



# Hospice News

Issue 5 ➤ February 2021

Supporting People, Changing Lives

## Your Support in Action

### Hospice and Pandemics

With you, we will be glad to see the tail end of Covid 19. Having said that, though, the pandemic has been the impetus for a number of areas of growth for Hospice.

Your donations fuel our staff as they focus on strengthening our online presence and resources. In the last year we have developed a robust online volunteer training system. This will provide access to Hospice training for new volunteers from across east-central Alberta. In addition, we have become very comfortable with Zoom, which is now a regular tool for training as well as for supporting our clients. In fact, your support has provided the resources needed to offer our first virtual grief support group which started this month. Eight individuals travelling the road of sorrow will meet together by Zoom for an eight-week journey.

We could not support our community and change lives without you. Ten thousand thanks.

Go to "Ways to Give" on Our Website to Donate

## Quotable



## Welcome Mary

Hospice welcomes **Mary McArthur** as the newest member to our volunteer team. Mary fills the role of *Social Media Coordinator*, drawing upon a lifetime of skills and experience. In this role she is responsible for Facebook and Instagram posts, as well as offering guidance for other aspects of publicity.

After retiring from a career as a reporter for the Western Producer, Mary went on to work in stakeholder relations with the premier's office under the NDP government. She now works as a freelance writer when she is not hiking the backcountry of the Canadian Rockies. Glad to have you aboard Mary ☺ See Mary's article on the next page...

## Connecting with Hospice

Program Coordinator, Bill Harder:  
780.608.0636 ➤ [program@camrosehospice.com](mailto:program@camrosehospice.com)

Volunteer Coordinator, Joy LeBlanc:  
587.322.9269 ➤ [volunteer@camrosehospice.com](mailto:volunteer@camrosehospice.com)

[@camrosehospice](https://www.facebook.com/camrosehospice)  
[camrosehospice](https://www.instagram.com/camrosehospice)  
[www.camrosehospice.org](http://www.camrosehospice.org)



Hospice Society  
OF CAMROSE AND DISTRICT

# 669 Days, 1800 Kilometers (and counting)

By Mary MacArthur

Connecting with people is Kelly Wiebe's way of giving back to the community.

Whether by saying hello to walkers on his daily walk around Mirror Lake, writing messages in chalk on the trails, or hanging candy canes with positive messages on trees at Christmas, Wiebe's goal is to lift people's spirits.



Photo: Mary MacArthur

For almost two years, Wiebe, 56, has walked the three kilometres around Mirror Lake chatting to people, visiting with the regular walkers, or giving encouragement to new people he sees on the trail. What started as a walk with friends has become an important part of his physical and mental health.

"I've been in a hole before. It's nice to have someone say, 'Hi,'."

On January 28, Wiebe had walked 669 days in a row.

His daily walk around Mirror Lake began April 1, 2019 and since then he has logged more than 1,800 kilometres.

"I can't imagine not walking now," said Wiebe, of Camrose.

"There were days I did not want to go. I was not in a good mood. As soon as I get to the lake I don't think of the pandemic."

On Wednesdays, Wiebe joins the group of walkers from the Camrose Hospice Society as they walk around the lake as a way of making connections and improving their mental health through communication and exercise.

"It filled a hole. There are such awesome people that have been through the same thing."

Other friends join Wiebe on different days of the week and Wiebe encourages new walkers to join him for exercise and conversation. As a sports fan, when Wiebe spies a club logo, he uses it as an excuse to strike up a conversation with strangers.

Using sports as a conversation starter is one of Wiebe's ways of beginning his weekly chats with three men he talks to each week through the hospice's telephone chat program.

Wiebe has also taken the hospice's volunteer program and the suicide awareness program. Wiebe's mother died by suicide and the program helped him deal with his grief.

Growing up to young parents, Wiebe said he realizes now it was not easy for his parents, but they did the best they could. Taking self-compassion modules through a program at St. Mary's Hospital is also helping him deal with grief.

Wiebe's next goals are to get to 700 laps around Mirror Lake and then 730 laps, which will be two years of continuous walking around Mirror Lake. On all these walks is his father who died four years ago.

Because of health complications, Wiebe's father couldn't walk. So with some of his father's ashes encased in a pendant around his neck, Wiebe takes his father on his daily walks.

"He is always with me."



Photo: Mary MacArthur



Photo: David Belcher



## Words

### The Grief Support Walking Group

By Joy LeBlanc,  
Volunteer Coordinator

Every Wednesday morning at 9:30 am, since July 2016, a group of grieverers gather at the Hospice offices to walk around Mirror Lake. They walk and talk, then enjoy coffee together with shared stories. The conclude by offering a special word for how they are feeling that day.

These stories and words, plus the fun and laughter amongst the tears, heal many hearts. New walkers are welcomed in and deep bonds of friendship and connections amongst the walkers are formed.

