

## Building a Home for the Ones We Love | HOSPICE HEART STORY

### A Place to Say Our Last Goodbyes With Love

It's hard to believe that Chatham-Kent Hospice is celebrating its ten-year anniversary! So many lives have been changed by this wonderful place, including mine.

In 2014 I was working as a nurse at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance and was honoured to be hired as the Director of Hospice Services to help design, build, and open the hospice. This role was such a gift to me, and I met so many wonderful people who were as committed as I was to bringing hospice care to Chatham-Kent. Everyone wanted to make this a place like no other – bringing comfort and excellent end of life care to those who would live there and to their loved ones.

My parents Helen and George Zimmer (aka 'Geo') listened to me talk about hospice for the next two years and were as excited as I was for it to open. I remember taking them on a tour and they were so proud of the work everyone had done. My dad had many machinist skills and the mind of an inventor. I explained to him how we had designed a beautiful reflecting pool where we hoped to float candles in honour of those who lived and died at hospice. He was able to design a tool on his lathe that we could use to lower the candles into the pool. It still sits in the reflection room and is known at the 'Geo stick'! A special legacy.

Hospice opened in April of 2016, and shortly after that, my father's health declined after living with cancer for many years. He suffered a stroke which left him unable to use his legs. When it was determined that he would not recover, we considered a move to hospice where the overhead lifts would support his care and mobility.

On Father's Day morning, dad called me from his hospital bed after a tough night and said, "I think I am ready to go to hospice now – the launchpad to heaven".



*We were able to move him that day, and it was the last Father's Day gift I would give to him. We shared lots of memories and had many parties over the next two weeks while he lived a full life in Room 1. I was on the other side of the bed now, and our family were the recipients of the wonderful care from the staff and volunteers.*

My father loved his time at hospice, and we have so many wonderful stories and pictures. My mom was a retired nurse who had been caring for him for a long time, and you could see the relief in her face when she could be there as his wife and not his caregiver. We made good use of the 'Geo stick' during our farewell celebration as he left the hospice, sharing songs and prayers, laughter and tears. We filled the pool with candles, and it was a time we will all remember.

Four years later, during covid, my brother Joe died suddenly after suffering a heart attack. He owned Zimmer Signworks and had installed the signage on the hospice. We think of him when we drive by and see the beautiful silver logo shining in the sunlight. We feel like his spirit is there too, even though he never lived at hospice.

## HEART STORY | Continued...

Fast forward another four years to April 2024 when my mom began suffering with heart failure. She was able to go home from hospital for a number of weeks but eventually needed the benefit of the palliative medications and the expertise of the hospice staff. Almost eight years to the day after my father was admitted, she was admitted to the same hospice room that dad lived in. We all felt relief that she was there, as did she. It was like going home – home to the 'launchpad to heaven'. Before she died mom told us, "I know you will be sad when I am not here, and you will miss me, but I want you to be happy – because I am happy! I am ready to go to see Geo, Joe, and Jesus. Please be happy for me." They both taught us many lessons through the years, but most of all they showed us how to live fully and die well.

We will be forever grateful to Chatham-Kent Hospice for all they have done not only for our family but for the thousands of people who have benefited from their care.

Happy anniversary!



Shared by Michelle O'Rourke in loving memory of her parents, Helen & George

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT | Cooking with Kindness



At Chatham-Kent Hospice, we often say that our kitchen is the heart of our home—a place where warmth, comfort, and connection come together in the simplest, most meaningful ways. Our very own Kitchen and Hospitality Coordinator, Tracey, sees this every day, and she has a special message to share about what it truly means to volunteer in this cherished space.

Our Kitchen Volunteers provide more than meals—they provide comfort, care, and moments of normalcy during some of life's most tender times. The smell of soup simmering, a freshly baked treat, or a cup of coffee offered with kindness can lift a family's spirit in ways words cannot.

If you enjoy cooking, working alongside a supportive and compassionate team, and would love to learn new skills and recipes while truly making a difference, we would be thrilled to welcome you.

Your time in our kitchen helps make our hospice feel like home.

Learn more or apply today to join our Kitchen Volunteer Team at: [www.chathamkenthospice.com](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com)

## BOARD RECRUITMENT | Shape the future of hospice and palliative care in Chatham-Kent

### Become a Board or Community Member

Both Chatham-Kent Hospice and Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation are recruiting new directors and committee members. 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 and financial practices
- Strong leadership potential
- Experience in healthcare an asset
- A desire to give back to your community

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

**Deadline to apply is: April 10, 2026**

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

JOIN US AS WE *celebrate*  
10 YEARS OF



**SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026**

12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Mud Creek Trail

Register, collect pledges, and hike in support  
of Hospice residents and their families!

REGISTER FOR FREE AT  
[www.hikeforhospiceck.com](http://www.hikeforhospiceck.com)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **EMBRACING TOMORROW TOGETHER: SPOUSAL LOSS SUPPORT GROUP WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 4 - APRIL 22, 2026**

Please join us in a safe space where individuals who have experienced the loss of a spouse or partner can share their experiences, find solace, and navigate the journey of grief together. Through mutual support, understanding, and encouragement, we aim to foster healing, resilience, and hope for a brighter tomorrow.

### **GRIEF & BEREAVEMENT WALKING SUPPORT WEDNESDAYS, MAY 6 - JUNE 24, 2026**

Join our non-judgmental, welcoming, and confidential walking group alongside others who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

### **PINT-SIZED TRIVIA AT RED BARN BREWING TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026**

Grab your friends and enter a team of up to eight players in the Pint Sized Trivia night hosted by Red Barn Brewing. Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation receives a portion of ticket sales from the event. Tickets available online at [redbarnbrewing.com/events/](http://redbarnbrewing.com/events/)

### **HANDBAGS FOR HOSPICE SPRING THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026**

This sold out event brings people together for the ultimate Bingo experience with designer handbags as the prize. But the real winner is Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation who has received over \$233,000 from Handbags events!

### **CRAIG'S CRUISE 4 COMFORT SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2026**

Join a fun day of ATVing that starts in Tilbury before leading you throughout CK. This popular event raised \$28,990 in 2025. Save your spot or purchase 50/50 tickets for your chance to win up to \$12,500 by contacting Craig at 519-380-5626.

**Learn more about these and other events at:**  
[www.chathamkenthospice.com/upcoming-events](http://www.chathamkenthospice.com/upcoming-events)



## CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE OR DONATE:



**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:

Email: [foundation@chathamkenthospice.com](mailto:foundation@chathamkenthospice.com)  
Phone: 519-354-3113 extension 2403.