and satisfying life for those who have encountered a disease or are affected by the natural process of aging. O. T's help their clients overcome physical, mental, and environmental problems that may result from injury or disability. Danielle is one of five occupational therapists working in the tri-community. She practices broadly as each client is different in their needs. Daily she spends her time coaching a resident on how to walk, dress, feed themselves and so much more. There are many things that Occupational Therapists do to make life meaningful and pleasant for their clients.

Danielle came to The Pas as a student Occupational Therapist to complete her practicum. It was during this practicum that she became familiar with the supportive trusting teamwork of a small-town hospital. She spent a few months as a student O.T. at the local hospital. She was recruited back to The Pas after a brief job in Thompson. This is Danielle Geddes story about learning to appreciate the community in pandemic times. She is one health care worker who has put herself on the front lines, keeping our elders safe and working with them to ensure continued quality of life.

Safety is key at the residence with many protocols put into place. Each staff member must wear personal protective equipment (PPE), and screen prior to starting their shift. As well the staff are practicing distancing measures. This can be challenging for an Occupational Therapist as much of their work is hands on. Some of the care home residents do not understand the social distancing measures but Danielle does her best to make connections and create meaningful relationships. It is important to connect and build trust when working with the residents. Danielle is grateful and excited to see the roll out of the vaccination program for long term residents. She states that this is an additional layer of protection for them. She takes the restrictions very seriously knowing the potential of the virus.

Danielle grew up in the urban center of Brandon completing her undergraduate degree at Brandon University. She graduated in 2012 with a master's degree in Occupational Therapy from the University of Manitoba. It was interesting that her first job took her north to Thompson and then to The Pas. She never imagined herself being happy in a small town, but that changed with the support of the small but mighty young professionals that she works with. The charge therapist (Monique Levesque) was responsible for encouraging Danielle to join the team in The Pas. Three groups of therapists (occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech occupational therapy) work very closely within one department. Prior to the pandemic the staff would get together for BBQ's and hikes after hours. Danielle is proud to be an employee of this department. She arrived here thinking that she would stay for a year or two and she is now going into her 8th year. The workplace environment and the young professional work mates have reaffirmed that The Pas is a good place for her to work and live.

Danielle and her husband met in Brandon and have moved around the province together. Once in The Pas, her husband attended UCN in the Natural Resources Management and Technology program. He

now works for the Manitoba Wildfire Service. He is an outdoors man, taking advantage of the abundance of skidoo trails that are right out their back door. He is also a hunter and a fisherman. Although Danielle was not much of an outdoors person, the pandemic has made her appreciate the many benefits of living in a small town. The outdoors is right there for all to enjoy, while staying socially distanced. She is a morning person and loves to venture out onto the walking trails that are within a short walk from her home. She takes her dog, Judy (named after Judy Garland for chewing her red slippers) for a morning walk prior to heading off to work. This helps to ground her and allows her to get ready for a full day of work.

As a family, they would travel out of the community, to visit family, and to discover the world on days off and vacation time. Their four-year-old son has travelled with them on family vacations to Disneyworld, the Gulf of Mexico, and multiple Canadian cities from coast to coast. They would look forward to exploring and experiencing new provinces and countries. Once a month they would travel to Brandon to visit grandparents and stay connected with family. Since last March, the travel restrictions made them look around the community with new eyes, seeing much that was not visible to them previously. They now take the time to explore the community and surrounding areas.

This winter they took Max to skate on different ice ponds on the way to Clearwater Lake. Last summer, they planted a somewhat large garden in their back yard to spark interest for their son. The garden included potatoes, beans, and carrots. Max tended to the garden daily, pulling a carrot or two to see how much they had grown. Danielle did not want to get too many plants going as she was concerned about recognizing weeds from plants. It was an enjoyable summer, harvesting many potatoes and carrots in the fall. She would have never considered taking on a project like this prior to the pandemic as she probably would have been travelling. They also spent many hot summer days at the local sand beaches within a twenty-minute drive from The Pas.

Her son keeps the normalcy in their life. He is a typical four-year-old who is always busy. He questions everything and has a strong desire to learn. He keeps Danielle and her husband in a routine, helping them bake and cook meals, getting outside, and moving about. Her world is complete with love from her husband, her son and her dog and the strong team she works with. They are enjoying activities as a family and spending more time with each other. They stay connected with extended family using technology. Often Max is read a bed time story from Danielle's mother via Facetime. They are finding ways to stay connected with grandparents.

Other places in the community that Danielle and Max often frequent is The Pas Regional Library. The staff know Max and greet him by name upon their arrival. Since curbside pickup, Danielle feels comfortable calling the library staff and requesting a specific topic for them to select books for her son to read. He is interested in dinosaurs and the planets, this week, specifically Jupiter. They always find him something interesting to read. Inquiring minds need to be filled with good content, which is all available at the library. This Christmas he asked for a telescope.

Danielle's favorite place to shop in the community is Tri Family Health. Her son has many favorite places. In the summer, his favorite place is going to the beach and getting ice cream from the snack stand. He loves the library and now he is enjoying the Le Pas de Danse class offered via zoom. One of Danielle's favorite times of the week is watching her son participate in the dance class. Her husband's favorite place is the skidoo trail which leads him to the fishing hole. The dogs favorite place is the walking path. They all have their favorite places to go, crossing paths to spend time together and stay

mentally and physically healthy. Although the Geddes are private people, they want others to know how much is available in our small town. The simple pleasures are found in family, in simple activities, putting your nose in a book, visiting an imaginary world, getting outdoors, going for a walk, planting a garden, or skating on a pond. Immerse yourself in what you love, cooking, baking, reading, walking, calling family and friends. Find your passion. There is so much available right around us. We just have to look.

Thank you, Danielle! You are one of many caring health care workers that show up each day to serve those that are in total lock down during this pandemic. You are appreciated and recognized for being there! Each day making a difference to help those in long term care. Thank you for making a difference to help elders and those living in the long-term care residence at St. Paul's. Elderly people need care and comfort to continue to lead a healthy life without worries and anxieties. As each day ends and the sun goes down, we age by one day. Eventually we become the elderly and may require this service ourselves someday.

Caring is a part of your DNA. Words cannot express the gratitude for your service!

Thank you for sharing your story.

Submitted by; Denise Duncan

Make Shift Happen.