



OAK RIDGES HOSPICE HERALD

Winter 2022 | Issue 13

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Please join us in welcoming Angelica Atkins who is the new Supportive and Spiritual Care Coordinator at Oak Ridges Hospice (ORH). We sat down for an interview with Angelica for this newsletter so you could learn a little bit more about her and this new role at the Morgan & Sidhu House.

What drew you to the position of Supportive and Spiritual Care Coordinator for Oak Ridges Hospice?

I believe every life is precious from start to finish and I wanted to be part of a team that provides care with dignity in the final days. I've been following the hospice since it was just a gleam in Dr. Steve Russell's eye. When I learned of the Supportive and Spiritual Care Coordinator position, I knew it brought together both my professional and personal experience.

Could you share a little bit about your personal/professional journey that brought you to ORH?

I've always felt called to support holistic healing and well-being. I earned a BSc. in Pre-Med Biology then switched gears to train as an Art Therapist. Finally, I went to seminary where I studied Theology, and Spiritual Care. These diverse fields all support my role on the hospice care team.

On a personal note, I draw inspiration from my dad's final days in hospital where he died of Leukemia the summer of 2020. Even during those early days of COVID, the medical and spiritual care team assigned to him provided such compassionate care. I hope to give others what my family and I received. Working at hospice is a way for me to continue showing my love for my dad.

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SUPPORTIVE & SPIRITUAL CARE

What does your role as Supportive and Spiritual Care Coordinator entail and how do you support individuals at the hospice?

My role is to provide residents and families with psychosocial, spiritual, and emotional support. What that looks like depends on the resident. It can include reminiscing, listening to music, saying prayers, celebrating milestones or observing important cultural traditions or spiritual practices. Sometimes, I facilitate community connections with leaders from a resident's faith community. In future, we plan to offer more connections to supportive services like pet, and music care.

Most often, I offer supportive conversation to allow residents and visitors a safe space to talk through thoughts, feelings, and experiences. That kind of care continues with our Grief & Bereavement Program where family members can be matched with volunteers for 1-to-1 peer support after they leave hospice.

Are there any common misconceptions about your role or what Supportive or Spiritual care might look like?

When I introduce myself and my role, people often say, "Oh, I'm not religious." Some people find meaning and connection in a faith tradition or community. But we all need support and we all find strength, purpose and fulfillment in something. Supportive & Spiritual Care is about helping connect people with what brings them comfort and makes life meaningful for them.

Do you have a favourite moment or memory that has happened since starting in your role at ORH?

The Honour Guard is always memorable, and different every time. When a resident dies, staff and volunteers line the entryway to stand in honour. The resident's family is invited to participate in a brief ceremony by writing in our Memory Book, adding a leaf to our Tree of Life dropbox, and turning on a beautiful stained glass light. It's often a time of tears, story-telling, gratitude, and laughter too.



What is something you would like the community to know about Oak Ridges Hospice or your role in general?

Most people think "death and dying" when they hear "hospice". Caring for people at end-of-life is what we do. But hospice is so much more! Some of the most meaningful memories can be made in a person's last days.

In the four months I've been at Oak Ridges, I've seen residents happy-dance on their birthday, and have their nails and makeup done. I've seen friends troop into a residents room in hockey jerseys to watch the game. And over and over, I've seen family members relieved of their caregiving role so they can focus on being together with their loved one.

MEMORY TREE



In early December we invited friends and families of our past residents to participate in a special memorial event at the hospice.

The event took place in the parking lot and garden at the Morgan & Sidhu House, facing our evergreen tree that was lit up with white and purple lights. Prior to the event, ORH volunteer, **Amy Toon**, created custom ornaments with the names of every resident who has been at the hospice (thank you, Amy!). She made two ornaments for each resident so one could be placed on our Holiday Memory Tree to stay at the hospice and the other could go home with the family.



After welcome remarks, guests were invited to light a candle and place an ornament on the tree. We read the names of all our past residents, while the **New Song Church Choir** provided a beautiful soundtrack. Oak Ridges Hospice's Supportive and Spiritual Care Coordinator, **Angelica Atkins**, was the emcee for the evening and helped plan the ceremony that included a beautiful poem with heartfelt wishes.

Thank you to **Tim Hortons** and **Geissberger Farmhouse Cider** who provided warm drinks for guests to enjoy. Thank you to our Kitchen Lead, **Joanna Thornton**, who baked some special treats that were served at the event, and to ORH volunteer **Trish Haak** for providing hay blocks which were used for seating. **We also want to extend a big thank you to everyone who helped plan this event as well as everyone who volunteered their time to support the event.**



We look forward to carrying on this new tradition each year at the hospice to remember all the incredible people we have had the privilege of getting to know and care for at the hospice.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Every gift has a tremendous impact at Oak Ridges Hospice and we are so grateful for the many individuals, community groups and foundations who have supported us in their own unique way! Below are some highlights from the last few months to celebrate this generous community.

