

## Dying Gracefully and Gratefully



No one wants to hear a doctor tell them that an illness will end their life, but when George heard this message, he wanted to make sure the time he had left was spent wisely.

Both George and his wife Marsha had lost their first spouse and had been their caregivers. George wanted to make sure Marsha had support through his illness and relieve her of some of the caregiving responsibilities. When friends offered to help, George took them up on it. He traveled to London often for treatments and several friends took turns driving. "George enjoyed visiting with his friends during these trips and the conversations were always different. We were both very thankful for their help," shared Marsha.

George also asked Marsha and his immediate family if they would like to join him on the Rocky Mountaineer train trip and they readily agreed. "This trip was something he had wanted to do for a long time. Before he got too sick, we made sure it happened. It was an amazing adventure!" shared Marsha.

They were both familiar with the Chatham-Kent Hospice and agreed that, when it was time, that's where George wanted to go to live his final days. They connected with Hospice early to see what they would have to do when the time came and learned that there were supports they could benefit from right away.

**“ We started working with the Spiritual Care Coordinator through phone calls to manage our anticipatory grief. It was extremely helpful. She asked all the tough questions, gave us direction and helped us face things earlier than we might have. It really helped improve our communication with each other, ”**  
shared Marsha.

George's illness progressed and they started having a nurse from Home & Community Care visit. George asked the nurse how they would know when it was time to go to hospice. When he experienced two falls in one day, they all agreed that it was time.

George spent five weeks at Hospice. He worked with the Hospice care team to create a personal care plan. His goal was to stay lucid as long as possible while being comfortable so he could visit with family and friends.

His pain was managed really well and the staff soon knew when he needed more medication before he even asked for it.

For the first two weeks, he had a lot of visitors and also got to know the hospice staff well. "George loved meeting new people and would ask the staff about themselves. Sometimes the housekeeper just wanted to move on to the next room but George would keep them in conversation as long as possible," shared Marsha with a laugh. When George started to tire more easily, the Hospice staff and volunteers helped manage visitors so George could rest.

Both George and Marsha not only got to know the Hospice team but to trust them as well. "I felt comfortable going home in the evening and getting a good night sleep without worrying about him. I didn't realize how tired I was until then," shared Marsha.

Although they were very familiar with the services offered by the Hospice, the personalized care still surprised them. "George got talking with one of the care team asking if they still made Juicy Fruit gum. The next day, they brought in gum for George. Another day, George was really craving rice pudding with raisins.

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## Hike for Hospice *The Girard Family*

The Girard family were one of our earlier Hospice families as their mom, Ann, passed away at Hospice in December of 2016. The following spring, we hosted our first Hike for Hospice event and the Girard family participated in memory of Ann. After participating in the event, they decided to get involved in the organizing of the next year's event. The Girard Girls (or GG's for short) have been active on the Hike for Hospice Committee ever since.

*"My Nanny (Ann) was the glue that held us all together and the fact that we could all be together in such a welcoming environment took one of the saddest and hardest moments our family had dealt with thus far and made it an experience that we don't have to look back on with heartbreaking memories. We had every single family member packed into her room with the fireplace on. We told the most ridiculous stories from our childhoods, while remembering the stories she had told us from here. We were all thankful that she had such an incredible life, and that we could be part of the end of it as well,"*  
shared Spencer Clarke, one of Ann's granddaughters.

Thank you to the Girard family for their continued support of Hike for Hospice. We invite you and your family to participate in this year's Hike for Hospice!



  
**HIKE  
FOR  
HOSPICE**  
CHATHAM-KENT HOSPICE  
**2023**

Collect pledges, get outside and hike in support of Hospice families! Virtual Hike will be held all week, with an in-person event being held on May 7th at 2pm.

