

HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Celebrating the gift of time...

Having our final memories at Hospice has brought great comfort



My beautiful mother, Louane, was in her 45th year when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. The news came as a huge shock, but my mom's positive outlook and perseverance set the tone for our family. After one very intense year of treatment Mom returned to her corporate role at Union Gas, and our family continued living the life we always knew.

As we transitioned into what I now refer to as the "bonus years", Mom's dreams as a mother, wife and dedicated professional continued to unfold. She watched my brother and I graduate post-secondary, accept our dream jobs, and she was by my side as we planned my fairytale wedding. She continued to work full-time and attained a professional designation. She traveled the world with Dad and even became a certified travel agent and started a part-time travel business from home. She moved forward, she didn't dwell on the past and we followed her lead.

In 2016 Mom began experiencing some health issues. The cancer

had returned, but this time with a vengeance. Treatment would prolong her life, but the disease was going to take her from us. We were shocked and devastated but we immediately jumped into action. It became my personal mission to save Mom from this disease. My father, brother, husband, family and friends rallied together. I put Mom on a strict diet consisting of the healthiest foods possible. She would drink the most horrid veggie smoothies with a smile. But unfortunately, the diet and treatments were not helping. My father and I became her main caregivers leading me to take a leave from work to care for her full-time.

As Mom's illness progressed, she would often tell us that Hospice is where she wanted to be in her final days. We would disregard her comments as the thought of it made our nightmare feel more like a reality. Over time, our perception of Hospice began to change as the doctors and homecare providers continued to educate our family about hospice care and how it could support us. They could see our stress and exhaustion and I know Mom could

see it too. During a follow-up visit, her doctor confirmed there was nothing further he could do and asked us to begin preparing for end of life. He offered to call Chatham-Kent Hospice to arrange a tour. We graciously accepted, wiped our tears and immediately left the hospital and drove to Hospice. This moment was a turning point for all of us.

The peaceful environment captivated all of us. Mom viewed it as a beautiful resort. We knew this would become our new home. Within 3 days we moved Mom to Hospice. We stayed there a total of 9 days, I personally stayed for 6 consecutive nights, so I believe I was able to experience everything hospice care has to offer and more.

“ I remember witnessing my mom's relief the moment she laid her head on her new pillow. She was comfortable, relaxed and smiling. She wanted our family to be a family again. ”

The clinical staff, volunteers and doctors began caring for Mom the moment we entered Hospice. The kitchen staff asked Mom to confirm her meal preferences and we jokingly encouraged Mom to order steak and lobster, but her sensitive pallet led her in the direction of more simple meal options.

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We enjoyed the soups and baked goods and would often share our take-out meals with other families in the dining room. There was an unspeakable bond I felt with the other families, we seemed to understand each other without having to say very much. Just sharing a meal was our way of saying "we are here for you."

We can't say enough about the doctors and clinical staff who cared for my mom. They communicated what medications they were offering her to ensure we were comfortable and confident in their abilities. It didn't take long for us to let go and put our trust in them. My mom was the most comfortable she had been in quite some time. This allowed her to have quality time with family and friends who visited. The staff even helped us plan a surprise 25 years of service work anniversary party with her closest colleagues. It turned out to be a beautiful celebration none of us will ever forget.

The day after the celebration is when Mom took a turn. The staff began to

explain they were seeing signs that end of life was approaching. They were gentle in their delivery but wanted us to be well informed so we could begin to prepare ourselves. We remained by Mom's side throughout the days and on the evening of May 5th my mom peacefully passed with the four of us by her side. We held a small service in the reflection room that evening. Together as a family we were able to pay our respects and say goodbye. This service and intimate moment we shared brought us so much peace and still does to this day.

Nothing can prepare you for a loss of this magnitude. Even though we knew cancer would take my mom, we were not prepared to live the following days, week and years without her. But having our final memories at Hospice has brought us great comfort knowing we did what was best not only for her, but for our family.

We are so thankful for Chatham-Kent Hospice and everything it offered and continues to offer our community. I encourage all families to seek hospice support if you are caring for a terminally ill loved one.



One way we give back is by participating in the annual Hike for Hospice. It's a wonderful way to honour my mom while sharing with others our hospice experience.

Adapted from a Hospice Heart Story shared by Katie Holmes and the McFadden Family.

To read a full version of this Hospice Heart Story visit: www.chathamkenthospice.com.

Supportive Care: *When should I ask for help?*

Grief is an experience like no other. It can be painful and life changing, and it looks different for each individual on their journey towards healing. Our Supportive Care Team is often asked, when should someone seek help when dealing with the loss of a loved one? The simple answer is that if you feel that you could use support you should reach out and ask for it. There are some signs and symptoms that may indicate you are experiencing unhealthy grief, and you could benefit from grief support.

