

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

HOSPICE SIMCOE - SEASONS CENTRE

2026 June Callwood Circle of Volunteers Recipient - Chad Zanelli

This award was established in 1994 by Hospice Palliative Care Ontario to acknowledge and thank outstanding hospice volunteers throughout Ontario. The award was named in honour of the late June Callwood, a long-time advocate of hospice, community activist, author and recipient of the Order of Canada. June was the inaugural recipient of the award. Since then, more than 1,085 hospice volunteers have been inducted into the Circle of Outstanding Volunteers. In all her years as a journalist, author, broadcaster, and humanitarian, June Callwood's name became synonymous with integrity, talent, and passion for social justice. She has touched the lives of generations of Canadians by giving that passion expression through her words and her work in the service of those in need. This award is a huge honour in our palliative care community and certainly in all volunteer circles.



Chad's journey with Seasons Centre began with what he thought would be a simple volunteer opportunity. Instead, it became a calling that would profoundly shape his life. For over 25 years, he has witnessed the remarkable healing that can occur when children are provided with a safe and supportive environment to express their grief. In accepting the award, Chad was quick to shift the spotlight away from himself and toward a cause that has become deeply meaningful to him, Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre. He reminded the audience at the volunteer dinner, where he graciously accepted the award, that grief touches all of us at some point in our lives. He invited those present to reflect on the emotions that accompany the loss of someone close and then to imagine experiencing that loss as a child. He reminded all of us that "we can't change what happened.

We can't stop the emotions that come with grief, but we can help children understand that what they're feeling is normal ... that their emotions should not be avoided or dismissed". Chad spoke from the heart as he provided the audience with the reality faced by many families who arrive at Seasons. His continued passion for Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre emphasized that "we don't ignore grief, we don't minimize grief; instead, we teach children how to live with it so it doesn't control the rest of their lives". When asked why Seasons Centre is so special, Chad's answer was simple: "the kids". He spoke of the privilege of watching children arrive withdrawn, quiet, and burdened by loss, only to gradually rediscover joy, confidence, laughter, and connection. Time and again, he has seen resilience emerge as children learn that they are not alone in their grief journey. Throughout his acceptance speech, Chad emphasized that the true recognition belongs to the dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters who make the work of Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre possible.

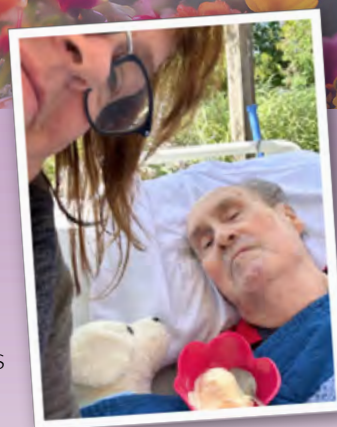
Reflecting on his volunteer experience, he shared that Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre has given him far more than he could ever give in return. It has filled his heart, strengthened his sense of purpose, and shown him the incredible impact that caring adults can have in the lives of grieving children.

Congratulations, Chad, on this well-deserved recognition. With a life philosophy to "positively touch as many people's lives as I can in my lifetime", we are grateful that Chad chose Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre to become part of that journey. Thank you for your decades of service, your passion for supporting children and families, and for being such a powerful ambassador in the important work you do. Your words ring true: "at Seasons, we help children find ways to process their grief in healthy, positive ways". Through your dedication, countless children have discovered hope, healing, and the strength to move forward.

Garden of Grace

*What can a garden give? New life? Growth? Renewal? Peace?
Or perhaps... all of the above?*

Recently, our family was blessed with the opportunity to transition our second—and last—parent into Hospice care. That may sound like a strange word to use when facing the loss of a parent. Blessed. But there is no other word that feels right. My mother passed in 2017, in the quiet stillness of winter. She was granted ten precious weeks in the loving care of Hospice. The season shaped those weeks differently; there were no gardens in bloom, no warm breezes, no butterflies dancing in the air.



