

## Fuelled by compassion: Cycle of Life Tour

When you combine wild ideas and practical expertise, you can create something wonderful.

That's what Graham Robertson and Beth Turner did when they launched the Cycle of Life Tour to support hospice care on Vancouver Island. The event has raised more than \$1.5 million to date.

Their recipe for success: he's the visionary founder and she's the voice of reason, they joke.

"I had great big ambitions and some ridiculous ideas. Some of them were realistic and some were not. I had no event experience before the Cycle of Life Tour," Graham says. "All the logistics – the gears, components, and moving parts of the event – were thanks to Beth."

Kicking off in 2011 with Graham riding solo from Anchorage, Alaska to Victoria, the fundraiser now includes hundreds of cyclists, volunteers, and supporters who keep coming back, year after year.

The two-day, 200-km Cycle of Life Tour winds through the Saanich Peninsula, the Cowichan Valley, and Salt Spring Island. It includes a few ferry rides, a campout (hot showers included), great meals, and at least a few challenging sections offset by the motivation that propels the riders and volunteers.

"People who have been touched by hospice are everywhere, and they are the most dedicated human beings you will ever find," Beth says.

Victoria cyclist Kelly McClaren remembers her loved ones when she rides. She also rides for everyone who might need hospice care, she says.



Organizing the Cycle of Life Tour has been a family effort for Graham, Beth, Ari and Elaina.

"When you see the difference hospice makes, you want to make sure it's available and the standard for end-of-life care. I want to make sure everyone on the Island has access to this important service."

Cyclists commit to raising more than \$1,000 for the ride and include bottle drives and garage sales along with physical training to prepare for the event. Some are seasoned cyclists who choose the "enduro" option for the ride, and others are committed novices. But they all share the same excitement when it's time to saddle up for the weekend, Graham says.

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*Save the date*

## FASHION FOR COMPASSION

This fun and elegant afternoon features a delicious lunch, fashion show, pop-up boutique, silent auction, and more to support compassionate care at Victoria Hospice.

Save the date to join us **Sunday, October 22, 2023**, at the Delta Ocean Pointe Resort.

Tickets go on sale in July!





# The 12th Annual Hike for Hospice was a wonderful day for compassionate care in our community!

Hundreds of people (and dozens of four-legged friends) gathered at Fisherman's Wharf Park under sunny skies on Sunday, May 7. Together, we raised more than \$70,000 for patients and families at Victoria Hospice!

Thanks to everyone who fundraised, sponsored, and supported the event in so many creative ways. See you next year!

### SPONSORS

Thrifty Foods, Heart Pharmacy, Dignity Memorial, KPMG, Bayshore Home Health (raffle sponsor), CTV, CFX 1070, 107.3 Virgin Radio, Used.ca

### COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

City of Victoria, Hotel Grand Pacific, Big Wheel Burger, Mount Doug Springs Water, Mufaro Marimba, Pets West, Royal Oak Burial, Sotheby's International Realty, Stages Performing Arts School, Titanium Tents, Event Service Production, Digital Direct Printing



### Cycle of Life Tour *Continued from page 1*

"It's great to see the reunions at the start of every ride, with everyone sharing the positive energy of celebrating the experience. But also they're sharing their grief and that's really meaningful as well."

The event is now organized by Victoria Hospice on behalf of Vancouver Island

hospices but continues to be inspired by Graham and Beth.

"It's amazing to see how the event has grown from the momentum of their vision and leadership," says Wendy Innes, Victoria Hospice Director of Development. They've created an

incredible legacy that picks up speed every year."

*This year's Cycle of Life Tour runs Aug. 26-27. Find out how you can sponsor a rider or volunteer at [cycleoflifetour.ca](http://cycleoflifetour.ca) or contact [debbie.greenway@victoriahospice.org](mailto:debbie.greenway@victoriahospice.org)*

# Heather Fox: Caring for the caregiver

When Heather Fox was a counsellor on the Palliative Response Team in the 1990s, there was no counselling support available to staff, at least not from someone experienced in caring for the dying. So she helped create the important role of caring for the caregiver.

Since then, she has supported countless Victoria Hospice care providers through confidential counselling, workshops on self-care, or simply holding space for staff in distress – after a sudden death, a personal loss, and through the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One of the good things about coming to see me is that I already know half the story,” says Heather. “Staff don’t have to explain what their work at Hospice is about because I’ve been there.”

