

# Press Release

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## Celebrating Rocmaura's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Rocmaura Foundation Hosting Annual Gala Dinner and Auction

SAINT JOHN, NB —Plans are underway to celebrate Rocmaura Nursing Home's 50th Anniversary. Rocmaura will be honouring the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception at its annual Dinner, Auction and Dance at the Saint John Trade & Convention Centre on Saturday October 29, 2022. This will be the nursing home's 23<sup>rd</sup> Gala and is the main fundraiser for the Foundation.

### HISTORY

Rocmaura Nursing home can trace its roots back to 1888 when the Diocese of Saint John erected the very first nursing home in the city, the Mater Misericordiae Home which was operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception. The Sisters had opened orphanages and schools and cared for the poor and began to see a growing need among the elderly.

As time went on and needs grew, a new, state of the art home large enough for 150 residents, was constructed on the rocky ground in the city's north end, named Rocmaura. Translated into Gaelic, it means "Rock of Mary." Rocmaura opened on a stormy Saturday on December 16, 1972, when many of the Nuns who were schoolteachers at the time, were able to come and help with the move.

Sister Mary Beth McCurdy, the Sisters of Charity's Congregational Leader describes Rocmaura as having a special energy that makes it feel different. "It's an energy of love and caring and compassion and respect and dignity" and she says that was always the intention of the facility.

"You can feel a sense of warmth and compassion when you walk in the door," says the home's current administrator, Sheana Mohra. "The work that we do here is a mission, not just a regular job."

## MAJOR PROJECT

Foundation Executive Director Sally Cummings says “New Brunswick has the fastest aging population in the country, and our frail and elderly are unfortunately far too often overlooked. Rocmaura Foundation helps provide the “extras” that are not funded by government, to enhance residents’ *quality of life.*”

Funds raised at this year’s Gala will go toward a major project to build a new palliative care suite. “Our hope is to provide a private, comfortable place for families to share with their loved ones at end of life. We believe this time should be as dignified and peaceful as possible, that each resident and their family deserve privacy and compassion.” The Foundation hopes to create a serene and comfortable space for families to spend together.

With residents moving into the home later in life and in frailer condition than they did in the past, it is not uncommon to have more than one resident at a time seriously ill or at the end stage of their life. “With generous gifts from donors we will be able to support our residents and their loved ones with grace and dignity,” says Cummings.

Oftentimes, if one family is already occupying the palliative care suite upstairs, a second family must visit their loved one in a shared room lacking privacy. There is little space for visitors, and noise from daily operations can be distracting.

Jennifer Wilcox appreciated the use of the palliative care suite when her mother died in June. “It gave us time to be there and grieve. It was calm and quiet.” She says they were able to play Theresa’s favourite music and have a warm blanket or make a cup of tea and didn’t have to drive home at night.

Rocmaura Foundation funded the home’s first palliative care suite in 2006 on the second floor at a cost of approximately \$65,000. It is presently pulling together estimates and project designs to build a second suite on the first floor of the home. Plans include a quiet area for all residents to enjoy daily, with a water wall feature which will be peaceful and relaxing.

The project is a major undertaking and could take a year to complete. With prices constantly fluctuating, the costs associated with renovations, structural changes to move a reception area, plumbing and electrical, labour, and then new furniture and decorating, expenses are estimated to be near \$100,000.

The Foundation is asking for contributions to help with everything from furnishings to construction costs. “We want to create a tranquil space that will accommodate families overnight, with a bathroom, living room and small kitchenette,” says Cummings.

Additional funds raised will also go toward a long list of smaller wishes for residents, including a blanket warmer, which brings comfort and warmth, therapy pets and babies, rehab equipment to prevent skin breakdowns and pressure sores, and music therapy programs, which bring joy to residents through improving memory, movement, and calm.

## GALA FUNDRAISER

The Foundation, which was founded in 1993, organized its first Gala in 1998. “This has become a longtime tradition in our community, and has gone through some changes in recent years,” says Cummings. “In 2020 the event was turned into a virtual armchair gala where viewers watched online from home, via zoom. In 2021 we were not able to hold a Gala at all, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

This year we are going back to 1972 when Rocmaura first opened, and we are throwing a BIG party with the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis! Two-time World Champion tribute artist Thane Dunn & the Cadillac Kings will be shaking things up at our dinner, Auction, and Dance at the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre on Saturday October 29, 2022.

“After more than two years of being in isolation, we want to provide a fun filled evening,” says Cummings. Life has been challenging during this pandemic, with fundraising events on hold, and visitor restrictions in place. This will be a time to celebrate and raise funds to enhance our 150 resident’s quality of life. We will have lots of social media photo opportunities around the room including a wedding chapel, and vintage pink convertible Cadillac, like Elvis would have driven.”

Sr. Anita Holmes, who was Rocmaura’s third administrator, is really looking forward to it. She is a BIG Elvis fan and says if it weren’t for her religious background, she believes Elvis could still be alive!

“People are excited to get together again,” says Cummings. This year’s theme is Viva Las Vegas and hosted by Cindy Day. It is going to be a fantastic evening to celebrate Rocmaura’s 50th anniversary and Honour the Sisters of Charity who have contributed over \$115,000 to Foundation projects over the years.

Gala goers this year will have a unique opportunity not only to bid on auction items for themselves but also to purchase items for the residents, like musical instruments and drums and

padded rehab equipment to prevent pressure sores. “People don’t need more “stuff” says Cummings. Instead of bidding on elaborate gifts for themselves, they can purchase items for the residents to enjoy.

Sister Anita Holmes says “Over the years changes have been made according to the changing needs of our most vulnerable, and I see that happening again. I’ve always been impressed when I come back for a visit, and I see the department heads and staff carrying on with that same spirit that was here when we began and will continue.” With continued generous support from the community, volunteers and staff, Rocmaura Foundation says it can help make life better for the residents in their “home away from home.”

## HOW TO HELP

- Gala Tickets are \$140 each and you get a \$65 tax receipt for your donation.
- A table of ten is \$1400 with a charitable gift receipt for \$650.
- There are a few special VIP tables which include a private reception with Elvis before the show and souvenir photo op with friends.
- New this year, companies can place special congratulatory ad in our souvenir program with \$500 and \$1000 donations.

For more information, contact Sally Cummings, Rocmaura Foundation 506-643-7090  
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# PALLIATIVE CARE SUITE

YOUR FOUNDATION'S MAJOR 2022 PROJECT

