Chatham-Kent Hospice

FALL 2024
NEWSLETTER

HOSPICEHAPPENINGS

Special treatment for Dad at Hospice

Truly understanding hospice care after having a loved one there

As the Executive Director of the Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation, I was very familiar with the care offered at Chatham-Kent Hospice, but I never imagined my family would be one of the families cared for at Hospice - until my dad became a resident last year.

My dad was very family-oriented and community minded. I was the firstborn, and I have two brothers and together, we gave our parents 7 grandchildren. Dad loved to follow the various activities of his kids and grandkids and was always willing to help neighbours, friends or family when needed.

When my parents moved to Chatham as a young family, they got involved in Kinsmen and Kinettes to get to know people. This also gave them the opportunity to get involved in the community. Later, when dad retired, he became a Hospice volunteer and picked up flowers from local florists who donated arrangements to Hospice.

Dad lived with Crohn's disease for most of his adult life. His first major health issue came when, at the age of 70, he fought colon cancer. The cancer treatments worked but took a lot out of Dad. Several years later he had a couple falls resulting in a fractured shoulder, and then a fractured hip, both requiring surgery. Finally, in January of his 85th year, he was diagnosed with end stage liver disease. Unfortunately, this time there was no cure.

One of the milestones both my parents were looking forward to was their 60th wedding anniversary in October. Because Dad was getting more tired by the day, we decided to host an Open House in August for friends and family to come and celebrate with them. It was a wonderful day with many friends and family, including Dad's brother who flew in from BC to surprise him. I am so glad we celebrated when we did because, by early September, you could see Dad's decline more readily.

> **"Earlier that summer, I had asked Amber, our Hospice Navigator, to meet with my parents and answer any questions they might have about Dad's illness. Dad had always said, when the time came, he wanted to move to Hospice. When Amber visited my parents for the second time in September, she too could see the decline and she was very forthcoming with them that the time had come to move to Hospice."**

As a family, we wanted to ensure Dad had the very best care possible at end of life, and we knew he would get that at Hospice. We also wanted to take the burden of care off Mom. She too was in her eighties and had been Dad's full-time caregiver and it was taking its toll on her.

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It took the weekend for Dad to come to terms with moving to Hospice, but once he was settled in his room, an ice cream sundae made by the kitchen volunteer made for a very warm - and delicious - welcome.

Because Hospice offers such a comforting, peaceful and safe environment, it provided instant relief to my dad, my mom and the rest of my family. Dad liked to know what was going on at all times, so he would feel in control of his situation as much as possible. Everyone was very patient and answered his questions with care and compassion. This lowered his anxiety and allowed him to rest better.

Knowing Dad was in good hands, Mom was able to go home and get a good night's rest. The rest of us- my brothers, our spouses and the grandchildren - all took turns staying with Dad in the evenings. The staff always checked in with us and made sure we were comfortable. It also gave each of us the opportunity to spend quality time with Dad.

Now you might be thinking that, because I work at Hospice, our family got special treatment - and we did - but not because I work there, but because every family at Hospice is special. The staff and volunteers make a point of getting to know each family and help them make the most of their time at Hospice. For our family, I can think of many small and big touches that made such a difference:

- The kitchen volunteers learned that Dad liked red grapes and Rice Krispies for breakfast and made sure they had these on hand for him.
- The reception volunteers kindly let people know that Dad wasn't up for company when he became too tired to visit with friends.
- For their actual 60th Wedding Anniversary, the staff presented Mom and Dad with a cake and refreshments that our whole family enjoyed in the Great Room.

When Dad died, it was very peaceful but having Hospice staff with us gave us so much comfort. I can't imagine how much harder it would have been if we had been at home.

Hospice exists in Chatham-Kent because of our caring and generous community. Thank you to everyone who has supported and continues to support local families like mine.

Shared by Jodi Maroney and the Brady family in memory of Ted

Volunteer Spotlight: *Deb*

"Over twenty years ago my dad spent the last 3 weeks of his life at Carpenter Hospice in Burlington. It was such an amazing and special place for my dad and my family. I told my husband, John, if we ever got a hospice in Chatham I wanted to volunteer there. When Chatham-Kent Hospice started looking for volunteers, I signed up and have never regretted my decision!

Being there for the residents and their families is just so fulfilling for me. I always take time to visit and listen to families so they can chat about their loved one or to just vent. I am not very 'nurse-y', but I am a very compassionate, caring person and love to be there when the resident or family needs me.

New volunteers can 100% make a difference in the kitchen. As Melanie, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, says, "helping hands make less work." I look forward to coming in for my weekly shift in the kitchen, knowing how much I am needed to ease the burden on the clinical staff. If all kitchen shifts are covered, it is a huge help to them so they can do their job looking after the residents and not worry about kitchen duties.

For anyone considering volunteering at Hospice, it is one of the most rewarding and fulfilling things I've ever done. I enjoy seeing my Hospice friends and staff who are always so thankful for my help. If I miss a week, I really miss being there. I'm so honored and grateful to be able to help when residents and their families need us most!"