This past August, my father began his final journey. After three long months at RVH, he was given just two weeks in Hospice. Two weeks that would become sacred. Every day in the hospital, he would ask, “Can we just go for one more drive?” While that wasn’t possible, I found another way. Each morning, I drove to places that held meaning in his memory, took photos, and brought them back to hang on his wall. We would talk about those places: the roads he loved, the skies he admired, the familiar landscapes that shaped his life. It was a gift to walk through history with him, to see the world again through his eyes. My dad was a man of the earth. He grew up on farms on the prairies of Saskatchewan and later in Oro, Ontario. As a young boy, he planted trees in Oro; trees that may still be standing today. He knew both the beauty and the devastation of nature. He understood its strength, its fragility, and its grace. It feels fitting now that nature would once again play such a profound role in his life, in the true blessing that awaited us at Hospice.



On the second day, the staff gently asked, “What would your dad truly appreciate?” Without hesitation, I answered, “To go outside.” I would have been grateful for the parking lot. I knew there was a small side courtyard. I was not prepared for the breathtaking gift of the back patio garden. On day two, out we went—a small, tender convoy of nurses, my dad, and me. They settled him comfortably in his bed under the canopy. I looked over at him. His eyes were closed, and he was smiling. It was a smile that could light the darkest day. A smile of complete surrender, of rest, of peace. It was something I had never witnessed in my father before: an unguarded, radiant calm. I quietly sent my brother a picture and wept tears of joy. Not sorrow, joy. Each day, weather permitting, Dad and I returned to our little slice of heaven on earth. He would gaze into the endless blue sky. He welcomed visitors as gifts. He held our hands. He began to reconcile that the end was near. And through it all, he carried a peace that comforted every one of us. The scent of lavender drifted in the air. Butterflies floated by.

Even the gentle hum of bees became part of the sacred rhythm of that space. It was not just a garden. It was a living, breathing testament to care, compassion, and grace. And the garden’s final gift? My father’s last walk. His walkout followed the meandering path that winds through that beautiful sanctuary. Surrounded by blooms and sky, by love and dignity, he made his final journey. So, I return to the beginning: what can a garden give? New Life. Growth. Renewal. Peace. And so much more. Revelation 22:2 reminds us: “The tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

To the many volunteers who faithfully give their time, their talent, and their hearts to create and tend something as intricate—and simple—as a garden: thank you. You may see soil, flowers, and pathways, but we see healing. We see dignity. We see grace. And for families like ours, you give more than beauty. You give peace.

Story by: Deborah Pratt

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Spring Garden Prep

As the days grow longer and the signs of summer begin to appear, our gardens once again come to life thanks to the incredible dedication of our gardening volunteers. This spring, the Holden team has collectively dedicated more than 200 hours preparing our gardens for the season ahead. Their work always begins at the front entrance - the very first space our clients, families, loved ones, staff, and visitors see as they arrive. Spring preparation is no small task, as all gardeners can attest to! It begins with the cleanup of months of fallen leaves and winter debris, followed by trimming and rejuvenating plants that have weathered the colder months. Then comes the fun part of designing each garden and carefully selecting the flowers that will accent their new home. Finally comes the planting, fertilizing, and watering, before the ten yards of mulch are added. Now, summer maintenance begins, where we all get to watch the picturesque landscape flourish with vibrant flowers accented by luscious green backdrops. The beautiful outdoor spaces surrounding Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre provide moments of peace, reflection, and great comfort for many who enter the outdoor space.

Our heartfelt thanks to the Holden team for their vision, commitment and dedication to creating these precious spaces.



Donating Dollhouses



I have loved dollhouses since I was a child – in particular, the creation of different lives and stories for the occupants. As a senior with plenty of spare time, I decided to find something to keep me occupied. It had to be something I loved in order for me to remain committed. Recently having had the pleasure of searching for special dollhouse items for my granddaughter Anna, I decided I would do the same for other children - children whose families cannot afford the expense, children who would benefit from such play... I find unique and beautiful dollhouses, my son puts them together, and I scour the Internet for special dolls, furniture and the other necessities of doll life. I have purchased some beautiful pieces from Ukraine, Poland, England... I then donate the “completed” dollhouse. Thus far, I have donated three – one to a women’s shelter and two to hospices – one being Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre.



