

INSIGHT



STORIES OF LOVE AND LIFE AT STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE

SPRING 2021

Hospice care allowed us to make up for lost time

One of the common beliefs about hospice is that it is the place you go to die, and it can be a sad day for patients and families when they enter the Hospice for the first time.

Those who have experienced hospice care know it can be about life, about making the most of the time you have left, a discovery that Penny Phibbs and her family made in the summer of 2019.

"To be completely honest, I didn't even know what hospice was until my family needed it," says Penny.

In 2018, Penny's ex-husband Paul was diagnosed with cancer.

Although the two were divorced, they had remained friends. Being a lifelong Christian, and having raised two children together, Penny always felt she had failed when her marriage ended after 27 years and saw the chance to take care of Paul as an opportunity to make up for that.

After losing a kidney to cancer, Paul developed lesions on his lungs and the cancer also spread to his brain. He underwent brain surgery in August, 2018 followed by five

rounds of radiation.

Following radiation treatment, the family arranged for Penny and Paul's daughter Brittnee and her husband James to move in with Paul to care for him during the day, and Penny arrived at the end of her workday to care for him through the evening and overnight.

On weekends, Paul stayed at Penny's home in Hagersville and on Sundays they attended church together.

By the beginning of 2019, Brittnee had given birth to her first child at a time when Paul's health continued



At the Hospice, the Phibbs family came together to make lasting memories with each holiday.

"It was a breath of fresh air. Paul improved almost immediately and we created more great memories during those six months than we would have for an entire year at home."

to decline. Penny shared that it became increasingly more difficult for her to provide the level of care Paul required. After much consultation with Paul's medical team the family made the painful

decision to move Paul into Stedman Community Hospice.

"It was a breath of fresh air. Paul improved almost immediately and we created more great memories

Cont'd on page 2...


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during those six months than we would have for an entire year at home," says Penny.

"Paul's mind became clearer during our time at the Hospice and for Thanksgiving, we booked the family room at the Hospice for a celebration. I brought in a cooked turkey and all the trimmings. The whole family came, including my stepson - Paul's son, who flew home from Vancouver. It was wonderful!" says Penny.

"We had Christmas at the Hospice, and our granddaughter Odette even took her first steps there. Paul said he never thought he would live to see that."

"We had Odette's first birthday party at the Hospice. We had a big barbecue there. We had Halloween there."

"The support we received from the Hospice was amazing. The volunteers were amazing. One man was a farmer, and Paul was a farmer. He would come in and the two of them would talk and talk."

"We had great visits with so many friends, friends who were very happy to see that Paul and I had repaired our relationship. It wasn't a romantic relationship, but the love

and respect was obvious to everyone."

Penny says Paul had embraced church and their pastor came to visit Paul in the Hospice regularly. They attended virtual church services, watching on the TV in Paul's room.

"At the Hospice, our kids got to see our relationship become strong again, and that was really good for them. There was so much healing and Paul was at peace. They will carry that with them for the rest of their lives," Penny shared.

During her months of commutes from Hagersville, Penny often baked

treats for the other families in Hospice and for the staff and volunteers, who particularly enjoyed her butter tarts.

On February 20, the one-year anniversary of Paul's death, Penny visited the Hospice and presented a cheque for \$5,500, the proceeds from sales of 172 dozen butter tarts.

"When I reflect on all that occurred, it is clear to me that I was meant to care for him. I had been given a second chance and the Hospice made that possible."

"Pure innocent love radiated from everyone there. I can't say enough."



During the summer, the Phibbs family enjoyed many outdoor visits on the Hospice patio.

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Supporting Families & Volunteers DURING A PANDEMIC

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, on any given day at Stedman Community Hospice, meeting rooms bustled with activity and dedicated volunteers could be seen working the reception desk, making soup in the kitchen, and assisting with patient care in a number of ways.

Today, for the most part, meeting rooms, family gathering rooms and hallways are eerily empty and have been that way for a year, since that infamous day in March 2020 when everything changed.

Volunteers who were active in the building went home and stayed home, group meetings stopped, plexiglass infection control screens went up and face masks went on.

