

Where My Mother Chose to Live Her Final Months | HOSPICE HEART STORY

A daughter's story of how hospice became a place of joy and connection

My mother, Sandra Angelini, grew up poor, so she learned to be happy with whatever she had and tended not to speak up when she needed anything. Still, she created the life she wanted, getting her Master's degree, becoming an English teacher, marrying, and raising a family. Friends, family, work, and travel filled her life with joy.

She lived independently after my father passed away, but at 82, she suddenly became too weak to walk, and she finally had to ask for help. Realizing that I couldn't give her the care she needed, I convinced her to go to the hospital. There, she was told that she had cancer and would have three months to live. After some discussion, we decided hospice was the best choice. My mother was at peace with the fact that she was near the end of her life, and she wanted to be in a calm, comfortable environment.

For me, the day she moved in was daunting: it felt like the final step toward the end. It was also a relief: she would be someplace safe and supportive. The hospice staff immediately surpassed our expectations; after my mother's first night in the hospice, she told me she was being treated "like a queen."

On her second day, the staff wheeled her bed into the courtyard so we could have lunch in the sun. The courtyard soon became her favourite part of the hospice, and I was able to take her, in her wheelchair, into the courtyard every day. She loved sitting beside the waterfalls while she had her coffee and was always happiest when she was out in the fresh air.



The staff and volunteers always took care of her physical and emotional comfort. They treated her like a person, not a patient, and always knew what would brighten her day. They would cut the crusts off her sandwiches, make her milkshakes in the evening, and compare Wordle scores with her every morning. No one rushed in and out when they were caring for her—they always stayed to chat and joke with her.



This warmth was the most important part of the hospice for me. My siblings live far away, so they weren't able to be with my mother during this time. Knowing that she always had friendly, familiar faces around her was reassuring to all of us.

One day, the residential social worker told us about Lasting Memories, a program in which hospice residents go on a day trip with their family, escorted by local paramedics. We went to a conservation area—since mobility had become an issue for my mom, she'd missed spending time in nature. On the day of the outing, the nurses helped my mom get ready and took photos of her, and the hospice provided a scooter so she could keep up with her grandkids.

HEART STORY | Continued...

In the pictures from that day, she is glowing, obviously excited. We had a picnic, explored, and spotted wildlife. The trip, coming at a time when my mom thought she would never be leaving the walls of this final home of hers, was a meaningful reminder that she was still alive.

My mom always had special moments to look forward to while in hospice, like flowerpot painting on Mother's Day with other residents and their families, barbecues throughout the summer, and a weekly family movie night in her room. My mother passed away after nearly five months in hospice. Her time there was peaceful and comforting and meaningful.

My mom and I had both viewed hospice as the place she would go to die. It was not. Hospice was where she would regain a sense of normalcy after a stressful period of time in the hospital. It was where she would enjoy the sunshine while she ate her lunch outdoors. It was where she would laugh and play games with her grandchildren up until her final days. It was where she would be brought to tears when a volunteer played her a particularly meaningful song on the piano. Most importantly, it was where she would spend her final months living rather than dying.



Shared by Cindy in loving memory
of her mother, Sandra



UPCOMING EVENTS

Glasshouse Ornament Sale
NOVEMBER 1, 2025

Pup Photos with Santa
NOVEMBER 15, 2025

**Grief Café: Drop-in Grief
& Bereavement Support Group**
NOVEMBER 18 & DECEMBER 2, 2025

Holiday Market at the Moose Lodge
NOVEMBER 22, 2025

Photos with Santa
NOVEMBER 27, 2025

**Tilbury Lions
Christmas Lights Festival**
NOVEMBER 28, 2025 to JANUARY 9, 2026

Learn more about these and other events at:
www.chathamkenthospice.com/upcoming-events

**Warmth in Winter
Coping with Grief Through the Holidays**

December sessions in Blenheim,
Wallaceburg, Ridgeway,
Tilbury & Chatham

Pickleball for Hospice
DECEMBER 7, 2025

Grief Café – Holiday Edition
DECEMBER 16, 2025

Horns for Hospice at the Fortress Tavern
DECEMBER 27, 2025



COMMUNITY & SUPPORTIVE CARE

Preparing the Heart: The Grief That Comes Before Loss



When someone we love is facing a life-limiting illness, our hearts begin to prepare—often long before any final goodbye is spoken. This experience is known as anticipatory grief.

