

FALL/WINTER 2022

INSIGHT

Stedman
Community
Hospice

STORIES OF LOVE AND LIFE AT STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE



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What's Your Legacy?

Evelyn Allison was the kind of aunt people love to have - fun, positive, generous and one who taught without seeming to do so.

Sisters Diane Williams and Denise Shiplo describe their Auntie Ev as a grateful person who led by example, and they weren't at all surprised when she left a gift to Stedman Community Hospice at the time of her death in 2021.

Evelyn Allison was a Bell Canada operator for 30 years and did not have children of her own. She had

"We saw how she gave generously to her community. If an organization had helped her in any way, she didn't forget it. If she saw an organization doing good work, she was happy to donate to them."

married twice, with her first husband, Hector Waters, passing away decades before, and her second husband, Jim Allison, passing away in 2013 at Stedman Community Hospice.

"She treated all her nieces and nephews, and Jim's three children as though we were her children. Everyone loved spending time with her," says Diane.

"We saw how she gave generously to her community. If an organization had helped her in any way, she didn't forget it. If she saw an organization doing good work, she was happy to donate to them."

Evelyn's nieces say she was a meticulous person who put a lot of



Always one to put her best self forward, even when getting admitted to hospital four years ago, Evelyn was in great spirits in this photo with her niece Diane.



Evelyn Allison was a Bell Canada operator for 30 years. This photo of her was published in the Brantford Expositor in August 2010 for a Bell Canada retrospective.

thought into her gift-giving legacy.

"One community organization had provided her and Uncle Jim support for which she was extremely grateful, and so she included them in her gift-giving," says Denise.

"She did the same for the Hospice. Although Uncle Jim was only at the Hospice for a short time, Auntie Ev was so impressed and grateful for the quality of the care he received while there. This support was very important to her and she never forgot it, so she included the Hospice in her will," says Diane.

Diane shared that Evelyn took care of her estate business well in advance of her death, giving legacy gifts to organizations that would help make a difference in the lives of others.

"She was thoughtful right to the end," says Diane.

Julie Powell, President and CEO of St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation, the official fundraising organization for Stedman Community Hospice, says

a significant portion of donations given to Stedman Community Hospice come from grateful patients and grateful families.

"Legacy gifts, no matter the size, can make a significant difference in the lives of many," Julie added.

There are many ways to give that won't impact your financial resources today, but will have a significant impact on our community Hospice in the future. Join our group of legacy donors, who, like Evelyn, believe in community.

If you are interested in more information about planned giving at Stedman Community Hospice, please contact Nicole Clarkson in the Foundation office at 519-751-7096, ext 2556.

The Foundation also encourages individuals to discuss planned giving with their financial or legal advisor.

COPING WITH GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Coping with a loss at any time of year can be painful but may be particularly so during the holidays.



Surrounded by multiple trigger points from television advertisements to poignant pieces of music to scents of the season, Christmas can be a time of increased sadness and heartache for someone who is grieving.

While grief never fully goes away, there will be times when emotions are much more heightened than other times, and when the sense of loss can feel greater. Christmas – the season which celebrates love and family time – is most certainly one of these times. It doesn't matter whether your special person died a few weeks, months or years ago, you may struggle to cope with your grief at Christmas.

Just as grieving is different for different people, ways of coping can be different as well. What helps one person may not help someone else, but having a coping plan is highly recommended. The following is a list of suggestions that can help you cope during the holidays:

- Try to be sensitive to everyone's needs as everyone in the family will have different ways of grieving

- Give children (and yourself) permission to look forward to and enjoy Christmas, to smile and have fun
- Also give yourself permission to not be okay
- Make space to remember that someone is missing and acknowledge that it is natural to miss them
- Talk as a family about how you are all feeling about Christmas
- Decide together what you would like to do to remember your important person
- Make plans but also give yourself permission to change your mind
- Be kind to yourself and if things become too much, find a way to take time out

THERE IS HELP AVAILABLE

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Stedman Community Hospice:

519-751-7096 / Ext. 2500

St. Joseph's Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) 1-905-972-8338

Education on grief can be received at Mygrief.ca

Your workplace may have services available through your Employee Assistance Program. Ask your Human Resources Department or Manager for contact information.

DID YOU KNOW?



1909

patients we have cared for in our Hospice since we opened our doors in 2004

51%
of our patients are female

49%
of our patients are male

88%

of patients receive Outreach care prior to admission to Hospice



Number of volunteer hours given for Hospice support this past year

3723

Brett Ramey

"I want to be where my kids are."



When Brett Ramey found out he had pancreatic cancer at the age of 53, he made just one request of his family: "Keep me home as long as you possibly can."

"He was adamant that he wanted to be at home," says wife MaryAnn.

