

Local bakers can help Hospice feel more like home



Did you use any downtime at the start of the global pandemic to hone your baking skills?

Maybe you've learned the delicate art of cake decorating, perfected the sourdough loaf, or even came up with some new spins on traditional cookie recipes.

Whatever your culinary flare, it can be used to benefit the community as Margaret Bahen Hospice and Doane House Hospice urge residents to hold bake sales for their coworkers ? or even their neighbours ? to raise much needed funds for local end-of-life care and grief support.

?Margaret Bahen Hospice and Doane House Hospice are sister hospices working together to support York Region residents,? says Jennifer Adams, Vice President, Philanthropy, for the Better Living Charitable Foundation, which oversees both hospices.

She notes Margaret Bahen supports people from all parts of York Region through residential care while Doane House supports north Aurora, Newmarket, and south Bradford with additional programs.

?It costs about \$1.8 million each year to operate both of our hospices and we receive just over \$1 million from the Central LHIN, leaving about \$800,000 to \$850,000 we need to raise each year to maintain our operations and ensure programs continue to run as we have always wanted them to run, to make sure families have access to programs as part of their ongoing treatment, grief and bereavement.

?As we enter our fifth year of operation, we are looking at some significant costs to replace different equipment within our hospice. One thing in particular we are looking at in the next couple of years is replacement of our beds for each of our 10 residential rooms. That looks like it will be an approximate cost of \$100,000. It is a big goal for us, but it is such an important one for service and care.?

Encouraging local bakers to step up and support local hospice care is an initiative that indeed came out of the global pandemic. As a person who focused her energy on baking during those months at home, Ms. Adams saw that her friends and family were doing the same.

There was an energy in the community that she felt could be harnessed and all it takes to get a bake sale fundraiser going for both Hospices is logging onto their website to fill out a form.

“You can create your own mini-page and send that to your friends, family, colleagues and contacts and ask them to make a donation at whatever level they would like, then you offer to bake something for them, whether it is your own special chocolate chip cookie recipe, carrot muffins, or whatever you might be known for or to try something new with your friends,” she explains. “It’s a way to bring back a little bit of that one-on-one connection. We started it when there were some stay-at-home orders and restrictions in seeing extended families and this is a nice way for people to connect on their doorsteps while supporting our hospices.

“This year, we’re continuing on with that on an individual level and we’re also expanding it to be an employee engagement initiative. We had a couple of companies last year that, as things were able to open up a little bit between waves, they would have an employee bake sales. They would run little contests where people would bake and then they would vote on what they liked best and each person made a donation. It really helped build a lot of company morale and employees were excited to be able to be back in person and connecting with their colleagues; this year we have made a concerted effort to reach out to local companies who are inviting employees back and looking for ways to encourage togetherness in supporting the community.”

Holding bake sales is not the only way you can help support both hospices in their fundraising efforts this year.

From May 22 – 29, they will host a Virtual Hike for Hospice event where people can collect pledges for the cause as they walk, bike and stroll – whatever gets you moving? – while sharing their efforts over social media.

Participants who raise \$250 and above will be invited to an in-person celebration event in June, which will be held at Doane House Hospice’s location on Eagle Street in Newmarket.

“We commonly have families who may have lost a loved one who will hike in memory of that loved one with their family,” says Ms. Adams. “We have volunteers and ongoing community supporters who just believe in hospice and what we do who sign up and participate to be hikers. Last year, we were very excited to raise \$80,000 so this year we always set our sights a little bit higher and we’re hoping we can reach the \$95,000 mark, really looking to engage with our community and returning sponsorship, and hopefully new sponsors to support the event as well.

“Our second signature event is our Tee-Off for Hospice, taking place at Pheasant Run Golf Club on August 23. We’re going back to an in-person shotgun start at 12.30 p.m., including on-course contests like longest drive, hole in one, and a lot of fun things to go out on course. It will be great to be back in person and thank our supporters and enjoy a good day out on the course.”

For more on these and other initiatives, visit myhospice.ca.

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