

Hope House to open Wellness, Grief & Caregiving Hub in community



Grief can be a complex journey, but it's not a journey you need to travel alone.

This is a philosophy that has driven Hope House Community Hospice since it was founded as Hospice King-Aurora-Richmond Hill in 1983, and it is one that continues to push them forward as they prepare to open up their new Wellness, Grief & Caregiver Hub in the local community.

Hope House recently moved from their long-time home on Industrial Parkway South, a facility that was shared with other non-profits, and has planted new roots on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Church Street.

With the new digs, comes a new approach and a new umbrella name for their community programs.

The Wellness, Grief and Caregiving Hub is a unique name for what Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Community Hospice, calls a "unique purpose."

"I think primarily when people think of a hospice, they think of beds and they think of end-of-life care," she says. "We do provide end-of-life care in people's homes, but a big part of the work that we do with the community is helping people along their journey. We provide supports right from the time of diagnosis to either the palliative path or through to recovery. This space identifies who it is and the type of supports that we are providing."

"A big part of what we do is helping people from the time of diagnosis, helping caregivers, and then the bereavement side of things as well after the death of a loved one. Through our children's, youth and family programs and the bereavement program, we're helping kids and youth who are coping with the death of a loved one, or coping through a serious illness diagnosis, and helping along that journey as well."

The new name, she says, helps foster a "welcoming, safe space" that serves the community.

The community can get their first look at the Wellness, Grief & Caregiving Hub on Friday, January 23 at 15105 Yonge Street, Unit 105.

Members of the community are invited to pop by between 2 and 4 p.m. to take in the space, learn more about programs, and stick

around the formal part of the celebration where Mayor Tom Mrakas will be on hand for the formal ribbon cutting, while Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa is slated to stop by to celebrate Hope House's receipt of a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

'We will have volunteers here who will be able to talk about their experiences being a volunteer, and each of our programs will have a display area to talk about the programming we provide as well,' says Bonner. 'It's going to be great to have the community come through our door, check us out, and learn a little bit about what we do.'

As they look ahead to their first full year in their new base, Bonner says it will be a busy several months for Hope House, whether working from their Hub or in the homes of clients.

'We're doing a lot of creativity programming this year,' she says. 'It seems to be a way to wellness, where people are exploring their creativity. They're coming into our space and we're having Crafting for Wellbeing, which happens on Fridays. We're going to do some Vision Board workshops as well. We have an art therapist that we're working with, and we have meditation and chair yoga, but there seems to be this change in direction to creativity and art-based programming that seems to really appeal to people. We've had really, really good attendance at these opportunities.'

'One of the [other] programs is called 'Who Am I Now?' After the death of a loved one, [sometimes there's the question] of who am I? 'I'm not a husband anymore. I'm not a wife anymore.' It's helping people sort of identify themselves and their new path, and it has been very powerful. We're also trying to build the teen program as we found that it's difficult for youth and teens as they're so busy with their school and activities. We're starting to do monthly get-togethers and it's been really successful getting teens who have gone through a similar experience to talk openly to each other about the things that they can't necessarily to their friends ' there will be more of that programming for teens this year.'

For more information about Hope House Programs, their Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub, and much more, visit hopehousehospice.com.

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