Anticipatory grief is the emotional response we feel when we know a loss is coming. It's not just sadness—it can be a swirl of anxiety, guilt, hope, anger, and deep love. It's our mind and body trying to make sense of what's unfolding. It can sneak up on us in quiet moments, when we realize that time with someone we love is growing short. It's complex, layered, and sometimes hard to recognize.

But it's not only about grieving the person—it's also about grieving the future. We grieve the life we thought we'd share.

The birthdays they won't attend. The milestones they won't witness. The quiet moments we imagined. We grieve the conversations we thought we'd have. The advice we hoped to hear. The laughter around holiday tables.

We grieve the comfort of their voice in hard times. The way they'd light up at our successes. The ordinary days we thought would stretch on. Even the simple things—a morning coffee together, a shared walk, a familiar routine—can carry profound weight.

And for the person who is dying, grief may be present too. They may grieve the future they won't see unfold—the growth of their children, the aging of their partner, the dreams they held close. They may mourn unfinished stories, unspoken words, or the ache of leaving loved ones behind. They may feel sorrow for the impact their illness has on others, even as they seek peace and meaning in the time they have.

These losses are real. Even if they haven't happened yet, they live in our hearts. And naming them—honouring them—is part of healing.

For the person who is ill, and for those who love and care for them, anticipatory grief can also bring moments of reflection and meaning. It's a time to say things that matter, to create memories, and to walk the journey together with tenderness.

You might notice changes in your sleep, appetite, or energy. You may feel distant from others—or crave connection more than ever. These are natural responses. Anticipatory grief is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of love.

At Chatham-Kent Hospice, we walk alongside you. Our team understands that grief begins long before death—and we're here to support you every step of the way.

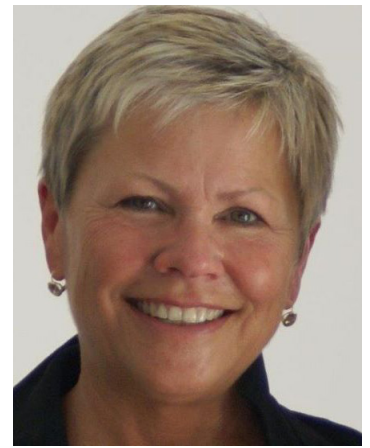
Anticipatory grief is part of everyone's journey. And together, we walk it with compassion, courage, and care.

PLANNED GIVING | A Legacy of Compassion and Care

Beckie and I always believed in giving back to our community, especially to local organizations like Hospice. Beckie volunteered her time at the Hospice reception desk, and when the lockdown brought that to an end, we began thinking about how we could continue to help in other ways.

During that time, we decided to establish our family foundation and to include a gift in our Will to Hospice, ensuring our support for a cause close to our hearts would continue after we were gone.

In the spring of 2023, Beckie returned to Hospice, this time for end-of-life care. The respect, warmth, and compassion shown to her, to me, and to our family and friends was remarkable. Everyone made a very difficult time a little easier.



I take comfort in knowing that our gifts—and the one left in my Will—will continue to support Hospice in Beckie's honour. I encourage others to consider doing the same; any gift, large or small, can make a real difference for others in their time of need.

-Ric Rossini



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT | Sharon



"I help in the kitchen because it's such a fulfilling way to support residents and their families. The caring, supportive team makes Hospice feel like a warm and safe place for everyone. I'm grateful to be part of something so meaningful.

To anyone thinking about volunteering but feeling unsure—Hospice truly feels like a big hug every time you walk in."

Sharon Haycock,
Kitchen Volunteer for over 4 years

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE OR DONATE:



We are grateful for your support of Chatham-Kent Hospice.

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Email: foundation@chathamkenthospice.com
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