

## Caring for a resident and their family

How Hospice gave a family something they didn't know they needed



In March of 2017 we received the phone call that no one wants to get. "We found a tumor." The prognosis was not good; 12 months, 18, if he's lucky.

Dad loved being outside, hunting and fishing, four-wheeling, tinkering in the garage, fixing lawnmowers, building bird houses, feeding the squirrels, biking, walking or just cutting the grass (most of which he did barefoot and topless).

When his kids were young, Bob enjoyed 15 years of coaching Chatham minor hockey, baseball and ringette. He worked for the Department of Highways in Chatham for 33 years, but when the government outsourced his department, he found himself retired at the young age of 49 and a half. So, Dad took to the golf course, but not to play. He tried golfing once and nearly took someone's head off, so he stuck to

cutting the grass and maintaining the greens at Country View Golf Course for 10 years.

My Dad was humorous, out-spoken, always so helpful to his kids, his grandchildren and his neighbours. Whenever there was a family reunion you could always hear his contagious laughter bellowing from every direction.

Although Dad was given the standard prognosis, with various treatments and surgeries he far surpassed their expectations! We got an extra 5 years with Dad, so we continued to make memories, going on various vacations and celebrating family milestones.

In March of this year, we found out the original tumour awoke from its slumber and started growing. At this point, Dad was not up for any more treatments.

We managed with Dad at home for April and May, but things quickly declined. He was no longer able to help get himself out of bed in the morning, his mobility was disappearing, and his pain was now intolerable. We knew it was time for Hospice.

As you approach Chatham-Kent Hospice you can't help but notice the beautiful landscaping and warm, welcoming greeting you get from the volunteer at the desk. Over time, many got to know us by name which made it easier to

walk through those doors every day. The volunteers in the kitchen were always hard at work making homemade soup and fresh baked goods. One time, Dad requested chocolate pudding at 3am and his request was granted. We were grateful for the weekly barbecues, soup and baked goods as they allowed us to have lunch on site and not have to worry about going home to cook. It was so nice to have our needs met as well as Dad's.

**“ When Dad entered Hospice, his pain was off the charts. The doctor told him, “Give me 3 days and I’ll have your pain under control.” Dad responded, “No.” He didn’t think that was possible. However, just as promised, in 3 days his pain was manageable. No longer would Mom have to manage his medications. This was taken off her plate the very first day and was a great relief. ”**

You might think the most impressive feature of the room was the big screen TV, fireplace, or huge bathroom, but it was the adjustable cuddle bed, which we took full advantage of.

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With the click of a button, the bed could be expanded to queen-size for those moments you wanted to lay down with your loved one.

Some of the things that gave us peace of mind were the personal buzzer that Dad could wear so it wouldn't get lost, as well as the room monitor that went to the nurse's station, so Dad could just call out and they would hear him. The nurses made it clear to Mom that she could call in at any time, so she did. Twice a day. First thing in the morning and just before she went to bed. This allowed her to get a good night's sleep.

When Dad passed, we were told that we didn't need to rush. We had a prayer service in his room with him and we were able to walk him out as a family and say our goodbyes before the funeral home took him to prepare him for the visitation. Each grandchild was given the opportunity to say a few words if they wanted, then lower a floating candle into the waterfall pond. It was such a peaceful way to end our Hospice journey. Hospice felt like a home away from home. We were able to be ourselves, spend all the quality



time we needed with Dad and not have to worry about anything else. Everything was taken care of by all the staff and volunteers. We trusted them, we listened to them, they cared for Dad with the utmost respect. They cared for us, and I knew this because, on most days, I felt like we were the only people there. The impact that Hospice left on our family will be a positive memory that ended a very long journey. There are not enough words to tell our Hospice story and the immense appreciation we have for such an incredibly warm, compassionate place.

**Shared by Sue and the Hoskins Family  
in loving memory of Bob**

## Volunteer Spotlight: *Marianne*

“ The most important aspect of volunteering to me, is making a small difference in someone's day. When you make food for someone, it means you care. Food is such an important part of our lives, and when a family member is critically ill, we sometimes forget to take care of ourselves. I love that homemade soup and baked goods are available daily to residents and their families. Soup is such a comfort food - it can give that little bit of strength to get through the day and put a smile on someone's face. I couldn't have imagined the positive and visible impact this would have. I always leave my shift, no matter how difficult, feeling like I have accomplished something good.

As a newer volunteer, the most challenging aspect was learning where everything is in the kitchen! Once I had that down, my confidence began to climb. It's basically using skills that I already possess and enjoy at home, to share with others. Of course, there was also the need to learn various health and food safety regulations that we might not follow at home (like taking the temperature of the soup), but it's not difficult, and there are all kinds of prompts and references in the kitchen to access if you forget. The Kitchen Manager provides lots of tips and tricks, and other volunteers are always willing to provide support. Even though I have been cooking for many years, I have learned so much. Shifts overlap so if there are questions there is usually someone nearby who can help. The recipes provided are simple and delicious and you get the opportunity to try some new ones, which I try on my family at home.