The compassionate care she has provided for 25 years is supported by our loyal donors. Like Heather, they know that hospice work exposes you to

the very essence of humanity.

“You see people when the veil between life and death is thin,” says Heather.

“You see suffering and sorrow and anguish, but you also see grace and love and kindness.”

While Heather offers specialized support for hospice staff, her tips for self-care could apply to anyone caring for a loved one at home.

Asking for help is key. “There is no shame in asking for help,” she says. “Asking for, accepting, and receiving help is an act of courage and generosity because you’re allowing somebody else to give to you when you’re the one who is so good at giving. Trying to do it all yourself is not realistic, nor is it healthy or sustainable.”

She also stresses the importance of ensuring your life has joy in it. “Take in all the opportunities you can to fill yourself with life, laughter, music, good food,



Heather invites clients to check in with their hearts at the start of each counselling session using her heart-o-meter.

good friends, solitude, dancing, nature, whatever fills you up.”

Heather is filled with joy when she thinks of her time at Victoria Hospice and the people she has served. “I love this work and I could weep with gratitude for the chance to do it.”

## Simply and profoundly in honour

Honouring people who are dying is what hospice care is all about.

At the Victoria Hospice Inpatient Unit, we also honour people after they have died.

With the consent of loved ones, a gong is sounded to invite everyone – staff, friends, family – to gather in vigil before the person’s body leaves the building. Two people unfold a special handmade quilt and drape the body respectfully.



A member of the staff speaks the person’s name and words of honour for them and their life. Others, including family, may speak as well.

“This patient honoring extends the care, dignity, and compassion that staff have offered the patient, family, and friends while in our care,” Clinical Nurse Leader Tracy McConnell says. “When family and friends are present, we sometimes hear their expressions of gratitude. We witness their tears, and exchange hugs.”

This transitional moment is full of respect, Spiritual Care Coordinator Debra Caravitis says.

“It’s a very intentional time. It’s a time to slow down and be quiet together in community to honour the patient, the family, and the work we are doing. It

is simple, yet profound ritual and an important part of our hospice culture,” she says.

“Families who have wanted this ritual to occur appreciate that others come together in gratitude for their loved one.”

Gathering together to honour someone’s life and death touches the heart of everyone involved.

“As long as I have been here, the tears are never far behind my eyes,” Tracy says.

*Your generosity helps create an environment that honours the full human experience of living and dying openly and compassionately. Learn more about how you can support patients and families by contacting us at 250-519-1744 or make a donation at [victoriahospice.org/careandcomfort](http://victoriahospice.org/careandcomfort)*

# Dismantling stigma: Suicide Loss Support Group

Grief can be a lonely experience. But feelings of isolation can be even worse when stigma surrounds the death of a loved one.

While everyone's grief is unique, connecting with others who can relate is important, Bereavement Counsellor Heidi Wigmore says.

Heidi facilitates a support group for people who are grieving a loved one who has died by suicide.

"When there's a real or perceived judgment around a death, or even more discomfort than usual from others, it adds to the bereaved person's suffering," she says. "This support group connects people who understand on a fundamental level what the experience of suicide loss is like."

That's what Karen Meyer found in the group after the death of her older brother, Peter.

"Not to feel alone in this type of loss was very healing," she says. "It's not always easy to talk about suicide, and it was good to have that safe space – a sacred space, I would say, to honour the people we lost and their lives."

Peter was 54 when he died on May 12, 2022. He was a husband, a father, and a cherished family member.

"I try not to shy away from speaking about him and his death, because mental health – and men's mental health – is such an important topic."

Sharing openly about the wholeness of who the person who died is an important part of the group experience. Although there is space to explore the nature of the death as suicide, this is simply one piece of the story explored in the group. A person is grieved and remembered for all parts of their life and story within the group and participants are encouraged to do so outside the group as well.

"I feel a tremendous empathy for the people in the group. And empathy of course for the people who died, wonderful human beings, husbands and fathers and friends. How sad it is that this has happened, and they didn't get the help they needed, or because they didn't reach out," Karen says.



"And yet here we were, reaching out, all these people in the suicide loss support group. Supporting each other because we can – and that's what we all need to do when we're hurting. And wouldn't it be great if everyone, and men in particular, didn't feel the stigma of asking for help."

