



HOSPICE HIGHLIGHTER

December 2025

Stars for a Dark Night community memorial and installation returns

It's no secret that the holidays can be a challenging time when you are grieving the loss of someone you love. To help you through this time, Hospice Peterborough is once again teaming up with the Peterborough Public Library to host a community installation of decorated stars in memory of loved ones who have died, along with a short memorial ceremony on December 18.

Close to 300 stars were contributed to last year's installation. Family, friends, and even pets' names have been shared on stars this year.

"We know many people in our community have faced loss, and it's moving to see everyone come together to honour their loved ones," shares Sheila MacPherson, Manager of Community Programs at Hospice Peterborough. "Moments like this remind us that grief touches all of us — and none of us have to face it alone." We warmly invite you to join this growing constellation, as a reminder that you too are not alone. Stars can be contributed until December 31. Please note they will not be returned to you.

If you'd like to contribute stars to Stars for a Dark Night...

- Stars can be picked up and decorated at Hospice Peterborough and the Peterborough Public Library throughout December.
- If you are connected with a local community organization that would like its own star-making kit, please email Carolyn Parkes at cparkes@hospicepeterborough.org.
- A short memorial ceremony will take place on Thursday, December 18, 2025 from 4-5pm in the Friends of the Library Community Room at Peterborough Public Library featuring candle lighting, reflective readings, music, and more.





ANNUAL HOLIDAY BOARD BREAKFAST

Each year our amazing board treats our staff to an **INCREDIBLE** holiday breakfast! It's truly a highlight of the season. Thank you board members for helping us kick off our day in a delicious way!

Christine's Hospice Peterborough story



Our family and my son Patrick, far right.

Hospice Peterborough holds such a special place in the hearts of our family. My hospice journey begins with my son, Patrick, who was diagnosed with Glioblastoma in August of 2016 at just 18 years old.

Patrick came into this world the happiest little soul. **He loved life.** He had so many friends! **And he absolutely loved canoeing, swimming, and being near the water.**

A series of headaches during the summer after his first year of university led to his cancer diagnosis, and for two years, chemotherapy and radiation kept him well enough to continue studying and working. Patrick's attitude was remarkable during this time; **he certainly never lost his sense of humour!**

In the spring of 2018, Patrick's illness spread and became terminal. It was without a doubt the most difficult time in our lives. He was only 20. We experienced profound and overwhelming sadness.

That's when we got connected to a supportive care counsellor at Hospice Peterborough. Only a day after I made the call for support, the counsellor was there. Right away, he helped us put things into perspective.

Working with the counsellor, we laughed, and we cried. He gave us tools, and he gave us insights. He even had coffees with our daughters as they processed the loss of their brother. He saw Patrick shortly before he died, too. **I was blown away by his dedication to supporting our family.**

Please join me in donating to Hospice Peterborough, so they can support more families, like mine.

Three years following Patrick's death, my dad was admitted to Hospice Peterborough's residence for his final moments. He had a good long life, filled with countless weekends at our log cabin and strong friendships. In many ways, **he and Patrick were so alike, each with a zest for living fully, simply, and joyfully.**

When he came to hospice, he was so comfortable, surrounded by people he loved. **If you could have a good death, dad had a really good death. We have hospice to thank for that.**

After these experiences with hospice, **I knew I'd love to give back.** I completed the incredible 30-hour Hospice Volunteer training in the Fall of 2024. It ended up being an important part of my grief journey, too. **Every year since 2020, we have participated in Hike for Hospice. Our team, Paddy's Paddlers, is an ode to Patrick's love of water and canoeing.**

This year, **I joined the volunteer Hike for Hospice Planning Committee,** the perfect opportunity for me to give back. **This became an amazing experience, full of laughter and joy. I looked forward to the meetings.** My husband Pat and I shared a lovely walk together, along with family members who joined virtually, on Hike Day (pictured right).



My husband Pat and I at Hike for Hospice 2025.

