

transitions

THE NEWSLETTER OF VICTORIA



HOSPICE

FALL 2023

Finding friendship in bereavement

Audrey Hunt and Margaret Payne experienced more than grief support in a Victoria Hospice walking group. They found friendship to last the decades.

New to Victoria and recently widowed, Audrey felt alone and a little daunted at the prospect of joining the group, she says.

“When I first drove into the parking lot, I didn’t want to get out of the car. I was suddenly scared stiff! I was used to going everywhere with my husband. But the volunteers welcomed me with open arms.”

Margaret’s husband had died the previous year and she was among the group on the fateful day of their first meeting.

“Audrey became my walking partner and she still is,” Margaret says.

More than 20 years on, Audrey and Margaret still walk together every week, sharing life’s ups and downs and fond memories of the walking group.

“Being with people who knew what you were going through was wonderful. They helped you because they knew what helped them, and there was always someone to talk to,” Margaret says. “If you burst into tears, you didn’t feel embarrassed, because everyone had all gone through the same thing.”

That connection with others who understand the experience of grief—no matter their age, gender, or culture—was key to getting through hard times, they say.

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Welcome, new volunteers!



Kerice Richards and Alissa Moore are among 33 new members of our volunteer team who support patients and families on the Inpatient Unit. Volunteers undertake 30+ hours of training from members of the care team and six hours of online learning.

They learn practical skills, like infection control, safe wheelchair handling, and assisting with meals. In addition to learning to work as a team member on the unit, communication skills, empathetic listening, and responding to people’s grief are key elements of the training. Volunteers also explore the range of supports that nurture the spirit at hospice, with appreciation for the diversity among individuals, families, and cultures.

“Our volunteers come from all walks of life, but all have a deep desire to support people who are dying and their families,” Volunteer Services Program Assistant Julia Dawson says.

The Inpatient Unit volunteer program is currently at capacity for new applications, but may reopen in the latter part of 2024.



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Honoured to be part of it

Interview with Teri Henderson

Teri Henderson was appointed Interim Chief Executive Officer in May, 2023 after joining Victoria Hospice as Chief Operating Officer in March. A long-time advocate for accessible and equitable community-based palliative care, Teri's previous roles includes Director of Clinical Services at Hospice Toronto and Associate Director of Community Development for Gilda's Club of Greater Toronto, a charity that supports people living with cancer. She has been a program lead and instructor in Mindfulness Informed End-of-life Care at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies and holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto.

What brought you to hospice work?

In 1998, I was at a dinner party when I received a call that my mother had fallen when walking in the snow. She couldn't get up, because as it turned out, she had two previously undiagnosed brain tumors. After she spent some time in hospital, I was able to place her in hospice near my home in Toronto. That experience altered the trajectory of my career as a social worker and changed me as a person.

What makes hospice special?

One of the important ways in which hospice is different is the dedicated psychosocial and spiritual care provided to families and the person who is dying. These are among the pillars of care we are committed to providing at Victoria Hospice.

How is hospice important for family and friends?

The care team knows how to slip in and out of the family experience, allowing them to be exactly how they need to be in that moment. Whether a staff member or a volunteer, our job is to stop and hear you, and simply be available. This kind of caring attention is important not only to loved ones, but to people who are dying who do not have a family or close friends. Our care team brings a trauma-informed approach to their work and don't make assumptions about the nature of people's relationships.

What does the "circle of care" mean?

We don't care only for the person who is dying. We support everyone who comes to be a part of that person's dying,



Teri Henderson was appointed Victoria Hospice Interim CEO in May 2023.

whether they are family, friends, children or neighbours. We support the circle who supports them, and that has a huge impact on their grieving once the person has died. Walking with families and friends and supporting them in anticipatory grief can actually shift how grief may be experienced once their significant person has died.

What have you observed at Victoria Hospice so far?

I love seeing the commitment of Victoria Hospice staff to the compassionate care they provide. Sometimes the work is difficult, and sometimes the circumstances are too. Like everyone in the healthcare system, our team has experienced pandemic fatigue and the staffing difficulties of recent years. But this team has risen to every challenge. They consistently hold high standards and bring so much integrity, dedication, and kindness to their work. I'm honoured to be a part of it.

Read our 2022–23 Annual Report on our website at www.victoriahospice.org or call 250-519-1744 to request a print copy.



