

Beyond words: exploring grief through creativity



Vicki and Dennis Sanders celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

A healthy dose of amusing banter and harmless teasing is, some say, the secret to a long and happy marriage. Vicki and Dennis Sanders lived by that creed.

They grew up on the same street in Saanich and met when Vicki was

15 years old. They wed and built a rewarding life together with three children and six grandchildren. They never agreed on TV shows, but they always enjoyed a good laugh and simple pleasures, like sipping coffee in their gazebo after sunrise.

“We were married almost 60 years. We were supposed to make it to 60,” says Vicki.

Following Dennis’ death on September 8, 2021, a friend encouraged Vicki to connect with Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services. She signed up for a three-hour workshop called Exploring Grief Through Creativity.

The workshops provide a supportive way to explore experiences of grief and loss through mixed media, incorporating drawing, painting, and collage. No art experience is required—just a willingness to try something new.

Finding creative ways to explore this experience can help during the grieving process, says Tamar Swartz, a bereavement counsellor, registered social worker and visual artist with expressive arts training who leads the workshops.

The workshop isn’t about composition or realistic representations, Tamar says. She encourages participants to follow their own creativity, and in this context, pair it with their grief.

“Mixed media expressive art has a way of revealing incredible insights and emotions that go beyond words.”

Vicki brought in some photos of Dennis for reference and used paint and collage. “The fact that you can use something that’s physically tangible to express your feelings and acknowledge your loss, is very healing,” she says.

Vicki says she loved sharing her piece and learning about what others had done. “It’s nice to hear from other grieving people in a safe environment, because you realize you are not alone. It’s important to get it out and not to keep it in,” she says.

“The workshop helped to take away the intensity of my grief. I could focus not so much on what happened but on what our life together was about.”

Vicki enjoyed it so much, she enrolled in a second offering of the workshop, which runs about once a month. “By the second workshop I had learned that there aren’t stages of grief, rather there is a grieving journey. I want to register for a third workshop, but I will leave room for other people to sign up!”



Tamar Swartz is a bereavement counsellor, registered social worker, and visual artist with expressive arts training. Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services are made possible thanks to the generosity of our donors.

Read our 2021–22 Annual Report on our website at www.victoriahospice.org or call 250-519-1744 to request a print copy.



The heart of hospice: care and comfort

The generosity of Victoria Hospice donors supports patients in so many practical ways. Recent gifts help patients stay cool and comfortable on the Inpatient Unit and on the rooftop garden.

Beautiful new wheeled recliners provide a cozy way to relax, have a meal or a visit. Sleek new air conditioners were a welcome addition this summer to keep the heat at bay.



Essential elements for comfort: an easeful chair and air conditioner for the perfect temperature. Pictured here are longtime volunteer Magee Miller and new team member Rochhe Laputa (HCA).

Two motorized awnings provide protection from the elements on the rooftop garden and enhance this very special place.

Our gratitude goes to the Susan & Wayne Mew Foundation in memory of Jack Purcell, Peninsula Co-op, the Victoria Imperial Lions Club, Susan E. Crow, Linda and Warren McGillivray, our partners at Island Health, and our generous donor community for supporting these key additions.

Gifts that provide ease and comfort to people in their dying time are so appreciated. Thank you to everyone who contributed so thoughtfully.

Electrical Maintenance Supervisor Martin Schicchi's team installed the new awnings that support a wonderful atmosphere on the rooftop.



Holiday gift idea!

The Teeny Tiny Garden Tour 2023 Calendar lets inspiration last all year long. Featuring exquisite blooms and garden hideaways, the calendar now includes moon phases for your lunar planting plans.

Calendars are \$25 (includes shipping) with all proceeds supporting compassionate end-of-life care at Victoria Hospice, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors.

Special thanks to volunteer photographers Lorna Shaw and Pam Irvine.

Order at victoriahospice.org or call 250-519-1744.



Cedar Hill Ladies golf group a driving force for fundraising

The Cedar Hill Golf Club Ladies' Division players are aces not only on the links. They're champion community fundraisers.

Their annual Ladies' Field Day charity golf event has raised more than \$250,000 for Victoria Hospice since 1986. This year, they broke previous records to raise more than \$27,700 through event registrations, a silent auction, and a range of inventive fundraising activities. A fun event inclusive of developing players, the Ladies' Field Day is a favourite among South Island golfers and garners a waitlist topped at 120 this year.

When room rental cost and a municipal grant shortfall presented a challenge, Peninsula Co-op stepped in with a matching \$10K donation in addition to their generous sponsorship.

"Peninsula Co-op is honoured to have supported the Cedar Hill Ladies' efforts



Carol Thompson and Doreen Hall are all smiles in support of Victoria Hospice

for nearly a decade," says Marketing and Community Relations Director Lindsay Gaudette. "We truly believe in supporting Victoria Hospice as they care for people in our community when they need it most."