But the care continues, albeit, in many respects, quite differently than it did before.

A fully lit switchboard offers a clue to the amount of work being done by phone within the offices of individual employees. For Supportive Care Co-ordinators Camillia Galezowski and Wes Coburn, their weekly group support sessions that were previously held in-house, now take place over the phone, and are one-to-one.

"People are responding well to telephone support but there are so

many benefits to group sharing that we're hoping to work it into our programming in the spring using Zoom," says Galezowski.

"There's an intimacy component to discussing grief. Group sessions are ideal when they take place in a physical room with everyone seated side by side. For most people it takes time to develop trust. The door is closed and it is a private, sacred space and conducive to sharing. Friendships are made that continue long after support sessions end.

Galezowski says face-to-face group meetings will be difficult to replicate in a Zoom session but it will definitely benefit participants.

For Volunteer and Community Engagement Coordinator Lynn Felker, the word "zoom" has become a much-used word in her vocabulary.

Felker joined the Hospice team during the pandemic, replacing key staff who had recently retired.

Felker says she has been getting to know the hospice volunteers – learning their interests and skill base over the phone and through Zoom. A small group has been meeting regularly on Zoom to explore volunteer-specific training related to hospice.

"These individuals have a wealth

of experience with our Hospice, and their input is essential as we move forward," says Felker.

Elaine Calvert, the Hospice's Executive Director says volunteer engagement is very important to the Hospice team.

"Under normal circumstances, volunteers are an enormous part of the Hospice workforce. Their absence has had a huge impact, not just from a financial perspective but from a care perspective. The vast majority are mothers and fathers, people who have raised children and have grandchildren. They are nurturers with an abundance of life experience. You can't overstate their importance in a Hospice setting," says Calvert.

Felker says volunteers have made some important contributions during the pandemic, assisting on an individual basis with outdoor tasks, and as part of the hospice team, providing emotional support to frontline workers.

Both Felker and Calvert say they are longing for the day when volunteers can be welcomed back in a big way.

"We need them," says Calvert. "It's not the same without them."

IN YOUR Hike 'HOOD Set for May 8th to 17th

Due to pandemic restrictions, we will once again be presenting our annual hike in virtual format as Hike In Your 'Hood 2021 with our generous sponsor Methapharm Specialty Pharmaceuticals.

The event, held from May 8th to May 17th will be self-directed, with great prizes and fun photo contests!

Registration is \$25 per person and includes a commemorative t-shirt for all who register. Details regarding a drive-thru pick up service will be emailed to registered participants in April. T-shirts are custom designed for the 2021 event and include the first name of all Hospice patients who have been in our care since we opened.

This year's Hike family are the Corkes. Vicki Corke along with her daughter Becky and son Brandon have been fundraising for the annual hike since 2011, after their aunt, Cheryl Corke, was cared for at the Hospice. In December, 2019, the

family lost its patriarch, Jamie Corke, well known to Brantford sports fans as a former Brantford Red Sox player and long-time umpire.

"We are so grateful for the tremendous support our family has



Photo Credit: Crystal Young

received over the years", says Brandon.

"We know it takes a great deal of money and a lot of support from the community to provide the cost-free services of the Hospice. We just want to do our part," he shared.

Watch for details on our customized doggy bandanas being newly introduced this year.

Our two photo contests that were a big hit with participants in 2020 will be back. Registered participants will be invited to send photo entries via Facebook for Most Scenic Hike photo and Perfect Pet Partner photo to be shared on the Stedman Community Hospice Facebook page. A \$250 Visa Gift Card will be awarded for the best photo in each of the two categories. In virtual format, as a registered hiker, participants can choose to physically complete a hike, walk, run or wheel, or simply raise funds in support of the Hospice.

"Our 2020 virtual event was a big success with over \$200,000 raised for the Hospice. We're hoping to build on that success for an even better event this year," says Julie Powell, President and CEO of St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation.

Fundraising prizes will be available for Top Fundraiser (18 and over), Top Youth Fundraiser, and Top Team. Please visit www.stedmanhike.ca to register today.



Shelley Groombridge, Outreach Nurse
Stedman Community Hospice

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