

HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Sandy McConney - June Callwood Award Recipient... "HERE COMES THE RAINBOW AGAIN"



When Sandy retired from a 30-year teaching career in 2009, a friend offered him a simple piece of advice: "Don't do anything for the first year." He followed that advice—until one day in 2011, when a short walk changed everything. Living just down the road from Hospice Simcoe, Sandy walked up to the front door and asked, "Do you need any volunteers?" As fate would have it, Volunteer Coordinator Kathy Stewart was nearby and welcomed him with open arms. That chance encounter would spark well over a decade of deep, compassionate commitment to hospice work. Kathy asked him early on if he could help with some painting. Sandy assumed she meant a few "touch-ups". Instead, he found himself painting the walls in all the rooms. That first coat of paint became the foundation for years of dedicated service.

After completing the required palliative care training, Sandy took on various volunteer roles with humility and heart: from in-home visiting to bereavement groups—including co-facilitating a new men's bereavement group. He took courses and attended in-service trainings to grow in every area of his volunteer roles. Volunteering seems to be part of Sandy's DNA. He grew up watching his parents model community service, and he helped his mother with Meals on Wheels. Throughout university and his teaching career, he coached and refereed sports, always giving back. When asked about his time at Hospice Simcoe, Sandy said simply: *"It's the most positive place I've ever been associated with. It's such a joy to be there. For a brief moment, you step into other people's lives—and what a privilege and wonderful learning experience that is."*

Sandy's deep humility was evident throughout the interview. Though he's receiving the June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Volunteers Award at the Hospice Palliative Care Conference in Toronto later this month, he remains modest:

"I'm not sure why they give you an award for something you like to do so much."

What makes the award meaningful to him is not the piece of paper, but the recognition from his peers.

"Being recognized by Hospice and my fellow volunteers—it's one of the greatest gifts of all."

Many at Hospice know Sandy not only for his steady presence but for his love of music. His performances on Tuesday afternoons bring warmth to both residents and staff. Who could forget his rendition of "Here Comes the Rainbow Again" by Kris Kristofferson at the Volunteer Celebration? The song, with its message of life's ups and downs and the return of good things, perfectly mirrors Sandy's view of hospice work: *"Ain't it just like a human, here comes that rainbow again."*

He reflects on the power of small acts of kindness, moments of hope, and the resilience of the human spirit—even in the most difficult circumstances. *"You see generosity & kindness in the face of hardship. The recurring possibility of good things, even when facing adversity, lets us as a team of volunteers do our best, and be good & helpful to one another."*

Hospice Simcoe is proud to celebrate Sandy—a man who gives not for recognition, but out of deep respect for the journey we all share. His presence, compassion, and quiet leadership embody the very soul of hospice care.

Congratulations, Sandy, on this well-deserved honour and thank you for sharing your heart and gifts with Hospice Simcoe!

Tell Your Story



Susan & Cathy - Volunteer Coordinators

Did you know that with the merger of Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre, our volunteer team has grown to over 200 incredible, active volunteers?

Here's a little backstory, for those who may not know: Susan joined Hospice Simcoe in November 2020, inheriting an established volunteer program, seasoned volunteers, and new volunteer applications coming in on a regular basis. Navigating a new role and an existing volunteer program during COVID-19 was no easy feat, and one that Susan accepted and managed beautifully. Everyone who knows Susan, knows that she is a kind and caring heart, who ALWAYS puts the needs and best interest of volunteers first. She is truly the ambassador of volunteer ambassadors!

At Seasons Centre, prior to the merger, onboarding and training new volunteers was shared amongst the staff (Joan, Paula, Danielle Z, Lisa, and Hailey), additional duties to their primary role. Talk about multi-tasking!

Meanwhile, Cathy had transitioned from Hospice Simcoe volunteer (2017) to Community Care Coordinator (2023) covering a maternity leave. With the Ontario Trillium Foundation Seed Grant, Cathy then became the Community Project Coordinator (2024). In this role she looked at Hospice Simcoe and Seasons Centre's volunteer processes, to create one new, common set of forms and processes for the newly merged Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre.

Through this merger, it became clear, that our big volunteer team will continue to grow. We will be adding new volunteers, enhancing current volunteer roles, and creating new roles as our programs and services expand to meet the needs of our community. The only way to maintain a truly volunteer-driven organization, and ensure that every volunteer receives the training, support, and acknowledgment they so richly deserve, was to hire a second volunteer coordinator to work alongside Susan. Because of her previous education, work, and volunteer experience, Cathy was the successful candidate offered the position.



What does this mean? What will this look like? How will this story unfold?

Well it's a work in progress. A story that will be written as we go, as we grow, as we learn, as we evolve. We promise to keep you in the loop as our roles become defined, as we divide the work, and decide who does what for which area of the organization. Rest assured, Susan and Cathy are a strong, united duo with a shared passion for Hospice Simcoe – Seasons Centre and a commitment to each and every volunteer on our team.



