

Lacing up for Hike for Hospice will help provide community with end-of-life care

Doctors, nurses and volunteers lace up every day to provide important and essential end-of-life care in local hospices. They did so before the global pandemic, and they have continued to do so in the 14 months since it began.

Theirs is a service driven by passion, but the level of care they are able to provide is driven by dollars.

And that's where you come in.

Next month, Doane House Hospice and Margaret Bahen Hospice will launch the 2021 Hike For Hospice Campaign. Running between May 21 and May 31, you can hike, walk, run or bike in support of the work both organizations are doing.

According to organizers, it costs an average of \$1,000 per day for hospital care versus \$460 for a day of care in hospice, all of which is provided to hospice residents and their families without cost.

"Hospices bring vital quality of care to Aurorans facing a life-threatening illness and to those near end-of-life," said Jennifer Adams, Director of Development for Margaret Bahen and Doane House Hospices.

Ms. Adams recently underscored the importance of Hike for Hospice in a delegation to Aurora Council. There, she said supporting their work as a "sound community investment."

"The people of Aurora are very fortunate," she said. "Across Canada, the number of hospices is quite low; however, Aurorans have access to two community hospices. Imagine a member of your family has a potentially terminal illness. Imagine the worry, concern and mental stress that would cause you and your family. Our hospice programs and services target each person's emotional, spiritual and physical needs. By surrounding our community members with a strong circle of support, we can help them make decisions for their days ahead.

"If their life-threatening illness persists and they are faced with deciding about their end-of-life care, Margaret Bahen provides an environment that feels like home. It is a place where families meet a loved one in peace, a place where gardens are grown, and a place where serenity and dignity for all is at the forefront. Annually, we support over 1,250 individuals through our programs at Margaret Bahen Residential Hospice and Doane House Community Hospice. This is made up of approximately 95 per cent of Aurorans and Newmarket residents."

Residential and community hospices, she noted, depend on fundraising and philanthropy to ensure the smooth operation of their services as governments only partially fund the clinical operations. It is estimated, she said, that 50 per cent of their overall operating expenses must be raised year after year to address shortfalls, and this funding can enable everything from meal preparation, to housekeeping, and even night vigils.

"Hospices simply do not function without armies of care," she said. "The bottom line really is this: Our hospices survive due to the generosity of our communities and the unfailing commitment of staff. These two energies come together in our major annual fundraiser, the Hike for Hospice. This initiative helps fund food, utilities, spiritual care, social work services, music and art therapy, volunteer services, bereavement support, and administrative support."

Walking, hiking, biking or running, the Hospices have set a fundraising goal of \$70,000 "a fraction of the \$800,000 needed annually to keep operations going.

"Last year with COVID-19, we saw a decrease in our fundraising dollars," said Ms. Adams. "We're asking for people to participate at any time (between May 21 and 31) for at least 30 minutes to either hike, bike, walk or run -- or choose another activity they are interested in. You can register on our website and then you're able to create a personal fundraising page that is then shared out to

your friends, family and contacts. Then, during the event, we're asking people to take pictures of them doing their activities, share it on social media using our hashtag #hike4hospice? to really spread the word.

To do just that, or to support the participants of your choice, visit www.myhospice.ca/hikeforhospice.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter