

Inside this Issue:

Page 2. Read:
*Protect yourself from
West Nile virus*

Page 4 Learn:
*What unwanted scent
can do*

Page 6-7: Discover:
*How to cope with the
stress of pandemic
influenza*



Sun Country Health Region is fit-testing its health care workers to ensure a good fit for the masks they will use when pandemic influenza (H1N1) activity increases this fall in Saskatchewan. Here, Shirley Thera, the Region's Workplace Health and Safety Manager and Calvin Coleman, Workplace Health and Safety Representative for the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO), show a group of 19 fit testers from Sun Country Health Region the most effective way to put together a respirator test hood. The testers have been fitting employees throughout the summer and will continue into the fall and winter.

Did you know?

Sun Country Health Region has one of the highest flu shot rates in the province among its health care workers. During 2008-09, 85.5 per cent of employees in acute care hospitals and 83.8 per cent of employees in long term care facilities were immunized for seasonal influenza.

A publication of Sun Country Health Region



Thoughts:

From the desk of Calvin Tant,
President/CEO,
Sun Country Regional Health Authority

When pandemic influenza (H1N1) activity increases in Saskatchewan this fall, southern Saskatchewan residents may face additional stress at home caring for themselves and ill family members. Given the uncertainties about pandemic influenza, how will you and your family cope with the impact of a pandemic?

The answer is - You will manage much better if you do two things: plan ahead and keep well informed about the pandemic.

The planning begins with gathering the materials you will need to look after your home and family for at least 72 hours. Detailed information about what to include in your household plan was published in the August 08 Regional Sun and is available on our website at http://www.suncountry.sk.ca/gsCMSDisplayPluginNewsletter/list/menu_id/42/pN/regional-sun-2008.

You can look for additional information at <http://getprepared.ca/knw/kt/kt-eng.aspx> or through the Red Cross at <http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=31422&tid=025>

Remember that your plan needs to include connections with one or more individuals who can help you (and you can help in return) during a flu outbreak.

The second part of the answer involves information. Be sure the information you use to make your plan and react to events as they unfold is accurate. Turn to reliable information sources like Sun Country Health Region at www.suncountry.sk.ca and the Fight Flu web page that gives you access to information from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada – www.fightflu.ca.

Additional stress may be inevitable under emergency circumstances like a pandemic. The impact of a pandemic might take you into unknown territory, with reactions and emotions you've never experienced before. Under these circumstances, you will need to recognize the point at which the stress and anxiety is affecting your ability to cope with your daily challenges. That's the time to look for help. You can call HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002, go to www.healthlineonline.com/ or call 1-800-216-7689 to speak to a SCHR mental health professional.

You will also find some good information in this issue of The Regional Sun. Save it for future reference.

