

# HOSPICEHAPPENINGS

## One Last Christmas Gift in the Warmth of Hospice



Coming to Hospice two weeks before Christmas was hard, especially knowing the holiday season would not be filled with the usual family traditions. But for Dick, Bev and their entire family, it was the one gift they had been hoping for.

“After his heart attack and stroke, we were able to manage at home, but then came his cancer diagnosis. It became difficult for us to give him the care he deserved so he was admitted to long-term care at the hospital. Like everything, COVID made visiting more difficult. My daughter Heather and I spent two and a half months with only two of us allowed to visit,” shared Bev, Dick’s wife.

“I let our doctor and palliative care team know that we wished to move to Hospice. We had not visited Chatham-Kent Hospice before but had friends who

shared their experience and it was something we wanted: a place where Dick would be pampered. Immediately upon arrival I saw the peace roll over him; he was a happy camper.”

The move to Hospice meant that the whole family, including their grandchildren, were able to be together as the holidays approached. Loyal, dependable, and kind hearted – that is how family and friends would describe Dick. It is no wonder he was adored by the younger members of his family who fondly referred to him as ‘Uncle Dickie’.

A die-hard sports fan, Dick’s loyalty extended to his teams - the Tigers, Lions, and Leafs. After a stroke left him unable to see out of his left eye, it became more difficult for him to watch the games.

**“ One of the many wonderful things about the rooms at Hospice are the big TVs. He was able to watch the games, and really see what was going on. Being able to watch together brought some normalcy back into our lives, ” shared Bev.**

Dick’s dependable, dedicated nature extended beyond his personal relationships to his work. A barber by trade, he started out

at the Southwest Regional Centre, but also held positions delivering the London Free Press, delivering baked goods for the local Tim Horton stores, and eventually, driving for CHAPs.

It was these delivery jobs that inspired Dick and Bev to show some appreciation for the trucking community, thanking them for their work especially during the pandemic.

“Every Thursday we would head out to the Tilbury ON Route & Flying J and hand out thank you cards to the truckers. Closer to Christmas, when Dick was at Hospice, I continued to spread cheer and gratitude. Many of the new friends we met out there learned that Dick was in Hospice and began to send cards directly to Hospice. One of the companies even sent a cast of their Challenger Transport truck. Dick and I were given the gift of service. It was heartwarming to see how such a small act made an impact on that community.”

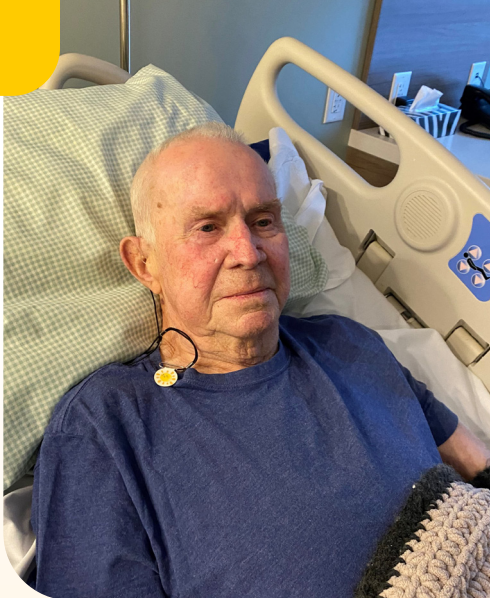
Having been married for 52 years, Dick and Bev share many memories together. “We were the pranksters in the neighbourhood. It was all in good fun, our friends and neighbours came to know that about us,” said Bev.

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“One memory of Hospice that will always stay with me is when I left the room one day so the staff could look after Dick. From the hallway I could hear them joking and laughing with him. They treated him with dignity as any patient should be, but it was second nature to them. From the volunteers in the kitchen and at front desk, to the housekeeping staff, they all showed compassion. Even when the housekeeper came in to clean, she walked by Dick’s bed, touching it saying ‘Good Morning, Sir.’ It totally moved my heart.”

While Bev thought the final gift Dick and their family would be given that Christmas season was moving to Hospice, the last gift actually came right before he passed.

“When Dick was dying, I put my hand on his chest because he was not breathing and I checked for a heartbeat. All of a sudden his eyes opened wide and were so blue. He was looking beyond. My daughter and I both knew who he saw. His look was one of awe and then he closed his eyes. Such a gift he gave us.”