Walking through grief

Support group creates community in nature

When kindred spirits meet in nature, healing happens. The Walking through Grief Support Group offered by Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services helps bring them together.

The group runs three times a year at the Rithet's Bog Conservation Area, near the Victoria Hospice Community Support Centre on Chatterton Way. As with other support groups, the walking group is a chance to be with others who have experienced a profound loss.

Counsellor and group facilitator Heidi Wigmore says, "People in bereavement often wonder, 'Can anyone hold space for what I feel right now? Are there people comfortable enough to be around my grief, my tears and anger, guilt and confusion? Does anyone feel the way I do?'"

Grief can feel isolating in how intense the feelings may be, coupled with few opportunities for deeply sharing that experience, she says.

"Isolation and loneliness are a challenge in these postmodern times, and grief can make that feeling even heavier. Social connection – especially in bereavement – is essential."

The group of 12 people meet over eight weeks to share grief experiences, nature, and community.

Participants tend to have an immediate sense of *I'm not the only one*, she says. "To be with others who feel the depth and intensity of grief and a sense of shared knowing and understanding is really crucial."

The walking group highlights awareness of the body-mind connection and the importance of movement.



Bereavement Counsellor Heidi Wigmore leads the Walking through Grief Support Group.

"Understanding that everyone's version of what movement is will be different, we each need motion to work through our feelings," Heidi says. "Emotions need motion, quite literally."

Restorative time in nature also provides a reset, with the flora and fauna of Rithet's Bog offering endless interest.

"People are encouraged to use their mindful awareness to pay attention to the surroundings, and share at our closing circle what they might know about a species or something interesting they observed. We have a nature book in which we track observations from our walks," she says.

"We know spending time in nature and places where we hear the waves or birds brings peace and solace. So that's a big piece of what we hope the walking group will give as well as that human connection."

The Walking through Grief Support Group is made possible by generous donors and community support. Learn more at victoriahospice.org/bereavement

Finding friendship *Continued from page 1*

"It was the best thing that could have happened, because I didn't know anyone. I got to know a group of people and we all came from different backgrounds," Audrey says.

"Knowing you're not alone is so important, and having something to look forward to during the week," Margaret says. When you're at home, without your significant other who had always been there, it can be hard. But it's good to get together and walk with others who

are going through the same thing. You can easily talk with them because they understand."

Gratitude for their experience led both Audrey and Margaret to become dedicated Victoria Hospice donors. Find out how you can support Bereavement Services by contacting us at donate@victoriahospice.ca or 250-519-1744.



Margaret Payne (L) and Audrey Hunt (R) have been friends for more than 20 years.

Quilted from the heart

Generous, funny, and loyal. These are just three words that describe Jean Gordon, who spent almost three months at Victoria Hospice in 2017.

"I always felt like Jean and I shared a soul," her sister-in-law and best friend, Lisa Gordon says. Lisa cared for Jean at home for more than a year with the help of care aides. When Jean was admitted to hospice, Lisa says Jean felt safer and rallied. "Hospice gave us three wonderful months with Jean. I attribute that to the excellent care she received."

In addition to the care team, the beautiful hospice quilts brought Jean much joy and comfort. One quilt she adored was black, bright lime green and turquoise, with dragonflies and offset panels and borders. "Every time that quilt came through the door, Jean lit up and spent hours looking at it," Lisa says.

A quilter with the Victoria Quilters' Guild since 1996, Lisa was unable to quilt while caring for Jean. After she died on August 24, 2017, it took several months before Lisa could return to her sewing room. By November, she began to make two quilts. "They just flowed. I didn't unpick a seam or make changes. They just came to me."

Lisa brought these quilts to Victoria Hospice a few months later, a generous contribution and a meaningful way for her to give back. Her gifts haven't stopped since. Her goal is to make enough quilts for every bed at hospice – 18 in total. She recently dropped off quilts number eight, nine and 10.

"They're made with love," she says. Indeed, her quilts are quilted



Lisa Gordon's handmade quilts are a labour of love.

commercially by fellow guild member Teresa Ranson with a long arm quilt pattern of loops and hearts. Each quilt takes about 50 hours to make and she described the process as therapeutic. She thinks of Jean as she makes them. "A quilt is from the heart."

