

Hospice is Home for the Holidays

How a difficult time is made easier by Hospice care



Christmas 2018. The beginning of our family's journey was unknown to us. Christmas was wonderful- my son-in-law cooked Christmas dinner; we took pictures. As a family, we loved the Christmas season. For many years my husband, Norris, would dress the part of Santa for our family and other's enjoyment. Everything seemed "normal". All was well, or so we thought.

In January 2019, our family was shocked into grief when my son-in-law died unexpectedly. Little did we know, my husband would pass one year later.

When Jacob died, Norris was battling a bout of pneumonia. Throughout the year, he fought to get better until the fall when he started to decline rapidly. I cared for Norris at home and went into "nurse mode" until he was hospitalized in mid-November. A month later, he was moved to Chatham-Kent Hospice.

“ Our family found the Hospice environment to be quiet, kind, supportive and private. There were none of the barriers we would have experienced at home...it was comforting. ”

Being able to stay overnight with Norris was such a blessing. I could wander the halls in the quiet of the night while Norris rested. It gave me time to be me and collect myself.

Hospice gave us permission to be ourselves. I no longer had to be "nurse" but could just be his wife. Norris had the opportunity to dress up as Santa one last time to the enjoyment of our family as well as others at Hospice. He loved being Santa and this made him, and all of us, very happy. We also enjoyed a Christmas dinner together as a family.

We had some familiarity with Hospice prior to this because we had known a few people who had called Hospice, home. After my son-in-law died earlier that year, my daughters also found support in the Art Therapy program offered as part of the Grief and Bereavement services.

It was from this program that the story of the "Christmas Spider" was shared with us.

CHRISTMAS SPIDERS

*“There is a story, I’ve been told
about a lady, gray
Who cleaned and shined her
cottage, awaiting Christmas day,
She dusted dirt and cobwebs, set
her tree upon the floor
And seeing several spiders, she
shooed them out the door.
Well, the spiders were unhappy
to miss out on Christmas day.
They never got to see the tree in
all its bright array.
So very late on Christmas Eve
they crawled in through a nook
And scurried up and down the
tree to take a closer look.
And when the lady, old and gray,
awoke to see her tree
Golden cobwebs graced its
boughs ‘twas quite a sight to see.
So, place this spider on your tree,
this story to recall.
For miracles to happen with all
creatures, great and small.”*



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We found comfort in this story throughout the Christmas Season. We made over two hundred Christmas spiders, shared them with other families and placed them all around Hospice. It was our way to give back to others and celebrate the season, even in our grief.

When my husband passed, I experienced sadness beyond belief. Now it was my turn on this grief journey.

Through the support I received while at Hospice, I was set on a path of grieving that was best for me. On this journey, I am able to grieve in my way, on my own schedule and have found spending time in nature to be very helpful. Our family is forever grateful for the care and compassion shown to all of us!

-Shared in loving memory by Joyce Reynolds and family

Providing support for grief after pregnancy loss



“ I wasn't familiar with grief until after our pregnancy loss and it was only then that I realized what a very specific type of grief this was. My friends and family supported me the best they could but what I really needed was to talk to someone who specialized in grief and was able to support me with my pregnancy loss. I am so thankful that Hospice was able to provide me with this support! Speaking with Sally has helped me tremendously. Navigating the different stages of grief and dealing with the waves as they come and go have been far more bearable thanks to my conversations with Sally. Her kindness, compassion, understanding and knowledge have helped me to get through this incredibly difficult time and I am forever grateful I contacted them. ”

-K.P.

Volunteer Spotlight: *Kaylee Boulley*

“ Since I began volunteering at Chatham-Kent Hospice I have been extremely surprised and overwhelmed by the amount of support and gratitude shown by not only family, visitors and colleagues, but also by people in the community when I educate them about my role. I believe Hospice is an incredible organization to volunteer for if you have a busy life like mine. I am able to volunteer regularly while being a full-time student and having a part-time job because the scheduling system is simple and accommodating which allows me to choose what days and when I volunteer. Volunteering during the pandemic has been amazing. I have received tremendous support from the clinical team which has made me feel very safe. We are provided with PPE and we sanitize often to ensure a safe environment for volunteers, staff and visitors. I really enjoy being a volunteer in such a supportive and friendly environment that enables me to help and support others. I love being a small glimmer of happiness in someone's day. Having conversations with visitors and making them smile is the most rewarding part of my position here at Chatham-Kent Hospice and for that I am very thankful. ”



Grieving during Isolation

Humans are social beings and the social distancing that we have experienced throughout this pandemic has been difficult for everyone.

Those who have lost a loved one in the midst of COVID-19 may be dealing with their grief and sorrow alone, socially isolated without the physical comfort of having their family and friends by their side. As social connections are limited, bereaved individuals are forced to find new ways to honour their loved ones, learn to cope with loss and move forward.



We'd like to share some strategies for coping with your grief during this time of isolation:

1.

