

Hospice Cares For Young Couple

Your gifts helped a loving wife say good-bye to her husband...

My husband Jonathan was the life of the party. He really knew how to connect with people, capture a crowd and make people laugh with pure gut-wrenching joy. And he knew it too, even at our short time in hospice, when our room was one person away from becoming a mosh pit, wine freely flowing, rocking out to a little AC/DC. He loved being the centre of attention. And so this article about him? Fitting.

Jonathan's hospice story is most certainly unlike many others, simply because of his young age. He was only 32 years old. Only 18 months prior to his passing, he was diagnosed with a grade 3 astrocytoma. Brain cancer. Out of the blue. We were devastated, of course, but it was Jon's positivity that kept us all functioning and moving forward.

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As his illness progressed, Jonathan's mother, Cheryl, an angel in her own right, moved in to help. At that time, I went on leave from work, so we could fully focus on providing the care Jonathan needed. But the thought of the inevitable was in the recesses of our minds. We thought we had more time.

The decision to move to hospice was also quick. We needed to move fast. But I will be forever grateful that we did. Upon entering the beautiful building, I felt relief, and immediate warmth from the volunteers, nurses, and doctors. Lola wrapped Cheryl and me into her arms and told us that we were no longer caregivers; we were now wife and mother.

Jon's room was like a hotel room – clean and crisp, without the clinical feel and smell of a hospital. We put his Green Bay Packers hat on the hook on the wall and his quilt at the end of the bed. We were asked if we were hungry and offered pizza, which was brought to his room pronto. I was also informed that new visitors were given a monarch chrysalis, to be released in the courtyard when it emerged, 10 days from the date on its jar. Jenn, our nurse, wasn't sure if there were any left, but then she returned with a jar in hand. “It's the last one,” she told me. Tears filled my eyes when I looked down at the date. It was our wedding anniversary, June 26. “Then it's meant to be,” Jenn said.



That night, family piled into Jonathan's room and we all shared laughs, tears and some wine. The same scenario could have been replicated at home. But it was at the hospice.

The next day, Jon was able to go outside. The beds just roll right out into the courtyard. We had so much more planned for Jon at the hospice, but we unfortunately didn't get the time. Later that afternoon, Jon took his last breath, surrounded by family, going out to his favourite rock music.

The hospice offers “cuddle therapy”, where you can lie with your loved one in bed one last time. Lola assured me she would clean Jon up nice. When I re-entered the room, he looked just like himself, Packers hat and all. I never wanted to leave and I was never rushed.

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Jonathan was wheeled in to the reflection room, his Packers quilt draped over top of him, his face still visible. After a couple pre-selected readings, we came up in small groups to release floating candles into the water below, and reflect on our treasured memories of Jonathan that will burn brightly forever in our hearts.

As we followed Jonathan through the hallways towards the hearse out front, everyone proceeded to stand at attention. Those volunteers and nurses who were involved in Jonathan's care, if only for a moment, stood by the front door to tell us it was an honour to have served him. I was speechless.

Jonathan's aunt Tammy may have put it best when she said we had "the unfortunate pleasure" of needing the hospice. I will never understand why this happened, why someone so special and loved had to be taken away from us, but I will always cherish the 17 years I spent with Jon. Our family was blessed to have experienced hospice care, even though we were not quite there a day. It didn't matter. The experience was nothing short of amazing, if you can use that word at such a tragic time. "It takes an extraordinary heart to do what the people at the hospice do," Tammy said. "Their kindness, compassion and thoughtfulness will always be appreciated and never forgotten."

Written by Ashley Goodbrand



Supporting Your Unique Grief Journey

Since launching in May 2018, the Chatham-Kent Hospice *Well Within* program has served over 100 individuals whose losses range from children to parents, spouses, siblings, friends, and more. The programs also offer support to those with anticipatory grief, when someone close to them has been given a life-limiting diagnosis. Programs include grief walks, Horticultural Therapy, Creative Arts for Healing, and Yoga for Healing.