Sun Country Health Region Administration

President/CEO:
Calvin Tant 842-8718

**Vice President
Corporate Services:**
Hal Schmidt 842-8714

**Vice President
Human Resources:**
Don Ehman 842-8724

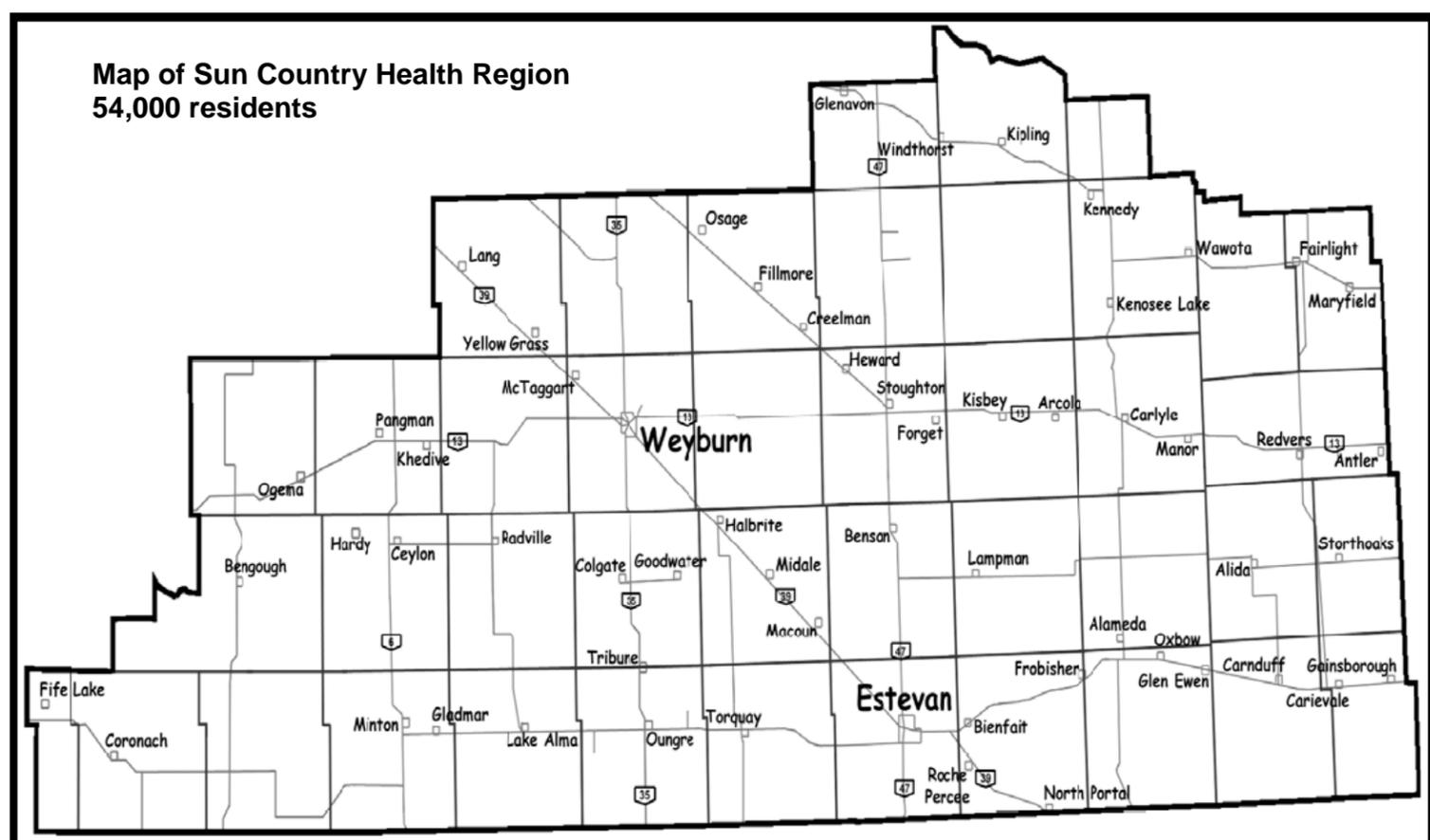
**Vice President Primary
and Integrated Health:**
Marga Cugnet 842-8729

**Vice President
Community Health:**
Janice Giroux 842-8652

**Regional Director,
Primary Care and
Rehabilitation:**
Heather Tant 637-2460

Director, Rural Facilities:
Murray Goeres 842-8706

**Quality Care
Coordinator**
Dianne Green 637-3642



Infected mosquitoes are here

Protect yourself from WNV

Mosquitoes infected with the West Nile virus have been found in Sun Country Health Region since late July. The Region's Medical Health Officer Dr. Shauna Hudson recommends individuals follow the FIVE Ds to help protect yourself from bites and reduce the chance of infection from West Nile virus:

1. **Wear a good insect repellent with DEET.**
2. **DRAIN standing water. Mosquitoes require water to complete their life cycle.**
3. **Avoid going out during DUSK and DAWN. The mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are especially active for two hours after sunset.**
4. **DRESS appropriately. Wear long sleeves and long pants (wear light-weight clothing to minimize the potential for heat-induced illnesses). Mosquitoes may be more attracted to individuals wearing perfumes and colognes.**
5. **Make sure that DOORS and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.**



Are you sure you need the ER today?

The emergency department is not staffed with a doctor

A doctor will only be called if your health matter is an emergency that can't wait for an appointment with your local doctor in his/her clinic

The emergency department is for emergencies only!

Diabetes program highlighted

The Sun Country Health Region's diabetes program was front and centre in the province on June 19, 2009. Kay Steele, Diabetic Nurse Educator, and Sheena Grimes, Chronic Disease Management Facilitator, made a presentation about the diabetes program at the 1st annual Saskatchewan Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Conference held in Saskatoon on June 18-19.

The purpose of the conference was to provide participants with an opportunity to share ideas, practices, and initiatives. Kay and Sheena described the diabetes program from its formal beginning in 2003 to the current state and future plans.

The success of the program has been through the partnership of many to develop diabetes teams across the Region. These teams have special training and/or certification in diabetes education and involve many disciplines. The teams are made up of a combination of diabetes resource nurses from Home Care, dietitians, diabetes nurse educators, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, podiatrists, and physicians.

Education and self-management are key components for the patients of the program. For more information about the program, please see the diabetes program description at our website at:

www.suncountry.sk.ca/service/57/88/diabetes-program.html

Annual Report ready now

Sun Country Health Region's 2009 annual report outlining the activities of the health region over the past year is available to read on our website at http://www.suncountry.sk.ca/gsCMSDisplayPluginNewsletter/list/menu_id/31/pN/annual-reports

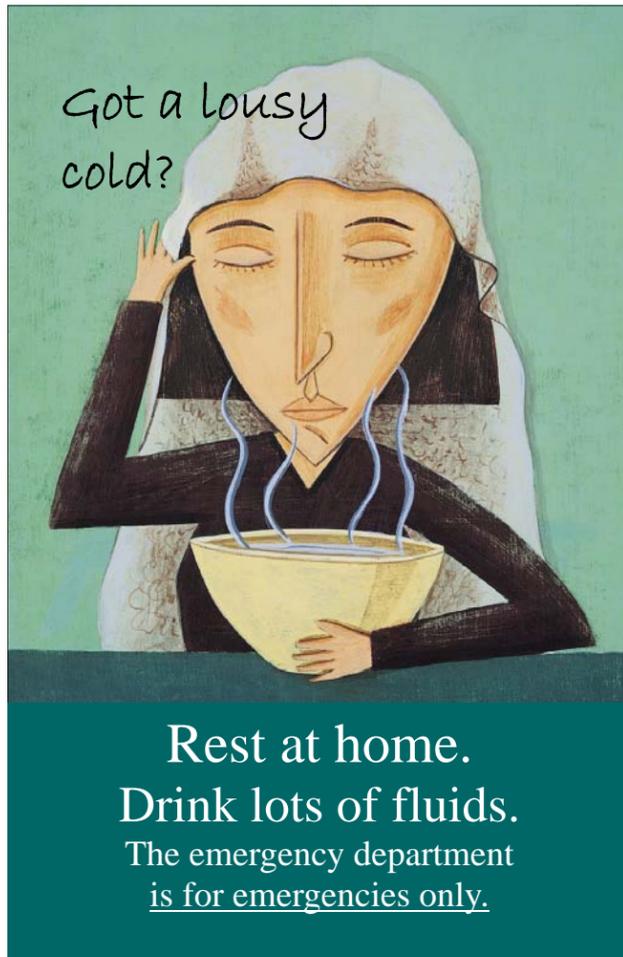
Do You Need the Emergency Department today?

Sun Country Health Region is embarking on an education campaign to assist residents to use the emergency departments of local health centres and hospitals appropriately. An advertising campaign including posters and brochures indicating the appropriate use of emergency departments will be introduced to communities in the Region during the first week of September.

"There is some misunderstanding among the public about the emergency departments in our hospitals and health centres," says Marga Cugnet, Vice President of Primary and Integrated Health for Sun Country Health Region.

"People tend to equate emergency departments with the doctors' clinics. They sometimes use the emergency department for non-urgent health matters like filling a prescription or checking out a cold," she says. Appropriate use is particularly important now that the highly infectious H1N1 virus is spreading among the Canadian population, she says. "We don't want to see the virus spread when people visit our emergency departments."

Dr. Alain Lenferna, Vice President, Medical for Sun Country Health Region, says all members of the public need to think about emergency departments



differently than they have in the past. "They need to stop and think before they use the Emergency Department," he says.

"The most important point to understand is that no health facility in Sun Country Health Region is staffed with a physician," he says.

"We have no 24-hour laboratory or x-ray department service either. All physicians in this Region are on standby."

"That means each time a doctor is called back to the emergency department, he or she is called away from a scheduled appointment at his/her clinic, or from home at night," says Dr. Lenferna.

"We want to ensure that each time a doctor is called out to an emergency department that it is an actual emergency."

Sun Country Health Region offers two steps for wise use of the emergency department:

Stop and Think and Act. These two steps will help ensure that serious medical emergencies can get the immediate treatment needed.

Dr. Lenferna says that evidence of appropriate use of the emergency departments in a rural health region can be a positive recruitment factor for new physicians.

"Some doctors may not consider a position in a rural community because he/she knows he will look after patients all day in a clinic and then be called into an emergency department every night for nonurgent issues,"

he says.

"We need to utilize our physicians appropriately to help keep them here."

Stop and Think:

- What can I do for myself?
- Can I rest, place ice on an injury or use a similar remedy?
- Can I take a medication to reduce pain or fever?
- How urgent is this condition?
- If I go to the emergency department and get a prescription, will a local pharmacy be open at this time to fill it?
- If I go to the hospital or health centre, will I spread the flu or a cold virus?
- Will laboratory or x-ray staff be available?

Act:

- Call Healthline at 1-877-800-000 or online at www.healthlineonline.com/. If your health concern is urgent and all of the above steps indicate it is necessary to travel to the nearest emergency department, take a list of your medications, health care/insurance card and any written medical history for the physician. When you arrive, a nurse in the health centres/ hospital will assess your condition to decide if a physician is to be called in.

A guide to appropriate use of Emergency Departments:

When should I use the Emergency Department?

Stop and Think:

- What can I do for myself ?
- Can I rest, place ice on an injury or can I take a medication to reduce pain or a fever?
- How urgent is this condition?
- If I go to the emergency department and get a prescription, will a local pharmacy be open to fill it at this time?
- Will laboratory or x-ray staff be available?

Act:

- Call HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002.
- If the above steps indicate it is necessary to travel to the nearest emergency department, take a list of your medications, health care/insurance card and any available written medical history for the physician.
- When you arrive, a nurse in the health centre/hospital will assess your condition to decide if a physician is to be called.
- If you are experiencing signs of a heart attack, stroke, or have difficulty breathing, call 911 for an ambulance.

Sun Country Health Region thanks you for doing your part to help people experiencing medical emergencies.



Are you sure you need the ER today?

The emergency department is not staffed with a doctor

A doctor will only be called if your health matter is an emergency that can't wait for an appointment with your local doctor in his/her clinic

The emergency department is for emergencies only!

What are Emergency Departments?

Emergency Departments exist to help everyone who comes through the doors. An emergency is an immediate and serious risk to life or limb. For example: difficulty breathing, uncontrolled bleeding, chest pain, numbness, weakness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg. When doctors, nurses and other skilled health care professionals are occupied with non-critical medical situations, they have a more difficult time caring for people who require urgent help. No health facility in Sun Country Health Region is staffed with a physician at all times. Physicians are called to a health centre/hospital on an "as-needed basis." Please do not use the Emergency Department for non-critical health issues.

How does HealthLine work?

A registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse at HealthLine will take your call. The service is available, at no cost to you, everywhere in Saskatchewan, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The HealthLine nurse can assist you in making a decision regarding your physical or mental health care. After consultation with a HealthLine nurse, you may decide you can care for yourself, or that you will visit your own family doctor. If your case requires emergency care, the nurse will advise you either to visit your family physician or a hospital emergency department.

Advice from HealthLine to visit an emergency department will not allow you to go to the head of the line. You will be assessed by a nurse upon your arrival. You may see a physician and receive treatment based on your need at that time.

HealthLine Contact Information

Healthline
1-877-800-0002

Healthline Online
www.healthlineonline.com/

Influenza Pandemic: A Source of Stress and Anxiety

The influenza pandemic is an unusual and unknown situation that calls on us to adjust and adapt since we have never had to deal with something similar. It brings out reactions and emotions in each of us. We anticipate its impacts on our lives and that of people close to us. The possibility of experiencing stress or anxiety is quite normal should an influenza pandemic or any other unusual event—anticipated or not—occur. While we have no control over such things, we are able to preserve our well-being. This involves recognizing the reactions and factors that contribute to stress and anxiety, so that they can be coped with.

The signs

An individual experiencing stress or anxiety will have several of the following symptoms:

- Anticipating scenarios: “And what if...”
- Excessive worrying and insecurity
- Feelings of powerlessness in the face of situations that cannot be controlled
- Self-talk that does not always reflect reality
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tension, irritability, or lack of tolerance
- Headache, stomachache, and neck tension
- Problems with sleeping or appetite
- Fatigue and lack of energy

What Is Stress?

Stress is a normal response to a demand for adaptation. In fact, stress is an integral part of life. It allows the body to adjust or adapt to a multitude of positive or negative events that anyone could experience, such as a birth, wedding, or job loss.

Stress shows up as various physical, cognitive, and emotional reactions. The ability to adapt to new situations depends on the individual’s personality, beliefs, past and current experiences, support network, and the like.

What is Anxiety?

Unlike fear, which is a response to a real, specific threat, anxiety is a response to a vague or unknown threat. Anxiety occurs when an individual anticipates the occurrence of a dangerous or unfortunate event. Anxiety is a part of life, just like joy, sadness, and anger. As in the case of stress, anxiety can show up as various physical, cognitive, and emotional reactions. The degree and intensity of anxiety experienced varies from one person to the next. How an individual perceives the event can significantly affect the intensity of the anxiety experienced.

Ways to improve your coping skills

All of these symptoms of stress and anxiety are normal in the face of events such as a pandemic. Most people have resources and means for adjusting to such occurrences. Trust in your normal ways of coping with difficult situations. For the most part, the coping methods are based on getting information, organizing your daily life, and seizing opportunities to take care of yourself.

Take care of yourself

- Get involved in physical activities that relieve tension, like dance or walking.
- Practice good habits like eating well, getting enough rest, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.
- Take time to enjoy little things, like a nice, relaxing bath.
- Keep in touch with your feelings, emotions, and reactions. Allow yourself to express them, to someone you trust.

Be informed

Get reliable information from www.suncountry.sk.ca. Remember that the Health Region was able to prepare for this influenza pandemic, unlike for those in the past.

Get organized

- Find one or more individuals you can count on, should the need arise, to help out with things such as taking care of the children or a family member in need.
- Organize and plan your tasks based on immediate priorities.
- Keep your daily tasks to a minimum as much as possible.
- Learn how to delegate and to accept help from others. For example, ask the children to do the dishes.
- Keep in touch with people who make you feel good.
- Get ideas from those around you to reconcile work and recreation.
- Remember winning strategies that you have used in the past to get through a difficult situation. Build on your resources and personal strengths.
- Breathe calmly and deeply.
- Give your beliefs a reality check.
- Listen to your self-talk and ask yourself if your fears are well founded. Check with someone you trust and who knows you well. Look for explanations that are more likely and that reassure you. Learn to live with a certain amount of uncertainty and the unknown. After all, that’s how life is.

Coping with influenza pandemic—part 2

Things will be better if -

- You feel more relaxed.
- While you remained concerned about the health of the people you care about, your worrying is not overwhelming.
- Ways of resolving or improving the situation seem feasible.
- Your thoughts are more realistic.
- You can pay attention when reading or watching television.
- Your mood is more stable.
- You have less muscle tension.
- You sleep better and regain your appetite.
- You feel that you are getting your energy back and that you are not as tired.

Mutual help and solidarity in any tragic event remain the prime attitudes for re-establishing individual and collective equilibrium.

SOME COMMON PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS TO STRESS

While reactions to an event may vary between individuals, there are common reactions that are normal reactions to the abnormal event. Sometimes these stress reactions appear immediately following the event; in some cases, they are delayed for a few hours, a few days, weeks, or even months. These stress reactions may be categorized as physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. The following table describes common reactions to trauma.

Physical reactions

- Faintness, dizziness
- Hot or cold sensations in body
- Tightness in throat, stomach, or chest
- Agitation, nervousness, hyperarousal
- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Gastrointestinal distress and nausea
- Appetite decrease or increase
- Headaches
- Worsening of pre-existing health/psychiatric conditions

Cognitive reactions

- Confusion and disorientation
- Poor concentration and memory problems
- Impaired thinking and decision making
- Complete or partial amnesia
- Repeated flashbacks, intrusive thoughts and images
- Obsessive self-criticism and self-doubts
- Preoccupation with protecting loved ones
- Questioning of prior belief system

Emotional reactions

- Shock, disbelief, numbness
- Anxiety, fear, worry about safety
- Sadness, grief
- Helplessness, powerlessness
- Vulnerability
- Dissociation (feeling disconnected, dreamlike)
- Anger, rage, desire for revenge
- Irritability, short temper
- Hopelessness and despair
- Blame of self and/or others
- Unpredictable mood swings

Behavioral reactions

- Sleep disturbances and nightmares
- Jumpiness, easily startled
- Hypervigilance, scanning for danger
- Crying and tearfulness for no apparent reason
- Conflicts with family and coworkers
- Avoidance of reminders of trauma
- Inability to express feelings
- Isolation or withdrawal from others
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

When to seek professional help

If you feel several of the following, your resources no longer enable you to manage your concerns on a daily basis. Beware of burnout! It can happen to anyone. Don't ignore these warning signs that may indicate you should seek professional help.

