

## Friends for life

Joan and Donna arrived at Victoria Hospice with lifetimes of experience.

Joan was a war bride and travelled all around the world. She has devoted some of her time at hospice to knitting scarves for care team members who bike to work. “It helps keep their necks warm,” she says. Donna has travelled extensively too. She has a ready laugh and is a devoted Toronto Blue Jays fan.

Neither was expecting to find a friend at hospice, a best friend. But they did.

They share one of the three double rooms on the 18-bed Inpatient Unit. They also share all the ups and downs of day-to-day life, chats in the night, and

have gotten to know each other’s family members, friends, and visitors. They look out for each other.

Joan has taught Donna to knit. And Donna has taught Joan all about the Blue Jays. If you visited them during baseball season, you’d find them knitting with an eye on the game, trading commentary on the score.

They have many nice things to say about each other. Donna says, “She’s like a mother to me.”

Joan says, “She’s a friend for life.”

Their friendship has touched the hearts of everyone at Victoria Hospice.



## Grief in the holidays: treat yourself like a friend

The holidays can be the most difficult time of the year when you are grieving the loss of someone important to you. Memories of past celebrations with



family members or friends who are no longer here can magnify feelings of loss, and you may feel unsure about how, or even if, to celebrate this year.

Grief at any time is tiring and challenging. As the holiday season approaches, you may need to pay more attention to yourself and ask, “What do I most need now?”

Grief has a timing of its own, sometimes appearing – or disappearing – when we least expect it. If you experience this

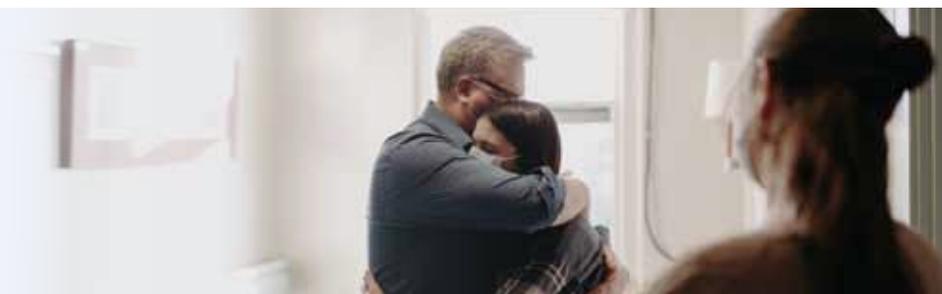
ebb and flow of feelings – even years after your loved one died – understand that it is common and a normal aspect of the grieving process.

It can be helpful to share your concerns and feelings with someone. Let people know what is difficult for you, and accept offers of help. If ever there was a time to treat yourself like a cherished friend, this is it.

*Read some tips for coping with grief in the holidays on page five.*

**No one should walk alone through heartache and loss. You can help.**

[victoriahospice.org/walk-together](http://victoriahospice.org/walk-together)



# Finding a path through bereavement

By Max Bolka

When my wife, Julia, hurt her back on the first day of our new life in Victoria, we were completely naïve about what was coming next.

Six months later, she could not lift her arm to feed herself, because tumours were pressing against nerves in her bones. She was eventually diagnosed with a rare cancer, and we put all our efforts and intentions into beating it. But Julia died on February 4, 2023.

Just like when Julia got sick and we couldn't see the road before us, I had no idea what my life would be like after I had lost her. I was completely blindsided.

For many days I could not get out of bed. And when I did, I was alone. I can't express the soul-crushing magnitude of the loneliness and pain of separation. There are no words for it. When I was able to get out of the house, I couldn't believe people were going about as if everything was normal.

## **I wanted to say, Hey, everyone! Don't you know what's going on? Julia has died.**

There's life "out there" and there's life "in here". My life in here has changed forever.

We hope our closest friends or family members will support us in grief. Often, they're not capable of it, and it's hard for them to see us in pain. They just can't understand our experience.

## **I found people who knew what I was going through at a Victoria Hospice bereavement workshop.**

I managed to get out of bed and show up that day, but when it was my turn to introduce myself, I couldn't even say my name.

But I was with others who were going through something similar. The bereavement counsellor, Heidi, said while we all go through the experience in our own way, we might follow certain patterns in a natural process of grief. It was a huge relief to hear I wasn't going crazy.

