

STORIES OF LOVE AND LIFE AT STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE

Gratitude prevails through grieving process

Dano was the love of her life. Although Gwen Schlatman was anything but smitten when she first discovered Dan Borthwick had a thing for her 35 years ago, his persistence convinced her to give him a chance.

"He was a party animal type guy, and I was kind of shy and low key, and when a mutual friend told me he liked me I said "Naw, I don't want to go out with him," Gwen reflected.

Gwen says in the winter when she was 21, she had her tonsils out and he came to the hospital to see her, which she thought was pretty nice. While she was recuperating at home, he called and asked if he could come visit and if there was anything he could bring. She asked for a chocolate popsicle and a banana popsicle, two things not so easy to find in winter.

"He showed up with both and said he had to drive to five stores to find them," says Gwen.

"I thought he must be a pretty nice guy, and he was. He would do anything for anybody. If he said he was going to do something for someone, he did it. Very reliable. He was a great husband for the 33 years we were married."

Gwen retired from SC Johnson in



Dan Borthwick is pictured here with his wife Gwen, attending a family wedding a few months before he passed away from pancreatic cancer.

March of 2020 and Dano retired from Unifor National Union in September, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. A month after he retired, Dano returned from a fishing trip and Gwen noticed his colouring was jaundiced.

Dano went to the hospital and doctors discovered a cancerous tumour near his pancreas. The tumour was removed in November, and while

doctors felt they got everything, over the next few months Dano developed cysts on his liver. In May 2021, further exploration revealed he had full blown Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, and Dano began a course of chemotherapy.

Over the next few months, complications from chemotherapy caused delays in treatment and required Dano to stay in hospital. In October the couple was told nothing more could be done and Dano made the decision to go to Stedman Community Hospice.

Shortly after Dano entered the Hospice, he decided to have a Celebration of Life, and he, Gwen and the family arranged to have a big party at the Oakland Legion where they were members.

"I remember him saying "What if nobody comes?" says Gwen.

"People are going to come!" Gwen responded, and that Saturday, more than 400 people came to say goodbye to their good friend.

"He had not been feeling so great that week but he lasted the whole evening and he saw everyone who lined up to say Hi."

Shortly after, Dano began to go downhill quickly, and wasn't eating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



much. The kitchen staff tried different foods and discovered he liked smoothies so that became his daily routine.

"They didn't just look after him, they looked after me too, making sure I was eating enough," says Gwen.

Hospice volunteers crafted a "handy hug", which fit Dano's arm span, with a cut-out hand pocket sewn to each end. When friends came to visit, each one wrote a note to Dano on the handy hug.

During those last few days Gwen saw changes in his behaviour and temperament. Dano, whose disposition was normally very good, was now easily irritated and directed his frustrations at his wife.

"That was difficult to watch, to take; that was not him," says Gwen.

"The Hospice staff was wonderful in helping me understand. They pulled me aside and told me not to take it personally, that it was all part of the illness. That was very helpful. I appreciated that," Gwen shared.

Soon Dano was sleeping continuously and was not

responding to his family's presence. His wife, his brother Sheldon, and his father, Ken, took turns staying with him. On December 4, 2021, Dano died with Gwen and Sheldon at his side.

Gwen placed Dano's handy hug in his casket to go with him and chose Stairway to Heaven as the song to play during Dano's walkout ceremony.

"I should have picked a shorter song. I forgot how long it was," Gwen chuckled.

Gwen shared that although Dano's care at the Hospice was provided free of charge, it was important to her to express her gratitude with a donation. After some checking, Gwen made a donation in the amount she estimated it would have cost her had she been charged for the care.

"The care and compassion of the staff is what I will remember most about being at the Hospice," says Gwen.

"On that last day one of the girls came up to me and thanked me for the privilege of caring for my husband. Here I was, so thankful for all



During the pandemic most family visits at Stedman Community Hospice took place outdoors. Dan is photographed here with his beloved German shepherd Bailee, his brother Sheldon and partner Krissy Roberts, stepsister Sue, and his father Ken.

they did for us, and they are the ones thanking me! They are truly special people."

On May 7, Gwen Borthwick will be this year's ambassador for the 19th Annual Hike or Bike for Hospice fundraiser,

along with her dog, Bailee.

"I'm looking forward to fundraising for the Hospice and to meeting and chatting with others who have been blessed to receive care from this wonderful place."

Volunteer Information Night Thursday, April 20, 7 p.m.