**Pre-order** your Hike for Hospice T-Shirt or Memorial Sign before April 1st!

**#Hike4HospiceCK**

 **MAY 1 - 7, 2023**

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## *Supportive Care:* Exploring the World of Spiritual Care Support



**Chatham-Kent Hospice offers holistic care for individuals and families at end of life. Our Supportive Care Program also offers anticipatory grief and grief support to individuals in the community coping at end of life or after the death of a loved one.**

One of the critical services offered to residents, families, and the community is Spiritual Care. Though it has been a service offered at the Chatham-Kent Hospice since its opening, not everyone is aware of the significant benefits of Spiritual Care Support. Our Spiritual Care Provider, Bridget Phelan, supports individuals and families in many ways including:

- Giving people the chance to speak their minds, free of judgement, and supporting their entire well-being through conversation that includes their emotional, spiritual, and intellectual domains.
- Assisting people in exploring their spiritual needs to have hope; to have a sense of meaning and purpose; to feel connected and important others; to be known and accepted; and to love and be loved.
- Working to create a safe space in which people can express themselves in ways that are authentic to them, and are free to explore the impact of their relationships regardless of nature.
- Supporting people's belief systems whether they engage in religious practices or other spiritual expressions such as art, music, journaling, yoga, meditation, or breath work.
- Facilitating spontaneous exercises to help people express anticipatory grief or grief experienced after the death of their loved one. It is often important for people to have a space that feels safe, an object that connects them to their person, and actions that express the way they are feeling at that time.
- Providing grief support to people in the community through individual sessions, or in groups such as Well Within Coffee Talk program or our seasonal Walking Through Grief group.

*For more information about these services, how they play a role at Chatham-Kent Hospice or how you can access Spiritual Care support, please contact Sally Reaume at 519-354-3113 ext. 2406.*

## Volunteer Spotlight: *Ken D.*

Being new to the community of Chatham-Kent, Ken was eager to find an organization where he could volunteer his time and heart. The Chatham-Kent Hospice was one of the organizations that drew his attention, and he began his journey as a volunteer in 2021. Ken has always been a people person; he enjoys meeting, socializing and helping those in need. This made the Direct Support Volunteer role a natural fit for him.

“*Being a good listener is the most important thing, and being able to laugh or give a hug, or just meet the resident or family where they are is helpful. Making mistakes is normal, but you have good support behind you and never feel alone. I received great training, as well as the opportunity to learn on the job, which is what I enjoyed the most.*”

Through volunteering, Ken has had the opportunity to meet and develop friendships with fellow volunteers, as well as many others from the community. For those unsure if volunteering at Hospice is right for them, Ken emphasizes, “Self-reflection is important, and so is a love of learning and growth! Be willing to learn a lot about yourself and others.”



Photo: Volunteer- Ken D.

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One of the staff went into the kitchen and made him some from scratch. He loved it and it was the last thing he was able to eat,” shared Marsha.

Another surprise for Marsha was how well she was cared for. “The staff and volunteers always checked in with me and made sure I had eaten. On a particularly bad day, a staff member pulled me out of the room and we sat down and chatted. It was so nice to be able to talk to her. It helped me better manage what was happening,” shared Marsha.

Since George’s death, Marsha continues to receive grief and bereavement support through the Hospice as she navigates her grief journey.

George’s son, Colin, shared this in his eulogy:

*“To the Staff and Volunteers of the Chatham-Kent Hospice – My Dad set out on a mission to die gracefully and gratefully.*

*His leukemia was a pretty determined foe that had other ideas. But each of you, with your compassion, professionalism, respect and warmth made it possible for my Dad to die with dignity. The Chatham-Kent Hospice is a very special place – I am convinced that every single person I encountered on my visits there was at least part angel. If you can, please consider donating.”*

-Shared by Colin in loving memory of his Dad, George



## 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 the Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation. As a volunteer board or committee member, you play a key role in building and sustaining Hospice care in our community.

### We are looking for individuals with:

- Experience and/or affinity for organizational governance practices
- Strong leadership potential
- A desire to give back to the community

Building a diverse and inclusive team is important to us and therefore candidates from equity-deserving groups in our community are encouraged to apply.

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

*Deadline to apply is: April 3, 2023*



**Chatham-Kent Hospice  
FOUNDATION**

*We are grateful for your support of Chatham-Kent Hospice. If you would no longer like to receive a copy of this newsletter or wish to receive an electronic version, please let us know by emailing: [foundation@chathamkenthospice.com](mailto:foundation@chathamkenthospice.com) or calling 519-354-3113 extension 2403.*

*Charitable Status #: 809001597RR0001*

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34 Wellington Street East, Chatham, Ontario, N7M 3N7

### Online:

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

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519-354-3113 ext.2403

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