

CELEBRATING A LIFE

Rae Whitesell remembers Dennis Turner

Five years ago, Rae's friend Dennis spent his last days on the Inpatient Unit. On one of Rae's daily visits, he noticed a guitar hanging on the wall in the lounge, beside a sign with the message "Please keep playing after I'm gone."

He grabbed the guitar and went back to Dennis's room.

They'd met back in 1992 and connected immediately through music and laughter.

That day years later at Victoria Hospice they laughed and played some of the old songs again. Songs that they wrote together and performed in the bands Jelly Foot and Red Eye Den. All the memories came flooding back.

After a while, when Dennis had fallen asleep, Rae decided to go back to the lounge and play a couple of cover tunes. A gentleman came out from adjacent room, with tears in his eyes, and he said, "That's Led Zeppelin. I can't thank you enough. You just lifted me out of such a funk."

When Rae told Dennis about it afterwards, he said he felt the same way. Playing music together again brought him out of his funk. You see, on top of everything else, Dennis's wife, Beth, had died unexpectedly the day before he came to Hospice. A terrible blow at the most difficult time.

The next day, he told Rae that Beth had come to see him.

"She was sitting in that chair right there", pointing to the armchair by the window. "She said 'I'll be seeing you soon.'"

Rae had always had a connection with the spiritual world, ever since he was a little kid. So when Dennis said he saw his wife in the chair, Rae thought: Of course she was there.



Left: Rae with his guitar and a totem Dennis carved for Rae's family. Right: The guitar in the hospice lounge—a gift from former hospice patient Darren Bos.

After Dennis died, Rae chose to remember him as the strong, funny guy he'd always known. He always kept a sense of humor with Dennis. They always had laughs together. Rae kept him laughing right up to the end.

Recently, Rae came back to visit Hospice. He sat in the lounge, playing some cover tunes. Some Zeppelin. A bit of a crowd gathered and people were enjoying it. It lifted him out of his funk. He thought for a moment that he felt Dennis was there. And Beth. And they were singing along and laughing. Just like in the good old days.

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 to dedicate a star online, or stop by the Community Support Centre on Chatterton Way or on the 4th floor of the Richmond Pavilion to hang a star on our Celebrate a Life trees.



If you're old enough to love, you're old enough to grieve

Grief at any age is incredibly challenging, but for young people it can be especially isolating and overwhelming. Losing a parent, sibling, or loved one can significantly impact a child's emotional and cognitive development. Without grief-informed support, they may struggle with their mental health and have difficulty coping.

"Young people process grief uniquely, making it essential for them to have dedicated support, especially when surviving family members are grappling with their own grief," says Victoria Hospice's Child and Youth Counsellor, Jessie Lane.

Support is available at Victoria Hospice for children and teens who are grieving, whether someone in their family is ill or dying, or they are experiencing bereavement. In addition to free counselling, the Child and

Youth Counsellor provides a wealth of resources for parents, families, and people who support a child or youth in grief.

Different children respond to different types of support, and art and play are often a component of the services provided. Through a generous grant last year, Victoria Hospice was able to begin

a memory box and photo frame project with several young people who wish to memorialize their important person.

Access to bereavement services at Victoria Hospice is open to everyone. No prior connection to hospice or referral is required. Contact us at bereavement@victoriahospice.org or 250-519-3040.



Counsellor Jessie Lane in the Child and Youth counselling room

In memory of Brodie *by Kim Johnson*

I'm sharing my family's story because the compassionate care we received at Victoria Hospice made all the difference during the most difficult time of our lives. My husband Brodie was the life of every party. Whether he was playing guitar,

softball or hockey, coaching our kids, or working as an electrician, Brodie was loved by all.

I never could have imagined that I would spend our last two weeks together at Victoria Hospice. Our kids, Rhys and Kiley, aged 12 and 10, visited almost every day never knowing when they'd say goodbye to their dad for the last time.

Brodie was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2017. He proceeded with chemotherapy and radiation and once his treatment was finished, we had two more glorious years with him. He was moved to the Hospice Unit in April 2019.

The care Brodie received in hospice was compassionate on all fronts. They made sure he was comfortable. They also took care of all of us.

