

HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER



Meet Sofi

The majority of volunteers at Hospice Simcoe are in the 50+ age category. Our kids have grown, we have extra time to give, and we've decided to spend part of that time at Hospice Simcoe. Sofi McLellan does not fit into that category. Sofi started helping out in the hospice kitchen at 17. As well, she has volunteered with Christmas Cheer, given time to Codrington Public School and helped out with Rotary events. At Eastview, Sofi assisted in the life skills class, was on the Link Crew which helps make the transition from elementary school to grade 9 an easier one and contributed to Student Government.

Because of her commitment to school and her community Sofi, at graduation this past June, received the Eastview Award of Excellence in Education, the May Court Scholarship and the L.J Thomson Memorial Award, CanDo Scholarship, Reid Scholarship, and Penny Renton Memorial Award. Quite the accomplishments!

For Sofi, Hospice Simcoe has a very special place in her heart. For one of her scholarships, the L.J. Thomson Hope and Strength Award, she wrote an application letter and an essay outlining why. Enjoy on page 2!

Mark's Story

Over the course of a year, 250+ residents come through and leave through the doors of Hospice Simcoe. During their time with us, our staff and volunteers do their best to care for and get to know each one of them and their families. But, it isn't often that we really know their life stories.

David Johnson was with us for a few days last year. Recently we received a letter from his son, Mark, and have been given permission to share it. It's a lovely story of a lovely man. Grab some Kleenex and enjoy the read.

Thank you Mark, for letting us know your Dad just a little bit more. (See pages 3-4)

The opportunities and requests for volunteer support that appear in this newsletter are designed for Hospice Simcoe registered and trained volunteers.

If you wish to become a registered volunteer, please contact Kathy or Tonya; kathy@hospicesimcoe.ca tonya@hospicesimcoe.ca Thank you!



SOFI'S ESSAY

The Happiest Sad Place by Sofi McLellan

Imagine walking into a stranger's house and immediately feeling at home; being overwhelmed by warm welcomes, tight embraces and "how do you dos" the second you step through the door. The smell of fresh baked cookies and butter tarts fills your nose. Beautiful flowers line the walkways and explode the gardens with colourful joy. Welcome to Hospice Simcoe.

In ten rooms lining the outer walls overlooking those beautiful gardens, lie ten people. These ten people have all been given a prognosis of three months or less. From ages 19 - 90, Hospice Simcoe has seen it all; mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons coming through the Hospice Simcoe doors for their final days. They register for a stay in their dream home where "nos" are few and far between, where ice cream for breakfast, cake for lunch and cookies for dinner are no longer just a dream. They enter with a signed DNR in hand knowing their dream home is their deathbed. Yet I've misled you again because in the short few months I've spent volunteering I've learned so very much. Hospice is no Disneyland, that's for sure, they don't grant wishes like a fairy godmother singing bippity boppity boo, birds won't fly through your window and dress you in the morning and no prince is going to ride in and fight off your terminal illness. Hospice may not be Disneyland, but it is magical. Somehow, through the help of nearly two hundred volunteers, they manage to take a tragic, heartbreaking experience and fill it with joy.

I will not claim Hospice is the happiest place on earth because it still is where people go to die but we will all die someday; our hearts will stop beating, our eyes will shut and our lungs will deflate. It's inevitable. It may be tragic and unexpected or maybe you'll be counting the seconds awaiting its arrival. Maybe you'll have been given three months to live and you'll sit, helplessly watching each second tick by; but Hospice changes that. From the Tuesday music group to the smiling staff, cheery volunteers, and Daisy the service dog, we've created a family. A place which allows your last days to be peaceful, where your family and friends can come and go without worry that you will ever be alone. I may not be able to call Hospice the happiest place on earth but it is by far the happiest sad place on earth.

Sofi's Experience with Aunt Beth

The simplest way to describe my Aunt Beth would be that she was the young, fun, cool Aunt with the best laugh. She was hilarious, her smile was contagious, her personality was magnetic, and she was full of life. In 2015, when she was diagnosed with non-hodgkin's B cell lymphoma at the age of 52, none of these traits wavered. She maintained her lively spirit and strength as she was treated in Turkey where my Uncle Dan was stationed with NATO. In 2016, I decided to create an Eastview Relay for Life team dedicated to fighting for my Aunt Beth. When she passed away, back at home in Canada, surrounded by family in June 2017, I again signed up for Relay for Life, raising the most money in our school, this time walking in her memory.