When Covid arrived, a new grief surfaced: the loss of these wonderful connections with each other on Wednesday mornings. The group knew how important this bond is, so they decided to stay connected via email, continuing to share their words for the day.

The word cloud to the right shares some of their words with all of you. For more information on the grief-support walk, call me at 587-322-9269.



## 1796 Days of Gratitude

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”  
(A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-pooh*)

As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, I will have worked for 1796 days with Hospice (one month shy of five years). It is with those all-too-familiar emotions of sadness and anticipation that I share news that I am moving on from Camrose Hospice. Beginning in April I begin a new venture with the Palliative Care Society of the Bow Valley in Canmore. This is a young palliative care society, just beginning the journey of developing programs and training volunteers. My role will be to provide leadership as they engage the community of the Bow Valley with palliative, grief, and educational supports. Offered as a remote working situation, Anna and I will remain in Camrose for the time being and I will work from home.

Looking back on nine years of involvement with HSCD, I am grateful for the many ways that I have been deepened as a person through the gifts of this relationship. My introduction to the Hospice village was through the invitation to be a volunteer-training facilitator in 2013. At the time, I supported the training program while still engaged in rural parish work as a pastor. In 2016 I responded to an HSCD ad in the paper for a Grief and Bereavement Coordinator. The rest is history.

For the last five years I have been working with the finest people that walk the planet – Joy, the board, care volunteers, clients, and community collaborators. All have mentored, inspired, and filled my tank with stories of hope, pain, loss, and the beautiful journey of sorrow.

I am excited to see what opportunities will arise as a consequence of my departure, for all loss heralds new beginnings. At the same time, all affected by my leaving have my compassion for the stress that this change causes.

To all whom I have had the pleasure of meeting along the way, ten thousand thanks for the gift of you.

*Bill Harder*



# Embracing Change

By Pamela Cummer  
HSCD President

As I write this on a very frigid February morning, I am thinking of the incredible changes we have all made in the past 12 months. We have made changes in our personal and professional lives, changes that have affected us as friends, family members and colleagues. The changes have been difficult, no doubt, but we have also been forced to be creative and look in new directions and at new methods of connecting.

The Hospice Society of Camrose and District has also been forced to look at new and innovative ways to meet the needs of our communities. Many grief programs are now being offered online; one-on-one support is offered via phone or Zoom. Our dedicated volunteers spend time providing phone support to individuals and often assisting them to make contact via our iPad program.

February and March will be very important months for our society as we once again look at change to our structure and programming. We will be saying goodbye to our program director, Bill Harder, after almost 5 years in our employ. Bill has been instrumental in developing all of the successful programs that HSCD is proud of; many of these programs being unique to Camrose and area. Bill has supported hundreds of grieving individuals and families, and I'm sure many of you who are reading this newsletter can attest to that. Bill has built a strong program base for Hospice,

developed well respected relationships within our communities and touched the lives of many. We will miss him greatly; he has left us with a very strong foundation to build upon.

The board of directors along with Joy LeBlanc and Bill have begun discussions and planning for our future. As we proceed, we know it is important to keep the needs of our community as a priority; grief support needs to continue for our residents and it will. Programming and individual supports will continue. We also recognize the difficult economic times we are in and hope to be able to address that issue in new ways.

Under Joy's leadership we have a strong body of volunteers to whom we are forever grateful as they step up to help us during this transition time. As you read this newsletter and think about hospice in our community, you may have ideas as to our future.

If so, please contact Joy, Bill or me; we really would like to hear from you. If you feel you can offer support to hospice at this time, in whatever fashion that may be, we'd love to hear from you also.

Change... it's happening to hospice. We are sad to say goodbye to our dear friend and colleague, but we are ever so grateful for what he is leaving us with – strong programming, wonderful community relations and above all, his incredible spirit of hospice!

We look forward to hearing from you, stay well and warm!

Sincerely,  
*Pam Cummer*



Photo: Myriams-Fotos

## Mark Your Calendar



### Facebook Live Lunch 'n Learn Series

(1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 12:05-12:20 pm – on Facebook @camrorehospice)

- Feb 17: Beverly Drever on *Being with Dying*
- March 3: Rajan Rathnavalu on *Contemplation and Palliative Care*
- March 17: Stacey Lynn Brewster, *The Importance of Green Sleeves*

### Saint Mary's Hospital Virtual Grief Support Group

Saint Mary's Hospital in Camrose is offering a virtual (Zoom-based) grief support group. It runs for 8 weeks on Thursday evenings (6:30-8:30) beginning March 4 and ending April 29. Call Shelly Dalueg at the hospital for more information or to register: 780.679.2793.

### Navigating Grief & Loss During Covid 19

February 25, 7pm on Zoom. A one-hour presentation sponsored by Wetaskiwin FCSS, Peace Hills Hospice, and HSCD. Call 780.361.4425 to register.