The Child and Youth Counsellor was a lifesaver, both to me and my kids. Rhys and Kiley were able to talk through their feelings with someone who could help them process this major life change. The Care team helped us to navigate our emotions as we witnessed everything unfold.

In those last few days of Brodie's life, we didn't have to navigate his changing medical needs. We could all just be with him. I could be with my husband just as his wife and the kids could simply spend time with him. That was the greatest gift.

At Victoria Hospice, every moment counts for local families facing the heartbreak of saying goodbye. Your support provides the compassionate care they need when it matters most. Learn more and give the gift of compassion at victoriahospice.org



Fashion for Compassion lights up the runway

Fashion for Compassion has quickly become one of Victoria Hospice's most beloved fundraising events. This year, over 200 guests enjoyed a delightful afternoon of fashion, food, and fun at the beautiful Delta Ocean Pointe Resort. Turnabout Luxury Resale showcased an array of stunning outfits, modeled by an incredible group of volunteers, hospice family members, and dedicated clinical and administrative staff. Guests were invited to purchase fashions from the show, along with unique jewelry and accessories, all in support of Victoria Hospice.

Together more than \$105,000 was raised for compassionate end-of-life care and bereavement support, with this year's Fund-a-Need going directly towards specialized Child and Youth Counselling for our families.



Krys Rennick, Hospice Registered Nurse, and Annie Prittie-Bell, Manager of Learning, Development and Culture, volunteered their time, talent and charismatic presence to strut the runway for a great cause. Annie's shih-tzu, Sprite, even made an appearance!

A family's journey through grief

Sometimes in life there are moments, a shimmer or wisp of a moment that changes a life for ever. A chance moment in 1997 led to me meeting my best friend and life partner, Ani. Flash forward 25 years, almost to the day, when we received the news. The flu like symptoms Ani had been experiencing were due to metastatic breast cancer in her lungs. This flicker of news was the start of a long journey over the following months.

Our family was cast like leaves into the wind. Our individual trajectories and paths were random and unpredictable. Midway through this time, again a chance moment led to meeting the palliative teams at Victoria Hospice. Honestly, I was judgemental at this time, as I felt this meant that we were giving up and accepting that death was inevitable. In fact, that was not the case. Our family was supported by the staff with information, contacts, counselling, and other supports. We all started our counselling while Ani was undergoing her second round of radiation treatment.

Ani passed away on December 26th, 2022. For our daughters and me, this was a cataclysmic day. It left us all empty. But with the support of friends, family, and the Hospice staff, we slowly sparred with our grief. Throughout our ongoing relationship with the Child & Youth bereavement team, there has been so much flexibility with time, place length and topic of our sessions. There has been no judgement- just support and honesty.

We remain on our journey with grief, and we know there will be moments that bring back our loss. But now we are much more confident in ourselves, our ability to face our thoughts and overcome — together.

~ Anthony Minniti

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 September 9 to November 4, 2024.

IN MEMORY John Adams • Sidney Alexander • Martha Appleby • Penny Authier • Jeannette Ballard • Pamela Barry • Patricia Bell
 Bonnie Bell • John Bidlake • Ronald Blasner • Zara Blue • David Bone • Catherine M. Bonnar • John Braybrooks • Hazel Brooks
 Arthur R. Bryant • Bob Buckingham • Roy Buettner • John V. Cain • William Campbell • Margaret E. Campbell • Sandra Chan
 Douglas Chimko • Susan Cotterell • Jenny Cox • Rosa Craveiro • Julia Darley Laver • Dennis Dean • Sharron Dezell
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 Jean L. Wilson • Louise Wingerter • Andrew Wooldridge • Loran B. Wright • Wendy E. Wyles

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

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

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.
- ♥ **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.
- ♥ **Plan your activities in advance.** Before the holiday season is in full swing, make plans 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.
- ♥ **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.

Fashion for Compassion Gratitude!

Heartfelt thanks to our guests, volunteers, and generous sponsors: Sands Funeral Chapel – Victoria, Amica Senior Lifestyles, BMO, Pharmasave Broadmead, Peninsula Co-op, Horne Coupar, and VandeRuyt Wealth Management. Their generosity made Fashion for Compassion a roaring success.

Mark your calendars—next year's event is set for October 2025!

Board member Laurie Pettinger brings down the house with her catwalk flare!

