



Co-operative Enterprise Award Presented to: Crocus Co-operative

For leadership, innovation and achievement in co-operative business and member service initiatives for the social and economic development of the co-operative sector.

Since 1983, Saskatoon-based Crocus Co-operative has helped break down the stigma surrounding mental illness while providing its members with a sense of belonging and purpose.

The co-op has more than 2200 lifetime members and in 2023 is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

For a \$1.00 lifetime membership, Crocus Co-operative members can enjoy meals, participate in daily social programs and earn income through employment programs. Members also have access to the co-op's computers, television, phone, internet and washrooms.

Crocus is a partner in a coalition of community based mental health service providers. A vital community resource for its members, Crocus helps to reduce the number of relapses, the severity of relapses, and time spent in hospital. This results in a reduced strain on the health care system and helps to strengthen the community by helping people to cope and thrive within it.

“Christmas and the holiday season can be one of the most depressing times of the year if you don’t have any contact with your family. Crocus has always been there for me,” says a Crocus Co-operative member. “We get to put up a Christmas tree and decorate the building: these are things that are missing when you don’t have a family or a place to go to. Crocus is my family.”

Approximately 300-400 members access Crocus services annually. Between 50-75 individuals attend daily.

The co-operative model ensures that the organization is meeting the needs of its clientele. At least 51% of the board of directors at Crocus must be members, while the remainder are community members who have a passion for mental health and enriching the Crocus community.

Crocus Co-operative members have autonomy to choose what activities they participate in. Recent offerings include chair Pilates, creative writing, a forestry farm picnic and a Metis fiddle performance. These social programs provide the opportunity for members to develop socialization and communication skills through interaction with others in a safe environment.

The Transitional Employment Program is one of the co-operative’s key programs. Members of all abilities are given the chance to work based on jobs available on a daily basis.

The TE Program gives Crocus members the opportunity to develop valuable work skills such as teamwork and time management. Members gain dignity and self esteem from doing real work while earning an income that contributes to poverty alleviation and improves their quality of life. In 2022 Crocus paid over \$100,000 in wages to its members.

Work teams do outside tasks such as yard maintenance or snow clearing. Inside tasks may include tactile work such as assembling corporate mailings and also making handmade greeting cards. Crocus reduces barriers to employment by providing members with winter clothing, work gloves, steel toed boots or safety gear.

“... with the help of staff and other members I started to go out on the work crew. I was delighted to be making a little bit of money for my pocket and it felt good to get some exercise. My self esteem grew and now I encourage new members. I haven’t been back in hospital for a long time. I think Crocus has a lot to do with that.”

Healthy bodies and healthy minds go together. Through Crocus Co-op’s kitchen program, members can purchase a home-style meal at an affordable price and enjoy it in a social atmosphere. Some members receive valuable work experience in the co-op’s kitchen, while others are able to participate in weekly cooking groups.

Crocus hosts students from nursing, social work and occupational therapy programs. Through their interactions with members, students learn about some of the challenges people with a mental illness face.

“Crocus gave me the opportunity to start to take control of my life. When I was released from hospital I was feeling pretty vulnerable. I didn’t have much confidence and was afraid to do anything.”

One in five people will experience mental illness, which can make everyday tasks such as leaving the house very difficult and can leave people feeling helpless, lonely and vulnerable. Crocus Co-operative provides a safe space for its members, and offers programming that reduces barriers, enriches the lives of its members, and creates positive, lasting friendships.

For providing a nurturing environment for those with mental health disabilities, we present Crocus Co-operative with the 2023 Co-operative Enterprise Award. The award will be presented during the Co-operative Merit Awards ceremony on October 16, 2023 in Saskatoon.

Awards will be presented October 16, 2023 at TCU Place, 35-22 St E, Saskatoon as part of the Co-operative Merit Awards ceremony. YOU'RE INVITED to attend and help celebrate our four Saskatchewan Co-operative Merit Award recipients.

Cocktail reception begins at 5:30pm and the dinner and awards ceremony begins at 6:00pm. RSVP to Saskatchewan Co-operative Association by October 9th - sca@sask.coop or 306-244-3702.

More information at <https://sask.coop/events/co-op-merit-awards>