



Nurse Sharon Daley examines a young patient aboard the Sunbeam V.—PHOTO COURTESY OF SEA COAST MISSION

BAR HARBOR — One of the signature programs of the Maine Sea Coast Mission is its telemedicine program and the regular visits of the Sunbeam V to four islands — Frenchboro, Swans, Isle au Haut and Matinicus. On the Sunbeam V is Sharon Daley, a registered nurse, who views herself as not just as the nurse but as a friend.

"What I like best about my position is that I get to know each island community and feel as if I am a little part of that community. It's a feeling of being able to connect to some people or some problem on the island," said Ms. Daley, who lives on Islesboro and knows firsthand the pleasures and constraints of island living. "Both Rob [Benson, pastor to the outer islands] and I do a lot of listening. Sometimes there are problems stressful to those on the island, but the informal aspect of the boat allows me to be a friend and to listen to lots of people."

While the Sunbeam's health program does not provide emergency service, it does provide very complete care and follow up. Sometimes, said Ms. Daley, that follow up is by telephone and sometimes it is just sitting down in the boat over coffee and cookies. She regularly checks in with patients after they have visited the doctor.

Ms. Daley also facilitates screening clinics to test for cardiac problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, thyroid disease, prostate cancer and skin cancer. She also organizes Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, provides chronic care management in homes for individuals who cannot get to the dock, and organizes health services such as preschool screening. As the school nurse for Matinicus and Frenchboro, Ms. Daley provides health education, conducts vision and hearing screenings, maintains immunization and health records and serves as a resource for teachers.

One new initiative, which Mission staff, including Ms. Daley, has undertaken this year, is working with people on Islesford, at their request, developing a workable plan that addresses their health needs and concerns. To date, the Mission staff team has made three trips to Islesford; that the people are continuing to meet over the summer is indicative of their investment in improving health care on Islesford, Ms. Daley said.

One possible program that seems likely to evolve from this plan is a more regular check in with elderly people to see how they are doing and to consider a way to provide some meals for these people, she said.

Another way Ms. Daley sees the Mission outreach to island people expanding is by using new technology to provide for things such as speech therapy when meeting with the therapist individually is not possible.

Swans Island has a new clinic developed by the town. The Mission provided a grant of \$27,000 to equip and furnish the clinic, and that grant was matched by Swans island residents. Ms. Daley sees patients in the clinic, not on board the Sunbeam, a trend supported by the Mission as it seeks to develop clinics on all the islands served by its Island Health initiative. The clinic, like the

Sunbeam V, in partnership with Mount Desert Island Hospital, is using telemedicine technology to connect island patients to land-based physicians and counselors.

Last November, residents from nine islands gathered at the University of Maine's Hutchinson Center in Belfast to discuss the need for more trained Emergency Medical Technicians on the islands, primary care, behavioral health and home healthcare. In addition, they discussed having more telemedicine facilities on individual islands.

"The Sunbeam with Sharon aboard extends the Mission's outreach and ensures that island residents are receiving comparable physical and mental healthcare as those living on the mainland," said Gary DeLong, the Mission's executive director. "The core of what we do on the Sunbeam is about connections – connections that are often expressed in small, subtle ways."