If you enjoy cooking or even would like to learn more about cooking, it's a challenging and uplifting environment to put those skills to good use. I plan to keep volunteering because I believe in the work of Hospice. It is a solid local organization of dedicated staff and volunteers that provides a much needed and appreciated service in our community. ”



**Marianne - Kitchen Volunteer**





## *Grieving During the Holidays...*

Grief is difficult on any day of the year. However, the holidays can be emotionally overwhelming and can intensify the pain and emotions you are feeling after the death of your loved one.

There is tremendous pressure to be joyful and bright during the holidays and we are often surrounded with reminders that this is supposed to be a time of togetherness and celebration. You likely have memories and traditions linked to the holidays that you once shared with your loved one and this can leave you feeling saddened with the realization that the holidays will no longer look the same.

Our Supportive Care Team offers these tips which we hope may assist with your grief during the holidays.

### *Be compassionate with yourself*

Grieving is very difficult and if you are getting up each day, getting dressed, bathing, and eating you are doing okay. Speak to yourself as kindly as you would someone else who is grieving the loss of a loved one. Give yourself permission to feel what you feel and be gentle with yourself.

### *Be realistic with your expectations of yourself*

Acknowledge how you are feeling and set boundaries and expectations for yourself and others that fit where you are in your grieving process. It is okay to say no to an invitation or be honest with family and friends that you “hope to attend but will have to see how you are feeling that day.” If you do attend, it is also important to plan an exit strategy so you can leave early if you are feeling overwhelmed.

### *Ask for help*

Reach out to others, including friends and family. Ask for help if you need assistance with something specific. Sometimes people really want to be there for you but don’t know how they can be helpful.

### *Acknowledge this holiday will be different*

It is important to acknowledge concerns you have about the holidays so you can communicate with your family and friends to determine whether to keep or modify traditions to celebrate your loved one in a new way. Your family may choose to create a new tradition, such as sharing stories about your loved one around the dinner table or bringing one of their favourite dishes to include them in your celebration. Expect that feelings of grief will be part of your celebration and support one another in grief. Remember, everyone’s grief may be experienced differently.

### *Donate to a charity in honour of your loved one*

As the holidays are often about gift giving, consider donating in your loved one’s name honouring their memory.

### *Self-Care*

Take time to do what you need to get through the holidays. Grief is exhausting, so take naps or five minutes for deep breathing to ground yourself. Practice things that give you energy in difficult times.

Want more tips? Visit our website:

[www.chathamkenthospice.com/resources](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com/resources) for other articles recommended by our Supportive Care team.



## Monthly Giving Testimonial

“ I started volunteering for the Hospice in the Foundation office back in February 2014, when things were very much at the conceptual stage. A couple of my relatives had accessed palliative care in different communities over the years and I have always believed we should have

an option locally. I made my first donation in recognition of my birthday in March of that year and continued to do so for a few more years.

Each week when I come to Hospice to volunteer, I see my donation making a difference. You can see the atmosphere is so positive and supportive. I look forward to seeing the decorations change for each season, marking each special time of year, and the floral arrangements that come weekly. It just gives you an uplifting feeling.

I was under the misconception, as I think a lot of people are, that Hospice would be fully government funded after it was built. But you realize once you are here that there are a lot of expenses that are not covered.

When I heard about the option to give monthly I thought ‘Oh, that is so much easier!’ I am still giving the same amount, spread throughout the year, but I don’t have to think about it. I don’t have to look ahead to having a lump sum. I know I have the option to change the amount or discontinue any time that I want but giving monthly just works really well for my family. It truly is the easiest way for me to support something I believe in.

My personal choice would be, when and if we need it, to come here at end-of-life because I think it is such a relief for families to know their loved one is being taken care of and they’re not having the challenge of 24/7 care. It is in no way a depressing place because you know families are getting the care they need at such a difficult time. ”

*Cathy Telfer, pictured with her husband, Bob*

## Thinking about hosting an event or fundraiser this Holiday season?

Why not spread the goodwill and consider supporting our Hospice families at the same time.

This could be as simple as taking a collection at a holiday meal or donating the proceeds of a raffle. Not sure where to start? Let us help!

### Contact Katherine at:

kstinson@chathamkenthospice.com  
or 519-354-3113 ext. 2409.

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### Upcoming Events:

#### AUTUMN VENDOR SHOW

Saturday, November 18

#### PHOTOS WITH SANTA & MRS. CLAUS

Thursday, November 23

#### CK FASHION SHOW

Friday, November 24

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For more details about upcoming events check out:

[www.chathamkenthospice.com/  
upcoming-events2/](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com/upcoming-events2/)



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Charitable Status #: 809001597RR0001

## 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 ext.2403

Please make cheques payable to:  
Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation

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