Since their family’s Hospice experience, Bev has become a regular supporter of Chatham-Kent Hospice, making monthly contributions in memory of Dick. “It was easy to set up and best of all, it helps local families like ours who are saying good-bye to a loved one. I know how much I appreciated the care and I want to make sure others get the same support. If you don’t have a charity, it is worth your while and your money to give to Hospice.”

**Shared in loving memory of Dick  
by his Wife Beverly**

## Volunteer Spotlight: *Kathy*

*Kathy has many fond and inspirational memories with the Chatham-Kent Hospice even before it was a building.*

“ I was convinced that this community should have hospice for palliative residents and their families, I wrote one of the letters that the committee used in their presentation to Municipal Council. I was honoured to work with the planning group as the hospice project was developing. As a reception volunteer, I get to witness the gratitude of the families who come to the hospice to make a donation in memory of their loved ones so that other families can access the hospice’s services. One of the most amazing experiences I had occurred the day a woman was being admitted to her room. Her husband took me aside and asked how much it was going to cost for accommodation, care, and medication. When I said, “Nothing”, he repeated the question and when I again said there would be no charge, his face visibly relaxed and tears started to form. These kinds of inspirational experiences are what have kept me volunteering for the Chatham-Kent Hospice for over six years. ”



**Kathy - Volunteer since 2014**

Reception / Decorating / Resident Experience / Grief Support



## How Music Therapy Goes *Above* and *Beyond* at End-of-Life

When people hear the words Music Therapy, they don't always associate it with having a role in hospice care. However, Music Therapy can affect multiple changes in the mind, body and spirit of a person, and can be an effective approach to supporting palliative care patients.



At end-of-life, each person's needs and wishes are radically different. Music offered by a trained Music Therapist has wide reaching and flexible capabilities. Even those people who do not generally enjoy listening to music can find that live music, when played by a Music Therapist, at a soft volume, the right speed and correct pitch, can slow down racing thoughts, relax the muscles, intercept pain messages from the brain and slow the blood pressure to decrease physical pain and improve breathing. We saw this with one resident who benefited from Music Therapy, specifically the use of a harp, for treatment of PTSD symptoms. The resident experienced decreased blood pressure, decreased heart rate, feelings of inner peace and physical relaxation.

For those who enjoy music, there are a variety of experiences for bringing peaceful thoughts, wonderful memories, relaxation, joy, meaning and purpose back to life. Some of these experiences include: playing instruments or singing with the therapist, praying or chanting with music, listening to familiar songs and discussing the lyrics or memories, moving to music, making up short pieces and even drawing to music. Each resident and their loved ones can choose the experience that is most meaningful to them. In one case, our Music Therapist was able to use the indigenous flute with a resident who suffered extreme physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. Pairing the flute playing with guided imagery, these sessions provided the resident with a heightened sense of spiritual health, emotional stability, and complete relief from physical pain during the session and for short periods afterwards.

Another aspect of Music Therapy that we offer is a Legacy Project. Working with the resident's abilities and wishes, the result of the project has a unique meaning for each resident and their family. Some examples of legacy project elements include: recordings of messages from residents, playlists of songs that are special for the resident and provide comfort for their loved ones, recording the heartbeat of the resident to give to family, creating original songs with the Music Therapist with the resident writing the lyrics and choosing the sound of the music.

**At Hospice, we have witnessed Music Therapy heal past wounds, create memories, and build bridges in relationships for the future. Music Therapy really does offer something for everyone!**

## Why Should I Consider Leaving a Gift in my Will?

### *Make a Difference AND take care of your family:*

You can leave a gift to charity without significantly impacting the legacy you leave to loved ones.

### *Amplify your impact:*

After your lifetime, it's possible to make a more significant gift than you might otherwise be able to afford.

### *Enjoy tax benefits:*

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### *Honour a loved one:*

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### *Set an example:*

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**HOW WILL YOU KEEP  
YOUR LOVE GOING?**



**WILL  
POWER**

## Want to learn more?

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[www.willpower.ca/charities/chatham-kent-hospice-foundation/](http://www.willpower.ca/charities/chatham-kent-hospice-foundation/)



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