Although a referral is not necessary to access the programs, a number of community organizations have referred clients to *Well Within*, including VON, Access Open Minds, Walpole Island Health Centre, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and more.

The Program Coordinator, Caress Lee Carpenter, believes the success of the *Well Within* program is two-pronged. We have developed programming based on the needs of the community and the feedback and recommendations provided help us improve future programming.

“Dealing with grief is unique to everyone. We want to offer a range of programs to support people in their individual journeys.”

If you would like to learn more about the various programs available, visit our upcoming events page on our website or contact Caress Lee Carpenter at 519-354-3113 ext. 2406.



Your donations help families say good-bye...

Every family has a lifetime of milestones and memories they celebrate and share. When you donate to Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation, you help people live their final days in comfort and peace, and you provide a meaningful way for families to say good-bye. These warm memories of a difficult time will help sustain families for years to come.

Help families say good-bye. Please donate today!

Did you know?

- A gift of **\$20** provides a bowl of soup, freshly baked muffin and coffee for a Hospice guest
- A gift of **\$50** provides an hour of 1 on 1 counseling for a grieving family member
- A gift of **\$100** buys groceries for a day
- A gift of **\$337** covers expenses for 1 resident for a day

Here are some ways you can help:

- *Join our Hospice Heroes monthly giving program* – It's easy, convenient, and makes a difference all year long.
- *Give an annual gift* – When making your year-end donations, please consider supporting our Hospice families.
- *Arrange to leave a gift in your Will* – It's easier than you think and will leave a lasting benefit.



Please consider donating today with the enclosed reply card and envelope. You can also make a donation with your credit card on our website (www.chathamkenthospice.com) or by calling 519-354-3113 ext. #2403. If you've recently made a donation Thank You! Please consider sharing this reply card and envelope with someone who might be interested in supporting our Hospice families.

Can we ask for 3 minutes of your time?

As a supporter of the Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation, you have made a big difference in the lives of our Hospice families. Now we would like your feedback on Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation as an organization. Please take a few minutes and complete a short survey.

Your input will help us develop our strategic plan that will guide us through the next few years. Visit www.chathamkenthospice.com and click on the link on the home page. Paper copies of the survey are also available at the Reception desk at Chatham-Kent Hospice.





“My Gift is my Presence”

I love volunteering at Hospice. I am a reception volunteer and each time I finish a shift I think, “I am so glad I volunteered today”. It never feels like a burden; it’s one of the best things I’ve ever done. My only complaint is having to smell freshly baked cookies for 4 hours!

Recently, I started bringing my dog Whisper with me. She is trained as a therapy dog and everyone loves her at Hospice. It’s amazing how visitors, staff, volunteers, and residents smile when they see her and stop to pet her and talk to me. I see the positive impact her presence is making in their day.

As the holiday season nears, I look forward to volunteering my time to help when other volunteers may not be available. Christmas was always spent with my husband and my parents every year at my house. Now that my parents are no longer with us, I feel like by donating my time to Hospice around the holidays, it’s like a gift I am giving to my parents; a way to honour them. They would have been thrilled with what Hospice is offering to our community and I know they would be proud of me for giving my time here.

Fran Betts, Reception Volunteer

During the holiday season, Hospice volunteers give over 280 hours to support our Hospice families. Are you interested in learning more about becoming a Hospice Volunteer?

Visit our website www.chathamkenthospice.com or give our Volunteer Coordinator, Melanie Watson a call at 519-354-3113 ext. 2401.



We are grateful for your support of Chatham-Kent Hospice. If you would no longer like to receive a copy of this newsletter, please let us know by emailing: foundation@chathamkenthospice.com or calling 519-354-3113 extension #2403.

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Contact us to learn more or donate:

By mail or in person:

34 Wellington Street East, Chatham, Ontario, N7M 3N7

Online:

www.chathamkenthospice.com

Or call:

519-354-3113 #2403

Please make cheques payable to:
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