

## Continuing a legacy of love...

Hospice changed the ending of this short battle to one of peace instead of chaos



Joan was a thoughtful, caring, fun-loving woman. She was a true friend; someone you could always count on. Joan was the heart and glue of her family. She was my best friend, my hero, my Mom.

Born and raised outside of Thamesville, she lived, worked, volunteered and raised her children in this community she loved.

Joan began to feel ill in the summer of 2017. She was no stranger to different pains and aches as she had lived with rheumatoid arthritis for 25 years. These pains had become different though and were worsening rapidly.

My brother went to visit her in mid August and when he walked in she was in the fetal position on the floor. He decided enough was enough and took her immediately to the hospital to get checked out.

The ER doctor considered different diagnosis, made a referral, and sent my mom on her way with pain medication. The following weeks we were in and out of the hospital several times but ended up with one scan and one blood test so definitive that Joan was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. The tumor on her pancreas was large, aggressive and was already impeding her liver and bowels.

Joan was admitted to the medicine floor of the Chatham Hospital where we stayed for six days. It was then my mom's doctors concluded her case was palliative.

Four months previous, Joan's mother had died in this hospital. Our family had just experienced death in the hospital and we knew, if we had the opportunity, we wanted a different environment for my mom's last few days.

We immediately insisted the doctor refer her to Chatham-Kent Hospice and we were fortunate enough to get a bed the following day.

When we got to Hospice it felt as if a bit of light was coming through after the traumatic last three weeks. After a steep decline Joan perked up a bit and was notably settled.

Our whole family was greeted kindly, and mom was moved into a comfortable bed with fluffy blankets and soft pillowcases. We were not rushed around or pushed aside.

They knew she was going to die, but that didn't make her less important than other patients. Her medical care, comfort and wellbeing in her last days became important not just to us anymore but to the staff at Hospice.

I felt for the first time in three weeks of terror, I was no longer my mom's note taker, caregiver, personal assistant; I was her daughter.

Hospice gave Mom's close family and friends the opportunity to come say goodbye to her without pushing my brother and me out. We were able to stay close by in the family room or courtyard and have a bite to eat, try to relax, or have a necessary cry without "being in the way".

I slept every night beside my mom on a pull-out bed or comfy recliner. I was treated like I should be there.

**“ The hospice staff took incredible care of her and knew that in order to make her comfortable and able to rest “her people” needed to be close, so they welcomed us as an extension of her.”**

Joan's short journey from the time she was diagnosed with cancer to death was 26 days. She didn't get a chance to go on any adventures, soak in some fun or take beautiful family photos.

But Hospice allowed us a safe space to tell her we loved her and made her comfortable. It changed the ending of this short battle to one of peace instead of chaos. Hospice helped provide us with some closure during a tragic time.

My mom's passions were being a mother and her community. Since her passing I have become a mother myself and have become involved in the community as a Family Advisor with the Chatham-Kent Hospice. I sit on the Quality Committee and give advice from our experience there to try to ensure that Hospice stays an amazing resource for the community. I offer family insight to various ideas and challenges the Hospice faces.

My goal is to continue to keep my mom, Joan's, legacy alive forever.



*Shared in loving memory of Joan by her daughter, Nicole.*

## *Celebrating...5 years of residential hospice care!*

On April 16th we celebrate 5 years since we opened our doors to welcome our first resident. We have done a lot of learning and growing but one fact remains true: Hospice is so much more than just a building. It is the feeling of peace residents sense when they are welcomed "home". It is the relief families feel knowing they are supported. It is the people – clinical, administrative staff and volunteers – whose priority has been, and always will be, to provide compassionate care to those facing end of life.

All of this would not be possible without the support of our community. You helped raise the funds to build our Hospice "home" and continue to provide your support to ensure this care is available at no cost to families.

*Thank you!*



## **Join us as we virtually Hike for Hospice!**

Spring is here which means it is time to Hike for Hospice! This year, in order to keep everyone safe, we are encouraging you to hike Mud Creek Trail any time between April 26th to May 2nd. Of course, if you can't make it out to Mud Creek, you can participate remotely by completing your hike wherever you would like. The important thing is to get active while raising essential funds to support future Hospice residents and families.

New this year, we are offering the opportunity to purchase memorial signs that will be displayed along the trail throughout Hike week. They will feature the name, picture and message of your loved one who has passed.

Back again this year is our Corporate Challenge. Download our Corporate Challenge Toolkit today.

Hike for Hospice would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Please remember to follow all local health guidelines regarding social gatherings and distancing. For more information or to register for the event please visit: [www.hikeforhospiceck.com](http://www.hikeforhospiceck.com)



## Help shape the future of Chatham-Kent Hospice by becoming a Board or Committee Member

New Directors and Committee members are needed for both the Chatham-Kent Hospice and Foundation Board. As a Board or Committee volunteer, you play a key role in building and sustaining Hospice care in our community.

*The Board of Directors is collectively accountable:*

- to members, community, funders & other stakeholders
- for the organization's, performance in relation to our mission and strategic objectives
- for the effective stewardship of financial and human resources

To see a full role description visit our website: [www.chathamkenthospice.com](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com)

Deadline to apply is: March 29, 2021



## What do Supportive Care Services look like at Chatham-Kent Hospice?

Many people are aware that grief counselling is a part of services offered at the Chatham-Kent Hospice. We offer counselling and support to residents, families and community members who are coping with grief. Your loved one does not have to have lived in hospice for you to access our services. However, do you know what Supportive Care services in the residence looks like?

- Supporting residents and families with end of life practical matters. These needs can include ensuring residents have designated a Power of Attorney to make decisions on their behalf for their Personal Care and Property or financial needs. It may be assisting family with the process of applying for Compassionate Care benefits so that they receive benefits while they are off work caring for their loved one. It may also include Advanced Care planning and having conversations with residents and families regarding their health care priorities, goals and wishes.
- Requesting volunteers to provide comfort support to residents with few family members.
- Helping families determine how to celebrate important events during difficult circumstances. This could include writing letters or cards or planning a small celebration.
- Working with a resident to share their life story through a Legacy project. Legacy projects may include telling the story of a resident's life through the creation of a book or music that they can share with loved ones. These stories and songs may have a lasting impact on families as they often learn more about their loved one through the process of creating it as well as have a keepsake to cherish.
- Planning a farewell ceremony to create a meaningful ritual to support loved ones as they say good-bye.
- Sitting down with families to help with difficult conversations. These discussions could entail talking about planning for care decisions when not all family members are in agreement, discussing family conflict, reconciling relationships or helping to say goodbye.
- Supporting families to access community services that address their unique needs, which may include financial supports, specialized mental health services, stable housing or connections with a support system.

Our focus is on helping improve quality of life for both palliative patients and their families by managing distressing symptoms and addressing emotional, psychosocial, practical and spiritual issues. For more information on our Supportive Care programs please contact Sally Reaume, Supportive Care Program Coordinator, at 519-354-3113 ext. 2406 or by email at [sreaume@chathamkenthospice.com](mailto:sreaume@chathamkenthospice.com).



This photo was taken prior to COVID-19.

## Volunteer Spotlight

“ For me, it is an honour to be involved as a Volunteer at Chatham-Kent Hospice. I strongly believe in dying with dignity. Hospice does end-of-life care the right way. What I do at Hospice is not difficult – from a Reception Volunteer to Plant Care to other tasks in between. It is extremely rewarding being here with our residents, their families and friends and being part of an amazing Hospice Team.”

- KERRY C.  
Hospice Volunteer since April 2014



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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](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com)

Or call:

519-354-3113

Please make cheques payable to:

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