Volunteer Awards Dinner

Celebrating compassionate contributions from the volunteers of Hospice Simcoe - Seasons Centre.



Together... we hiked for hope!



We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day on Sunday, May 4th, with the sun shining through the resilient trees. Sunnidale park was filled with love and laughter, with an energy that provided invisible hugs for those being remembered. With a record number of participants, we raised an incredible **\$155,000 in support of end-of-life care and bereavement programs.**

From the heartfelt memorial signage to the joyful moments of families embracing, walking, and remembering together, the day was filled with powerful reminders of why we do what we do. A huge round of applause for our top volunteer fundraisers, Marjan deJong Deller, and Marlene Drysdale and our top staff member, Amy Pritzker. Team Hospice Hugs took the honours of winning the internal fundraising challenge.

The dedication of all volunteers, staff and community supports is what made our annual event a true success! Your presence and spirit were definitely a highlight of the day. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who volunteered, participated, donated and helped to spread the word. It is your unwavering commitment that makes all the difference.

Thanks Team Hospice Simcoe, for turning a hike in the park into a lasting impact for those in need of compassionate care.



Tell Your Story

STEP BY STEP ~ HEART BY HEART

With the theme of 'Tell Your Story', there is no greater story than seeing the colourful shirts everyone was wearing amidst the deep purple Hospice Simcoe Staff and Volunteers! I remember the Hike for Hospice with these bright shirts, heartfelt signs and faces marked with both hope and remembrance. Every step of the hike was movement of hearts with purpose.



It's not just another fundraiser, it's where the community unites to support something more meaningful. I saw tears, laughter, and perseverance as so many walked not only for themselves, but for someone they loved. It reminded me that Hospice is far more than just a service. It's a promise. It's a commitment to dignity, to comfort and to being present in the moment. And this Hike was a shared effort and truly reflected what our volunteers live out every day.

Let's keep moving forward, step by step, heart by heart, toward a future where no one walks alone.

- Bob Savage



Kelly's Corner

We are very excited to share with you that a few staff and volunteers had a wonderful time at the HPCO conference in Richmond Hill this year! We honoured Sandy McConney as the June Callwood Award winner! And celebrated MJ Adams, the "Birds", and Deb White presenting "ACP The Musical"; Danielle Marshall-Ceo presenting about Care Giver Supports and Joan Kennedy presenting about Children's Bereavement Services. It was great fun and a wonderful learning opportunity!



We are already excited to attend next year! - Kelly Hubbard



Tell Your Story

In Praise of Storytellers

On a lovely early summer afternoon last week, I went for a sail with two old friends. When I say old, I mean that between the three of us, we had celebrated 224 birthdays! One of them was a best friend since Grade 1, the other was a teacher and mentor and friend for almost 50 years. The wind was light, the temperature pleasant, the air hazy from wildfires hundreds of miles away, it was a lovely afternoon.



The sailing wasn't demanding, so we talked, and we talked, and we talked. One of my companions was Dr. Rick, a long-time Hospice Simcoe volunteer, and he is a master storyteller. Rick would start talking about someone, then would weave something or someone else in ("and he was of course married to Mildred, who used to sing in a choir with Joanne, whose daughter is now a lawyer in Barrie. ."). His stories were always about people, and always making connections, weaving different threads together to make a tapestry of our community.

There is huge value in stories. As long as there has been language, people have told stories, about themselves, their families, their friends and neighbours. A need to tell and hear stories has been described as an essential activity of the human species. Before there was writing, the oral tradition of telling stories was the only way that history was passed down. Even rock art may have been a way of telling stories. Now, even in our electronic age, stories are a rich way of making connections, of deepening our knowledge of each other. We learn about the subject of the stories, but we also learn about the storyteller.

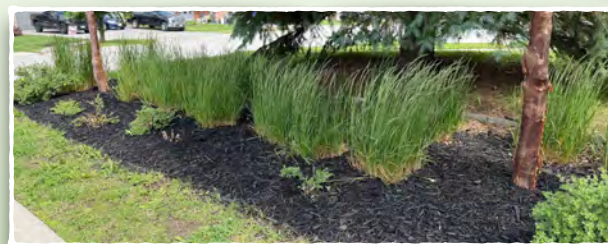
Storytellers have been regarded as teachers, spiritual guides, healers, leaders, entertainers, bringers of meaning and understanding to our lives. So here's to you Rick, and all of you storytellers out there – we need your stories, we love your stories, and we hope you will just keep on telling them.

- Dr. Brian Morris

Grateful for green thumbs!