Being in his Brantford home with his wife, son Braydin and daughter Rashell was important to Brett. He was a devoted husband and father and when he wasn't putting in long days at Brett's Hair Design, he was either cooking up a storm at home, cheering Braydin on at a Brantford Red Sox Junior game, or at the trailer in Long Point relaxing with the whole family. He set aside Mondays to hang out with Rashell.

"Above all, he was a breadwinner who worked hard to earn a good living for his family," says Rashell.

"Of all the things he taught me, the one thing he instilled most in me was

a strong work ethic," she shared.

"Dad rarely stayed still and never took time to think about his health. He had not been feeling great but had not gone to the doctor. In fact, I was the one who first noticed there was something really wrong. It was close to Christmas when I looked at him this one day and the whites of his eyes were yellow. He didn't take me seriously and I had to tell him three times to look in the mirror. When he did, I could see by the look on his face that he was scared," says Rashell, who was 15 at the time.

Brett visited with doctors right away who cautioned him to prepare for what could be very bad news. The family had already booked a family getaway to the Dominican Republic for New Year's Eve and Brett quickly informed the doctor he had no plans of cancelling.

"He was stubborn," MaryAnn chuckled.

"The doctor didn't stand in his way. He gave Brett his card and told him to be sure to call should he get sick while on vacation."

"Brett and I knew it was bad, but we didn't tell the kids," says MaryAnn.

"We wanted to get the vacation in, knowing there was a good chance it would be our last one together. I'm so glad we decided to go."

Brett's diagnosis of pancreatic cancer came on January 10th, just days after their return, and a diagnosis of liver cancer followed. After surgery, the family was told the tumor was the size of a football and had wrapped itself around some major organs, so it was impossible to remove it entirely. A CT scan in May indicated he had only days to live.

In March, just two months after Brett's diagnosis, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. Overnight, the government vacated volunteers from health care facilities, including



In the three days Brett Ramey was at the Hospice, Tara, one of the nurses, created hand molds for Braydin and Rashall, as part of the Hospice's legacy program. The child's hand is clasped with their parent's hand and a detailed mold is cast, providing a unique keepsake that lasts for decades.

hospices, and visitor restrictions were put in place. For a while, only two essential caregivers were able to visit dying individuals in hospices.

"For the first two years of the

pandemic many patients chose to stay at home longer in order to have more family around them," says Dr. Bernadette McNeil, Medical Director at Stedman Community Hospice.

Brett Ramey was one such patient. Although Brett passed away at Stedman Community Hospice, he only spent three days there. In May, he began receiving care at home through the Hospice's Community Outreach Program, where a doctor and nurse team provided specialized consultation based on Brett's identified goals of care.

As a lifelong Brantford resident and local business owner, Brett had a large circle of friends. He was known to be a kind and loyal friend, always willing to lend a hand to a friend in need.

"He had lots of friends who wanted to say their goodbyes," says Braydin.

Brett was an avid car enthusiast and MaryAnn recalls members of the Piston Pusher Car Club driving by the house in their classic cars, tooting their horns, all for Brett.

A few days before Canada Day, a neighbour let the family know he would be lighting fireworks at sundown in Brett's honour.

"By then he was quite ill and we

rolled his bed to the front window so he could watch the show," says Mary Ann.

"He so appreciated all those things."

On July 1st the family made the decision to move Brett to the Hospice and on July 4th he passed away.

"We were so thankful that we could keep him at home right until the end. We outfitted the house with all the equipment he needed. It wasn't easy. It took the three of us taking turns looking after him at home, a lot of help with meal preparation and moral support from both sides of the family, and I doubt we could have done it without the Outreach team by our side," says MaryAnn.

"He wanted his kids around him. That was his comfort. The outreach team made it all possible."



COVER PHOTO:

The Rameys - Brett, Rashell, Braydin and MaryAnn, in the Dominican Republic on New Year's Eve, on their last family vacation and just days before Brett's cancer diagnosis.



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HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTS ARE

Being home during the pandemic was a gift for one family's journey through cancer diagnosis, treatment and saying goodbye.



As devastating as the pandemic has been, for one woman afraid of dying alone, it created a set of circumstances that allowed her to live and die peacefully, surrounded by her family.

By the time Jay-Dee Webster's cancer was diagnosed in 2017, it was already too late to save her life. The excruciating back pain she'd been experiencing for months turned out to

"At the time of her diagnosis, we were all living under the same roof, so that made things easier to manage."

be non-small cell lung cancer that had spread throughout her body and into her bones. Doctors set out to contain and hopefully shrink her tumors with a course of radiation treatment.

Jay-Dee, an educational assistant at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic School Board, supporting special needs students, became wheelchair-bound around the time of diagnosis and took leave from her job of 24 years to undergo treatment.

