

STORIES OF LOVE AND LIFE AT STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE

Hospice helped family prepare for the loss of a “larger than life” husband and father

Brian Smith was one of those people who gave 110 per cent to his family, friends, customers, and life itself. His wife and daughters describe him as being larger than life – super confident, super prepared and super productive, a man who anticipated everyone’s needs and had a contingency plan for every situation.

“After a snowstorm, he wouldn’t just shovel the driveway, he’d top up your gas, warm up your vehicle and point it in the right direction so all you had to do was get in and go,” says Kathryn, his wife of 41 years.

At Brian’s funeral, his daughter Hilary Marcotte shared that when she and her sister Rachel were little, he would line them up and say “Repeat after me – I am somebody! I can do anything!”

He would leave his kids messages like “I love you” on the bathroom mirror, written in soap.

“He was a fabulous storyteller and people loved to be around him,” says Kathryn.

“He quietly helped so many people and he never wanted any recognition for it. He gave his all to everything, and he absolutely loved life.”



Kathryn and Brian Smith derived great pleasure from their travels, including this visit to the Canadian Rockies in 2012. Later on in their marriage the couple enjoyed traveling in their motorhome to Florida and taking trips abroad with family and friends.

Brian’s family agrees that it was his love of life that made it that much more difficult for him to come to terms with a brain cancer diagnosis at the age of 61, and a prognosis of having just eight months to live.

“He was devastated,” says Kathryn, “and he remained devastated until

the end.”

“For a guy who was such a doer, to have your driver’s licence taken away, his whole identity was lost,” says Hilary.

Kathryn describes her husband as a fiercely independent man who felt desperate to get things in order.

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The Smith Family
2024 Hike Ambassadors

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stedmanhike.ca

"He didn't want to leave anything for us to have to do when he was gone," says Kathryn.

"It was always difficult to keep up with Brian's fast pace. As Brian became reliant on others and collaboration became more necessary, it was very difficult for everyone. Throughout his life, Brian had seldom needed or asked for help from anyone."

"Dad couldn't always communicate to others the best way that they could join in; he just felt that you should know," said daughter Rachel Wallace through tears.

Rachel made numerous trips from Saskatchewan during her dad's 21-month illness to spend time with him and to assist her mother and sister.

Brain cancer was devastating for the whole family. As Brian's day-to-day needs increased, Kathryn, Hilary and Rachel found themselves suffering from burnout. It was then they sought the help of Stedman Community Hospice for Brian's daily care.

In addition to providing end-of-life care, the Hospice offers grief and bereavement support to patients and their loved ones from the time a life-limiting diagnosis is made.

"Our relationship with the Hospice began months before Brian needed end-of-life care," says Kathryn.

"We utilized the Hospice's counselling services and it was the best decision we could have made."

"It was amazing for us. And for Dad,"



Brian Smith is pictured here with his daughters, Hilary, Rachel and grandchild Haydon at the 2011 Relay for Life, Lions Park, Brantford.

says Hilary.

Kathryn, an ordained pastor herself, described their Psychosocial, Bereavement and Grief Counsellor, Elizabeth Maracle, as one of the most skilled counsellors she has ever known.

"Brian's speech was affected by the brain tumor, and I really wanted us to make decisions about what to do during Brian's final days before he lost his ability to communicate his wishes. Brian was never at peace with dying and Elizabeth did an amazing job of facilitating these difficult conversations with us."

"Dad was never one who wanted to share his feelings openly with people he didn't know but he remarked at how helpful Elizabeth was to him," says Rachel.

Kathryn says Brian was someone who loved being at home and wanted to be at home as long as it was possible.

"But he loved his family so much

and told us that if we got to the point where we could no longer care for him at home, to utilize the services of the Hospice," says Kathryn.

Brian's wife and daughters cared for him at home throughout his illness. He received support from the Hospice's outreach team at home as needed before entering the Hospice. He passed away on September 8, 2023, after a week in Hospice.

"It was our fear of him falling while we were moving him that led to our decision to go to the Hospice," Kathryn shared.

"Brian was a large man, and when we saw it was a struggle for the trained staff to move him, it validated our decision."

"They gave us space," says Hilary. Someone else was moving him, making the coffee, facilitating the visits from friends, all at a time when we were beyond exhausted."

"They took such good care of him and us," she shared.

Rachel says it wasn't just the inside space, but the outdoor space as well, that gave her comfort.

"I was so grateful for these incredible gardens," says Rachel.

"It really helped me to go outside for walks so I took advantage of this beautiful space."

"Our experience with the Hospice left us with this overwhelming feeling of gratitude for the incredible care we received. We are so very thankful," says Kathryn.

Legacy program benefits both patients and loved ones in grieving process

Thanks to the generosity of donors, Stedman Community Hospice has established quality, free programs geared to supporting, educating, and empowering individuals, families and caregivers dealing with a life-limiting illness. Part of this exceptional care includes our vision for an expanded legacy program to

offer legacy projects to all patients, both in-house, and eventually, to those in the community in our Outreach program.

The term "legacy" is defined as the long-lasting impact of events, actions, etc. that took place in the past, or in a person's life. Legacy projects at Stedman Community Hospice are meant to symbolize an individual's

relationship with their departing loved one, but more than that, the creation of a legacy item can be, in itself, a healthy, therapeutic means of expressing one's grief.