Loyal donor Audrey Hunt

I am a Victoria Hospice monthly donor because I feel very grateful for their kindness and what they did for me after I lost my husband.

We'd only been in Victoria for 18 months when my husband passed away in 2002. I hadn't had the time to make friends or get to know anybody. After he died, someone suggested I get in touch with Victoria Hospice, and I joined the walking group. That was the best thing I ever did, because I was lonely.

I met up with a group of people who had all recently been bereaved. We walked every Saturday morning for six weeks, along with volunteers who were extremely kind to us. We really appreciated having them there. During that time, I made friends among our group and we decided to keep going, and we did, for years and years. I still have friendships from that time, and one is a close friend who I walk with every week.

I'm not a wealthy person, and I just do what I can, but I feel Victoria Hospice is a very worthwhile charity. I have been to hospice and seen that they do wonderful work, and the bereavement groups are very important. If you can afford to give a little bit of money – which I try to do – it is helpful. And it is for me too, because it makes me feel better.

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You can be a member of the Hospice Hearts Club by indicating you would like your gift to be monthly when donating online or via the form on page five. Call us to learn more at 250-519-1744.

Alan Tompson: In memoriam and gratitude

When Alan Tompson lost Anne, the love of his life and wife of more than 60 years, he felt he couldn't go on.

But he found a supportive community and a bereavement counsellor at Victoria Hospice.

"It saved me," he said in a 2016 interview.

"The counsellor helped me understand that talking and listening to others in support groups wasn't just helping me, I was helping them too. I realized that if I can be of help to people, then that's what

I should do. I'm honouring Anne's memory by trying to be as much help as possible to others."

Alan's vision of helping others extended long into the future, so he included Victoria Hospice in his will. He died in Victoria in February 2023.

"Alan's heartfelt tribute to Anne and to future patients and families at hospice is profoundly touching, and we're very grateful," says Wendy Innes, Victoria Hospice Director of Development.



Alan and Anne Tompson



Thank you to our riders, generous sponsors and community supporters for helping raise **over \$325,000 this year** for Vancouver Island hospice care. The Cycle of Life Tour has now raised **almost \$2M since 2011!**

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learn more at cycleoflifetour.ca

Writing your Will may be one of the kindest things you can do for your loved ones and the causes you care about.

The Government of BC has proclaimed October 1 to 7, 2023 **Make a Will Week**.

You can find resources at www.willpower.ca or call Legacy Giving Officer Michelle Atamanchuk at 250-812-3753 to learn more about leaving a legacy to Victoria Hospice.



Your Donation Makes a Difference

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

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- ☐ 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 April 25 to August 20, 2023.

