

Compassionate Connections

Sage Centre | Rosedale Hospice | Children's Grief Centre

Hospice Calgary Newsletter • Spring 2020 • hospicecalgary.ca

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Children's Grief Centre Text & Chat Services

Did you know that almost all Canadian children have a cell phone by age 11? Many own a phone specifically just to text. Evidence suggests that texting and online chatting are here to stay. In fact, many young people send thousands of texts each month. People go online for everything, including emotional support. We are excited to be able to say that we are making efforts to support our clients in ways that work best for them. We are launching text and chat services this March as yet another way for our community to get grief support from us.

The Children's Grief Centre's text and chat services will be offered three times per week in the afternoons and evening. Online support will be provided by specially trained staff and all conversations will be private and secure. Trailblazers like Kids Help Phone, Distress Centre, Wood's Homes, and Alberta school nurses have implemented text programs and shown there is a need for people who wouldn't otherwise seek support through more traditional means.

We are thankful for the Spruce Meadows Leg Up Foundation, The Calgary Foundation, TELUS Friendly Futures Foundation, Government of Alberta Community Initiatives Program, Children's Hospital Aid Society, and Ernie and Leah Hagel for getting behind this new program. Their support has allowed us to keep relevant and offer grief-specific support using a communication tool preferred by today's young people.

Life's Last Chapter

Last year, Hospice Calgary staff brought several new and exciting initiatives to fruition. One project was the creation of an easy to read and informative booklet for family caregivers that our previous Medical Director, Laurie Lemieux, started as a work from her heart. Life's Last Chapter is a purse size, 16-page, booklet that contains practical information on the changes that occur in a person's body and mind as death approaches.

The project grew to be a shared vision between Rosedale staff and the Community Hospice Services team, with professionals from both sites contributing their expertise. Finally, in spring of 2019 after preliminary reviews from a variety of community members, this long envisioned resource was complete. We are proud to have this resource on hand, offering solace and shared wisdom for our clients and community members.

Our Volunteers, Our Angels



Volunteers come to Hospice Calgary for a variety of reasons. Some are past clients or family members, while others are studying to enter the medical profession. Kanako Hiratsuka-Earle came to us following the death of her husband.

Kanako's husband spent only 24 hours in hospice care, but in this short time Kanako came to realize that hospice staff are, "cut from a different cloth". Simply put, Kanako feels that those who work in hospices are angels.

A year after Kanako's husband died, she decided she wanted to make some significant changes in her life. Kanako cut her work down to part-time and began to look for volunteer work. She stumbled across an ad looking for administration volunteers to work with Hospice Calgary. The volunteer role immediately jumped out at her :

"If I can volunteer somewhere and help out the angels — I am in."

Kanako has been volunteering with Hospice Calgary since 2014, and we are hoping to have her working with us for many years to come. She volunteers on reception every Monday, guides prospective families and patients through tours of Rosedale, and most recently did the voiceover work for our new telephone system.

Kanako's work with families during her tours has been a huge asset for us. Her ability to understand and connect with the families is outstanding. Marie Wong, our Manager of Volunteer Services, has remarked that Kanako is :

"incredibly kind and genuine. She listens to what people have to say, and you can see people open up to her right in front of your eyes."

It is quite ironic that the comments Kanako makes about the atmosphere at Rosedale Hospice are the same as what we say about working alongside her. Kanako is a pleasure to be around; she is peaceful and radiates positive energy. She is truly an angel herself.

Meet Kristy Gauld Dyer – Our Spiritual Care Coordinator

Spirituality is about connection, whether it be to self, to others, or to an ultimate Other. The work of spiritual care is to listen deeply and foster these connections. Spirituality is different for everyone.

My work is to learn the uniqueness of our patients and families and to honour their experience, their traditions, and their needs/hopes.

Spiritual care takes place during courageous, creative, and gentle conversations that assess a person's well-being and coping, and their sense of meaning and purpose as it has been, and as it changes. It can be facilitating rituals or spiritual practices that are meaningful to the patient or by simply sitting quietly at their bedside.

