Newsletter | Summer 2026

HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Held Through the Hardest Days | HOSPICE HEART STORY

The compassion, comfort, and community that made all the difference during my mother's hospice journey.

My mom was tiny in stature but enormous in spirit. She was a school teacher who liked things organized, structured, and running properly. She was very good at keeping everyone in line. Alongside that practical and disciplined side was a huge heart for people and community. She loved bringing others together.

In the 1980s, she had this burning desire to start a community choir. At the time, many people thought it was unrealistic in such a small community. But she created it. The first concert had about a dozen in the audience and maybe 10 in the choir, but years later, there were sold out performances at the Chatham Cultural Centre.

One of the greatest gifts I was able to give my mom in her last season was arranging hospice care for her. Fortunately, before the cancer progressed too much, Mom and I met with Amber, one of the Hospice Navigators, and got the wheels in motion. I'm so grateful we did it early, before it became a time of crisis.

Hospice was also a wonderful support to me. I began grief counseling there with Stefanie before my mom got seriously ill. I don't think people always realize that grief begins long before someone passes away. There is grief in the anticipatory stages too, in watching someone you love decline and trying to prepare yourself for what is coming. By the time my mom entered hospice care, I already had a trusted relationship with my grief counsellor. I wasn't trying to build that connection while simultaneously walking through the hardest days of my life. I already had support in place.

That is something I now encourage people to take advantage of sooner rather than later. The grief and bereavement support offered through Hospice is such an important part of the care they provide.

> ***When my mom came to Hospice, the experience was incredibly comforting. From the moment we arrived, there was this overwhelming sense that we were being cared for too, not just my mom. Suddenly, I wasn't responsible for managing every detail. Instead, I could focus on simply being with her.***

The day my mom arrived happened to be her 87th birthday. The staff were absolutely phenomenal. They decorated her room with a Happy Birthday banner adorned with music notes, a fitting tribute for someone who had spent so much of her life bringing people together through music. They brought in a birthday cake with candles and gathered to sing Happy Birthday to her. It was a simple gesture, but it meant so much to our family. In the midst of such a difficult season, they gave us a moment of celebration, joy, and dignity. It was one of the sweetest acts of kindness we experienced during her time there.

It was much different than the experience I had with my father who passed away at home. We were trying so hard to coordinate care and manage everything ourselves that it often felt like we were in survival mode. The Hospice experience with Mom was much calmer and more peaceful.

HEART STORY | Continued...

One of the things that surprised me most was how much comfort came from something as simple as the kitchen. Hospice can feel intimidating, especially for children. My daughters were young and understandably nervous about coming. But when they arrived to find homemade soup, cookies, and kind staff, they felt very much at home.

That kitchen became much more than a place where food was prepared. It became a place of comfort and connection. We would gather there between visits to my mom's room. We would sit with coffee or soup and just take a breath for a moment. It gave us something familiar and comforting to hold onto during such a difficult time.

And practically speaking, it mattered so much that meals were simply there. When you are emotionally exhausted and walking through anticipatory grief, even thinking about what to feed your family can feel overwhelming. Having that care wrapped around us lifted a tremendous burden.

My mom would have appreciated that deeply because caring for people was always second nature to her. Even now, after she is gone, the impact she left behind continues through the choir she built and the relationships she helped create. In many ways, that is what Hospice does too. It creates connection, comfort, and community during some of life's hardest moments.

I will always be grateful for the care our family received through Chatham-Kent Hospice.

As Hospice looks toward renovating and expanding their kitchen space, I can say firsthand that it is so much more than a kitchen. It is comfort. It is care. It is community. It is one of the many ways families feel supported and held during the hardest days of their lives.

For our family, it made all the difference.

Shared by Janice in memory of her mother, Alma

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT | June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Volunteers Award

Congratulations Sadie Bruette

Sadie is a compassionate and humble volunteer who brings comfort and dignity to everyone she meets. Through her exceptional commitment to the mission and values of Chatham-Kent Hospice, she quietly helps create a sense of warmth and reassurance for all who enter our doors.

Whether offering a gentle smile or kind words at reception, Sadie helps ease moments often filled with worry, grief, and uncertainty. Serving with humility, compassion, and deep respect, she truly embodies the spirit of hospice care and makes a meaningful difference in the experience of every person she encounters.

Photo: Sadie Bruette with Chatham-Kent Hospice's Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Tara Lauzon.

Learn more or apply today to join our Kitchen Volunteer Team at: ***www.chathamkenthospice.com***

STRATEGIC PLAN |
Chatham-Kent Hospice's Vision for the Future

As we look to the future of hospice care in our community, we are embracing new strategic directions designed to strengthen compassionate support, expand access to services, and respond to evolving needs. We are grateful for the generosity of our donors, whose partnership makes this important work possible, and we are excited to share the vision that will guide our next chapter of care and impact.

Enhance Residential Hospice, Community and Supportive Care

- Enhance caregiver support, grief & bereavement education and counselling
- Improve transitions between hospital, home and Hospice
- Extend Hospice services to the community
- Ensure Hospice infrastructure meets needs

Connect People Earlier to Hospice

- Expand public and provider awareness
- Create clear access pathways
- Strengthen navigation for potential residents and families
- Improve early connection across the illness journey

Advance Equity and Community Voice

- Build relationships with the Community
- Enhance the design and delivery of services through community engagement
- Expand outreach to underserved populations
- Promote person-centred care

Foster and Invest in People and Culture

- Nurture staff and volunteer well-being
- Strengthen staff, physician and volunteer engagement
- Establish a leadership program for emerging, existing and informal leaders
- Broaden our Volunteer program

Build Partnerships

- Position Chatham-Kent Hospice as a system leader and partner of choice
- Strengthen partnerships across the health and social systems
- Foster continued collaboration with Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation
- Explore shared funding and pilot initiatives

SEE THE DIFFERENCE YOU MAKE

In this edition of the Hospice Happenings newsletter, you'll find our Annual Impact Reports that share the difference you made possible last year in our community through the Chatham-Kent Hospice and Foundation. We want you to know how your donations are helping our community and be transparent about the management of your gifts. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

HARVESTING STRENGTH TOGETHER |
Finding Connection & Resilience in a Season of Transition

Even in the fullness of summer, many people begin to sense the early shift toward autumn — a season that can bring both reflection and a desire for steadier support. Even before the leaves change, the thought of returning routines, shorter days, and familiar anniversaries can stir emotions in unexpected ways.

As we move through these summer days, it can be helpful to consider the kinds of connection and support that might carry you gently into the fall. For many, midsummer becomes a natural moment to pause and think about what may feel grounding in the months ahead.

Grief can feel heavier as the days shorten, and people often notice their grief shifting in ways they didn't anticipate. The earlier sunsets, the longer evenings, and the return to structured routines can all intensify feelings of loneliness, fatigue, or emotional vulnerability. Many people describe a renewed awareness at this time of year, a sense that memories sit a little closer to the surface. These experiences are not signs of "going backward." They are natural responses to a season that invites reflection, stillness, and a deeper noticing of what matters.

Yet the coming season also offers something deeply supportive: connection. Just as communities gather to harvest what has grown, we can gather around one another to share warmth, stories, and presence. Resilience is often misunderstood as standing strong alone. In truth, it grows in relationships — in the moments when we are accompanied, when someone listens without rushing us, when we feel seen in our grief rather than expected to move past it.

The months ahead encourage us to notice the strengths we've cultivated through loss: the ability to adapt, to honour our limits, to carry love forward in new ways, and to keep moving gently even when the path feels uncertain. These strengths don't erase the pain of grief, but they help us carry it with compassion.

Because autumn can be an emotionally complex time, we're sharing our fall programs in a special "Upcoming Events" insert now, so you have space to explore what might support you when the season arrives.

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE OR DONATE:

Chatham-Kent Hospice
FOUNDATION

We are grateful for your support of Chatham-Kent Hospice.

If you would no longer like to receive a copy of this newsletter or wish to receive an electronic version, please let us know:

Email: foundation@chathamkenthospice.com
Phone: 519-354-3113 extension 2403.