My daughter-in-law, Julia Corcoran, has been a great help. She reached out to others for suggestions as to where to donate. We have quite a list. One of the reasons I choose women’s shelters and hospices is because I believe children residing in or visiting these places will benefit from such imaginative play – play in which they have some control – something currently lacking in their lives. They create the narrative in a dollhouse story. I hope the children enjoy playing with the dollhouses as much as I have enjoyed preparing each one for a new home.

Our heartfelt thank you to Elisabeth for sharing her gift with Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre. This will bring such joy and imaginative play for our children and families during their time with us.

UPDATES FROM OUR PROGRAMS

Bell Farm Bulletin

In our Community Programs, teamwork continues to be at the heart of everything we do. Supporting individuals and families through illness and bereavement is never the work of one person alone - it takes staff, volunteers, community partners, and clients coming together to create spaces for connection and support.

Collaboration between the Seasons Centre and Bell Farm Social Workers allows for a more wraparound approach to supporting families, ensuring care throughout each stage of their journey. Teamwork is also reflected within our volunteer groups, where volunteers come together to support programming and create welcoming spaces for clients. Through programs such as our Community Information Fair and Ended Beginnings grief support group, we continue working together to respond to the evolving needs of our community.

Thank you to the volunteers who are such an important part of our team!

Story by: Teneal Campbell, Community Support Programs Manager



KIDZ KORNER

As we conclude another year of Seasons Centre groups, we are reminded of the incredible team of people who make these programs possible. From our dedicated buddies and volunteers to community partners and donors, each person plays an important role in creating a safe and caring space for participant families.

We are incredibly grateful to Jimmy Chews for their ongoing support of our Littles groups. With groups beginning at 5:30 pm, many families arrive after a busy day of work, school, and activities. Thanks to Jimmy Chews' generous donation of pizza, children can enjoy a meal before group starts. This helps ease the evening rush for caregivers and provides peace of mind, knowing dinner is taken care of. Sharing a meal also gives children a chance to connect, laugh, and settle in before group begins. The impact of this support is strengthened by the amazing volunteers who serve meals with such kindness and care.

We would also like to thank Boston Pizza for once again donating pizzas for our year-end celebrations. These special gatherings mark the end of another meaningful year and the beginning of summer. They provide an opportunity for participants to celebrate their accomplishments, recognize how far they have come, and honour the friendships they have built along the way. Throughout the year, participants have formed meaningful connections, learned healthy coping skills, and support one another in their grief journeys. It has been a privilege to watch their confidence and resilience grow. This summer, we are excited to continue supporting grieving children and teens through our Summer Littles Group, Summer Teen Group, and Grief Buster Camp. We look forward to creating more opportunities for connection, comfort, and hope in the months ahead.

Story by: Programs Coordinator, Seasons Centre



COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner 2026

Our 2026 Annual Volunteer Appreciation & Awards Dinner was a well-attended evening of food, friendship, and fun. We welcomed over 125 Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre volunteers and staff to the Barrie Country Club, a new location chosen primarily for its size! Our team has gotten so big that we have outgrown most Barrie venues – and their parking lots!!

From cocktails through dinner, and during the Choir Revolution sing-along, it was heartwarming to see everyone socializing, laughing and celebrating with one another. The line-up for the photo booth grew as the evening wore on. Countless photos with silly faces, superhero costumes and wacky backdrops, captured the connections of colleagues who have become friends, teams bound together by shared passion, and commitment to the important work we do.

We celebrated years of volunteer service from one to thirty and learned why our June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Volunteers award winner Chad has devoted 25 incredible years to supporting grieving children at our Seasons Centre location.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the evening a success. We are grateful for the many ways you support our programs and services with compassion, empathy, and care.

To our friends at Mars Canada – thank you for the generous donation of candy treat bags for the entire volunteer team. While they were a take-away for most, we did see several bags opened throughout the evening, for those whose sweet tooth couldn't wait until they got home!

We look forward to an even bigger team celebration next year. The Barrie Country Club should be able to hold us all, at least for a few more years...

Story by: Susan Haiplik and Cathy Lowrie, Volunteer Coordinators



“Navigating Comfort and Care Information Fair”

Join us every third Thursday of the month at 130 Bell Farm Road where you will find helpful resources and conversations. DROP-IN from 1pm-3pm.

