

Walk, roll and stroll to support end-of-life care provided by local hospices

Spring is in full swing and as you look for opportunities to get more active in the great outdoors, each step you take can help countless others across York Region with this month's Hike for Hospice.

Benefiting Margaret Bahen Residential Hospice and Doane House Hospice, this year's Hike for Hospice will take place between May 22 and May 29 and there's still time to get involved.

The fun fundraiser gets underway next Tuesday, May 17, with a virtual kickoff event before participants are encouraged to get out into their own neighbourhoods to collect pledges and get active for the cause.

?Participants can do their hike, walk, roll, run or stroll ? whatever it is they want to do ? between May 22 and May 29,? says Hospice's Jennifer Adams. ?One member last year did paddleboarding so I think this year he's [getting involved] by getting into his kayak. We're hearing more also about people who are doing it in groups ? maybe it is their colleagues who work at the same place who are going to participate together, we have family members who are going on their own to walk, family members who are gathered in memory of a loved one impacted by hospice, and different forms of groups getting together.??

This year, both hospices have come together to set a shared Hike for Hospice fundraising goal of \$95,000, so every step counts.

?We receive government funding of about \$1.1 million each year,? Ms. Adams explains. ?However, the cost to operate our hospices is just over \$1.8 million. We need to raise \$750,000 to \$800,000 per year to maintain the current operations for both of our hospices. Our hospices are free of charge for families to access, so there are no fees to come and stay at our residential hospice or [to] access programs through Doane House. That is a major push for us every year with fundraising.

?As we look to the future this year and in years to come, there are things our residential hospice in particular that need to be replaced. We're in our fifth year of operations and we have a number of things that will need to be replaced in the next couple of years. For example, our hospice beds ? those will need to be replaced in the next little while and those will likely cost about \$100,000 to do all ten beds. We're trying to replace all our patio furniture this year, which makes it a welcoming space for families to visit on their private patios. We need to earmark some funds for the cost of replacing those types of items as well.??

Hospice care is an essential service, she adds, and palliative care is one that many people don't really know about until they need it.

Both hospices are ?committed to helping the full family,? not just individuals who might be actively receiving treatment for a life-threatening illness or in need of end-of-life care; it's to help the whole family navigate very difficult waters and even endure the grief and bereavement process.

?We're not just involved with families for a short period, we're available for many years as they need it,? says Ms. Adams. ?Being in hospice is a welcoming environment and a place where families can not worry about the day-to-day care of their loved ones, knowing that that is being taken care of by our registered nurses, practical nurses, and our palliative care team, including PSWs. They can just purely focus on spending time with their loved one and creating memories that will last forever for them.

?We are so grateful to be part of this community. We are always honoured to be able to share in a small part of a family's journey and be able to provide whatever comfort and care they need in that moment and for the years to come. It is such an honour.??

For more on this year's Hike for Hospice event, or about Margaret Bahen Residential Hospice and Doane House Hospice, visit myhospice.ca.

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