For nearly 10 years, Hospice Peterborough has been there for me and my family, through multiple losses and grief. I was surprised that despite having all these incredible supports available at no cost, they rely on fundraising to meet client need. You may never meet those who receive your support, but I can tell you from my experience, it means everything.

If you're reading this newsletter, I know you're a supporter of the work of Hospice Peterborough. I hope we can once again depend on your donation so Hospice can continue to be there for families, like mine. A gift of any amount makes such a difference!

In our lives, we are all going to experience death. A place like hospice provides these incredible services – counselling, support groups, and a comfortable home for life's final moments – at no cost to those who need it. **We need your support to keep hospice as vibrant as it is.**



My dad, John, meeting his grand-daughter Millie while at Hospice.

I am very grateful for the incredible services that our family have personally received from Peterborough Hospice, which can only happen because of generous sponsors and donations from our community.

*A heartfelt thank you,
Christine*

P.S. – I'll never forget the kindness that met me at Hospice Peterborough every time. Your support makes that care possible – thank you from the bottom of my heart. **Make a donation today at www.hospicepeterborough.org/donate-now**

Grief and the holidays

Facing the holidays when you are grieving can be a challenge. While there are no magical solutions, here are a few suggestions:

- Talk about your grief - talking about the person gives others permission to do the same
- Be realistic - your grief may be intensified, respect your need for rest
- Choose your company carefully - be with those who have shown to be caring, and don't be afraid to be alone

Remember, grief can be an expression of love. Embrace it.

Be patient with yourself.



Scan QR Code to listen.

The holidays can be a difficult time when you are grieving.

We hope this special episode of our podcast brings you comfort.

[Click here to listen.](#)



Upcoming Memorial Events in our Community | 2025



Stars for a Dark Night: A Gathering to Remember Loved Ones who have Died

Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 4:00pm (lobby installation ongoing through December)

Location: Friends of the Library Community Room - Peterborough Public Library (345 Aylmer St N, Peterborough)

Hendren Funeral Home Candlelight Services of Remembrance

Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 7:00pm

Location: Norwood United Church (4264 Highway 7, Norwood)

Date: Friday, December 19, 2025 at 7:30pm

Location: Lakefield United Church (47 Regent St, Lakefield)

Darkness to Light for Community Members impacted by Suicide and Overdose

Date: Sunday, December 21, 2025 at 7:30am

Location: Del Crary Park (Rink and George intersection)

**If you are grieving a loss this holiday season, you are not alone.
We see you, and we honour your experience.**

*Season 4 of our
podcast is here!*

WHAT NOW?

WITH JULIE BROWN, RED KEATING AND DAVID KENNEDY

**On the threshold of
life, death and grief.**



Spotlight on a recent *What Now?* episode:

WHO AM I NOW? A CONVERSATION WITH KELLEY RAAB ON GRIEF, IDENTITY, AND THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AFTER LOSS

The hosts and Dr. Kelley Raab examine how bereavement unsettles personal identity, why spiritual frameworks can both support and complicate the grieving process, and how the death of a parent can create profound emotional and existential disorientation.

With insights from both her research and lived experience, listeners are provided with thoughtful guidance on navigating grief's impact on the self.

HEAR THE FULL EPISODE...   

www.what-now.buzzsprout.com

Introducing Hospice Peterborough's new Supportive Care Counsellors addressing complex grief: Barb and Kelly



Hospice Peterborough is grateful to have received funding to hire two new part-time Supportive Care Counsellors addressing complex grief: Kelly Gorman and Barb Woolner. We asked Kelly and Barb to share a little more about what falls under the category of "complex grief," the importance of providing this type of specialized support, and what they are finding meaningful about their roles so far.

Can you provide some examples of complex/traumatic grief?

Kelly: The people I support have often gone through losses that are sudden, unexpected, and traumatic in some way. Some examples are: a death caused by an accident, the loss of a child, several losses happening close together, death by suicide, or overdose. These kinds of losses can make grief feel especially overwhelming and complicated.