As a result of this tragedy, I started volunteering at Hospice Simcoe with a mission to help others going through the same battle. It turns out that volunteering at Hospice is one of the best choices I could have possibly made. For over 200 hours, I have spent time in the Hospice family kitchen comforting family members of residents, at Holiday celebrations greeting friends, and doing home visiting with a man who has since passed away. This experience has been one like no other and I am grateful to have the privilege of helping others affected by cancer in honour of my amazing Aunt Beth. Losing a loved one is extremely difficult, especially when they are so young and lively but I believe I took my grief and turned it into something positive.



HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Mark's Story-continued

When David Johnson was born, Charles Lindbergh had yet to make his solo flight from New York to Paris, and Canada was not yet 60 years old. Driving a car was much like driving a tractor – or so he once described it to me. Over the course of his long life David Johnson saw many changes.

I remember sitting with him looking out over the Winnipeg Airport when he told me how much he simply marvelled at the drama of the story of human progress. I remember too a cool night in October, 1957 when he took me out at midnight to watch the light of the Sputnik silently and slowly move across the stars.

Over the course of his 93 years, my father influenced, for the better, literally thousands of lives. That includes my brother Tim and I. By far he had the strongest influence over my life than any other person. And I can say without question that he was the finest person I ever met.

There are two qualities that stand out to me about my father. First, since the day he was born, he passionately wanted to be a good man. In whatever he did he wanted to do the right thing – the ethical thing. And since life is predominantly not black and white, he agonized over the best course of action to be taken. Above all he wanted to be a man who was right with God.

The second thing about him was his consummate humility. He was by no means a man of pretension or position. He was simple and genuine and supremely honest. Of any man I've known he came the closest to what I consider the best definition of humility: – to know and accept who you are and what God intends you to be.

He had no exceptional formal education to speak of. But he formed an early and serious attachment to his dearly beloved Church of Christ. So much so that a senior minister in the denomination suggested that he consider evangelism as a career choice, even though by this time he had a promising job working for Imperial Oil in Sarnia, Ontario where his family had moved. It was here too that he was smitten by the young, beautiful and beguiling Evelyn Rose Whitfield who lived two doors down and whose large family also belonged to the Church of Christ.

My father decided that if he was going to be a minister he should seek some practical training. So, as a young man in his late teens he hitchhiked all the way to Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, to enter its program of training for the ministry. But, as he told me later, he simply ran out of money and found himself desperate for the companionship of Evelyn Whitfield. So he hitchhiked all the way back to Sarnia, convinced at first a reluctant Evelyn to marry him, and the two of them ventured off to Vancouver where he became the minister of a small congregation in Richmond. He was 21 years old.

My father learned to be a minister by doing the job. And he came to be very good at it. After leaving Vancouver in 1956, and after a sojourn as minister in Jordan, Ontario for six years, he became minister of the Fennell Avenue Church of Christ in Hamilton. By this time he had become one of the most influential ministers of the Church of Christ in all of Canada. He then used his skills to good effect as the administrator of the Grove Park Home for the Aged here in Barrie, as a Rotarian, and as a respected member of the Church of Christ here.

continued next page

HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

David Johnson ... continued...

It is a natural instinct to want to grow up and become an independent person. For most of us, this inevitably leads to some form of conflict with parents, in particular sons with their fathers. It was no different with me and David Johnson. But for me there was a kind of paradox. For how do you stand up against a quintessentially decent man? How do you challenge a man of such sterling character? How do you rebel against a good man and remain good yourself?

I did this by differing with him in matters of orthodox religious doctrine. We did not see eye to eye on some of the fundamental tenets of his faith. This led ultimately to a stand off – one of those really important conversations that I will always remember. It took place in a bedroom in our house in Hamilton when, muscling up some self-righteous temerity I proceeded to tell my father what in his belief system I did not adhere to. Which was, in effect, a rejection of what he had devoted his life to. And what did he say to me in response to this impertinent recitation? He said with a fatherly gentleness that was typical of him: – “Mark, whatever it is you believe, or happen not to believe, the truth is we love you.”

That was a life’s message of David Johnson, which ultimately was the message of his Maker and his Saviour.

The good will and affection David Johnson evoked in others was abundantly evident in the last few weeks of his final illness. Speaking as one member of his immediate family, I want to thank the staff and fellow residents of the Waterford Barrie Retirement Residence. A special gratitude is owing to the nursing staff and doctors of the Royal Victoria Hospital. In particular, however, we want to thank and praise the staff, volunteers and Daisy of Hospice Simcoe who cared for him with such beauty in his last few days. Above all, however, we want to express our gratitude to his brothers and sisters at the Barrie Church of Christ.

