



Langley Hospice News

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April 2013



Langley Hospice Society, a community-based, non-profit organization, provides compassionate support to help people live with dignity and hope while coping with grief and the end of life.



A Toast to Our Volunteers!

It's that time of year again - **National Volunteer Week** - which gives Langley Hospice the opportunity to honour and celebrate our wonderful volunteers! Volunteers are the greatest strength in our not-for-profit charitable organization and are active in all of our programs and services: board of directors, hospice thrift store, office/administration, special events, quilting group, visiting palliative and/or bereavement clients and the children's program. Our dedicated volunteer team totals 157 and has contributed 27,540 hours this year which is equal to 14 people working full-time. These special people save the health care system approximately \$546,000 yearly!

Vital is the role you play,
Outstanding in every way,
Loving, compassionate and full of good cheer,
Undeniably wonderful every day of the year.
Newsletter, quilting, office, fundraising, board members,
client and store
Teams of fantastic people that are our organization's
core.
Extraordinary magic that you create
Every one of you we celebrate
Remarkable and dedicated are our volunteers,
So we raise our glasses high and give you all three cheers!
(Adrienne Barnett)

We hope you all enjoy this very special edition of our Langley Hospice News which is written from the volunteer's perspective and the rewarding experience it gives them.

With the state of the economy and decreasing health care dollars, our dedicated volunteer force is more important than ever. From the bottom of my heart, thanks to each and every one of you for a successful and productive year.

Sandra Castle
Executive Director



VOLUNTEER VIEWPOINTS

A Change in Perspective

"What do **you** want? I don't want any more people poking at me. Go away!"

The words stung, but I managed to say in a calm, quiet voice, "Pat, I'm not a nurse. I'm a volunteer and I just wanted to see if there was anything I could do for you."

"Yeah! You can f***in' well leave me alone!"

Respecting the patient's wishes as I was taught I turned and walked away, but I was shocked by her harsh response and even a little angry.

Since beginning my hospice work five years ago, this was one of the few times I'd truly been upset by a patient. Intellectually, I knew her mood was understandable - she was dying of cancer - but emotionally I still found it hard to deal with. All I wanted to do was help. The nurses told me not to concern myself - she was like that with everyone, but I decided to try again later anyway; maybe after lunch she'd be feeling better. Unfortunately, I received the same blast of invective then.

I'd experienced anger from patients before. There are always a few who are curmudgeonly or cranky by nature; people who are suffering or depressed are not going to be at their best. Surprisingly though, the past few years has shown me that most dying people are approachable and usually appreciate our efforts to comfort and support. I have nothing but admiration for their courage. Pat however was different; for some reason she pushed my buttons, so I began to avoid her.

Over the next few weeks, whenever I was on shift, I would sometimes see Pat in the hallways in her wheelchair, or out in the garden smoking. With her booming voice, she always seemed to be in command of her situation and of others. Occasionally, I caught her yelling at the nurses in her colorful language; they ignored her vitriol, did their job

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and left as quickly as possible. Family members came in from time to time and I would pop my nose in to say hello and ask whether anyone needed anything. I thought I'd be less threatening with her family present and I certainly didn't want to upset Pat again. To be truthful, I didn't want to feel the brunt of her wrath again either.

One day, after a couple of months had passed, the nurses asked me if I felt comfortable enough to assist them with a patient. They needed an extra pair of hands to provide patient support while they inserted a catheter. "Yes, of course", I said, eager to help in any way. But, when I followed them into Pat's room, I began to feel anxious.

Pat had been bedridden for the past week as her cancer progressed. Her face was gaunt and pale, with dark circles under her eyes, now dulled with pain. The brightly coloured turban she wore to cover her baldness was awkwardly askew. I knew instinctively she was afraid. The nurses began their work, while I held Pat's hands. Even two expertly trained medical staff seemed to have difficulty adjusting the catheter properly and she cried out in pain several times, squeezing my hands tightly. I spoke softly to her, letting her know it would soon be over. My heart broke as her eyes pleaded with me. Please, she seemed to say, make it stop.

Eventually the deed was done; the nurses gave Pat a sedative and we left her to rest. Close to tears, I went on to visit another patient down the hall, but my experience with Pat didn't leave me. I was full of guilt for the way I'd judged and avoided her, as if I had been picking and choosing who deserved my compassion and who didn't. It had been difficult seeing her in pain and helpless, her dignity shattered. She was losing the battle for life and she knew it. Her inner strength had kept her alive far longer than most.