*The next session starts in October 2023. To learn more, please contact Bereavement Services at 250-519-3040.*

*The Suicide Loss Support Group is funded by generous donors, the Province of British Columbia, the Provincial Employees Community Services Fund, and the Victoria Foundation's Community Grants Program.*

*If you or your loved one are struggling with your mental health, don't hesitate to reach out. One option is the 24/7 Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888.*

## On sale now: Teeny Tiny Garden Tour 2024 calendar



The **Teeny Tiny Garden Tour 2024 Calendar** lets inspiration last all year long. Featuring exquisite blooms and garden hideaways, the calendar includes moon phases for your lunar planting plans.

Calendars are \$25 with proceeds supporting compassionate end-of-life care at Victoria Hospice, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. Order online at [victoriahospice.org](http://victoriahospice.org)

Special thanks to volunteer photographers Lorna Shaw, Donna Robertson, Geof Squarok, Lee-Anne Stack, and Carole Valkenier.

# Become a Hospice Hearts Club member

We fondly refer to the generous community of monthly donors as our “Hospice Hearts Club” because we know how much they care about Victoria Hospice patients and families. Their sustaining donations ensure important programs and services are available right now and for years to come.

Monthly gifts are one of the best ways to support compassionate end-of-life care at Victoria Hospice. They reduce the cost and time required to process donations and ensure more of your gift goes where it’s needed most.

When you become a Hospice Hearts Club member, you join a compassionate community of hospice supporters who ensure people who are dying and their families receive the very best care possible.



## How it works

- ♥ Sign up with credit card or by direct withdrawal from your bank account.
- ♥ Choose your preference of withdrawals on the 1st or 15th of the month.
- ♥ You can easily start, change, or stop your monthly gift at any time.
- ♥ You will receive a single tax receipt in February for the total amount you donated in the previous year.
- ♥ You’ll be invited to our annual Donor Appreciation Tea where you can hear updates first-hand and meet members of our care team.
- ♥ Sign up below or visit [victoriahospice.org/monthly](http://victoriahospice.org/monthly). Please contact us if you have any questions at 250-519-1744 or [donate@victoriahospice.org](mailto:donate@victoriahospice.org). Commit with your heart and become a Hospice Hearts Club member!



## Attention runners!

If you’re planning to participate in the **2023 Royal Victoria Marathon**, make your steps count for compassionate end-of-life care at Victoria Hospice!

Join our team, walk, run, and collect pledges to support compassionate end-of-life care through participation in any of the marathon weekend events October 6-8, 2023. The new 5K and Thrifty Foods Kids Run takes place on the Saturday in Oak Bay, followed by the Marathon, Half Marathon and 8K on the Sunday in downtown Victoria.

Contact Raisa Frenette at 250-519-1741 or [rfrenette@victoriahospice.org](mailto:rfrenette@victoriahospice.org) to learn more about how you can be involved or select Victoria Hospice as your charity of choice when you register to run. Lace up those running shoes!



## Your Donation Makes a Difference

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

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

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

Name .....

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Card # .....

Expiry date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

My donation is  in memory  in honour of .....

Please send an acknowledgement letter to

Name .....

Address .....

City/Prov/Postal .....

- Please send me Victoria Hospice Connections e-newsletters.
- I would like to find out more about including Victoria Hospice in my will.
- I have included Victoria Hospice in my will.
- I wish to remain anonymous.

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 from February to April 2023.

