

The easiest decision during a difficult time

How the promise of a bubble bath changed a family's end-of-life experience



My mom, Kerry, was the definition of a 'social butterfly' in the best way possible. She had a genuine interest in everyone she met and a contagious laugh that could fill a room. She made people feel important and taken care of, which also made her a great waitress, a career she took pride in. She lived for traveling to the beaches of Cuba and when asked what she liked most about it she would tell you, the people. She mastered the balance of being my mom and best friend and, as a single parent, worked so hard to make sure I had everything.

In the spring of 2019, after months of various unexplained symptoms, Mom was diagnosed with liver failure. At the time, the doctors were hopeful that with treatment and healing there was a good chance of a full recovery. Just two months later, after calling Mom and not getting through, I had a sense that something was very wrong. I immediately got in my car and drove the hour to Chatham and found

Mom in a state that will haunt my memories forever. It was the first day of an incredibly difficult journey, and the first day my mom as the vibrant, run-circles-around-me woman I knew her to be, was gone forever.

We spent the next two years battling every obstacle that came our way and Mom slowly became more and more ill. She eventually had to quit a job she loved, leave a town full of friends she adored, and move in with me and my family so I could care for her full time. At the end of August 2021, Mom had a fall. I must have known in my heart it was the start of the end because instead of driving her to the hospital in Windsor, like so many times before, I headed to the highway and drove to Chatham. It was there where we got the news my house was no longer safe for Mom. The hope of a liver transplant, which was what kept us going, was no longer on the table as she was just too weak. Completely exhausted, Mom made the impossibly difficult decision that she was done with needles and procedures and most of all hospitals and wanted to spend whatever time she had left free of those things.

When the Chatham-Kent Hospice was brought to our attention, I was hesitant at first. Wasn't hospice a depressing place?

“ But the more I researched, the more I realized it was actually quite beautiful and looked incredibly peaceful. And it had an accessible bath tub! Mom had been wishing for a hot bubble bath since the start of her illness but was too weak for the one we had. It was actually the bath tub that finally sold us. ”

The CK Hospice was everything we hoped for and more. Mom got her bubble bath and I felt somewhat at peace for the first time in 2 years. Instead of taking care of Mom's medications, meals, and every need like I had been, I was able to just be her daughter again, a role I missed very, very much. Her suite was beautiful and she felt relaxed and at home watching all her shows on her big TV with friends and family and even our puppy who had become the light in her life. To top it off, the staff were beyond words. Each and every one of them were so nice and knowledgeable and also had the best sense of humour which was so appreciated by Mom.

They made Mom laugh everyday which made me so happy to see. She got to be the 'social butterfly' she was one last time. In her final hours, they were so in tune with Mom's needs, even when she couldn't verbalize them, and made her safe and comfortable. They made a horrible situation so much better which I know is one of the main reasons I'm feeling at peace today.

I will cherish the CK Hospice forever and am so happy we made that very difficult decision; the decision that ended up being the easiest.

-Shared by Lisa in loving memory of her mom, Kerry



Hospice & Foundation recognized as standard for quality

In December, Chatham-Kent Hospice received accreditation through Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO) for a Hospice Residence 2021-2024. HPCO Accreditation signifies to health professionals, the public, and funders that an organization, institution or program complies with industry standards and serves as an indicator of commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

“Working through the accreditation process allowed us to take a look at our current practices, refine what was working and look for areas of improvement. This peer-review recognizes the work of our whole team to ensure the care we provide is of the highest quality, setting new standards in hospice, palliative care,” shared Jessica Smith, Chatham-Kent Hospice Executive Director.

The Hospice Foundation has also recently received accreditation through Imagine Canada. The Imagine Canada Standards Program is designed to strengthen the practices of Canadian charities and nonprofits and increase public confidence in the sector's work through demonstrated transparency and accountability. This stamp of approval demonstrates to Chatham-Kent that the Foundation is committed to achieving our goal to 'earn and keep the community's trust' as outlined in our strategic plan.

Thank you to everyone– the clinical & administrative staff and the volunteers for working together towards these achievements.

Volunteer Spotlight: *Tina D.*

“ The opportunity to provide comfort and compassion to others was what drew me to volunteer at Hospice. My favourite aspects of being a receptionist include supporting the families and creating a warm community for others during a vulnerable time in their lives. It has exposed me to various scenarios which have taught me to be alert, flexible, and to problem-solve!