At the patient's request, I will arrange for a leader from their specific religious or spiritual tradition to come and visit with them.

For me, spiritual care is about listening and bearing witness to a person's humanity and their story and finding every means possible to honour that — within their living and their dying.



The Hospice Calgary Champions Program



One of our greatest assets is our people; staff, volunteers, board members, past clients, and alumni.

We know that many people who have been involved with us have a strong bond with the organization even if they aren't connected to us on a regular basis. It's not uncommon for these individuals to share their experiences with Hospice Calgary to help others in the community who are dealing with illness or loss. These people help to tell our story. These are our champions.

Sarah Walker (former Executive Director of Hospice Calgary) is excited to help us with this new champions program, and research ways we can more formally engage our stakeholders. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Kim McNeil at [403.263.4525](tel:403.263.4525) or kim.mcneil@hospicecalgary.ca.

Stay tuned as more details about this exciting program emerge.

The Hangout

Sometimes connecting with one another over grief is simply about being in the same room, playing a game, and knowing you are not the only one who has lost someone.

Following demand from our teen clients to connect with other grieving teens outside a counselling environment, our new program The Hangout was developed. It's a monthly drop-in group that meets at the Children's Grief Centre or offsite, depending on the activity.

We held our first session in January and welcomed 6 of our teen clients to participate under the leadership of 3 teen leaders, who are past clients. The feedback from the group has been extremely positive so far, including requests that we host the group more often.

The Hangout is made possible through a generous donation from the Nickle Family Foundation.



Tonight was really fun. I was nervous but it all worked out and I felt really welcomed.

- Hangout participant

I wish it was more than once month, like every other week.

- Hangout participant

From One Rosedale Family

We asked two of our major donors to share a little about why they remain connected to Hospice Calgary. From their family to yours, here is their story.

Death is a natural occurrence, but a frightening one that none of us understands or wants to dwell on.

In August 2003, our then 39-year-old son suffered a seizure while on a hiking trip. By the end of the day, we knew he had a brain tumour — a grade 2 astrocytoma.

MRI's, C-scans, surgery, radiation, and chemo took its toll on an otherwise healthy young man, but he recovered and lived life to the fullest for another thirteen years.

In October 2016 after a routine MRI (and some symptoms that one tried to ignore) our son was diagnosed with an untreatable grade 4 glioblastoma. This was devastating news for a young man and his family. With no possible treatment, we watched a young man who wanted to live and was absolutely terrified, face the unknown — death.



After two weeks in palliative care, it became evident that he needed hospice care. Rosedale was the obvious and only choice. He was treated with dignity, compassion, and love by everyone who worked there. The nurses, volunteers, and staff are all absolute angels of mercy to be able to comfort a person in their final hours.

This was our second experience with a family member at Rosedale Hospice, one was 93 years old and the other 52, but the care for both was comfort and compassion.

God bless Rosedale Hospice and all their staff. We need to continue to support the wonderful care that those in need can experience.

Education through Hospice Calgary

Dying to Know: Advanced Illness Education

Our monthly education program, Dying to Know, is open to anyone interested in topics related to death and dying. The following upcoming sessions are **free of charge** and feature expert speakers. This speaker series has been wildly popular and sells out quickly. Register today to save your spot.

APR
21

EMBRACING ILLNESS AND DEATH THROUGH RITUAL

Lisa Marie Walker, Hospice Calgary Volunteer and Life Cycle Celebrant and Ceremonialist, will share the important role that ceremony and ritual can have in supporting you through this transition time.

MAY
19

REFLECTIONS ON CAREGIVING

Kathy Bach Patterson, Hospice Calgary Family Counsellor, and Heather Lucier, family caregiver, will share their experiences and strategies for facing difficult life transitions.

SPACE IS LIMITED

**TO REGISTER FOR THESE
FREE SESSIONS ONLINE
AND LEARN MORE:**

hospicecalgary.ca/education

All *Dying to Know* sessions are at Sage Centre (1245 70 Avenue SE) with free parking available in front of the building and across the street at Trail Appliances.

