

MENTORSHIP HELPS WORKERS CONNECT WITHIN HEALTH REGION  
- PROGRAM OFFERS EMPLOYEES A WORKPLACE RESOURCE,  
SUPPORT

**BY HANNAH SCISSONS, THE STARPHOENIX** FEBRUARY 15, 2011



*Teya Cherland (left), an addictions counsellor at the Calder Centre, served as a mentor for fellow counsellor Martina Matthewson*

**Photograph by:** Gord Waldner, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix

When Martina Matthewson started a new job as an addictions counsellor with the Saskatoon Health Region, she felt intimidated by the size of her new employer -the largest employer in the province.

But thanks to a mentorship program, she found a friendly face to welcome her after she was paired with a fellow counsellor.

"The biggest thing was coming to work and not feeling completely like the new person," said Matthewson. "Knowing there was one person there who knew me took the anxiety away."

She was paired with Teya Cherland and the two of them met to develop a list of goals for their partnership and for Matthewson's early days at the Calder Centre in Saskatoon in April of last year.

It was the first time Cherland had participated in the program, but she said she would easily do it again.

"You can never know enough people and have enough support, especially in the health region where there's so many people, so having that connection with somebody where you're able to talk to them on a different level than work . . . is important," she said.

In terms of working with Matthewson, Cherland said the mentor-protege relationship has evolved to the point where Matthewson -the former newbie -is mentoring Cherland on some of the programs she's involved with.

That's one of the various benefits that mentors find when they participate, said mentorship consultant Colleen Stewart.

"I think sometimes people are worried about the time commitment and that sort of thing," said Stewart. "Often I find that when people are hesitant to do it, after they come to the workshop and connect with the protege they see there's a lot more gain to it than they realized and they get so much more out of it."

She has heard from other mentors about how -through mentoring others -they remembered things they loved about their jobs. Others realized they had more skills than they normally gave themselves credit for.

Since the health region implemented the mentorship program in April 2009, more than 1,000 people have participated. Stewart said the program grew out of a survey conducted in 2005 where mentorship was a common theme raised by employees.

The health region was recently named as one of the top-20 employers in Saskatchewan and the mentorship program is one of the reasons why, said Stewart.

Matthewson agreed.

"Any time you can connect people and create a connection between new and existing staff, it's really positive," she said.

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