As a university student, I try to coordinate my volunteer shifts with my academic breaks, such as Thanksgiving weekend, reading week, and winter break. I also schedule my volunteer shifts on weekends when I am not busy with school and when I plan to come home!

Although volunteering at Hospice can be sad, the experience is incredibly fulfilling as you are able to provide warmth and support to families who are grieving. I truly believe that it is a great honour to be a part of such a vulnerable time in their lives, and the rewards that come with volunteering are absolutely priceless.”



Photo:
Volunteer- Tina D.



5 Truths We've Learned About Grief

Loss is something we all have to go through at some time in our life, whether it's our family pet, a parent, a spouse, a friend or our child. While we have no control over it we have to find a way to get through it.

One of the difficult things about grief is that it's like a fingerprint and unique to each person. Until you go through it there is no way of knowing exactly what it will feel like or what will help you move forward. What is common in grief is that most people we talk to feel like they are doing it wrong or that they are weak because they're struggling to cope with their loss. Even people with excellent coping skills may be brought to their knees by grief. It is for these reasons that we wanted to share some truths about grief we have learned through work with hundreds of people. We hope these truths may help you to know that you are not alone.



1. *Grief is messy*

Often those grieving feel that they are “a mess” but in truth grief is messy and it is ok to not be ok while you are coping with the loss of a loved one. Despite early interpretations of grief theories, people do not go directly from one stage of grief to the next. They may experience all of the stages over time or many of them in one day. Living with grief is not a linear process. It can feel messy and uncomfortable and there is no way to predict what to expect next. It may feel impossible to accept the reality that your loved one is gone, and this may feel unbearable at times. People have described grief as feeling like being on a roller coaster and developing strategies that ground you can help you through the process.

2. *Grief is exhausting*

Although people often recognize grief as an emotional response to loss, grief also has psychological, physical, cognitive, spiritual, social and behavioural aspects. When someone is dealing with grief their body, mind and spirit are actively engaged in processing their loss. Often those dealing with grief underestimate the toll it takes on them and they question why they don't have the capacity to function at their normal level. It is important for those grieving to listen to their grief as well as their body and slow down to take care of themselves and rest when they need to.

3. *Some people don't cry*

Many people have expectations about what their grief should look like. For example, that their grief should include crying. While often people do cry, and this is a very healthy outlet for grief, this is not the case for everyone. Sometimes people judge themselves for not having the emotional response they were expecting and it is important to know that we are all unique and there is no right way to grieve. The amount of crying one does, does not equal how much one cared about their loved one.

4. *You can't organize or distract your way through grief*

One coping strategy that many people use to deal with their grief is “keeping busy.” This approach can be very effective however it is also important to take the opportunity to “sit with your grief.” Connecting with others, engaging in productive tasks and participating in activities are all healthy ways to cope with loss, however it is essential to find balance and allow oneself time to feel emotions and acknowledge them for healing.

5. *Grief is not something you just do and be done with it*

Grief is difficult in every way and often people ask when they will be “through it” or “over it.” The truth is, grief lasts a lifetime, as we carry our loved ones and their memories with us for as long as we live. However, the pain of grief can change over time as people integrate their loss into their life and learn to adapt and use strategies that help them to cope when grief shows up.

Help shape the future of Chatham-Kent Hospice

by becoming a Board Member

New Directors are needed for both the Chatham-Kent Hospice and Foundation Board.

As a Board member, 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

Both organizations are also looking for new committee members to support the Board of Directors.

To see a full role description visit our website, www.chathamkenthospice.com.

Deadline to apply is: March 28, 2022

Join us as we 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 25th to May 1st.

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.

Although this event is free, we encourage participants to register at www.hikeforhospiceck.com. There you will also be able to purchase a commemorative Hike for Hospice t-shirt or memorial signs that will be displayed along the trail throughout Hike week. The signs will feature the name, picture and message of your loved one who has passed.



Hike for Hospice would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors:

Title Sponsor Battery Boy, and
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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!



Chatham-Kent Hospice
FOUNDATION

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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 ext.2403

Please make cheques payable to:
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