Later, I joined the Walking through Grief Support Group led



Max Bolka is pictured here with volunteer Maureen Dixon (L) and bereavement counsellor Heidi Wigmore (R).

by Heidi, and Maureen, a long-time volunteer. We gathered in an opening circle and said our names, except for one, who couldn't get the words out. And I thought, I've been there.

## **Grief changes, but it doesn't go away.**

Part of it means exploring who we want to be in the world after the loss. Walking beside Heidi, Maureen, and members of the group helped me see that.

That's why I wanted to share my story, and help in any way I can. We're all going to be touched by death and grief at some time, but it's too hard to heal in isolation.

I have a long way to go, but I felt my experience shift during my time with the walking group, and I want to express my gratitude from the bottom of my heart – to you, and everyone who supports Victoria Hospice. This vital service is so important.

I am so thankful for the kindness and compassion I found at Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services, and their specialized, professional expertise that helped me through some of my darkest days.

Victoria Hospice is a bright light on a path through grief and loss.

## **Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services include:**

- ♥ One-time, interactive workshops on grief and mourning
- ♥ 8-week support groups for adults who are grieving someone who has died from a toxic drug/substance
- ♥ Walking through Grief support groups
- ♥ 8-week online bereavement support groups
- ♥ Exploring Grief through Creativity groups
- ♥ Suicide Loss Support Groups
- ♥ Individual counselling and more!

## Gifts of a lifetime

A generous \$200,000 donation honours the compassionate spirit shared by lifelong friends Miriam Li and Josie Tan.

They met in Kansas City, Missouri, at a hospital where Josie, originally from the Philippines, was training to become a medical technologist. Miriam, originally from China, was working on her master's degree in Microbiology. They quickly became one another's chosen family.

Miriam and Josie moved to Canada more than 50 years ago and continued work in their fields at Victoria General Hospital. They lived life to the fullest, enjoyed extensive travel in retirement, and were competitive lawn bowlers with a tight-knit group of friends at the Gordon Head Lawn Bowling Club.

Throughout their lives, Josie and Miriam were at each other's sides as friends, companions, and caregivers. As Miriam approached the end of her life, Josie attentively cared for her, with much-appreciated support from the Victoria Hospice Palliative Response Team.

"The nurse and counsellor treated Miriam with the utmost care and dignity during her final few days," says Josie. Miriam died February 15, 2023 at the age of 91.

The donation made in Miriam's memory feels so right to everyone in her family, especially because she had been a long-time supporter of Victoria Hospice, Josie says.



The memory of long-time hospice supporter and cherished friend Miriam Li has been honoured by a generous donation.

To celebrate this incredible generosity and to honour Miriam's life, a group of loyal friends, fellow lawn bowlers, former colleagues, and Victoria Hospice staff members joined Josie on the Victoria Hospice Rooftop Garden. Members of the Palliative Response Team who cared for Miriam had a chance to share their memories.

"On behalf of the hundreds of patients and families who will be touched by this generous gift, I'm deeply grateful. I am so inspired by the generosity of Josie, Miriam, and her family," says Victoria Hospice Interim CEO Teri Henderson. "They embody the compassion for others that is the heart of hospice care."

---

## 12th Annual Clews Charity Golf Tournament another big success

A big round of applause for Kim and Justin Clews! The annual Clews Charity Golf Tournament has raised more than \$280,000 for Victoria Hospice, with \$40,000 raised at this year's event on September 27 at the Uplands Golf Club. The tournament, dinner, tiered raffle, and the generosity of golf club and community members made the 12th annual event another smashing success.

Kim (Victoria Hospice Foundation board member) and Justin (an Uplands Golf pro and UVic Vikes golf coach) are pictured here with daughters Adilynn and Maliyah, who are a big part of the event!



# Celebrating Bob Embury

by Liz Ilka

Meeting Bob was unexpected. I was a divorced lady with a good job, and I wasn't looking to meet anyone. So, when this nice-looking man started chatting with me at the bus stop one day, I was cautious. We discovered that we grew up in the same part of the country – he outside Windsor, and me in Detroit.

We spent our first date sitting on the stairs of the downtown library, sharing a Verners ginger ale, which is a Detroit specialty. I learned he had worked at a dozen jobs in a dozen places, from shrimp boat worker to shoe fixer at Disneyworld. When we met, he worked in the maintenance department at Queen Alexandra Centre. Later he worked at the Cancer Clinic as the day maintenance guy. He loved it and worked hard to make all the patients feel comfortable.

Before long we were best friends. He'd come over to my place on Friday afternoon and stay until Monday. He couldn't make it through the whole week, so usually by Wednesday he'd say, "I'm going downtown. Do you want to come with me?" On Friday he'd come back again and make me dinner.

We travelled to Portland, Vancouver, Port Angeles, and Seattle. Bob liked CNN and he liked old-fashioned radio shows too. We never missed a Seahawks game on TV. We were happy in our little setting. There was respect on both sides, lots of give and take. It was pretty darn special.

After Bob was diagnosed with cancer, it was a slow progression. When he couldn't drive, he used a cane to come to my house. Next it was a walker and then he couldn't come out at all.

He spent a few days at Hospice where they worked on his meds to make him comfortable. There were angels all around us. They even let me bring little Emma Jean, my Shih Tzu-Yorkshire Terrier, who loved to visit with Bob. That was a godsend to him. I did my best to be with him right to the end, love him, and make him as comfortable as I could.

## Celebrate a Life \* Dedicate a Star

You can celebrate the life of someone important to you by dedicating a star in their name or by making a donation in their memory.

Visit [victoriahospice.org/celebrate](http://victoriahospice.org/celebrate) to dedicate a star online, or stop by the Community Support Centre on Chatterton Way or the 4th floor of the Richmond Pavilion to hang a star on one of our Celebrate a Life trees.



We had 13 wonderful years. It was a nice life, a perfect life together and I miss him. I don't think "woe is me". I feel I was lucky to experience such a good relationship in my lifetime. I didn't think it would happen, but it dropped right in front of me. I could never match that.



# Fashionable fundraising!

Victoria Hospice supporters know compassion never goes out of style – and they proved it once again at Fashion for Compassion sponsored by Sands Funeral Chapel (Victoria) on Sunday, October 22.

Together, they raised more than \$90,000 for compassionate end-of-life care and bereavement support! Thanks to our generous guests, we exceeded our goal to raise funds for six new sleeper chairs, so families and dear ones can stay close and comfortable around the clock. Additional funds will purchase other equipment and support care and comfort on the Inpatient Unit.

Props and applause go to the models: Erin Dopko (hospice family member and Cycle of Life Tour Volunteer), Teresa McFadyen (Inpatient Unit LPN), Heidi Wigmore (Bereavement Counsellor), Brad Baker (Sands Funeral Chapel Senior Funeral Director), Michelle Bahena-Olivares (Manager of Research, Quality and Safety), Laurie Pettinger (Member of the VHS Board of Directors), Kara Schneider (Lead Physician), and Cathy Hunt (Inpatient Unit Volunteer).

Heartfelt thanks to our sponsors: Sands Funeral Chapel (Victoria), Amica Senior Lifestyles, Broadmead Pharmasave, Horne Coupar, Megson Fitzpatrick, Turnabout Luxury Resale, VandeRuyt Wealth Management and emcee Susie Wall!



## Tips for coping with grief over the holidays

♥ **Decide how you want to spend the holiday.** Allow yourself to think about what you most need and want to do. It's OK if you want to change things completely, just a little, or not at all.

♥ **Be flexible about holiday traditions.** Holidays are often spent with the people we are closest to and you are missing someone important. Without the person you've lost, you may not be able to do all the holiday things you'd normally do. You might reconsider activities that aren't essential, and ask for help with anything you'd like to continue.

♥ **Plan your activities in advance.** Before the holiday season is in full swing, make plan that can be adjusted according to your needs. Let people who are important to you know what your plans are and if you are open to invitations.

♥ **Take time to care for yourself.** Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel and to spend time alone or with others as needed. Rest and breathe deeply. Try to add some physical activity and spend time in nature.

♥ **Give to others.** Sometimes the sadness and loneliness of grief during the holidays can be lightened a little by caring for others. Consider hosting a pre- or post-holiday gathering for friends and family or perhaps volunteering with your charity of choice.

♥ **Do something to remember your loved one.** You may want to continue a favourite tradition or start something new: take a walk in a special place, create a special ornament or decoration, or perhaps make a holiday food item that your loved one particularly enjoyed.

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 August 21 to October 31, 2023.