After being diagnosed with a terminal illness you may not be sure where you and your family can turn to for support.

Upcoming Dates...

- Thursday, August 20, 2026
- Thursday, September 17, 2026
- Thursday, October 15, 2026



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW PAMPHLET ONLINE](#)

MOMENTS OF REFLECTION



Spiritual Care - *Connection*

I was reminded again, a few times this past week, about an important word that we often take for granted... Not because we don't value it but because we may forget from time to time is its impact on our everyday lives, and in fact our very ability to cope with the ups and downs of being human. The word is **CONNECTION**.

I had the pleasure of attending the HPCO (Hospice Palliative Care Ontario) conference in June, and one of the keynote speakers reminded us of the importance of connection in our work. The keynote speaker was a nurse by the name of Philip Larkin, who has been a nurse in Ireland and Australia for over 30 years. He shared several studies where they asked patients and families about the care they received and, overwhelmingly, just as important as the medical attention, including pain control, the responses received were about staff and volunteers that cared—cared enough to talk, to sit, to give a hug, to listen to them about how hard things are or where their loved one used to work or go to school or their favourite fishing spot.

The importance of connection is something we know, but I'm not sure we understand its incredible power. We need it like we need air to breathe. We need to make time to lift each other up—to let others know they matter. It simply makes us better humans—and better caregivers. Take a moment and think about the people who have lifted you up over the years, those close to you, or perhaps people you may not even have known very well, who were simply kind. Those who take the time to greet you in the morning or at the end of the day...those who let you in the lane in busy traffic or hold open the elevator door, or smile. In our ever-impersonal world where people are so busy and have little time to think about their neighbour, how beautiful and fortunate that we volunteer and work in a place that values connection above all else.

So when the day is hard, and you feel you have nothing left, give a hug to a volunteer, talk to a staff member about their day, listen to a client or family member who needs to share...and feel the healing power of connection.

Story by: Lori Scholten, Spiritual Care Coordinator

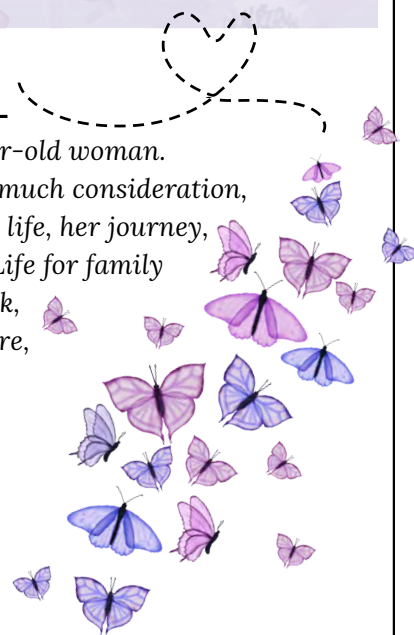
The Walk of Life

Today, I had the privilege of attending a beautiful Walk of Life for a remarkable 62-year-old woman. The family in attendance was plentiful, and it was obvious she was loved deeply. After much consideration, her husband chose three very special and meaningful songs that perfectly reflected her life, her journey, and the memories she leaves behind. Her sister asked if I would videotape the Walk of Life for family members who were unable to attend. While it may have seemed like a small thing to ask, I felt so honoured to be entrusted with such an important task. I also felt a little pressure, as my children often remind me that my photography and filming skills aren't exactly award-winning.

But in honour of this lovely woman, I tried my best. That included walking backwards, carefully climbing alongside a rock garden, and silently praying I wouldn't trip. As the vehicle slowly drove away to "The Time of My Life," I found myself reflecting on the positivity and beauty of the day. While her life was cut far too short, she leaves behind a beautiful legacy, countless treasured memories, and a family whose love for her was evident in every moment.

Today was a reminder that a life is not measured by its length, but by the lives it touches. It was an honour to witness this farewell and to be a small part of preserving precious moments for those who could not be there.

