

## I felt the pressure of caregiving fall away

One family's Hospice experience during the pandemic



Mal and his wife Gail were together for 44 years and between the two of them, had five children. They met in Kingsville while playing darts at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 188 - a game they both enjoyed their entire lives.

When they weren't going to dart tournaments, they really enjoyed camping and spending time with friends at their seasonal trailer they had for 25 years at Campers Cove in Wheatley, Ontario.

Mal worked in the food processing industry and they moved several times for work, before retiring in Wallaceburg.

Mal was rarely, if ever sick, until he started to experience sudden fatigue in December 2019. They discovered he had leukemia. He managed at home with periodic stays in hospital in Wallaceburg and Chatham for blood and platelet transfusions.

He received some chemotherapy treatments as well, but he didn't like how he felt after the treatments and decided that was enough.

While in the hospital, the staff talked to him about what he would like to do moving forward and introduced him to the idea of hospice care. Gail had visited the hospice in Windsor before and had a friend who volunteered with the Chatham-Kent Hospice, but other than that, they knew very little. Once they understood the type of care Hospice could provide, Mal agreed that Hospice was where he wanted to go. He knew he didn't want to die at home for Gail's sake. The transition to hospice happened very quickly.

"Mal went from having three blood transfusions a week to help overcome fatigue, to having a burst of energy after arriving at Hospice. I'm not sure why, but this was quite a gift for our family," said Gail.

Although they had some experience with a hospice in the past, they were very happy with what they experienced at Chatham-Kent Hospice.

“ I felt the pressure of caregiving fall away as soon as we arrived, ”

Gail said, adding that it was an added bonus to sleep overnight in Mal's room throughout his stay.

Mal received many visitors while at Hospice until the restrictions for COVID-19 hit. At the time, the restrictions were two visitors at a time.

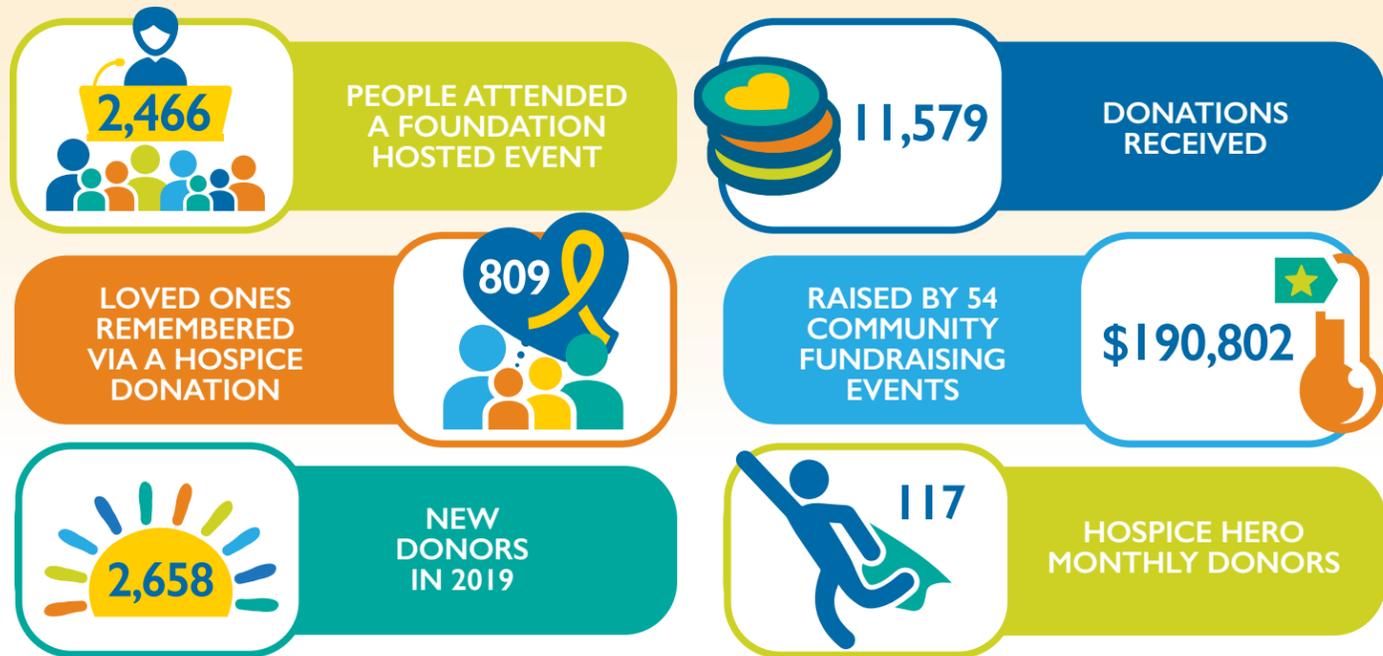
The family reached out to the Retro Suites who provided them with a room at a reasonable rate. That allowed all the family to congregate together and take turns visiting Mal.

Because of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions put in place, Mal's family was not able to hold a funeral.