DISCOVER HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE WITH YOUR TIME

The hospice experience is supported by a dedicated group of people who give of their time and talents. Together, their contributions fulfill the mission to celebrate each life with dignity and safety. Volunteering builds strong communities and enhances the support available to people in difficult situations. Your time will be recognized and valued at the Stedman Community Hospice as you provide practical care for your friends and community neighbours.

To learn more or to register for the information session, please contact Lynn Felker at lfelker@stedmanhospice.ca or 519-751-7096 ext 2523.



Pictured here are some of the In-Residence Clinical Care Team and some of the Palliative Care Outreach Team (PCOT) at Stedman Community Hospice. The In-Residence team consists of RNs, PSWs, physicians and Spiritual, Grief & Bereavement Practitioners. The PCOT team consists of eight physicians and five RNs, two Supportive Care Practitioners and a Clinical Navigator. The PCOT team works collaboratively with Home and Community Care Support Services and agency service providers, to deliver palliative and end-of-life care in the patient's home.

Palliative care matters

Most of us would agree, the way we live matters. But so does the way we die. At Stedman Community Hospice, we know the value of a palliative approach to care.

Palliative Care is a holistic team approach that offers a support system to help people live their best life until death. It is an approach to care that recognizes the unique needs of families who must learn to cope with their loved one's illness and death. Palliative care focuses on providing relief from symptoms, pain, and physical, spiritual, and mental stress. It can benefit patients and their families as soon as there is a diagnosis of a life-limiting illness, not just the last few days or weeks of a person's life. Palliative care enhances quality of life. It affirms life and regards dying as a normal process. When you think about it, palliative care is actually more about living than it is about dying. As we look at the future of palliative care, Stedman Community Hospice is committed to providing palliative programs and services to meet the needs of our community.

Navigating the medical system can be daunting. Understanding palliative care options can be confusing whether it's an individual's need or that of a family member. As leaders in hospice palliative care, Stedman Community Hospice is here to help. We know without question that behind every person needing palliative care there is a spouse, mother, father, child, co-worker, student, caregiver, or sibling with real lives, concerns, fears, commitments and responsibilities. The way we live matters. Let's continue the discussion on the way we die because it matters too. Do you have a question around palliative care?

***We're here to help,
please contact us at
519-751-7096, ext 2500***

Karen Candy
Vice President



HIKE OR BIKE for Hospice Sunday, May 7

Annual event now features route for cyclists

The 19th annual Hike or Bike fundraiser in support of Stedman Community Hospice will have some exciting new features this year, including cycling routes for the growing number of bike enthusiasts in the area.

"In previous years, those who preferred biking to hiking held a separate event on the same day but missed out on the festivities and fun of the larger event," says Julie Powell, President & CEO of St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation, the event organizer.

"This year, cyclists will be included, departing just down the road from the Hospice at the Woodman Park Community Centre, and taking a route that doesn't intersect with the hiking route taken by the hundreds of walkers who participate each year. Because cyclists do a longer route, they will start earlier than hikers, allowing them to finish in time to join the activities taking place on the grounds of St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre."

Powell says volunteers will be on hand at Woodman Park Community Centre to provide bike security while cyclists take part in the festivities. Those festivities include a Celebration of Life ceremony, family-friendly features including Guinness World Record stilt walker, Doug the Great,



Freeway the Clown and his balloon animals, favourite storybook princesses, bouncy castles, face-painting and more!

All participants will receive an official 2023 t-shirt as part of their \$25 registration fee, along with a boxed lunch and refreshments.

Those who raise \$250 or more will receive a gift at check-in. Larger prizes will be awarded to the top three individual fundraisers, top team and top youth fundraiser. The first 75 people to register online will receive a free doggie bandana featuring the "Hike or Bike" logo.

This year's ambassador is Gwen Borthwick, whose story is featured on the cover of this issue of INSIGHT. Gwen's husband Dano was a resident of Stedman Community Hospice who died from pancreatic cancer in December, 2021.

Registration is now open.
Visit stedmanhike.ca today to sign up and begin fundraising for a wonderful cause.

INFORMATION FOR HIKE or BIKE PARTICIPANTS

Saturday, May 6

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 7

HIKE DAY!

- 8:30 a.m.** Registration opens
- 9:00 a.m.** Cyclists depart from Woodman Park Community Centre, Grey St.
- 10:30 a.m.** Celebration of Life Ceremony
- 10:50 a.m.** Warm-up
- 11:00 a.m.** Hike begins

A light boxed lunch is provided to registered attendees following the hike/bike

No on-site parking on event day! Sharp Bus Lines shuttle available from Lynden Park Mall

Visit stedmanhike.ca to register or donate today!

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

Donate online today at sjlc.ca



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