Barb: Yes. I agree, Kelly. I would like to add that grief can be highly individual, so what may be traumatic for one person might not be for another. The impact of the grief depends on a range of circumstances such as our current life circumstances or how we have learned to cope with life challenges to date.



Hospice Peterborough's new Supportive Care Counsellors supporting complex grief. Pictured top: Kelly Gorman, pictured bottom: Barb Woolner

Why do you think it's important that complex/traumatic grief is supported in this way?

Kelly: When someone is carrying both grief and trauma, it can really change what they need for support. Meeting people at their own pace, and in a way that feels safe, is essential when trauma is part of the picture.

Barb: It's important to hold space for the specific type of loss and longing a client feels. We can also hold space for the future part of them that will emerge "in its own exquisite timing" (as Jane Siberry sings).

What are you finding meaningful about the role so far?

Kelly: Traumatic loss touches people so deeply - psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. It's very meaningful to be able to sit with people in those moments and to support them as they navigate something so profound.

Barb: Professionally, I think what's been most meaningful for me is hearing how the client met the person they are remembering; the encounter story. The narrative of how their lives came together for however long or short can be illuminating for both of us. On a personal note, I have noticed that this work has encouraged me to make more space for the people and situations in my life that mean the most to me. We are, of course, aware, cognitively, that things can change in a moment, though I thank my clients for instilling in me a richer knowing of this truth.

Is there anything else you would like to share about this work?

Kelly: While there are common themes in how people may be affected by a traumatic loss, everyone's path through grief is different. One of the most important parts of this work is honouring that uniqueness and following each person's lead as they find their way forward.

Barb: Great point, Kelly!

Thank you, Kelly and Barb! If you have questions about eligibility for this program, please contact our intake team at intake@hospicepeterborough.org

*Hospice Peterborough
Book Club*

10-11am

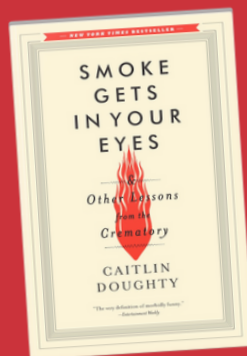
Friday, February 20, 2026

Participants can attend in-person at Hospice

Peterborough or via Zoom



February 2026 Book



Hospice Book Club is a warm, open group with a shared interest, and anyone connected to Hospice is welcome to participate!

For more information or to register, please contact BJ Ross: bröss@hospicepeterborough.org or 705-742-4042 ext. 224

"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory" by Caitlin Doughty

Congratulations to our 85th volunteer training cohort



A heartfelt congratulations to our latest graduates of the hospice volunteer training program! This was our 85th cohort! We are so grateful for all of the ways you continue to support hospice work, and for where you will take your new skills going forward.

In the third photo (captured by volunteer Kate) volunteer training participants are growing a yarn-web of gratitude and well wishes for each other, and reflecting on their experiences in the training. We are pleased to report that this is the same ball of yarn (final photo) our former colleague Paula started at least 20 years ago! The tradition continues...



Top: Our new graduates

Bottom left: The same yarn has been used for at least 20 years, connecting volunteers old and new.

Bottom right: The volunteers participate in creating a yarn web, showing their connectedness.

Support Hospice Peterborough

Let's Connect!

 @hospiceptbo
 @HospicePeterborough
 @hospiceptbo

YES, I want to support vital hospice palliative care!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please contact me to discuss my legacy gift, or gift in a will, to Hospice Peterborough.

Donate online at hospicepeterborough.org
Or mail to 325 London St Peterborough, ON K9H 2Z5

Registered Charity No.
11947 8964 RR00019

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.



325 London Street
Peterborough, ON K9H 2Z5
705-742-4042
admin@hospicepeterborough.org

Amount:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$200

Other: _____

I would like to make my gift by:

Cheque (payable to Hospice Peterborough)

Visa MasterCard AMEX

One-time donation Monthly donation

Card #: _____

Expiry Date: _____

CVV: _____

I would like to be an anonymous donor

This gift is in memory of:
