



## NEWSLETTER Winter 2018-19

### These Lanterns will Always Shine

Robert McCharles was diagnosed with cancer in January 2017. Six months later he passed away at home, surrounded by his loving and supportive family. His wife Jeanie says the support and care they received from the medical staff and the Hospice Palliative Care Society was like a well-oiled human machine.

Nurse Susan MacKenzie, Doctors Ritter, MacCormick, Shareef and Murphy all cared for Robert. Jeanie says those providing care were always “acutely aware of the needs of their patient, and were the epitome of empathy. One of the things Jeanie appreciated was the encouragement Robert received from medical staff. “Knowing you’re terminal, it’s important for the patient to hear they are handling their illness well,” said Jeanie. “Hearing those words of encouragement meant a lot.”

Jeanie said any questions she had throughout the process were promptly answered. “I could keep Robert at home because I knew I had a team behind me, one that I could count on,” said Jeanie. She says it was like having her own personal advisor and physician, “I really cannot say enough about them.” She is also grateful for the support of her three children, who visited frequently from Toronto. “I know not everyone is in a position to do that, so knowing there is also a supportive team to rely on offers a huge amount of comfort.”

Jeanie realizes that most people don’t understand the importance of palliative care until they need to use the service. That’s why palliative care is so important, and why the new Hospice Residence is so badly needed. I know the numbers that go through there,” said Jeanie. “You’re not even aware of what you may need, what you’ll encounter. That’s why it’s so vital that the citizens of Cape Breton have options when facing end of life care.”

One of the things Jeanie appreciated most was the fact that the medical staff focused on Robert’s life, rather than his death. The medical staff were genuinely interested in Robert. “It was comforting that Robert could talk about his favourite hobbies, like fishing and gardening,” said Jeanie. “They saw him as a person, not an illness.”

His uniqueness was also evident during the celebration he planned. Jeanie says Robert didn’t want a wake or a service. With seven grandchildren under the age of 8, he planned his send off with them in mind. He had a friend build an urn out of wood, sealed with a treatment that would allow flames to change colour. From their backyard, a number of family and friends watched as the bonfire on the water changed colour, and the flames danced. Robert left instructions to tell the grandchildren that when the flames changed colour, Grandpa had gone to heaven. Each child had a lantern of a different colour to place on the water, saying a final and poignant good-bye.



Robert and Jeanie McCharles surrounded by their loving children and grandchildren.

### MISSION STATEMENT

To support and promote compassionate care for individuals and their loved ones who are living with a life-threatening illness. It takes a supportive community to deliver the mission of the Hospice Society of Cape Breton County. We anticipate and appreciate your continued support, enabling us to fulfill an important role in our community.



# Here Comes Inspiration

Facing a life-limiting illness is not easy at any age. Facing it when you are 41 with a husband and three young children presents unique challenges. For Donna Marchand, she faced it with grace, optimism and a quiet dignity that provided inspiration for those around her. As a business person, Donna's husband Jason is used to dealing with staff, but he had never seen the calibre and the dedication of those working on the An Cala Unit.

As part of a big, close-knit and supportive family, it was important to have the space and freedom to spend time together. The family was grateful for the opportunity to do so, and as Jason said, the kitchen was well used, with family often sharing their meals with others on the Unit. He recalls with deep appreciation the kind and compassionate gestures from staff and volunteers throughout their stay. "The nurses putting cream on Donna's hands, making sure she was as comfortable as possible," said Jason. He was especially touched when one nurse came in two hours before her shift, equipped with gingerbread men and everything needed to decorate them, much to the delight of their kids.

Jason said Donna was always optimistic about her illness, but as the medical staff said, they were dealt a bad hand, when the cancer spread to her brain. As a couple, the two spoke about their life purpose after surviving a first round of cancer in 2014. Donna felt her purpose was to help people as best she could. In fact, she lived by the motto, "if you can be anything in this world, be kind."

As her illness progressed, her headaches were aggravated by any amount of sound or light. Cardboard over the windows helped, as did her faith and the love and support of her family. Donna left her mark on those around her, including her family and the medical staff who cared for her. "The staff were angels," said Jason. "Not everyone could do what they do, but I couldn't tell you one thing they could improve upon or do better. They did everything right."

Jason says the two fit a lot into their lives, and didn't have a lot of regrets. They travelled, they enjoyed their time together and made a lot of memories. Donna passed away at the age of 41 on Canada Day in 2017. A date that also means a lot to Alan MacDonald, Co-ordinator for the Palliative Care Bereavement Program. He too lost his wife on Canada Day, at the age of 41 many years ago. Jason said the calls from Alan and the chats over coffee help a lot. "It's nice to have someone to bounce things off," said Jason. Alan calls every month, he listens. It's nice to have that."

Today, Jason and his children do their part to brighten the days of those working and volunteering on the Unit. On special occasions, they put together treat bags for the rooms and the staff. "We were blessed to have Donna for as long as we did," said Jason. "I think she would be pleased we're doing something to show how grateful we are." Proving that once again, Donna continues to inspire those who loved her.