Deb - Kitchen Volunteer

Navigating *Holiday* Traditions While *Grieving...*

For someone who is grieving, the holidays are often challenging. Everywhere we turn, we see messages about togetherness and celebration, and this can be very difficult. Grief involves a vast mix of emotions, as well as secondary losses such as: changes to traditions and connections; loss of routine; and the reality that things just don't look the same as they once did. Please know that these are common themes when grieving and you are not alone.

It is okay to consider changing traditions, blending old traditions with new ones, or skipping an activity that feels too painful for you right now. You might create new rituals and traditions to honour your loved one, and that feel more manageable to you. Here are some ideas and strategies that might help you cope, and maybe adapt traditions or make new ones this year.

Memory Tablecloth: Using a tablecloth (a solid colour tablecloth is usually best), set your dinner table as you normally would, but leave some space around the place-settings. While eating dinner, share memories and invite everyone to write their favourite memory on the tablecloth using a permanent marker. This tablecloth can be added to at each of the holidays or family dinners throughout the year, becoming a beautiful keepsake in honour of your loved one.

Craft in Their Memory: Create a collage or scrapbook of your favourite photos of your loved one and the times you spent together. Create homemade decorations or gifts that remind you of them.

Light a candle in your loved one's honour: This can be done on your own while you have a quiet moment to reflect on your love and grief. It can also be done with supportive friends and family as you reminisce.

Recipe Revival: Make your loved one's favourite food or bake their favourite dessert. Make a smaller portion for yourself or a large portion and freeze some for later. Either way, it can bring many memories, create conversation and is a delicious way to evoke their presence.

Personal Tribute: Write a letter or journal about your favourite memory of them. Read it aloud or keep it in the quiet of your heart, whichever feels best for you.

Memory Walk: Bundle up and go for a walk in a place that was special to them. This can be a moment of solitude or shared with family and friends. Warm up with a soothing tea or hot chocolate afterwards.

Create a Holiday Playlist: Music can be a powerful way to feel connected. Include some of your loved one's favourite songs, alongside your own personal favourites.

Remember, the goal is to celebrate their life in a way that brings you comfort. Take notice of how you are feeling. It is okay to feel whatever you feel. Be aware of it. Most importantly give yourself permission to grieve and to experience moments of joy without guilt. Again, it is okay to have a wide range of emotions during this time. Seek support and connection from family and friends who are supportive of you and your needs.

Do you feel the need for professional grief support?

We have knowledgeable, supportive staff ready to assist you during this time. Self-referrals are accepted and can be completed online at: chathamkenthospice.com or by calling: 519-354-3113 ext. 2406. We will also be hosting a Coping with Grief During the Holidays event on November 28, 2024, from 6:30 – 8:30pm. Registration is required by phone at 519-354-3113 ext. 2406, or by email at supportivecare@chathamkenthospice.com.

Giving Beyond a Lifetime

Diane was a wife, mom, grandma, great grandma, sister, aunt, and friend.

Diane worked for many years at Thamesview Lodge in both dietary and housekeeping services. In her retirement, she loved to travel with family and play pickleball with her many friends. She lived life to the fullest and was never afraid to try new things- she even ziplined in Jamaica!

Diane was a loyal monthly donor to Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation, and after her passing in March 2024 she became a Beyond a Lifetime donor when she left a donation in her Will to support the families at Chatham-Kent Hospice. How fitting for someone who loved life so much to leave a gift that would continue to make a difference even after she was gone.

Not only will her legacy live on in the lives of those who loved her, but also in the lives of the families her generosity will impact. Thank you, Diane!

What do you love to do with your down time?

Bike, golf, ride horses, bake?

Every year, people in our community take inspiration from their favourite activities, or their loved one's favourite activities, and organize fundraisers to benefit Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation. Last year, community fundraisers accounted for more than $211,000 in donations. Events organized by community members broaden our support base, increase awareness about the care and services we offer, and inspire people within your network to support something you are passionate about.

One such community fundraiser is the Hudson Motorcycles ATV Ride for Hospice organized by Vince Masse of The Chatham-Kent ATV Club. The ATV Ride had been taking place for a few years before Vince's father-in-law's health declined and the family found themselves at Hospice. After their experience, the organizing team felt that Chatham-Kent Hospice should benefit from the event.

"With our experience in 2020, no words can describe how wonderful the Hospice was for my father-in-law and the family, too. Just walking through the doors to pick up the last items for the event was reassurance that our ATV club and Hudson Motorcycles are doing a great thing raising funds for CK Hospice," said Vince.

In just two years of donating to Hospice, the event has already donated $8,500.

Community fundraisers come in all sizes from backyard parties to city-wide festivals. What all these fundraisers have in common is their goal to help families in Chatham-Kent. Starting an event can be intimidating, but you won't be alone on your planning journey. If you're curious about organizing a community fundraiser, reach out to Katherine Stinson, our Special Events Coordinator. She can help you make your event a gift to families who will use Hospice.

Chatham-Kent Hospice
FOUNDATION

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Online: www.chathamkenthospice.com

Or call: 519-354-3113

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