Thank you for showering your love and affection upon him.



David Johnson with sons Mark (L) and Tim

My neighbour just yelled at her kids so loudly that even I brushed my teeth and went to bed.

My ability to remember song lyrics from the 80s (or 60s or 70s) far exceeds my ability to remember why I walked into the kitchen.

As I watched the dog chasing his tail I thought “Dogs are easily amused.” Then I realized I was watching the dog chase his tail.

Sometimes I shock myself with the smart stuff I say and do. Other times, I try to get out of the car with my seat belt on.

Does refusing to go to the gym count as resistance training? Thanks to M.J. Adams for submitting these.



HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Volunteers



Yoga for Grief at Hospice Simcoe by Danielle Marshall

In June, Hospice Simcoe's Yoga for Grief Relief finished up at Ann Green Bliss Yoga studio in Barrie.

In this yoga segment participants were invited to explore and support the body and mind after the death of a loved one. Individuals were guided by yoga instructors and bereavement volunteers in a safe and sacred space.

What is the connection between grief support and yoga?

Dr. Lyn Prashant quoted in Antonio Sausys' book - "In Yoga for Grief Relief we learn to express, not repress; to externalize, not internalize, to breathe again and relocate all our losses to our heart centre so we can thrive within our newly met self. Yoga provides support for all the systems and is the container for integration of the mind-body-spirit." - Lyn Prashant PhD (Sausys, Antonio. (2014). Yoga For Grief Relief. p. xiii. New Harbinger Publications Inc. Oakland, CA.

This series is appropriate for all levels and you do not need to have experience with yoga. Modifications and adaptations will be provided to clients with injuries or health concerns.

One participant said the most important thing that they gained from support in yoga for grief was, "...a feeling of being more at peace."

Thank you to Amy Ford and Wendy Small for your yoga expertise and leadership and thank you to Laura Keys for your wonderful organizational skills and dedication to the group and the participants. Thank you to Anne Green Yoga Studio for donating to Hospice the space for bereaved individuals to gather and share in their healing experience.

If you want more information on Yoga for Grief please contact Danielle Marshall at 705-725-1140 ext 404. See you in September!



The group in session at Bliss on Dunlop Street.



Amy Ford (L) and Wendy Small (R), our volunteers with Ann Green of Bliss Studio.



HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Book Review by Sharron Bowden

THE HUNTRESS, by Kate Quinn (Author of The Alice Network)

The main character of this novel, Nina Markova, held my interest throughout. She was born in the most eastern area of Siberia and always wanted to leave. The first time she saw an airplane she knew that's what she wanted to do. She did learn to fly and became a member of The Night Witches, a group of Soviet Union women who were fighter and bomber pilots and navigators during WWII. These women were real; the only women fighter pilots that existed.

During the height of the war Nina crosses paths with a Nazi woman known as the Huntress, a woman who has committed unspeakable acts of violence against anyone who got in her way, including women and children. Nina manages, through marriage to Ian Graham, a British war correspondent, to find refuge in England. The marriage is in name only but even after the war was over they did not divorce.

Ian has stayed in Europe. He, along with Tony Rodomovsky, an ex American soldier of several cultural backgrounds, have formed an alliance to bring justice to Nazi war criminals. When Nina learns they are looking for the Huntress, she joins them in their hunt. Their search leads them on a remarkable journey. To find out if the Huntress was ever caught and brought to trial, this book is available at the Barrie Public Library.

I was especially interested in Kate Quinn's "Author's Notes" at the end of the book. She explains who the actual people were, who inspired her characters. Here, she also talks about the climate of the 1950's, when it was becoming less popular to bring Nazi criminals to justice. People wanted to forget all the terrible things that had happened and move on.



DYING MATTERSConversations on Life, Death & Bereavement

Join us on Tuesday September 10th from 6 - 8PM for our next Dying Matters event titled: **Palliative Care & Options at End-of-Life.** This event is designed to encourage individuals in our community to start talking about dying, death and bereavement.

Our Panelists include: Dr. Brian Morris, Lori Scholten-Dallimore and Tammy Pollard. They will explore topics such as Palliative Care, Triaging, Palliative Sedation and M.A.I.D., while encouraging conversation and questions from attendees.

For more information or to **RSVP**, please contact Doris at 705-725-1140 or doris@hospicesimcoe.ca

This event is open to all community members, free of charge.