Pat had allowed me to witness part of her final journey that day, and by so doing changed much of my thinking about humanity and my own assumptions. I try harder now to be more non-judgmental. As human beings, I know we are all connected and deserving of love and respect, no matter what our personality is reflecting to the outside world.

When Pat's time finally came, I wasn't there, but I mourned her when I heard. She had affected me greatly; she'd been a catalyst for change and I will remember her always.

Wendy Francis
Hospice Residence Volunteer



Volunteering Magic

I have had the opportunity to volunteer as a cabin counselor for teen girls for two years now. I have learned so many things, and seen such strength and wisdom come from such young minds. Camp brings so much joy through activities such as: honoring a loved one who is gone through art, discussion, and games; camp-wide water balloon fights; singing songs beneath the stars; worst-dressed competitions; and hiking. There are many more moments that will be in the memory of these children and teens (and the volunteers) for a long time to come. It amazes me to see children and teens who have endured a great loss be able to manage to come together and allow emotions to flow, while still having fun. These youth understand each other, as one never has to tell someone when to respect others. Because it is all understood without a word being said. Thank you for letting me be a part of Camp Chrysalis, where magic seems to happen.

April Holland
Camp Chrysalis Volunteer



My First Year at Hospice

After having spent a year as a volunteer at our Langley Hospice Residence, I have been contemplating what this year has meant to me; what I have learned, and what I have been able to give.

I believe my hospice work actually started two years ago as I sat with my own mother at a hospice in Regina. It was then that I decided this was where I would volunteer. In the past I have served on numerous boards and committees. From all of them I have learned a tremendous amount, and worked with very dedicated, knowledgeable, and community minded people. So why is this different for me? I am now privileged to be on a different journey. This is a journey where those we meet even for so short a time, need so little from us but give us so much. It is where simple things are important, like a cup of tea with a lady who just smiles and touches your hand. It is a hug, without words, or an opportunity to listen to a family's story about their loved one. It is giving a grieving family time, care and the best that your heart can offer.

I have learned from the residents that their world is very small and most important is family, friends, pictures on their wall, grandchildren that come to visit, and the comfort of quiet surroundings. Gratitude is in abundance, from the

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residents and their families. I know I express the thoughts and feelings of many of the volunteers. When I leave the residence after three hours, I take all those I have met that day home with me in my heart. I have a sense of joy and peace knowing that it was good to be there as part of their journey and with them as a part of mine.

Donna Porter
Hospice Residence Volunteer

Recipe for Success

On a beautiful, calm Wednesday afternoon, I was welcomed into Dorscie Paterson's home with open arms and a smile as bright as the sun. She is an esteemed volunteer for the Langley Hospice Society. With the warmth of Mother Nature around us, I asked Dorscie to explain her journey to hospice volunteering. She talked of seeing Elizabeth Kubler-Ross speak at the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver, as the topic of life and death "fascinated" her. Although this opportunity ignited her interest, it wasn't until the death of her mother, however, that Dorscie really comprehended the weight of losing a loved one. "I remember a nurse gave me a bundle of my mother's clothes as I walked out the hospital... I saw a man walking a dog, a woman driving a car... and all I could think was – *don't they know my mom just died?* But of course they didn't. I needed to talk about it but life was going on for everyone else".



The need to talk, to share her experience, to cry and be comforted; these were imperative to Dorscie. As a result of these desires, along with time, great effort, and the assistance of other like-minded individuals, Langley Hospice Society was created as a community resource for those seeking support for grief and bereavement. "We literally started in a kitchen", Dorscie recalls. "We were surrounded with *ingredients*, but didn't know if our recipes would be successful - meaning we knew the work we wanted to do was significant, but would people really use us?" As time has shown, the work was not only important, but indispensable. As Langley Hospice Society now celebrates 30 years of community service, I was curious to know what sustains Dorscie's passion in this work. "It's the most fascinating work!" she exclaimed. "To share a journey with these people... anytime you can help, in any way, to ease their journey, that is what you must do. In any way you can. When I am asked 'how

can you do that?', I wonder why 'that' is said with fear. To me, 'that' is a gift. I don't choose to carry this work as a burden. To me, it's an experience in my life and someone else's life".

