

## **Recreation Therapy At Pembroke Regional Hospital Brings Healing And Hope To Patients Experiencing Mental Health Challenges**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 7, 2025**

On any given day, patients on the Acute Mental Health unit at Pembroke Regional Hospital can be found partaking in a number of leisure activities, both group-based and independently, as part of their journey to recovery.

Some of the therapeutic activities used at PRH include arts and crafts, relaxation exercises, walks and stretching on the unit's outdoor patio, gardening, pet therapy, board and card games, bean bag toss, trivia and bingo. Additionally, self-directed activities such as journaling, knitting, diamond art, paint-by-numbers, word searches, crossword puzzles, and adult colouring are offered and encouraged when groups aren't running.

"More than just activities, however, recreation therapy is an essential component of mental health treatment that offers patients meaningful opportunities to build skills, connect with others and improve their overall well-being," said Recreation Therapist Shannon Reckzin. "It's about using recreation as a tool to support recovery, improve mental health and enhance an individual's quality of life."

"Our goal is to uplift people through simple leisure activities," Ms. Reckzin said. "We challenge patients to connect with others through the activities that they do. We encourage them to say 'yes' in small increments and to try new things. As a result, it's incredibly rewarding to see them proud of their accomplishments and realize that they can effect change in themselves."

Ms. Reckzin said patients are also encouraged to use some of their down time in hospital to start planning for their return home by considering what they can add to their daily routine in order to maintain balance – whether that be joining a gym, volunteering, going for walks, planning social outings, or taking up some form of crafting or artwork.

"Recreation played a key role in helping me conquer my anxiety and depression," shared one patient, adding that they "loved" how the activities helped to slow their racing thoughts to the point where they were actually able to laugh and enjoy the time spent with others.

Another shared that while they were "full of anxiety", the hospital's Recreation Therapist was so kind and easy to talk to that, with her encouragement, they were able to not only go to a group session but stay in the session. "My stress did decrease and I was thankful for that," they said.

Bailey Lance-Provencal, Clinical Manager of the hospital's Acute Mental Health unit said recreation therapy is designed to support holistic recovery for patients who are facing mental health challenges by involving them in meaningful and enjoyable activities that address various aspects of their well-being.

This approach helps individuals rediscover activities they enjoy, develop new coping strategies, and rebuild routines. By fostering these positive experiences, the program promotes overall mental health and wellness, enabling participants to actively engage in their own recovery process.

Ms. Lance-Provencal emphasizes that “recreational therapy is an essential component of the daily healing process. It not only maintains patients' well-being but also enhances their emotional and psychosocial health. Through these therapeutic activities, patients can explore healthy leisure options, develop transferable skills, and experience significant improvements in their mental health.”

The benefits of recreation therapy are numerous. It reduces anxiety and stress, decreases isolation, elevates emotional well-being, increases independence, builds self-esteem and confidence, enhances motivation, promotes community integration, ensures better quality of sleep, minimizes trigger behaviors, and increases participation in meaningful activities.

Given the amount of pressure so many put on themselves in life, Ms. Reckzin said ensuring leisure time is set aside is important for everyone as it helps to manage stress and balance with work life.

As another patient shared, recreation therapy has played a pivotal role in their recovery journey. “I’m still in withdrawal stage from alcohol. I suffer from depression, anxiety, and daily stress. What helps me here in dealing with my health, besides the terrific nursing staff and doctors, is the relaxing and therapeutic activities – twice daily – organized and led by Shannon (Reckzin). She helps us recognize that we all have rough moments and refocusing on art, music, games, etc. can help get us through.”

“Our goal is to empower patients to see the possibilities in their recovery journey,” Ms. Reckzin added. “Recreation therapy reminds them that there is joy and fulfillment to be found, even in challenging times.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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