"Not being able to have a funeral for Mal or spend time with my family has been really hard on all of us," Gail said. "We're hoping to hold a Celebration of Life in the near future, once some of the restrictions are relaxed."

Grief is difficult at the best of times, but during a time with social isolation restrictions, it makes a hard time even more so.

If you or someone you know are struggling with caring for a loved one at end of life, or need support for a recent loss, please know that Chatham-Kent Hospice is here to help.



### June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Volunteers Award: *John Lawrence*

“I volunteer because our Hospice is a wonderful place where staff and volunteers not only provide excellent care for the residents but they also enrich the precious moments the residents share with their loved ones during their final days together.”

- JOHN LAWRENCE



John was committed to bringing a hospice to the Chatham-Kent community and worked tirelessly along with other passionate people to make our Hospice a reality. With his past work experience and involvement with a number of community initiatives, John played a key role in developing community partnerships that have and will continue to benefit our Hospice. John was on the Chatham-Kent Hospice Board of Directors and is the founding Chair of the Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation. He continues to generously share his knowledge, experience, and time in supporting people facing end of life in our community. The June Callwood Award was established in 1994 to acknowledge and thank outstanding Hospice volunteers throughout Ontario.



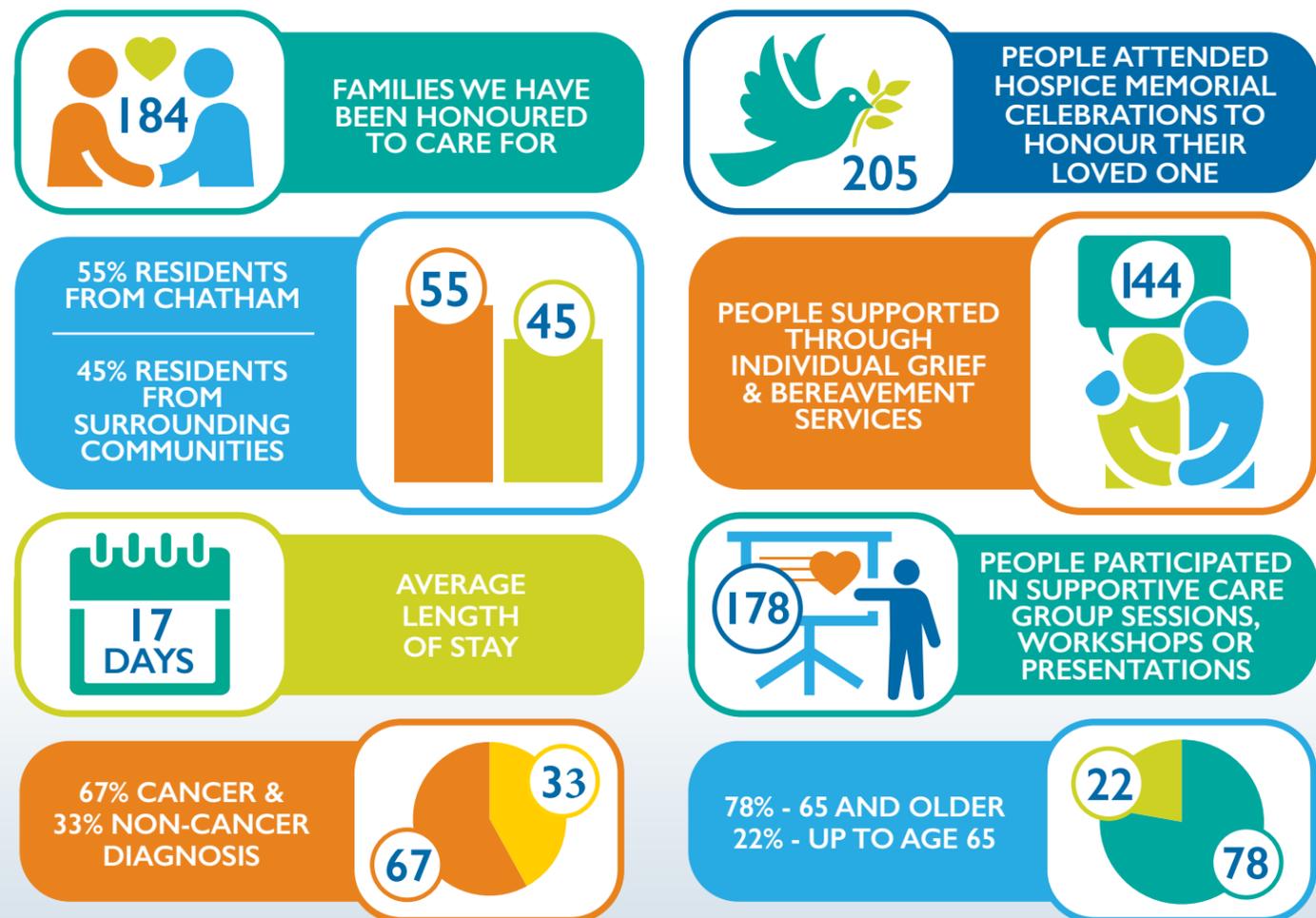
### Living at Hospice During COVID-19

“It means the world to me and my family that I am able to live at Hospice. After day-to-day tasks in my home became more difficult, having trouble with my vision, and losing my balance, it makes me feel safe knowing the caring team of doctors, nurses and PSW’s is there if I need anything. I know I am not the only one they are caring for but they make it seem like no detail is too trivial.