Some signs and symptoms that may indicate you are experiencing unhealthy grief, and you could benefit from grief support:

- Feeling significant guilt about surviving when your loved one died
- Experiencing ongoing flashbacks, hallucinations or nightmares
- Continued ongoing disinterest in daily activities
- Severe irritability and outbursts of anger towards others on a consistent basis
- Heart palpitations
- Overactive startle reflexes
- Sleeping disturbances
- Eating changes

If you are feeling out of control or unable to cope for an extended period of time, or if you have suicidal thoughts, it is critical that you reach out for support. You do not have to face your grief alone.

What help is available at Chatham-Kent Hospice and what is the best fit for you?

Individual counselling support is offered by Registered Social Workers, a Spiritual and Supportive Care Provider or a Music Therapist. Individual counselling allows you an opportunity to discuss your loss and process your grief in a safe, supportive and non-judgmental environment.

Educational workshops may be valuable if there are specific areas or topics for which you are seeking resources. These one-time events can be beneficial in providing tools and connecting you with other bereaved individuals with similar needs and struggles.

Group programs can be particularly beneficial if you are seeking the opportunity to share your story and gain support from professionals and other bereaved individuals who have similar experiences. Group programs are offered in various forms such as drop in programs, therapeutic groups and action-oriented groups. Group participants can share as much or as little as they feel comfortable. Many people form strong connections with other participants during group programs.

Lastly, there are many **online resources** available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week where bereaved individuals can seek information and gather tools. Please see our website for online links for resources regarding grief and bereavement.

For any questions you may have or to inquire about grief support services through the Chatham-Kent Hospice please contact Sally at 519-354-3113 ext. 2406 or email at sreaume@chathamkenthospice.com.

Volunteer Spotlight

“As a Complementary Therapy Volunteer specializing in Reflexology, being able to bring a little bit of comfort to someone, is what makes my day. At Hospice, I feel a sense of calm and peace. There really are no words that best describe my experience as a volunteer at Chatham-Kent Hospice, but I can say that anyone who is thinking of volunteering at Hospice, would find it truly rewarding.”

- HEIDI
Hospice Volunteer since 2015

Caring, compassionate people who have just 4-8 hours a month to share are needed to assist in the kitchen and provide Direct Support care. Screening includes an interview, reference check, police information check and health screening. Extensive volunteer training provides valuable information to volunteers so that they can assist in the care and support of our families and their loved ones in a palliative care environment! Please visit our website at www.chathamkenthospice.com for more information or to fill out an application.



UPCOMING GROUP PROGRAMS:

COFFEE TALK
DROP IN
March 25th, 2020

HEALING
ART GROUP
Session Begins
April 9th, 2020

HEALING YOGA
Six Week
Session Begins
April 20th, 2020

HEALING HEARTS
BEREAVED
PARENTS GROUP
April 21st, 2020

GRIEF &
BEREAVEMENT
WALKING GROUP
Session Begins
May 5th, 2020



Good-byes & Knee High

On July 12, 2020, we will be hosting the 6th Annual Tom & Sandy Price Memorial Golf event. It's a fun way to celebrate two very special people who loved the game of golf, and an opportunity to socialize with friends & family while raising money for the Chatham-Kent Hospice.

Sandy, our Mom passed away on February 6, 2014 after a very short battle with lung cancer. We were all devastated - she was a very strong-willed woman and could successfully take on any challenge. Even after her diagnosis in September 2013, with determination, she won the Senior Ladies Club Championship. In November, following a treatment she stopped into the golf club to pay for her 2014 membership. She loved the game.

Her health quickly deteriorated and she ended up in the Critical Care Unit in February. All of us stayed with her at the hospital and were accommodated to the best of their ability. Thankfully, we were able to be by her side, holding her hand and telling her how much we loved her as she took her last breath. Shortly after, we heard that construction was to begin on the Chatham-Kent Hospice and it became our goal to raise money for the Hospice.

From 2014 to 2018, we hosted the Sandy Price Memorial golf event - a four-person fun scramble with no team restrictions. It was held in July around Mom's birthday. At the event, we wear knee high socks, as she did for years due to circulation issues. It was her personal identifier on the course. Our Dad, Tom, worked at getting sponsors for the par 3

holes and we are thankful to Investor's Group (IG Wealth Management), Giant Tiger, Honda House and Willow Ridge Golf Club for their support. Each year, this tournament was a way for Dad to remember Mom, keeping a tiny bit of her alive in him. After the event, we would go to the Hospice for the cheque presentation and even though it wasn't a large amount, it was something from our family & friends in memory of Mom.

In January 2019, Dad's health declined following a two-year battle with lymphoma. His wishes were to go to the Hospice but at that time the Hospice was full. He passed away at the CK Health Alliance on January 27th. So last July, we hosted the 5th annual memorial golf event but renamed it the Tom & Sandy Price Memorial Golf Event. It's our way of keeping their memory alive, getting together with family and friends to have fun and raise some money for the Chatham-Kent Hospice.

-Tom Price Jr. & Lori Price Couture

Thank you Price family & friends!
To date, you have raised over \$7,600
in support of our hospice families.



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 by emailing: foundation@chathamkenthospice.com or calling 519-354-3113 extension 2403.
Charitable Status #: 809001597RR0001

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

Please make cheques payable to:
Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation

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