Donna and Jason Marchand with their children.



A photo of Donna highlighted with her motto.

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# Hospice Residence Update

We know that the Society's many supporters are anxious to see construction started for the long planned Hospice Residence, as are we. We continue to work hard to make this happen.

The Society's partnership with Membertou continues to be solid, for which we are most grateful. Campaign chairs Brian and Monica Shebib are busy reaching out to potential donors to help advance the project. Negotiations related to the operating costs of the facility are ongoing.

We have received written and verbal commitment from the Province of Nova Scotia that a Hospice Residence will be established here. However, we have asked for--and still await--a formal and public announcement from government for this project.

We continue to advocate for and support exceptional end-of-life care for our community including the greatly needed



Hospice Residence. We express our thanks to the community for their ongoing support and wish you the best for the Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year.

As always, we will keep you informed of our progress.

## Patricia Jackson

Co-Chair,  
Hospice Palliative Care Society

## Nancy Dingwall

Chair,  
Hospice Residence Build

# Memorial Service

Music and memories were the hallmark of a November 5th Service held to honor the individuals who were cared for in the Palliative Care Service between March and August of 2018. Close to 300 individuals were remembered through a touching ceremony that saw the family of the late Harold Yurchyszyn light a candle and place a rose on a book of names on behalf of all families. Special thanks to the Men of the Deeps, Jenn Sheppard, Jordyn Crocker and Stephen Muise for providing the incredible music for the evening.



# Burger Week

Local eateries were especially busy from October 27 to November 3 when Burger Week participants snacked on specialty burgers while supporting the Hospice Palliative Care Society. Over 20 participating restaurants donated a portion of the proceeds of their burger sales. Thank you to all participating restaurants and their burger eating patrons! You raised over **\$8,000**



# Our Community Partners are Amazing!

The Parsons family did some heavy lifting recently. They held a washer toss tournament and raised **\$525!** Their generous donation to the Society was made in memory of Robert Parsons. We are very grateful and excited you plan to do it again next year.



Kristen Parsons, Madison Parsons, Peyton Parsons, Greta Parsons, Sadie Parsons, back row: Ann Parsons and Kathy Forsey.

For the second year, the team at Parkland Cape Breton held a very successful fall fair and donated the proceeds to the Hospice Palliative Care Society. We are so grateful for the **\$1,000** donation and happy there are plans to do it again next year!



Linda Coleman and Nadine Oliver presenting the cheque to Pam Ellsworth

It makes us shiver! But in a good way. The Port Morien Polar Dip is looking for brave and hearty volunteers. Why not start off 2019 on the right foot with a dip of the toe (and more) in the Atlantic Ocean. Already, Glace Bay's Scotiabank team is up for the challenge, and encouraging more teams of six or less to join in. The team raising the most dollars takes home bragging rights and an incredible shiny, new trophy donated by the Port of Sydney. Funds raised will be shared between the Hospice Palliative Care Society and the Port Morien Legion, Branch 55. It's easy to register, just email [portmorienpolar dip@gmail.com](mailto:portmorienpolar dip@gmail.com) or call 902-317-4133. See you on January 1st!



Register for 2019 Polar Dip

In this case the big one did NOT get away. Thanks to Willis Ayres and his friends who compete each year to see who can catch the largest lobster. Participants donate \$50 and the winner donates the proceeds to their charity of choice. This year, Willis was the winner with a 9.3 pound lobster and the Hospice Palliative Care Society received **\$1,450!** Thank you to Willis and to everyone who made this fish tale a dream come true.



Willis Ayres presents the cheque to Pam Ellsworth

Golfers enjoyed a beautiful June day at Bell Bay Golf Club during the 21st annual Together We Care golf tournament in support of the Hospice Palliative Care Society. This sold out tournament is a favourite for many local businesses who continue to support us year after year. Thank you to all of our volunteers, golfers and sponsors who make this such a successful day!



Successful Golf Tournament

At St. George's Hall, there are a number of talented crafters who cater to the cruise ship market. There is also a very special fundraising effort, thanks to Jody Sutherland and Elizabeth Campbell. Individuals are invited to take a beanie cap for themselves or for someone who may be dealing with cancer. The caps are free of charge but many provide a generous donation whether or not they take a cap. For the past three years, the proceeds have been provided to Hospice Palliative Care, with this year's donation totalling **\$799!** Now, that's a feather in our cap!



Jody Sutherland and Elizabeth Campbell presenting the cheque to Kathy Forsey

## Hospice Palliative Care Society of Cape Breton County

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

☐ Yes, I would like to help support the Hospice Palliative Care Society

Please find enclosed my gift of: ☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ I have enclosed a cheque, payable to Hospice Palliative Care Society

☐ Donate online at [hospicecapebreton.org](http://hospicecapebreton.org)

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