- You can't seem to figure out how to start the day off. Everything seems to be a mountain-like obstacle.
- You can't make even simple decisions; you have errors in judgment.
- You can't concentrate and are distracted.
- You are more impatient with your children. You have the impression you spend your day shouting; you are afraid of losing control.
- Just hearing somebody say the word pandemic makes you panic.
- You feel like you are suffocating. Your heart is galloping, you feel dizzy, and you are nauseous.
- You are constantly on the lookout for flu symptoms.
- You avoid everyone outside the home.
- You always feel on the verge of tears. You can't sleep.
- You have lost your appetite. You have recurrent thoughts that are intrusive and frighten you.
- You feel exhausted and at the end of your rope.

If you are experiencing these symptoms please call

1-800-216-7689

to speak to a mental health professional.

The original of this information can be accessed at the Government of Québec's pandemic web site: <http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/news/news.shtml>. A French version of the pamphlet is also available at this site.

SCHR challenges its staff to adopt

A new way of cleaning

In the 1840's, doctors discovered they could spread a contagion from the autopsy room to the section of the hospital where women had their babies. What they learned then about the importance of a clean environment, clean equipment, and clean hands for ensuring good health is still important today.

Sun Country Health Region (SCHR) had patient safety in mind, too, when it joined a national campaign in 2008 to reduce the number of infections from an antibiotic-resistant disease called Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

o MRSA is spread in hospitals by contact with contaminated surfaces or via health care worker's hands.

Health care associated infections are a major cause of excess illness and death in Canadian health care institutions.

To begin SCHR's local campaign, Infection Control Nurse Michelle Luscombe worked

with teams of staff to create a work plan to improve the way facilities are cleaned and to promote hand hygiene for health care workers.

The next link in the chain was to get staff members interested in the program. Cultural change doesn't happen just because someone at the top says it should.

What's needed is leadership – a person who understands why the change is necessary and will take the lead among their co-workers.

SCHR was very fortunate to have several of these people.

Here, two of those leaders are highlighted.

The first is Shirley Wheeler, Regional Director of Housekeeping. The second was one of her employees, environmental service worker Darlene Champagne who discovered she was a first-class teacher as well as a first class cleaner for the past 14 years.

"I found it so interesting to see what a difference a cleaner can make to a good outcome for a patient or resident, especially when it comes to these new and highly infectious illnesses," says Darlene.

"Learning how stubborn these germs are and how they live and reproduce helped me understand exactly why we need to clean differently. Our motivation is important, too. We shouldn't be making this change just because someone tells us

to do it and it's our job, but because we can make a big difference to people," she says.

"We all understand the basics of good cleaning," says Darlene. "But one of the more important new things we've learned is more hygienic methods of cleaning so we're not just transferring germs from one area to another."

"For instance, years ago we were told to dry everything we'd washed. Now we don't do that because the disinfectant we use in the water takes time to kill the germs as it dries."

"Darlene was enthusiastic from the beginning," says Shirley. "She was a real advocate for all cleaning protocols. The challenge with MRSA got us started but we've gone further than that."

SCHR began the

cleaning campaign with four facilities.

"But when H1N1 influenza showed up this spring, we started going faster and most facilities are on board with the new cleaning practices," says Shirley.

"We couldn't have done this without Darlene going to our acute and long term care facilities all over this large region to train the staff in the new protocols. She is really gung-ho and really effective," she says. "She's very comfortable giving presentations."

Darlene admits the teaching part gave her a thrill. "I found that everyone listened when I spoke, and I could relate to every issue they raised because I've done the same job. I learned that I would like to make greater use of my skills as a trainer."

"I found that besides telling people how to do something, it's important to explain why," she says. "That's a key lesson when you need to make a change."

Thanks to Darlene's willingness to learn and grow beyond the immediate confines of her job, she has helped herself and SCHR, says Shirley. "We can do a better job in the future thanks to her."



Darlene Champagne and Shirley Wheeler