Story by: Fran Michaud-McKenzie, RPN



“Advance Care Planning The Musical”

Hospice Simcoe-Seasons Centre now has 220 dedicated volunteers involved in every single part of the organization. The newsletter gives us an opportunity to celebrate their activities and successes. One of the very notable volunteer initiatives which continues to make a difference in our community is: Drum Roll please**“Advance Care Planning The Musical.”**

MJ Adams, the visionary, creator, writer, producer and director tells you how it all started... “In the fall of 2023, I was one of 12 Hospice Simcoe volunteers who put their name forward to speak in the community about advance care planning, a recognized urgent need in Simcoe County. On attending the first session, to find out what was expected of us, Social Worker Amy Pritzker, leading the group asked us to introduce ourselves. As we went around the room, two of the volunteers broke out in laughter saying, “here we are going to speak to the community but our own mothers refuse to talk about death and dying.”

Oh, mothers and daughters! The PowerPoint presentation began and I wondered if using PowerPoint would engage an audience on such a serious topic. Was there another way to tackle this challenging subject? That evening at home I thought of the play *Come From Away*, the story of the people of Gander Newfoundland where on 9/11, 60 planes were forced to land, doubling their population. Playwrights from Toronto talked to the mayor about telling the story of the town’s caring and generosity in a musical. The rest is history!

The following week at the ACP volunteer session I asked “Is it possible that we get this information out in a musical play about advance care planning?” Amy was positive! During the following week, songs popped into my head during the night with an idea of a mother/daughter interaction. When I presented to the volunteers in the Hospice Tuesday Afternoon Band, there was support all the way! With the women in that group and other additions, the musical play took off. With the involvement and enthusiastic participation of Lori, Wendy, Donna, Terri, Chris, Lisa and Mary Ann this little musical play has been tweaked and polished. It has become a 3-act play with narration, acting and music. The singers are called The Hummingbirds. Through catchy melodies, witty dialogue and relatable characters, Advance Care Planning the Musical has transformed a somber theme into an uplifting narrative.

“We’ve had fun and continue to do so performing it in Simcoe County. The ensemble travels in Mary Ann Pope’s van, the Pope Mobile!” What began as a volunteer grassroots effort has certainly gained momentum. “We’ve been supported each step of the way by Hospice administration. From the very first we were seen, valued and appreciated.” This active volunteer group continues to be invited to perform for groups, and at events such as the local International Women’s Day luncheon in March. They have bookings well into the fall. Just recently, a video of the performance was created for future community educational purposes. The reason for creating this play extended beyond entertainment. It is an ongoing call to action with an aim to empower individuals to have this vital conversation to ensure their voices are heard. We celebrate our volunteers!!

It all starts with an idea ...

Story by: MJ Adams, Volunteer



Advance
Care Planning
ONTARIO

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Kelly's Corner

The care of our first pediatric resident at Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre was a remarkable example of teamwork, compassion, and dedication. From admission through end-of-life care, every member of the interdisciplinary team came together to provide exceptional support for the resident and family during an incredibly important and emotional time. The nursing team worked closely with physicians and the Nurse Practitioner, ensuring that care was responsive, coordinated and focused on comfort and quality of life. We were fortunate to collaborate with the SickKids Palliative Care Team, whose expertise and guidance helped us confidently navigate the unique needs of pediatric hospice care. Strong partnerships with Ontario Health at Home, and the Bell Farm and Seasons Centre teams ensured seamless communication, continuity of care, and timely access to resources and support services. Our volunteers also played a vital role, offering kindness, companionship, and practical assistance that enhanced the experience for both the resident and family.

Throughout this journey, Betsy's leadership, encouragement, and unwavering support helped guide the team, fostering confidence and collaboration every step of the way. Her commitment to excellence and person-centred care inspired all of us to work together toward a common goal. Caring for our first pediatric resident was both a privilege and a profound learning experience. It highlighted the strength of our team, the value of collaboration across organizations, and our collective commitment to providing compassionate, high-quality hospice care. We are incredibly proud of what we accomplished together and of the meaningful difference we made for the resident and family during this precious time.

Story by: Kelly Hubbard, Executive Director



The Power of Teamwork

The old saying goes, "There is no 'I' in teamwork." Never is that more applicable than at Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre.

Everyone has a part to play, and our staff and volunteers are the heart of everything we do. Through their compassion, dedication, and generosity, they bring comfort, dignity, and support to individuals and families throughout our community.

Many often think of the direct nursing care, which does remain at the forefront, but it is the team that surrounds the care that collectively makes our organization exceptional. The team that includes building maintenance and environmental services to ensure the comforts and cleanliness of our facilities, our delivery teams that are comprised of both community partners and volunteers, and the extension far beyond our walls that carries our services into the community.

Without volunteers showing up every day, there wouldn't be smiling faces of those sharing their unique gifts, talents and time to help those facing life-changing moments. Without administration, there wouldn't be the proper deployment of all the team members and fundraising to keep the doors open. There is no "I"; only "we". We all have a part to play, and no one is more important than the other team member. Another old saying is "It takes a village to raise a child". To paraphrase, it would be that "It takes a community to operate Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre.

We are all part of that community! *Story by: Bob Savage, Board Chair*



COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

An Old Word

I love playing with words: everyone in my family is a writer, I love my morning Wordle, I think puns are a great form of humour. So, when I came across a new word – an old word – recently, I was excited and wanted to share it with you.

The word is Respair. It means “to feel hope again, after a period of despair”. The word was last commonly used 500 years ago, and then fell out of our vocabulary. Respair is a word for a positive emotion, and I find it troubling that the negative word despair is very much with us, while respair has been left behind. Despair is all around us. Our world throws despair at us with every headline: wars, wildfires, heat waves, floods, tariffs, shootings. Our day-to-day lives might lead to despair about finances, about relationships, about health, about the future. Our work in palliative care exposes us to despair all the time. Despite the hope that I have written about as always being a part of the dying process, I am realistic enough to acknowledge the grief and abandonment that our residents, clients, and families feel as despair.

Respair can be central to all of the work that we do together here at Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre. While we acknowledge and honour a family's grief, while we understand the tears and the wailing of despair, we still know from our experience and learning that hope can come again. A lifting of the spirit, a sense of optimism can come again. We can't make that happen quickly, we can't force it on anyone, it doesn't happen with a single interaction. But every interaction can help. Every cup of tea, every shared memory, every anecdote that we listen to can help. Respair lives in those fragile moments when hope begins to return – glimmers of lightness, after months of heaviness. Respair shows itself in an unsure smile, the big breath taken after crying, the willingness to get up and re-engage. Respair. An old word that we can make new again.

Story by: Dr. Brian Morris, Medical Director



SNAPSHOTS of connection



Compassionate care is at the heart of everything we do, and its impact is reflected throughout our organization.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

This spring, our community demonstrated the incredible impact of giving back. Every act of generosity helps bring comfort, connection, and support to individuals and families when they need it most.

Tender Hearts - Hope's Reunion Gala, a great success!

We're so pleased to share that the Tender Hearts Gala was a tremendous success.

TOGETHER, WE EXCEEDED OUR GOAL OF \$125,000.

THANK YOU!

www.grievingchildren.com



The 2026 Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign raised an outstanding \$105,221 in support of Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre. Thanks to the generosity of Tim Hortons guests, restaurant teams, and volunteers, the campaign has now **surpassed \$900,000 in contributions over the past 10 years**, helping ensure compassionate hospice and grief support services remain available to local families.



Our Annual Hike for Hospice was another inspiring success, bringing together individuals and families from across Simcoe County in support of our mission. Whether walking in memory of a loved one, in honour of someone receiving care, or simply to give back, participants **helped raise more than \$150,000** to support hospice care and grief support, offered at no cost to those who need them.



Follow us on socials to keep up on Community Happenings!



HOSPICE RESIDENCE:

336 Penetanguishene Road, Barrie, ON L4M 7C2. T: 705-722-5995 | F: 705-722-0716

COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

130 Bell Farm Road, Unit 1, Barrie, ON L4M 6J4. T: 705-725-1140 | F: 705-725-1710

SEASONS CENTRE - CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS:

38 McDonald Street., Barrie, ON L4M 1P1. T: 705-721-5437

www.hospicesimcoe.ca | www.grievingchildren.com

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