Field Day Coordinators Doreen Hall and Carol Thompson have been hitting the road to solicit donations for the event for more than 10 years.

The positive response to the tournament and generous contributions shows how many people in the community have experienced and value hospice services, they say.

"Everyone knows someone who has been

touched by hospice care," says Carol, whose father died in hospice in Kelowna. "I don't think there have been many times when Doreen and I have been turned down when asking for donations." "It's one of the most worthwhile things I do," Doreen says.

The caring team and peaceful environment at hospice were greatly appreciated when Doreen's husband came to hospice for the last 24 hours of his life, she says.

"After Dr. Wilde, one of the doctors, came to speak to us, my daughter said, 'That was an angel.'"

Driving forces behind the successful event include committee members and dozens of volunteers, who enjoy—as the ladies say—creating opportunities for people to support compassionate end-of-life care.

Tournament Chair Alison Farquhar says, "People are so generous, and everyone enjoys dedicating the day to the event—and partly because it's such a worthy cause."

"The proof is in the pudding with the number of ladies who return each year," Doreen says.

Wendy Swonnell, Carol Thompson, and Doreen Hall with Victoria Hospice Development Officer Raisa Frenette





Celebrating this year's Cycle of Life Tour presented by Think Communications

*Thank you to the riders, generous
sponsors, and community supporters
for raising \$310,000 for hospice care
on Vancouver Island!*

What an amazing weekend in support of
compassionate end-of-life care at Vancouver Island
hospices! The fundraising effort of all the Cycle of
Life Tour riders was off the charts and this year's ride
was a record-breaker! We would like to thank all
the riders, supporters, sponsors, and volunteers
who helped make this event a huge success.



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The heart of dedication: retired physicians return to serve

Caring for people who are dying wasn't simply a career for three Victoria physicians. For Gail Saiger, Manny Fritsch, and Tommy Connolly, it's a lifelong dedicated practice. The retired physicians returned to the Victoria Hospice Inpatient Unit this spring in new roles that speak to their commitment to compassionate end-of-life care and the people served by hospice. Palliative care physician Manny Fritsch and respirologist Tommy Connolly recently joined the volunteer team on the unit and palliative care physician Gail Sager holds a new role as a unit clerk.

Previously the medical director of a long-term care facility and palliative care physician based in Ladysmith, Manny began his career delivering babies.

"When I interned in 1977, I delivered babies on the third floor of the Richmond Pavilion [the current site of the Victoria Hospice Inpatient Unit]. I enjoyed being at Hospice much more than at the big teaching hospital in Vancouver—this was a great place to learn. Hospice is the best part of the hospital," he says.

"I have the same feelings about a patient having a good death as I do the delivery of a baby if everything goes well." After a nearly 40-year career in respirology, Tommy says his volunteer role at hospice is rewarding in more ways than one.

"At Hospice, the emphasis on empathy, care, and consideration for others—that's all quite beneficial, and you can take that and use it in the rest of one's life. Not just



Manny Fritsch, Gail Saiger, and Tommy Connolly

in looking after people who are dying but in your day-to-day activities with your family and friends,' he says. "You can be, let's say, a little bit nicer."

Following 15 years on the Victoria Hospice medical team, Gail helped establish the new 12-bed acute palliative care unit at Royal Jubilee Hospital in 2020.

"It was exciting and so worthwhile, and we developed a great team on 8 South," she says. "But I missed Victoria Hospice. I was thrilled that the Director of Clinical Services was willing to hire me in this new role. I'm learning a lot and grateful for the opportunity to support the team in this way." And Victoria Hospice is grateful to these three dedicated practitioners. Welcome (back) to the team!



Your Donation Makes a Difference

☐ **YES!** I will join the Hospice Hearts Monthly Giving Club!

My **monthly donation** will be: ☐ \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other

☐ My **one-time donation** will be: ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1000 ☐ Other

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Compassionate end-of-life care at Victoria Hospice is made possible through the generosity of our community. The people named below have been commemorated in memory or in honour by friends and loved ones through gifts to Victoria Hospice between April and July, 2022.

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THE NEWSLETTER OF
VICTORIA HOSPICE

We'd love to hear your hospice story.
Please connect with us if you would
like to share your experience.

Contact Lorelee Smyth
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level of depth and meaning for your life.

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you can help make a difficult situation the best it can
be. Everybody passes away at some point, and it's so real
and so raw for their loved ones. If you can take away even
a little bit of suffering, you slowly improve the world
through simple acts of kindness and attention. The world
can be so superficial right now, but we're part of a pivotal
moment in the lives of patients and families and we have
the opportunity make such a positive impact. They'll
remember it forever. You can't redo it.



Breanne Ohl , Victoria Hospice
Community Response Coordinator