GOLFAPALOOZA



We are extremely honoured to be the recipients of the proceeds from GOLFAPALOOZA. This annual tournament is organized by the Caldwell family in loving memory of Carly Anne Caldwell. Thank you Caldwell family and everyone who participated in this fundraising event!

RESIDENT GOWNS



Thank you Sharon Schmidt for sewing flannel gowns for our residents so they can keep warm and stay cozy during the winter months!

MARK WILLES AUTOMOTIVE



Thank you to Mark Willes and the entire team at Mark Willes Automotive for raising money for the hospice by donating a portion of their sales from Oct 1 - Dec 24, 2021. We are so grateful for your generous support!

DANA'S GOLDSMITHING



Thank you to the amazing team at Dana's Goldsmithing for their ongoing support of the hospice. Through the sale of the Tree of Life Pendants, Dana's has raised \$5,920 for Oak Ridges Hospice.

WORDS FROM THE HEART

We love sharing with you the kind words we receive from friends and family of our residents. It is through the collective support and compassion of this community that we are able to provide exceptional care at Oak Ridges Hospice. None of this would be possible without each and every one of you.

Dedicated to the Outstanding Oak Ridges Hospice Family

By the Family of Glenn McConnell October 7, 1975, to
December 16, 2021.

I remember the exact moment my life was changed by someone with a developmental disability.

The memories seem far away, blurry as if they don't belong to me. But this is what happens after you've been caring for someone for years. You change.

There are no instructions, you learn to be patient, love unconditionally with the understanding one day you will be future planning for your loved one. Never did I think I would be preparing for him.

They don't tell you about the fact if you do it right, you'll never be the same. They don't tell you it will be the most amazing experience you'll ever have. They can't describe on paper the emotional toll it will take on you. They can't tell you there may come a time where you find yourself lost without them. They don't tell you you'll come to love them, and there will be days when you feel at peace. But it happens.

At the end of the day, your hands will be tied because some things, as you learn quickly, can't be explained with something as simple as words. They can only be felt. And most of the time, until someone has had their own experience, they just won't understand.

They can't explain the bond that develops. You develop a bond so strong they can just give you a look and you know exactly what it means, what they want, and what they're feeling. And most of the time, all it boils down to is they want to be heard listened to, and included. Loved.

He taught me it's OK to forgive myself when I have a bad day. There's always tomorrow and a mess-up here and there doesn't mean it's the end of the world. He taught me to slow down, to ponder, to take the time to just look around and take in this beautiful world and all of the simple joys we are blessed to encounter every day.



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Today I held his hand, told him I would be ok as he took his last breath. My world collapsed as I slowly watched him slip away.

So when did I change? I realize now there wasn't one pivotal moment. Instead, it was a million little moments, each important in their own way, that when added together changed me because sometimes the things we can't change end up changing us.

I'm grateful for each day we had together, RIP Glenny Boy

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers for the exceptional care, love, and dedication given to Glenn during his stay at Oak Ridges. You truly are a blessing to those you care for. For this, I thank you for making Glenn's last days so memorable.

HIKE FOR HOSPICE



The 5th Annual Hike for Hospice will be taking place on Sunday, June 5, 2022 at Palmer Park in Port Perry.

We are so excited to get back to an in person event this year! Not only is it the 5th anniversary of the event, this year's event also marks one year of the hospice being open to serve the communities of Durham Region. We look forward to having our biggest Hike yet in 2022! Registration will be opening in April so stay tuned for updates!

If you are interested in learning more about sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website at: www.oakridgeshospice.com/h4h

JOIN OUR TEAM



Are you interested in joining a passionate and dynamic team to provide compassionate care at Oak Ridges Hospice? **If so, we want to hear from you!**

We welcome resumes from RNs, RPNs and PSWs on an ongoing basis. Visit www.oakridgeshospice.com/careers to read the job descriptions and find out how you can apply.

IN MEMORIAM



We gratefully acknowledge donations received in memory of the following individuals*:

Tommy Andersen
Percy Beirness
John Michael Brown
Patricia Brownson
Frank Camisso
Diana Chambers
James Clancy
Brian Compeau
Lynn Cook
Janice Coulton
Berendina Dunford
Ruby Dusty
Howard Ferguson
Michelle Germaine
Irv Gibson

Helen Hadden
Mary Healey
Roy Hebb
Mildred Hibbs
Gary Hill
Brent Holmes
Evelyn Hoyles
Dawn Ireland
Jean Jarvis
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Oosterhof
Glenn McConnell
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Bruce Stewart
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Ruth Eleanor Stone
Lucy Stubbs
Eileen Sullivan
Anne Marie Szebedinszky
Sandra Thomas
Mary Jean Till
Dale Van Camp
Jennifer Vanderven
Nancy Vincent
Betty Whaley
Audrey White
Joan Wotherspoon

*Donations received from November 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022

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