"I had no experience caring for someone who was very ill. I called the Hospice on every issue and they were always there to provide me with answers and support."

"That was really hard for her," says daughter Harmony.

"She absolutely loved her job and her students were like family to her."

Two years earlier, Jay-Dee and husband Jerry, in planning for their retirement, had built an apartment onto the family home in St. George, and Harmony, her partner Aaron and daughters Mekayla and Kennedy moved into the main house.

"At the time of her diagnosis, we were all living under the same roof, so that made things easier to manage," says Harmony.

"We all had roles related to her care. Dad was the cook, Aaron was the heavy lifter who moved her from her bed chair to the vehicle. I took her to her clinic appointments and looked after her day-to-day care, my brother Clayton called from the U.S. every morning to check on her, and the girls were her constant companions."

After five days of intense radiation therapy, Jay-Dee was able to move more freely and was able to walk again for a while. A doctor and nurse care team from the Hospice's Community Outreach Program and a nurse from Home and Community Care Support Services (formerly the L.H.I.N.) came regularly to assess Jay-Dee's needs and to help with pain management.

"We couldn't have done it without them," says Harmony.

"Dr. McNeil and nurse Shelley

Groombridge from the Hospice, and nurse Karen Wilkes from Community Care were our link to the outside world, especially during the pandemic."

"I had no experience caring for someone who was ill. There were so many things –vomiting, the difficulty breathing, constantly varying degrees of pain – it was all new to me. I called the Hospice on every issue and they were always there to provide me with answers and support."

With radiation and pain management, there were periods when Jay-Dee could live a fairly normal life. For a while, radiation successfully shrank the tumors and she was able to drive and run errands.

In reflecting on the last two years of her mother's life, Harmony says the pandemic was a blessing for the family.

"Schools were closed so Mekayla and Kennedy were at home, they were here with her."

"She became my teacher," says Kennedy, who was 15 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"It was perfect. She really missed being with her students, and I really appreciated the one-on-one lessons. I had access to other teachers but I chose her."

"Plus she was afraid to be alone," says Mekelah. "She didn't say it outright, but you knew. She always wanted someone in the room with

her, so being home from school made it easy for someone to be with her at all times."

"The pandemic forced us into a small circle where it was just the family and the care team. It was the best two years of family life we ever experienced, and it was due to the pandemic," says Harmony.

Jay-Dee's oncologist had initially indicated that she probably would not live beyond six months but she survived another four and a half years, passing away on November 13, 2021, with her husband, children, and grandchildren in her room with her.

Jay-Dee's death came suddenly that day.

"I don't believe any of us thought it was her day to go," says Harmony.

Harmony contacted the care team to give them the news.

"Shelley told me she would like to get my mom ready to go to the funeral home, and even though I expressed it wasn't necessary, she came by later that day and bathed and dressed her. She was amazing," says Harmony.

"Dr. McNeil and Karen came to the house as well to provide support to the family."

"These people were important in our daily lives for nearly five years. They will always be special to me and I'll never forget all they did for my family."



PET THERAPY

Visiting pets bring comfort and joy to patients

Pet therapy can have a tremendously positive impact on hospice patients and is so much more than a simple visit with an animal. "Pets have an incredible ability to provide comfort and joy to us," says Acting Hospice Director Kerri VanSickle.

A pet visit is therapeutic; the natural bond between humans and animals can bring joy, humour, unconditional love, and soothing companionship for patients.

The close companionship of pet dogs and cats provides a relaxing and understanding presence to those on the end-of-life journey. Pets can provide a positive distraction from physical and emotional symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath and anxiety.

In addition, animals also have a profound, measured impact on the social and emotional well-being of patients. The soothing presence and unconditional affection of a beloved

animal often results in reduced feelings of loneliness, reduced feelings of depression and lower levels of anxiety.

Juliana Millar says bringing her dog Benji to the Hospice brought a smile to her grandmother's face and provided her with added comforts of home.

"Benji and I would often visit my grandma at her house. She would make homemade dog biscuits for him. His happy-go-lucky spirit always made her smile," added Juliana.

Studies have also shown that pet therapy can contribute to the release of good endorphins that promote a sense of happiness and well-being.

ABOVE: Hospice RNs Ann, Josie and Andrea enjoying the benefits of our volunteer Pet Therapy dogs.

LEFT: "Bringing Benji into the hospice benefited not only myself and my family that was visiting but also my grandmother," says Juliana Millar, granddaughter of patient Gayle Swann.

Often, benefits are realized just from quietly enjoying the animal's presence in silence, or talking to, petting, holding or cuddling the animal.

"It's amazing to witness the lifelong bond between our patients and their pets," says Kerri.

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

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