**IN MEMORY** Alice Adams • Ken Agate • Sidney Alexander • Dennis A. Anderson • Ray Arcand  
 Penny Authier • Jeannette Ballard • Pamela Barry • Brian Belcher • Bonnie Bell • Ray Biederman • James T. Black  
 Ronald Blasner • Donna Boffo • David Bone • Eunice Borgerson • Richelle V. Briggs • Fred Briscoe • Margaret Brown  
 Arthur R. Bryant • Bob Buckingham • Florence Cameron • Margaret E. Campbell • Donald Cawley • Cecil A. Chapman  
 Dale Chekwech • Shirley Chew • Norma Coell • Gerri Cosgrove • Eleanor Crosby • Mary Csordas • Islwyn Davies  
 Pamela Delbrouck • Berniece Delbrouck-Burton • Dominic DeMeo • V. Penny Denoon • Sharron Dezell • Rabea Al Doori  
 James Duncan • Stewart W. A. Duncan • Jean Ellison • Margaret A. Ford • Adele Frame • Joan A. Francis  
 Susan Fritz • Louise Gagnon • Donald Gajda • Shirley Goodwin • Ed Graham • Phyllis Gray • Marguerite Green  
 M. Gropp • Robert Guskey • Bunny Hawkes • Garry Hayes • Lindsay Headland • Mei Hoh • Donna Hooper • Patrick Howie  
 Lesley Hulme • Albert Hunter • Ronald Hunter • Peter Huntly • Don Irish • Mary Irish • Jerry Kean • Colin King  
 Russell Knight • Janice Kraft • Allan Kraft • Ryan C. Krisher • Jerald Kustaski • Lavone Landie • Edward Lane • Marjorie Larkin  
 Julia Darley Laver • Kenneth C. Lawrence • William Lawson • Lisa J. Layton • Dolores Leavitt • Leona Lench  
 Harry Hung Wun Leong • Victoria Lindgren • Paul Mably • Mike Macfarlane • Dorothy MacIsaac • Ruth Mackie  
 Judy Maclachlan • Francette MacMinn • William H. Martin • Steve Martin • Mary Matheson • Peter McCafferty  
 Larry McCafferty • Hazel McCudden • Janice McIvor • Beverley I. Mcmillan • Colin A. McNeil • Wayne Meckle  
 Robert C. Messerschmidt • Tara Mogentale • Tom Monteski • Claude Morin • Lynne M. Morrison • Nan Nielsen  
 Ted Nielsen • Danny Normandeau • Eliane Nugent • Pat Ormerod • Gail Owens • Rod Parkhurst • David Parry  
 Evalyn Partridge • Rita J. Paulhus • Paula Payer • Paul Perry • Kevin Peterson • Sylvia B. Plumridge • John Plumridge  
 Gunilla G. Posnikoff • Vern Prier • Ailsa Quann • Donald A. Rahrick • Audrey Rands • John Robertson • Milforde Rose  
 Tara S. Ross • Robert Rouse • Glen Roy • Kenneth R. Sapriken • Lavonne Schaddelee-Miller • John Schreiber • Ken Scotten  
 Elizabeth Shelton • Suzanne Skedgel-Hill • Ceri E. Smith • Wayne Spearman • Sheryl Steeves • Harry F. Street • Denise Sturmwind  
 Howard Swift • Edna Szabados • Kay Taggart • Richard M. Tanner • Peter Tennent • Dennis Todd • Tina Toth • Edna L. Tyler • Michael Wainwright  
 William J. West • Betty Wierenga • Jean L. Wilson • Donal Wright • Jörg Wybranietz • Wendy E. Wyles

**IN HONOUR** Perry Fainstein • Phyllida Knowles • Don Ross

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

Contact Loralee Smyth  
 Philanthropy Coordinator  
[loralee.smyth@victoriahospice.org](mailto:loralee.smyth@victoriahospice.org)

3rd Floor, Richmond Pavilion  
 1952 Bay Street  
 Victoria BC V8R 1J8  
 250-519-1744

Charitable Registration Number  
 11928 4230 RR0001

Victoria Hospice respects your privacy and we do not sell, trade, lend, or rent your personal information.

# Emotional and spiritual support services are essential elements of the Victoria Hospice circle of care

**Bereavement Services** include support groups, workshops, and counselling sessions for anyone in the community.

**Counselling support** at home and on the Inpatient Unit helps patients and families through the hardest days of their lives.

**Child and youth counselling** provides critical support for our youngest clients through anticipatory grief and bereavement.

**Music therapy** on the Inpatient Unit helps to reduce fear, anxiety, and isolation, and increase connection to self identity, relaxation, and comfort.

**Spiritual care** helps people who are dying connect with what gives meaning and purpose to their lives, to hope, forgiveness, and their relationships.

**Your support makes these services possible. Thank you!**