With a sparkle in her eye and smile from ear to ear, Dorscie shared a few of the many personal volunteer experiences that demonstrated her affection for hospice work. She recounts a time when a physician asked her to speak to "an angry patient". Dorscie states "all I knew of the patient was that he was a fisherman, and frankly, that's all I needed to know. I began my conversation with him, with me still standing at the door. I asked him about fishing; a topic that obviously comforted him. As the conversation progressed, I forgot he was described as "angry". The next thing I know, I am holding his hand, at the side of his bed. With his hard eyes now soft, he asked "will you come back again?" and I told him "you can rest assured, I will be here".

Dorscie shared other experiences of patients, many of whom were described as "angry" or "difficult", but as she points out, "who wouldn't be? You're in a hospital – *dying*. But are these reflections of patients' true self? Of course not!" As Dorscie demonstrated, by taking the time to humanize and listen, we, as volunteers, "can provide that breath of fresh air" that patients may be struggling for. She continues, "we (volunteers) must be aware and connect with the flow of the room. Yes, we are there for the patient, but is there a family involved as well? They're just as important. We must be aware of space, movement, the variation of movement, and acknowledge that the flow is constantly changing".

In addition to attentive listening, having a genuine interest in hospice work, *enthusiasm*, Dorscie explains, is just as essential. "You need a certain amount of enthusiasm to not only do the work, but to enjoy it as well". By acknowledging the power of your presence, ensure that "you look and feel like you want to be there, not that you have to. Remember, this invitation to be a part of [a patient's] life during this time, is a gift". She continues to explain that "the best part of life is not just surviving, but thriving, with passion and compassion; humour, style, generosity and kindness from a grateful heart". Without a doubt, this certainly sounds like a recipe for success.

Shivani Kaushik, MSW, RSW
Adult Bereavement Coordinator



A Gift to Yourself!

I used to think of volunteering as giving, which it is. Now I also think of it as receiving. Personally receiving the joy of working with such amazing women, and the sense of doing something important for a good cause.

Volunteering at Second Story Treasures has been a great experience for me. I look forward to Tuesday afternoon and can't wait to see what treasures are ready for inspection. The women I work with are also treasures. What a wonderful group! My Mother left me with some good advice. In your life you need three things. Someone to Love, Something to do, and Something to look forward to.

Well I love my Tuesday ladies, they keep me busy with something to do, and I really do look forward to it!!

Volunteering is a gift to yourself!

Sue Westhaver
Thrift Store Volunteer



Why Do You Volunteer At The Hospice Residence? A Personal Perspective

When I began volunteering at the Residence about 1½ years ago, I very quickly became aware of how often the question is asked: “Why do you do this type of work?” Well, the answer is simple, isn't it? Actually no, it is not that simple; at least I believe it is not easy for most.

Initially I was a little flummoxed for an appropriate and honest answer to the question. Simply to say something along the lines of “I like to help and talk to people” or to respond in some similar fashion seemed a superficial answer that lacked substance and did not give a comprehensive explanation.

I pondered the question, and still do so to some extent, because our lives are an evolving sequences of experiences, observations and events that over time influence and shape and may change our perspectives, thoughts and opinions. As anyone knows who is

involved with hospice work of any type, it is one of the greater privileges in life to become a confidante to someone who is experiencing end-of-life or with an accompanying family member or close friend who is following a grief and bereavement journey. There are few life experiences that compare to the profundity of these encounters, as anyone who is involved in healthcare or the medical professions know only too well.

A reply to that question “Why do you do this type of work?” evolved as “Well, it helps me keep my feet on the ground”, and sometimes I add in a lighter tone of voice “And it helps me not take myself too seriously”. Saying “it helps me keep my feet on the ground” is a response that I can give which holds conviction and while it is not a particularly comprehensive reply, it does however convey a sense of one benefit that I gain from being a volunteer.

At the end of a shift at the hospice Residence, I reflect on the events and interactions that have taken place and can say simply I think that my feet are well and truly firmly planted on the ground; where else do you interact with people who in almost all, if not all instances, have no agenda other than their prevailing and critical circumstances.

Each volunteer who does this work likely has differing focuses and perspectives on the reasons why they do it and the rewards that they derive vary from one person to another. Although the volunteers come from different walks of life, each brings their own skills and presence to the Residence and there is a common commitment that is shared by all. This commitment is challenging to express succinctly in a few words, however, is perhaps illustrated by relating an occasion that is not necessarily especially unique, but holds a very special place in my memory and likely is the kind of experience to which most hospice residence volunteers can relate.