Acknowledge your pain

Though you may be physically isolated or may not feel comfortable talking about your feelings under normal circumstances it is important to express your feelings of grief. You can do this by phone, virtually or physically distanced with a family member, friend or Supportive Care team member. Now is the time to lean on people who care about you and to accept help when it is offered. Acknowledging your pain is an important step in the healing process.

2.

Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions

Take this time to self-reflect. Try to understand if this is a positive, negative or neutral feeling. Where am I feeling this in my body? What is happening right now that may be causing these feelings to arise? How can I allow myself to experience this feeling in a manageable way? Gaining insight and understanding into your feelings can empower you and support you in processing your grief.

3.

Understand that your grieving process will be unique

Don't let anyone tell you how you should feel, including yourself. Allow yourself to feel what you feel without judgement. It is ok to cry, to be sad or angry, to feel lost and to have moments of joy. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, despite what others may tell you.

4.

Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically

At this time it is easy to get settled into sedentary habits. Set aside some time to be active such as walking or doing stretches. Eating regularly and well is also critical to your well-being. Remember the relationship between your physical health and your mental health.

5.

Maintain hobbies and use creative outlets

You may find comfort in activities that bring you joy or remind you of your loved one. Exploring creative ways to express yourself, such as art or journaling may also assist in processing your grief.

6.

Plan ahead for things that may be difficult

Holidays, anniversaries or birthdays can be very hard when your loved one is not there for your traditions. It can be helpful to choose what activities you think you can handle, what celebrations you are not able to attend at this time and how you may want to acknowledge your loved one on that occasion. Communicating your choices to others is important as they may also be grieving. When others understand what your needs are and why, they may find it easier to accept your choices. Lastly, there may be a need to plan and compromise as everyone's grief is unique. When families members are all grieving they may have to talk about their needs and find compromises in order to make holidays manageable for everyone.

Our Supportive Care team is here to help you in your grief journey. Learn more by visiting our website or connecting with Program Co-ordinator, Sally at sreaume@chathamkenthospice.com or 519-354-3113 ext. 2406.

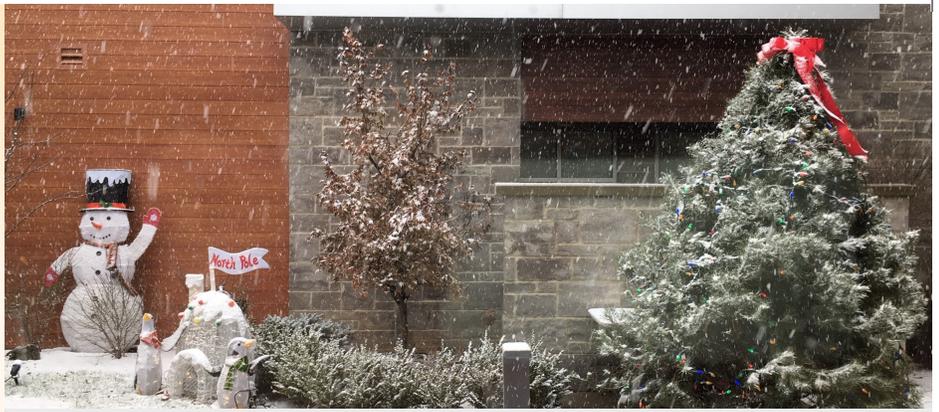
Loyal Donors Dr. Colin and Rebecca Bryan

Chatham-Kent Hospice – where caregivers simply become loved ones again.

“ Having worked with palliative patients for over three decades, we know the value of relieving family members of the awful burden of being primary caregivers. Hospice allows them to spend precious quality moments together. We applaud the phenomenal service the team at Chatham-Kent Hospice provide each and every day - from the cleaning crew to the nursing and administrative staff. While we have never had to take advantage of the Hospice, many of our patients and their families have benefited from their care.

We are also aware of the ongoing costs of providing this care. Our monthly donation, along with yours, will give the Chatham-Kent Hospice the assurance that this wonderful service can continue from year to year. We have also made provisions in our Will to leave a bequest to them after we are gone.

We encourage you to seriously consider becoming a monthly donor, regardless of how much you can afford to give. ”



Gifts are a special part of the holiday season-

...Not just those wrapped with pretty paper and ribbon, but more importantly, the ones that can't be touched, but are felt. Gifts like hope, peace and time.

Residential hospice care gives families the gift of time. While we cannot extend the time residents and families have together, we can help them make the most of it. Families can reminisce about precious memories and ensure nothing is left unsaid. Knowing our compassionate team is there provides the peace-of-mind families need to be present in the moment and appreciate their time together, however long it may be. A spouse can simply be a spouse, and a child can simply be a child again.

This holiday season, by making a donation to support residential hospice care, you can give a family the gift of time – time to spend together reflecting and celebrating the life of a loved one.

To make a donation please visit us online at www.chathamkenthospice.com, give us a call at 519-354-3113 ext. 2403 or return the enclosed reply form.



Chatham-Kent Hospice
F O U N D A T I O N

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