

Partnership of helping hands and caring hearts celebrates one year

In February 2025, Victoria Hospice and Island Health deepened their palliative care partnership to include training and deployment of Victoria Hospice volunteers to the 8 South Palliative Care Unit (PCU)* at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital (RJH). Since then, five Hospice volunteers have logged 637 hours on 8 South, and four more are currently completing orientation.

Maureen O'Neill was one of the first to be trained and complete a volunteer shift "next door".

"It's always nice to know you might have brightened someone's day," says Maureen, who has logged nearly 1500 hours since she started volunteering with Victoria Hospice in 2014. As a retired Occupational Therapist, Maureen has years of clinical experience, which serves her volunteer practice in a unique way. Her focus on patient comfort provides the kind of non-pharmaceutical pain management that is so important to

people as they approach end of life. "Our roles as volunteers on the Inpatient Unit and 8 South PCU are similar in that the goal is always patient comfort," Maureen adds. "But on 8 South, our primary focus is on providing companionship and reassurance, often helping to alleviate the boredom and anxiety that sometimes comes with being in hospital by offering conversation and snacks to make things a little less daunting."

"The volunteer program enhances supportive care by providing comfort, companionship, and practical support during what can be a very vulnerable time. It has further enriched the compassionate environment we strive to create for patients and families on the unit," says Mackenzie Gavidia-Alas, Manager 8S Oncology & Palliative Care. "Our partnership with Victoria Hospice has brought tremendous value to patients, families, and our clinical teams on the Palliative Care Unit," she adds. "We've seen firsthand how meaningful this additional layer of support can be and are very grateful for the continued collaboration."

Amber Rumpel, Palliative Care Nurse Consultant on 8 South, sees the value of this partnership every day, and really noticed it brought to life during the holiday time, New Year and long winter months. When asked about the partnership, she offered, "I just wanted to say a huge thank you to the volunteers that have helped to bring such comfort to the patients on 8 South over the holidays. It was so lovely seeing them all. I hope they know how much we appreciate them."

Congratulations for one year of this expanded Victoria Hospice-Island Health partnership, bringing hospice hearts like Maureen's into the hospital corridors and patients' lives.

**In September 2020, Island Health opened a new specialized palliative care unit at RJH on 8 South accommodating up to 12 patients with complex symptom or psychosocial issues plus life-limiting illness. These beds are in addition to the 18 beds on the Victoria Hospice Inpatient Unit.*

Volunteer Maureen O'Neill (L) knows that sometimes a cup of tea and quiet conversation make a world of difference in a patient's day.



Around the world, compassion counts: Victoria Hospice donor Paul Loofs

Paul Loofs has seen more of the world than most people dream of. He circumnavigated the globe three times in a VW Beetle. He volunteered with Medical Ministry International and the Canadian Red Cross, and he's lived in Germany, Honduras, Canada, and points in between.

Amidst the highlights, he's also seen a lot of suffering in his life and his travels, but what makes the greatest difference is the compassion behind the helping hands, he says.

"I credit my mother for setting an example of compassion," he says. "She was a nurse in the First World War, and she was super caring."

Now 96 and settled in Victoria, Paul is intent on making a difference for people close to home. Ensuring people have compassionate care at the end of life is one of his top priorities.



Paul presents a donation to Victoria Hospice CEO Teri Henderson.

A long-time Victoria Hospice donor, Paul is a member of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem which supports hospices and palliative care programs in Canada. He's also included Victoria Hospice in his will to ensure ongoing support for compassionate care.

Paul says one of the ways people might suffer at the end of life could be through loneliness.

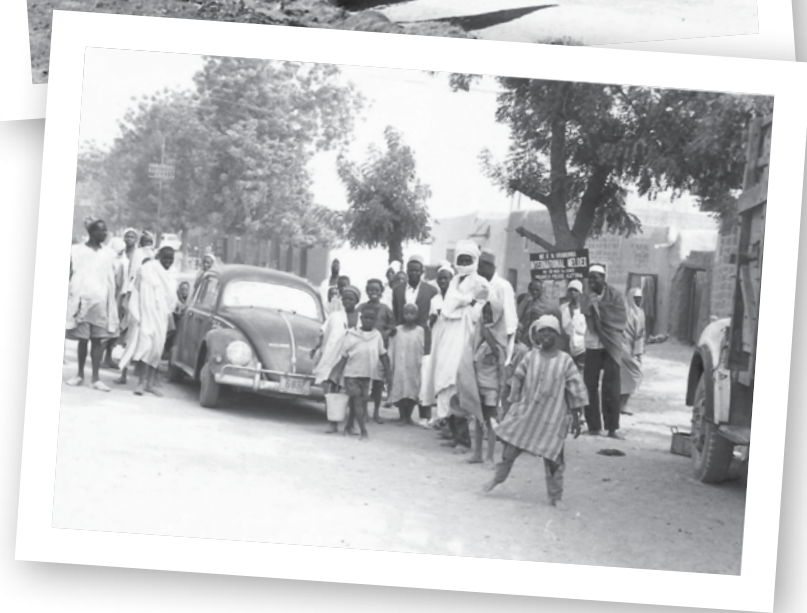
"I'm startled by the fact that there are more and more elderly people who don't have family members nearby or family members at all. That's kind of scary to think of, coming from a big family and we were all one heart and soul," he says.

"Patients at Victoria Hospice are surrounded by people who know what they are going through. It's reassuring to know there are many people at Hospice and the Community Support Centre who are experts in what they do," he says.

"Paul's longstanding generosity and commitment to the future of compassionate care is an inspiration," says Michelle Atamanchuk, Senior Development Officer, Legacy and Planned Giving, at Victoria Hospice. "We're grateful for all Paul has done – and intends to do in the future – to support patients and families at Victoria Hospice."

The efforts of stalwart donors like Paul ensure that expert care is available now and into the future.

Contact Michelle at michelle.atamanchuk@victoriahospice.org or 250-812-3753 to learn more about leaving a legacy at Victoria Hospice.



Throughout his globetrotting life, Paul Loofs has believed in the power of compassion—one of the main reasons he continues to give to Victoria Hospice. Above, Paul in Africa in 1962.

Hike for Hospice: Who are you hiking for?

For many in our community, Hike for Hospice is far more than a fundraising event—it’s a heartfelt opportunity to walk in memory of someone loved and missed. Each year, people of all ages gather to honour the lives of people that have touched theirs.

Participants can enjoy friendly competition in the Workplace Challenge, bring along their four-legged companions for a chance to win the “Pawsitive Spirit” award, or Hike on Your Site from a location of their choosing, all while walking together in remembrance. And if you’d like to volunteer, your help is appreciated!

Personal Perspective

David Williamson (left), General Manager at First Memorial Funeral Services, sees Hike for Hospice as a powerful event fostering connection, compassion and a strong sense of community support.

“It creates space for people to come together through something deeply personal, their grief journey,” says David. “No matter where we find ourselves along that path, this event reminds us that while grief is unique to each of us, we are not alone.”

This year, David is hiking in memory of his sister-in-law, Nancy Chaggar. “The care and support Hospice provided to Nancy and her family, both leading up to her passing



People of all ages Hike for Hospice to honour the lives of people that have touched theirs. Visit victoriahospice.org/hike to learn more and to register.

and in the months that followed, were invaluable,” says David. “Hospice offered comfort, and guidance, during an incredibly difficult time.”

Give the gift of compassionate care

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

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- I would like to find out more about including Victoria Hospice in my will.
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- I wish to remain anonymous.



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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 from November 10, 2025 to February 5, 2026.

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

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