One afternoon towards the end of a busy 3-hour shift at the Residence (each shift at the Residence is different, unique and profound) during which I had spent some time with an elderly lady who we will call Ann, which is not her real name. Ann sat next to the bed of her husband of many years who had just died. She sat very quietly; her grief at that point seemed to be internal. I asked if I may sit with her for a while. I listened to and shared in Ann's silence. She was very serene and we did not talk very much, however the silence was louder than any words could be. After such an experience, how could my feet be anywhere but firmly planted-on-the-ground!

Thornton Smith
Hospice Residence Volunteer

Happenings...

Upcoming Children's Camps

Our **Children's Day Camps** are an excellent opportunity for bereaved children to learn how to better support themselves and their peers through the challenging rite of passage that comes with grief. Through games, crafts and commemoration activities, children strengthen resiliency skills needed to navigate future losses and life transitions. Dates for upcoming day camps will be announced in April, 2013.

Camp Chrysalis Grief Camp ~ Thursday, August 22nd to Sunday, August 25th at Camp Elkgrove: This four-day retreat is ideal for children aged 7 to 13 who have participated in a loss support program and would like four days of fun, sharing and celebration of the values and insight that working through a loss gifts us with.

Pre-registration for this camp is required. For information about these and other upcoming children's program activities, please contact Linda at 604-530-1115.



How Children Grieve For Parents, Caregivers & Family Members

Langley Hospice Society will be offering two presentations on understanding children's grief for family members and caregivers. Coffee and Snacks will be provided.

Friday May 10, 2013 ~ 10am – Noon
Tuesday May 14, 2013 ~ 6pm – 8pm

If you are interested in attending one of these sessions, please contact Linda to register at 604 530-1115 or by e-mail to lindasheridan@langleyhospice.com.

Adult Bereavement Support

Langley Hospice Society's **Heart to Heart Widow's Group**; an open group which provides support and resources for women who are grieving the loss of a spouse or partner.

There is no need to RSVP; please attend if you are interested. Meetings will take place the second Tuesday of every month, from 10:30am to noon.

Welcome - New Volunteers

A heartfelt welcome to the following new volunteers:

- ♥ **Client**
Robin Edwards
- ♥ **Second Story Treasures**
Maureen Brisson Jason Nutt
Chris Pedlar Dave Turner
Jessie Xi
- ♥ **Society Board**
Alma Barranco Robert Carpenter
Elaine Walton



Volunteer Hours
November 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013

♥	Client Volunteers	2,309 hours
♥	Store Volunteers	6,891 hours
♥	Office, Events, Board Newsletter & Other	848 hours

That's a total of 10,048 hours over the last four months! Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers for your generous commitment to Langley Hospice!

**December, 2012 ~ March, 2013
Donations Made in Memory of:**

Jean Bachen
Patricia Bell
Margaret Bickford
Tamara Blucke
Lise
Bradley-Dupuis
Cathy Chapell
Della Crawford
Diana Dermody
Fen Dorozio
Lu Douglas
Audrey Dunn
Doreen Fisher
Edwin Frey
Maxine Gray

Jean Head
Amy Hughes
George Kennedy
Dorothy King
Stanley Kiyon
Sanford "Chuck"
Leblanc
Carolyn Lees
Yam Jim Lee
Greg Long
Olive Marshall
Joan Miki
Edythe Morris
Gordon Murray
David Paterson

Ruth Patterson
Marlene Poole
Hans Reglin
Anthony Scott
Bill Sim
Doreen Smith
Maureen Sutherland
Bessie Jean Szakacs
June Tribe
George Weir
David White
Robert Stanley Wood
William Zemlak

Society Board

Kathy Derksen, President
Scott Taylor, Vice President
Bonnie Greenlee, Treasurer
Anne Pilgrim Secretary
Alma Barranco-Mendoza
Robert Carpenter
Lawrence Eta
Jane Hamar
Dorscie Paterson
Elaine Walton

Foundation Board

Roberta Frankforth, President
Anne Dent, Vice-President
Merlyn Jussila, Treasurer
Dorscie Paterson



Executive Director

Sandra Castle

Palliative Program

Fernande Ouellette

Bereavement Support

Shivani Kaushik

Children's Bereavement Support

Linda Sheridan

Special Events/Volunteer Services

Denise Station

Administrative Services

Wendy Vetsch

Second Story Treasures

Manager/Store Operations

Diane Boyd

Assistant Managers

Deborah Campbell

Kathy Sawatzky



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Langley Hospice Society

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