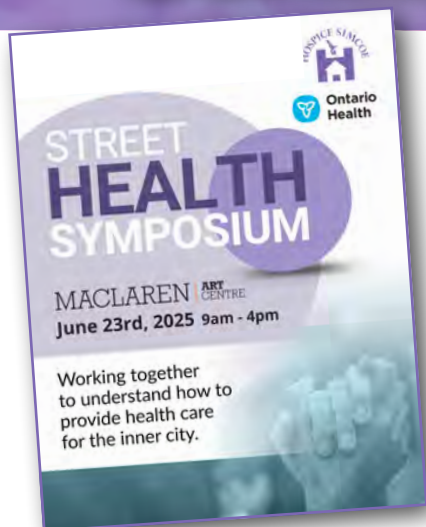
After a long, snowy winter, we've been especially grateful for the green thumbs and generous hearts of the Holden family! Their dedication and incredible gardening and landscaping skills have transformed our grounds into a vibrant, welcoming space – just in time for spring.

Thanks to their hard work, residents, families, visitors, volunteers, and staff can enjoy the beauty & peace of nature in our gardens here at Hospice Simcoe.



Thank you, Holden family – your efforts are appreciated!

Community Engagement



2025 Street Health Symposium

On June 23rd, 85 health and community services partners (including volunteers) gathered at the MacLaren Art Centre for a conversation about providing health care to street-involved folks in our communities. With representation from over 25 organizations, primarily from Barrie and South Georgian Bay, the goals articulated by participants were to gain awareness of existing work and issues, to collaborate and network about potential opportunities, and to acquire skills or knowledge on how to support patients effectively.



The foundation of the day was set with the TEDx talk “What’s a life worth” by Dr. Naheed Dosani, MD (founder of the Palliative Education and Care for the Homeless (PEACH) program in Toronto), where it’s argued that, since experiencing homelessness reduces a person’s life expectancy in half (from 77-80 years to 42-52 years old), this particular patient population would benefit from a palliative approach to care - an approach which honours communication, collaboration and holistic pain and symptom management across care settings.

A panel conversation featuring Emily Dampier-Heins (Mamaway Wiidokdaddwin), Sarah Tilley (Gilbert Centre for Social & Support Services), Sara Peddle (Busby Centre), and Tracy Wood (Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe Muskoka) highlighted the experiences of those providing frontline care to individuals experiencing homelessness. These stories illustrated gaps in care and the residual grief (in all its forms) impacting the community. The remainder of the day focused on collective conversations about gaps, challenges, opportunities, and how to move forward in alignment towards change.

- Amy Pritzker, Clinical Coach



Volunteer Spotlight

Chad Zanelli



With a life philosophy to “positively touch as many people’s lives as I can in my lifetime”, we are blessed that Chad Zanelli chose Seasons Centre to become part of that journey. For the past 25 years, Chad has volunteered alongside an extraordinary team, helping children to navigate the unimaginable grief no child should ever have to endure and is something bigger than any words can express. It all started with a small ad in the Banner Advance

where Chad had no idea then, that volunteering at Seasons would fulfill his life in a much deeper meaning beyond comprehension.



Chad described his volunteer experience with such a calling beyond words, *“being part of Seasons has not only given me purpose bigger than anything I could have ever imagined; it has shown me how much healing can occur when the kids are directed in the appropriate manner”*. Chad many times referred to Seasons Centre as a ‘one-of-a-kind’ place where he quickly answered the question *‘why Seasons?’ ... “for the kids”*. Chad went on to describe the humbling healing he observes in the children as they transform from quiet, withdrawn and hurting into smiling, laughing playful kids again.

Chad expressed the appreciation of his role as a volunteer, getting the opportunity to witness the growth and resilience in children that fills him in ways he could never describe. In fact, Chad spoke several times of how describing Seasons Centre in words to others is actually indescribable as there are no descriptors that can capture what you see with your own eyes and what your heart experiences with every group. Of the many stories gathered in the past quarter century, Chad shared one that gave a glimpse into the feeling the heart makes with children that he experiences every time he volunteers. It started with the little girl just following Chad around but with trust and emotional connections new smiles emerged and she continued to move closer and closer until she was right under his arm during closing circle. Chad described how the experience *“filled my heart and my bucket overflowed with emotion that I carry around like walking on a cloud”*.



Thank you Chad, not just for the time, energy and care you pour into every moment, but the forever impact you leave on the lives of children!

What's Happening

WE'RE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THAT YOU HELPED US TO RAISE... **\$155,000**



To support our end-of-life care and community bereavement programs. Thank you to everyone who joined us at Sunnidale Park to make our Hike for Hospice a great event in memory of our loved ones.



Thanks to the Tim Hortons Smile Cookie campaign...

Hospice Simcoe and RVH's Birthing Unit each received an incredible **\$110,112.51!** We're so grateful to the Barrie Tim Hortons owners and their teams, our amazing volunteers and staff who helped raise awareness, and everyone who purchased Smile Cookies! Your support means so much.

Thank you for helping us make a difference!



Stay tuned for the upcoming 'SUMMER REPORT'

This July, we will be emailing our latest news & updates in a 'Summer Report'. We want to keep you updated on several initiatives we're working on to improve the delivery of high-quality palliative care and community bereavement support.

If you do not receive your email by August 1st, please contact Jackie at: jackie@hospicesimcoe.ca for your copy.

Like us, Follow us, Subscribe and engage with us!



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