Would you like to become a Client or Family Advisor?

Clients and families play a unique role in helping Hospice Calgary to improve the quality and safety of the services we provide. Join our Family Advisory Team today, and you can impact how we provide services at Rosedale Hospice and in our community programs.

Can you speak comfortably in a group and work in partnership with others? Do you have the time to volunteer? Do you listen well and have the ability to show concern for a variety of issues? Are you a current or past client or family member? If you have answered yes to these questions, you may be just the person we need.

If you would like more information about this opportunity, please contact:

Erin Forsyth
Director of Clinical Care at Rosedale
erin.forsyth@hospicecalgary.ca

Elaine Munce,
Director of Community Hospice Services
elaine.munce@hospicecalgary.ca



Finding a Way to be Happy Again



My life was happier than I ever thought possible. I was an accountant by profession. It was a good fit for my nature. I relied on fact and logic and was most comfortable with structure and control. I took a more cerebral approach to life in general, except when it came to my husband, Wayne, whom I adored.

Then, in November of 2013, my world started to crumble. Following what we thought was a bad headache, and then a seizure, my husband was diagnosed with brain cancer. It was surreal. He was diagnosed as “terminal” and given a timeline of 13 months.

I honestly had no idea how my life would change. I was used to a job of 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, where I was in charge. Now cancer was in charge 24/7. I cooked, cleaned, tracked and administered drugs, took him to all his appointments, and took care of his personal needs all while consoling and encouraging him.

During this time, Wayne and I began attending Hospice Calgary’s Living With Cancer program. Every Wednesday, we spent 4 hours with people who were also dealing with a terminal cancer diagnosis. We quickly realized this was our place — these people understood us and what we were going through — no pretense, no apologies for cancer symptoms or medication side effects, no walking on eggshells, no explanation for tears or sadness — everyone knew and accepted our reality.

For those few hours each week, we could be ourselves. It was such a welcome break from the routine of our everyday, cancer focused lives.

When Wayne died on a cool rainy day in the spring of 2015, I held him and told him how much I loved him. After 28 years with this wonderful man, I was alone; my life, as I knew it, was gone. Nothing in life really prepares you for the death of someone you love.

Shortly before Wayne died, he told me to find a way to be happy again. I could never really deny that man anything, and it was his last request that got me into counselling. Counselling and later a grief support group helped me accept Wayne’s death. The members of the group became each other’s biggest cheerleaders. In fact, one became much more than just a cheerleader; Brad Edwards became my husband in October 2019.

Hospice Calgary and the Living With Cancer program were very dear to me for the role they played in helping Wayne and I during our struggle. In 2016, I decided to return to the Living With Cancer program, this time as a volunteer.

To this day, I continue to volunteer with the program. It is an incomparable privilege to work with the staff, fellow volunteers and of course, the participants and their families. There is more honesty, love and compassion in that room than most people ever have the opportunity to experience. I will never get over Wayne’s death, but I can say that I have fulfilled his last wish for me — I have found a way to be happy again.



Sage Centre &
Rosedale Hospice
Hospice Calgary



We promise to journey with you, through end of life and grief, for as long as you need us.
In this issue of **Compassionate Connections**

Children's Grief Centre
Text & Chat Services

Life's Last Chapter

The Hospice
Champions Program

Hospice Calgary 403-263-4525 | info@hospicecalgary.ca | hospicecalgary.ca | Charitable Registration #118963669RR0001
Join the Conversation Online     @hospicecalgary

Hike for Hospice Calgary



SUNDAY MAY 3, 2020

Festivities: 9 am | Ceremonies: 10 am | Hike: 10:30 am
Registration: \$15

Walk at Sikome Lake, Fish Creek Provincial Park
Sign up or donate online: hospicecalgary.ca/hike



EVAN J. STRONG



LAN SOLUTIONS

MARSHALL DRUGS

WESTERN ENERGY SERVICES CORP. ATCO