In Canadian culture, the topic of death is often avoided as we have been socialized to be a death-avoiding

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These are examples of some of the legacy projects available for families to consider as part of their grief and bereavement journey.

and death-defying society. Legacy projects can provide an opportunity for clarifying and communicating stories, values, beliefs, and be an expression of love, counteracting the negative impact of avoidance. Legacy projects allow individuals an opportunity to

share valuable information about themselves before they die. Creating a legacy project can contribute to the dignity of the one dying by recognizing the value and worth of the life they lived. Additionally, it can provide a sense of continuity and connection

for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Legacy projects can also allow loved ones to cherish a keepsake for generations to come.

Research shows that legacy projects can have a very positive impact during periods of emotional distress, resulting in fewer depressive symptoms, fewer feelings of hopelessness, and improved life satisfaction. Patients demonstrate increased social interaction and communication with their loved ones at the bedside, often leading to a reduction in anxiety and a decrease in caregiver stress. Patients demonstrate an enhanced end-of-life experience, including a personal sense of dignity.

With this research in mind, Stedman Community Hospice has expanded the legacy program to offer beautiful projects such as hand-holding photography, family fingerprint trees and hearts, hand molds, and teddy bears containing voice and/or heartbeat recordings.

Advance Care Planning: Who is On Your Team?

If you look in the dictionary for the definition of teamwork, you will find, “the combined action of a group of people, especially when effective and efficient.” Effective teamwork often leads to success in sports, but teamwork is just as important in helping us to succeed in life. Teamwork helps solve problems. Every team has a plan - sport teams have their playbooks, choirs have their sheet music, organizations have their work plans. Like any good team, it’s about strong communication and having a plan so everyone is on the same page. By working together, teams can find the solutions that work best.

So, what about our own healthcare team? What would happen if you were suddenly not able to speak for yourself? What if you were too sick or unconscious (not awake) and needed surgery? The reality is we all have choices when it comes to our care but if we don’t share those choices with

others then the likelihood of our wishes being followed when we can’t speak for ourselves decreases significantly. Research suggests that almost 50 per cent of Canadians have not discussed their healthcare plan with loved ones or medical professionals. These conversations are important. Did you know there is a day set aside in Canada for these discussions? April 16, 2024, is National Advance Care Planning Day, the perfect time to assemble your team and develop your plan.

The Advance Care Planning (ACP) conversations you have today will make it easier for your team in the future. Without a plan, loved ones are often stuck at the most vulnerable of times, trying to make good decisions with no clue as to what their family members’ healthcare wishes are. If you are having trouble starting the conversation, ask yourself this simple question, “who do I want on my team and what is important

to my quality of life?”

ACP is a way for a person to prepare for future health care needs. It is a series of conversations. None of us knows what the future holds. We don’t know what health challenges we may face - big or small. However, we do know what we value and what is important to our quality of life. Again, as someone who works in palliative care, I can attest to the fact that those who have had ACP discussions often require fewer interventions and place much less strain on caregivers.

So this year, I encourage everyone to call a team meeting on April 16, 2024, and start the discussion. For more information head to www.advancecareplanning.ca, because the space between guessing and knowing can be closed with a conversation.

*Karen Candy, VP Campus of Care
St. Joseph’s Lifecare Centre*

Hike or Bike for Hospice celebrates 20 Years!

20th Anniversary event features new website and new ways to commemorate the day

This year marks 20 years that Stedman Community Hospice has been providing compassionate end-of-life care to individuals in our community. For each of these 20 years, grateful, community-minded people of all ages have come together in May to raise funds so that Hospice care can be provided to families at no charge.

"We have lots of great fun planned for our 20th Anniversary event and will be adding some new attractions for this special occasion," says Julie Powell, President and CEO of St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation. More details will be made available as we get closer to the event.

She says family favourites such as Guinness World Record stilt walker, Doug the Great, Freeway, the Family Entertainer and his balloon animals, favourite storybook princesses, and bouncy castles will also be part of event day festivities.

Powell says event organizers will be building on the bike component of the event that was added last year.

"We were really thrilled to have more than 90 cyclists come out in 2023 and feel there is lots of potential for even greater participation this year," says Powell.

NEW ONLINE REGISTRATION PLATFORM

Powell says she is excited to be introducing a new simplified online registration platform.

"A major frustration for participants in the past was that each registration had to be processed separately, which can be time-consuming when you're registering a whole family or team. Our new system allows you to register everyone in one transaction," says Powell.

Registered participants will still be able to access all the great features of a personalized fundraising profile, including your photo, fundraising goal and a special message to friends to encourage their support for your fundraising campaign. A running list of top individual and top team campaigns will continue to be displayed on the home page.

"We've kept all the great things that everyone liked about the previous site and added a number of new efficiencies," she says.

2024 AMBASSADORS

This year's ambassadors are the Smith family, Hilary, Rachel and their mom Kathryn. The family was grateful for the services of Stedman Community Hospice in 2023 when Brian, the family patriarch battled brain cancer, and passed away at the age of 62. The Smith family story is on page one of this edition of Insight.

Registration for this year's event is now open at stedmanhike.ca



INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS SATURDAY, MAY 4

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

EARLY BIRD CHECK-IN

99 Wayne Gretzky Parkway
St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre Parking lot
(off Chatham Street)

On-site parking available during early bird check-in

SUNDAY, MAY 5

EVENT DAY!

8:30 a.m. Registration & activities open

9:00 a.m. Cyclists depart from Woodman Park Community Centre, Grey Street

10:30 a.m. Celebration of Life Ceremony

11:00 a.m. Hikers depart

A light boxed lunch is provided to registered attendees following the Hike & Bike (approx. 11:30 a.m.)

No on-site parking on event day! Sharp Bus Lines shuttles available from Lynden Park Mall beginning at 8:15 a.m.

Programs and services of Stedman Community Hospice are made possible by donor support.

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