**IN MEMORY** Renee Abrioux • Sidney Alexander • Mary Lois Alford • D. J. Armstrong • Penny Authier • Gordon Ayre Jeannette Ballard • Dorothy J. Barlow • Pamela Barry • Janet Bavelas • Thomas E. Bayer • Bonnie Bell • Susan L. Blake Rich Howard Bloom • Bella Bourakovskaia • Fred Briscoe • Bob Buckingham • Lynn Calder • Dawn S. Cameron Margaret E. Campbell • Ann Chaland • Robert Chaland • Cecil A. Chapman • Griselda Christmas • Michael L. Chupick Kathleen Coleman • Keri L. Coles • Richard J. Collier • David A. Collier • Jean Courville • Roslyn Davidson • Tom Davie Jim Daynard • Egle Debei • Sharron Dezell • Gary Dillabaugh • Patricia Dobbs • Mary C. Doyle • Veronica Druce Stewart W. A. Duncan • James Duncan • Rosemarie W. Elliott • Marjorie Elphick • William Emigh • Pauline Fiederer Richard Fonley • Margaret A. Ford • Ronald J. Friesen • Blair Friesen • Susan Fritz • Donald Gajda • Kenneth Galvin Phyllis Gray • Marguerite Green • M. Gropp • Robert Guskey • Bill Hamilton • Ephraim R. Harris • Bunny Hawkes • Gary Hayes Donna Hooper • William Hosie • Karen Hughes • Lesley Hulme • Don Irish • Mary Irish • Maurice G. Johansen Judith Johnston • Jennifer Karmona • Robert Kenig • Jean E. Kódar • Ryan C. Krisher • Doris Kroeger • Jerald Kustaski Kenneth C. Lawrence • William Lawson • Lisa J. Layton • Miriam Li • Victoria Lindgren • Raymond Lo • Ian M. Lochhead Gary Lunden • Nick Lundhild • Paul Mably • Evi B. MacDonald • Mike Macfarlane • Dorothy MacIsaac • Ruth Mackie Judy Maclachlan • Roberta McCarthy • Hazel McCudden • Janice McIvor • Daniel J. McLachlan • Maylene S. McMillan Colin A. McNeil • Yolande Melanson • Rick Milburn • Philip Moore • John Motala • Jean Mozley • Angela Murphy Thomas Murray • Christabel Newcombe • Eliane Nugent • Lillian R. Nygaard • David O'Brien • Tim O'Connor • Gail Owens Roma De Paoli • David Parry • Evalyn Partridge • Rita J. Paulhus • Catherine E. Pearse • Paul Perry • Kevin Peterson Sylvia B. Plumridge • John Plumridge • Robert Pollard • Ailsa Quann • Donald A. Rahrick • Candy Reed • Arthur Reynolds Susan Rich • Janet Robertson • John Robertson • William A. Romain • Milforde Rose • Tara S. Ross • Robert Rouse Sandra Runcie • Deepal Samarajeewa • Janice R. Sharp • Suzanne Skedgel-Hill • Ceri E. Smith • John Smith • George Smith Margaret Smith • Sheryl Steeves • Sandy Stewart • Mark Stormoen • Howard Swift • Edna Szabados • Phyllis Tarrant Peter Tennent • John Toward • Romeo N. Verrier • Denise Voss • Doreen Waldie • Manfred Weissman • Basil Wells • William J. West • Shirley Westaway • Joan Westran Barbara R. White • Maxwell White • Jennifer Whybrow • Jean L. Wilson • Nicki Winter • Donna Wood • Joyce Woods • Jörg Wybranietz • Wendy E. Wyles Olga Yakimovich **IN HONOUR** Barbara Carr-Harris • Perry Fainstein • Xiao Qian Cui • Leai Shen

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

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## Green thumbs and caring hearts

The Victoria Hospice Rooftop Garden opened in 1997 thanks to generous donor support. It has been lovingly maintained by dedicated volunteers ever since.

Over the years this peaceful oasis has seen weddings, family get-togethers, tears, laughter, and death. Many folks return year after year on the anniversary of their loved one's death to sit in quiet contemplation, ring the memorial bell, or write in the garden journal.

Although all the Rooftop Garden volunteers share a spirit of generosity, each person offers their gift of time for a different reason.

Mike joined us a year after his wife Tara received hospice care. "For me it was a no-brainer. I wanted to give back to an organization that gave both Tara and our family so much care and support when we truly needed it," Mike says.

Elizabeth was drawn to the warmth, compassion, and genuine love that she witnessed from Hospice staff, she says. She is a Unit and garden volunteer. "I have volunteered a lot of places, and this is the most rewarding experience I've had," she says.

Kathleen, a Master Gardener and the lead Rooftop Garden contractor, has been tending the garden for nearly twenty years. She has cherished moments like convening with visiting hummingbirds or being in the presence of a grieving family while they take in the sunset. One time a

young man whose mom had just died approached her.

"Can I have a hug?" he asked. "You remind me of my mom."

The Rooftop Garden is a place of peace and reflection as well as a source of strength and inspiration.

These words from a grateful family say it all: "The garden is vibrant yet gentle – like the rest of the Hospice. Thank you so much for caring so beautifully."

We share their gratitude!



Mike Ross, Kathleen Laird, Elizabeth Garrett, Wendy Wimbush, Gill Ellis, Melanie Jacobs have collectively offered 75 years of service on the Rooftop Garden!