



Anya Langkow, RhPAP’s rural community consultant, east central zone, left, Leslie Cholwsky, editor at Community Press, and Shirley Damberger, owner of HOM of Well Being, have a discussion at the Flagstaff region event. — Photo supplied by Flagstaff County

Community leaders in the Flagstaff County region understand how valuable healthcare workers are to rural Alberta and they wanted to show their appreciation to their unsung heroes.

Led by the Flagstaff Healthcare, Attraction and Retention Committee and supported by a \$1,000 grant through RhPAP’s Attraction, Integration, and Retention Program, they were able to say thanks to those who work in healthcare during Alberta Rural Health Week in 2024.

Members from Flagstaff County, the Town of Hardisty, Town of Killam, and Hamlet of

Galahad organized the special event that included a dinner, keynote speaker, and mental health panel, says Don Kroetch, Flagstaff County reeve and chair of the committee. Local business partners also contributed.

More than 120 people who work as health professionals or provide support to healthcare including hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and allied health services throughout the region took them up on their offer and attended the event held in Killam, located about 45 minutes southeast of Camrose.

“We really leaned on our site managers at each of our hospitals and healthcare facilities to get that word out to the healthcare workers,” says Shaina Dunn, economic development coordinator with Flagstaff County. “Anyone throughout the Flagstaff region was invited.”

The organizers used the event as an opportunity to bring awareness to the importance of mental health for healthcare professionals and the communities they serve.

Tyler Smith, a Humboldt Broncos crash survivor who also won Amazing Race Canada in 2023, spoke about Unveiling the Power of Resilience, Leadership, and Teamwork.

“What we wanted to do was bring a bunch of healthcare workers together, put them in a room, celebrate them, support them, increase morale, and really shine a light on the incredible work that they do,” explains Dunn.



Motivational speaker Tyler Smith, a Humboldt Broncos crash survivor who also won Amazing Race Canada in 2023, spoke to the crowd as part of the event.

— Photo supplied by Flagstaff County

A discussion panel was also set up to draw attention to mental health.

“As rural healthcare workers, they are kind of bearing it all and doing it all. So that vulnerability to burn out is, I’d say, probably exceptionally high. So, opening up that door and conversation around talking about mental health and making sure you’re taking care of yourself and taking care of those around you,” says Dunn.

“People were very thankful to be able to come together that night, celebrate each other and support each other, and have those conversations.

It's not the first time the Flagstaff committee has worked with RhPAP on attraction and retention initiatives.

Anya Langkow, RhPAP's rural community consultant, east central zone, says the area's attraction and retention committee with support from RhPAP, has also hosted Let's Go Rural! events for high school and post-secondary students and hands out monthly appreciation baskets to healthcare teams in the area.

"They are a well-oiled machine in Flagstaff under Don Kroetch and Shaina Dunn's guidance."



More than 120 people attended the evening celebration that was made possible with support from RhPAP's Attraction, Integration, and Retention Program, communities in the region, and area business partners.

— Photo supplied by Flagstaff County

Kroetch says it's important for his rural community to not only recognize local healthcare workers but also to reach out to possible future health employees while promoting the benefits of living and working in the Flagstaff region.

"It's a very competitive workforce market out there and we want to be in the game. We want to show them what we have to offer and why we, the people of Flagstaff region, live here and why we are very proud of where we live."

\*\*\*

More information on RhPAP's Attraction, Integration, and Retention Program is available [here](#).