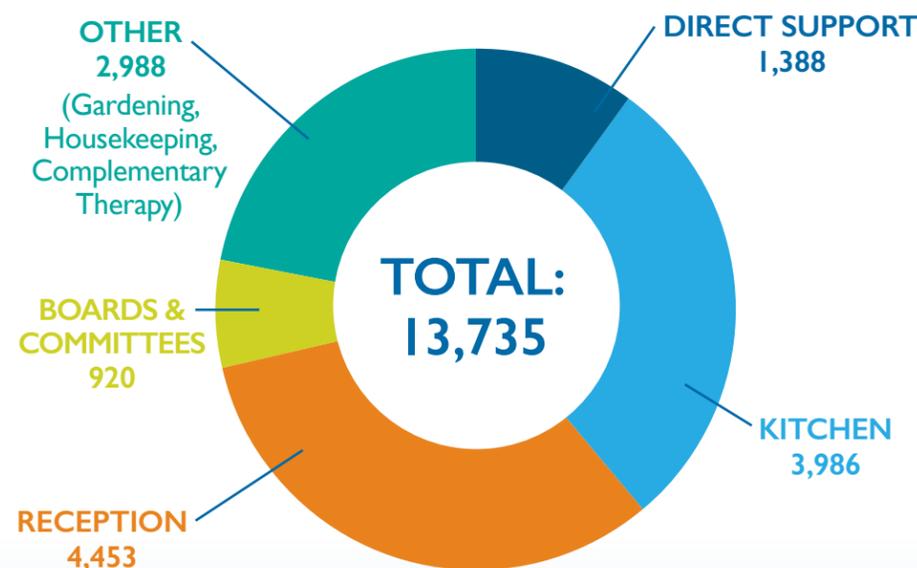
My family is able to check in, even at a distance, to see how I am doing and are reassured that I am well taken care of and at peace.

It is a weight off my mind and I could not have made a better decision to come here.”

- FRANCESCA



### VOLUNTEER HOURS BY JOB:



Our volunteers are an incredibly valuable part of our care team!

197 VOLUNTEERS + 13,735 HOURS = 7 FULL TIME EMPLOYEES



VALUE = Priceless!

Thanks!

Thank you SO much to the volunteers who have made and donated cloth face masks and gowns for our staff and visitors or donated face shields, goody packages, crocheted hearts or other thoughtful items. Knowing our community cares and has our back feels really good!



\*Our audit was delayed this year and therefore our financial information was not available at the time of printing. Please look for the audited financial statements to be added to our website by October 1, 2020.

# Comfort During Chaos - Practices that can Provide Calm and Peace

After a loss, one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves is to build our resiliency skills in order to stay emotionally and mentally well. During difficult times, fear may lead us into a worry loop and we may lose our sense of purpose and meaning. Here are some practices that may bring you comfort during this time of uncertainty.

**Back to Basics** – In times of stress, nutrition, water and rest help our bodies and brains remain healthy and strong. Drink lots of water, eat healthy meals (with the occasional treat) and try to regularly get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Developing healthy routines supports our nervous system in staying as grounded as possible.

**Move** – When stressed and anxious, our bodies are braced for protection. Our mind and body are interconnected so movement supports our physical, emotional, and mental health, and can help alleviate tension. Rhythmic moving such as walking, running, stretching, or yoga helps with emotional regulation and stress reduction. Find some form of movement that you enjoy!

**Breathe** – By slowing, lengthening and deepening our breathing we can reduce stress and help to regulate our emotions. Practice by breathing in deeply as if you are enjoying the smell of a flower and blow out your breath as though you are blowing bubbles.

**Humour and Play** – Two of our greatest tools for coping with difficult emotions are humour and play. They have a calming impact on our nervous system.

Sharing inspiration or humour on social media can spark joy for ourselves and for others. Playing cards, board games or physical games with our loved ones can also be an excellent distraction and create fun memories.

**Manage your Attention** – At a time like this, information can be empowering. However, it is important that while staying informed we do not help our worries grow. To manage our attention and thoughts, we should choose reliable sources of information and limit our news intake. When taking in overwhelming information we can shift our attention away by taking a shower, going for a walk, or opening a window and breathing in fresh air. Intentionally shifting our focus helps manage our feelings about what is happening in our world.

**Connect with Self and Others** – What helps you to connect with yourself? Focus on things that you love such as nature, reading, or spirituality and be compassionate towards yourself. Physical distancing during this pandemic does not mean being socially isolated. Maintain social connections with others through phone and virtual visits. Plan a virtual lunch or game night with your loved ones, express your gratitude to others, and take care of each other.



*We are grateful for your support of Chatham-Kent Hospice.  
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foundation@chathamkenthospice.com  
or calling 519-354-3113 extension 2403.  
Charitable Status #: 809001597RR0001*

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### Online:

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