IN MEMORY Rabea Al Doori • Sidney Alexander • Corry Allen • Dennis A. Anderson • Penny Authier • Jeannette Ballard Dorothy J. Barlow • Michael Barner • Pamela Barry • Anne Bartels • Bonnie Bell • Herman Bergink • Robert Blaikie Kathryn Blaikie • David Bone • Arlene J. Boyden • Raymond Brookbank • Steven D. Brown • Bob Buckingham Margaret E. Campbell • Betty Carmichael • Donald Cawley • Ann Chaland • Robert Chaland • Cecil A. Chapman Dale Chekwech • D'Arcy Christensen • Juliana Chupick • David A. Collier • Meryl Connor • Gerald Cox Dominic DeMeo • Shirley Dey Captain • Sharron Dezell • Gary Dillabaugh • James Dixon • Cindy Donatelli • Lorraine Doyle Stewart W. A. Duncan • Valerie Edwards • Margaret England • Pam Engwer • Donald P. Evans • Pauline Fiederer Deborah Fleury • Margaret A. Ford • Susan Fritz • Donald Gajda • Timothy George • Grace M. Gilmore-Cutler Rita Goodman • Robert Gossen • Phyllis Gray • Marguerite Green • Deb Grimes • M. Gropp • Robert Guskey Andrea M. Hall • David Harper • Bunny Hawkes • Ernie Hawkins • Garry Hayes • Diane Hoadley • Donna Hooper William Hosie • Lesley Hulme • Lianne J. Hunter • Don Irish • Mary Irish • Cathy Janakas • Michele Jean-Quiring Ian Johnson • Colin King • Ryan C. Krisher • Jerald Kustaski • Florida Laforest • Susan Lamb • Middleton Lambert Lavone Landie • Hans R. Larsen • Alfred Law • Kenneth C. Lawrence • William Lawson • Lisa J. Layton • Leona Lench Miriam Li • Victoria Lindgren • Ian M. Lochhead • Paul Mably • Ruth Mackie • Judy Maclachlan • John MacLachlan Donald MacLean • Colin L. Mantell • Kathleen Marshall • Pieter Marsman • William H. Martin • Barbara McCall Roberta McCarthy • Samuel McCoy • Hazel McCoy • Hazel McCudden • Joe McGregor • Janice McIvor Anne Marie McLaughlin • Maylene S. McMillan • Colin A. McNeil • Marjorie G. Mobsby • Tara Mogentale Christine E. Molnar • Sit Mui Pang • Shauna Mullinix • Valerie Nixon • Gail Normandeau • Eliane Nugent Tim O'Connor • Roxanne Ogden • Mona E. Olmstead • Pat Ormerod • Gail Owens • Diane Ozard • Mary Painter Shao Pan Tsai • Vastupal Parikh • David Parry • Evalyn Partridge • Robert M. Paterson • Joyce A. Patton Rita J. Paulhus • Albert E. Peeling • Paul Perry • Kevin Peterson • Sylvia B. Plumridge • John Plumridge Marilyn D. Posner • Gunilla G. Posnikoff • Ailsa Quann • Donald A. Rahrack • Allen Robb • John Robertson • Milforde Rose • Joerg Rosenthal • Tara S. Ross Robert Rouse • Valerie Ryan • Dave Savage • Lavonne Schaddelee-Miller • Linda Schur • Ken Scotten • Janice R. Sharp • Evelyn G. Sheldrick • Betty Silvers Suzanne Skedgel-Hill • Kathleen M. Smith • Ceri E. Smith • Barry Smith • Doug Smith • Mark Sondheim • Mary Spearing • James Staples • Helen Stark Sheryl Steeves • Ronald J. Sweet • Howard Swift • Edna Szabados • Peter Tennent • Richard F. Thuillier • Robert Tolson • Sharon Tunnell • Langley Tunnell Russell Unfreed • Jake Van Bilsen • Mary C. Vaughan-Thomas • Romeo N. Verrier • Barbara Viney • Denise Voss • Loren Welch • William J. West • Shirley Westaway Barbara R. White • Kevin D. White Davis • Virginia Whitehead • William Wigmore • Roger Wigmore • Jennifer Williams • Jean L. Wilson Phillip Wong Young • Joyce Woods • Tyler Wormell • Jörg Wybranietz • Wendy E. Wyles • Beng Yeap • Catherine Young • Nora Young • Ata'o'llah Zamany

IN HONOUR G. P. Fatt • Jane Peverett • Linda-Mae Ross • Thomas Wall • The Staff at Sands

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

Contact Lorealee Smyth
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Bouquets of gratitude: Jean Davey

A longtime Victoria Hospice volunteer, Jean Davey was known for her gifts of time and roses. She offered more than 4,500 hours of support for patients and families before she died on the Inpatient Unit this spring.

"She loved to bring her prized roses to the unit, sometimes with a particular patient in mind who she thought would enjoy them," her daughter Catherine says. "She was a

very caring and gracious woman, and it meant a lot to her to support people and bear witness at the end of life. Hospice was really special to her."

Jean was special to Victoria Hospice too, and is well loved and remembered by staff and fellow volunteers. "She was a consummate lady with a heart of gold," volunteer Lionel Zelniker says.

Jean was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in the Victoria Hospice Society in 2007 for her compassionate service. She was a volunteer on the unit and the Rooftop Garden, and supported fundraising events, including Celebrate a Life and the Teeny Tiny Garden Tour.

When Jean approached the end of her life, the environment at hospice offered Jean and her family comfort, Catherine says.

"They make you feel like family," she says. "They're not just caring for your loved one,



Jean Davey (R) and Tessa Van Engelen (L) at the Celebrate A Life Event in 2015

but they were caring for me too. I felt love here – for my mom, and for my family."

Like her mom, Catherine's also a devoted volunteer, giving her time to the food bank.

"Some of the most beautiful moments of my life have come from interactions with people I meet in my volunteer role. It's a transcendental thing – it lifts you up. That's what my Mom had here at hospice."

