

## VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Hospice Groups

Hospice Groups take care to a new level in Aurora and Newmarket

By Chris Ballard, MPP

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One of the greatest gifts I receive as an MPP is the honour of meeting members of our community who give of themselves in order to improve the lives of others. In the months ahead, I hope to chronicle some of those unique people and groups.

At the annual general meeting last week of Doane House Hospice, I was reminded of the importance of volunteerism in making our community such a special place to live.

I was reminded of the compassion, vision, dedication and quality care provided our residents by volunteers and a handful of staff, who run the hospice on a shoestring budget

Doane House Hospice is celebrating its 25th anniversary of providing hospice care. Aurora is doubly blessed with two hospices serving the needs of those facing terminal or chronic illness. North Aurora and Newmarket are served by Doane House Hospice. South of Wellington Street, residents are served by Hospice King-Aurora. Incredibly, Hospice King-Aurora has served those in need for 31 years.

Both organizations offer their services for free and rely on the funding kindness of individual and corporate donors to keep their doors open.

Discussing end-of-life care is never a pleasant topic. I've had the discussion too many times with family members and close friends. But, while death is inevitable, how we choose to live our days with a life threatening illness is very much up to us.

This is where community-based hospice can be of great assistance.

Doane House Hospice "promotes living every moment, and offers individuals diagnosed with a life threatening illness compassion, support and hope," says the organization.

"Our programs and services are designed to support the individual by meeting their emotional, spiritual and physical needs. This gives the individual the ability to make the right decisions for their care through being able to navigate the system, access the right care at the right time, and help support their family and friends through caregiver relief and bereavement."

Both hospices have volunteers trained and supported by professionals. Between the two groups, more than 230 people volunteer their time to provide support and service to our community.

Both groups say volunteers come from all walks of life and vary in age, cultural background, faith, gender and careers. Some have experienced the loss of a loved one and the experience has changed their lives. Some volunteer because they want to do something meaningful. Some just like to help people.

Whatever the reason, volunteering with a hospice will enrich, if not change, your life.

An important fact about hospice care: Ninety per cent of Canadians say they want to remain in their own homes during the final stages of life, but 94 per cent of caregivers say they cannot cope without help "the kind of help hospice volunteers and staff provide.

What, exactly, do both hospices do?

Hospice King-Aurora offers five core services including an in-home visiting program where professionally trained and supported volunteers offer non-medical services to individuals living with life-threatening illness and their families. Wellness programs provide services that promote health and well-being, and a post-cancer program called "Picking up the Pieces." Adult caregivers can take advantage of group support and wellness programs.

Support is available to children and teens coping with the serious illness of a family member. Group and one-on-one support and wellness programs are available to children, teens and adults coping with the death of a family member or friend. Education and awareness programs focus on seminars and workshops on issues of hospice palliative care, grief bereavement and family caregiving. At Doane House Hospice, core services are similar, and include a bereavement program, caregiver support, mind-body connection and visiting volunteers. Doane House Hospice is also known for its art therapy, where "spontaneous art making has profound healing effects for families impacted by a life-threatening illness." The group's Oasis Program offers a place where those facing life-threatening illness can "take refuge from the world" to relax and refresh.

Perhaps the best way to learn about the two hospices, and the hospice movement, is to visit their websites and read the stories told by clients and families. I hope you will be inspired to support the organizations, either through a gift of money, time or both.

You will meet some wonderfully dedicated volunteers, and staff who make a significant difference in our community.

They are heroes.

To learn more, contact Doane House Hospice at 905-967-0259, and Hospice King-Aurora at 905-727-6815. Both have websites with lots more information

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