The location for this event is at **Lion's Gate Banquet Hall (386 Blake St., Barrie)**

What's Happening?

Lunch & Learn

12-1pm

Light lunch provided.



Monday, Aug 26th

With Mayor of Barrie, Jeff Lehman

While there is no cost for the light lunch, some volunteers have indicated they would like to make a donation. There will be a donation box available for those who wish to do so.

Thank-you to the Bereavement Team!

From Kathy Stewart

We have an amazing team of volunteers and staff who are supporting the bereavement clients and programs at Hospice Simcoe, primarily in our Bell Farm Road location.

From April 1st to July 8th, 2019 (only 3 months) we have served 178 clients. Over the whole fiscal year (2018) we served a total of 216 people and in 2017-18 we served 189 people.

Hospice Simcoe Bereavement Volunteers contributed 828 meaningful volunteer hours over the last 3 months supporting clients and their families.

Thanks to staff and volunteers for your dedication, collaboration, patience and kindness as we work together to make our community stronger helping others to understand death and dying.

"It is great to have someone to share my thoughts with who have experienced a similar loss"

"I feel more at peace and accepting after my sessions"

-Comments from clients

From the Chair...

Hello Everyone,
Hope you're enjoying the summer. I hate to think that it's almost half over!

The Board does not have formal meetings in July and August but our work continues. Kelly keeps us well informed and we trust her and the team implicitly to keep things running smoothly.

I neglected to mention the election of new officers following the AGM. We are committed to ensuring a succession plan is in place to fill positions as current Directors come to the end of their terms.

I was elected as Chair for the upcoming year. My term has been extended for that time but sadly for me I will be stepping down in June 2020. It is a privilege to hold this position but it's always beneficial to welcome new, very competent individuals who bring innovative and fresh ideas. Cindy Brunelle Taylor was elected as Vice Chair. Andrew Matthews will continue as Treasurer and Sharon Hannigan was elected as Secretary. Thank you to Carolyn Moran who held the Secretary's position for the last few years.

As you know, Kelly is back at Hospice Simcoe full time. She did an exceptional job assisting Hospice Huronia. They were very disappointed that we could not continue the contract. Too much happening at HS that required Kelly to return full time. Perhaps down the road there may be formal integrations.

There is a lot of activity in system re-structuring. Kelly is very involved and will keep everyone up to date as things develop.

There are so many good news stories about significant surprise donations and successes at fundraising events. Congratulations to Lynda Murtha for securing the Tim Horton smile cookie campaign again this year. Fantastic.

Take good care and as always, thanks for all you do.

Sincerely, Chris



HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

In our Community...

Join us this September!

The countdown is on...

Golf for Hospice – September 9th – we are 80% sold out. If you or anyone you know who would like to golf with us or donate an auction item, please let Josie Mc Donnell know

Josie@hospicesimcoe.ca



Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign

We are happy to share that for a fifth year, Hospice Simcoe has been selected as one of the charity recipients for the 2019 Tim Hortons Smile Cookie campaign. We are happy to partner with the RVH Foundation for this year's event. Save the date – Monday, September 16th will be the media launch day. For those of you who have generously given your time to volunteer on this day in the past, our thanks. With your help we received over \$62,000 last year. Every dollar went to providing our programs and services. Our sincerest thanks to the owners, staff and customers of the local Tim Hortons restaurants for their continued support.

Will you join us again this year? Are you a new volunteer or a volunteer that has not done this in the past? We would love to have you join us. Please let us know if you would be willing to give an hour of two of your time the morning of September 16th to be at a Tim Hortons restaurant in Barrie, Alcona or Stroud to 'greet' customers. For further details, please contact Lynda Murtha Lynda@hospicesimcoe.ca

Dish Update

We are pleased to announce that this year's Dish for Hospice event raised almost **\$6000**. That is equivalent to 600 diners. Thank you so much for supporting this annual event. Our thanks also go out to the many local restaurants that participated. Special thanks to our volunteers Sandra Barrett and Kerry Desmond for their assistance with this event.

Barrie Thunder Classic

Barrie Thunder Classic car shows continue every Wednesday evening at Heritage Park through the month of August. All proceeds this year to Hospice Simcoe. Admission is free. For more information www.barriethunderclassics.ca Our thanks to John & Sandi Porter and Chris Nichols for braving one of the hottest Saturdays this summer to work at the Hospice Simcoe tent for the big Classics in the Park show on July 20th.