

# LIFE JOURNEYS

The Official Newsletter of  
Nanaimo Community Hospice Society

Spring 2024

## Capturing The Heart of Hospice

It's 2024, and Nanaimo Community Hospice Society is off and running! We have welcomed four new staff members – Sydney Hunt, Events Coordinator; Erin Finnerty, Volunteer Coordinator; Amy Tan, Administrative Assistant; and Anna Myrdal, Thrift Shoppe Donation Receiving Clerk – to our Hospice staff team. We are happy to be growing and touching more lives in our community.

We have many special events coming up – you'll learn more about them in this newsletter, so keep on reading! Our Event Management Team is planning a Beer & Burger Night on March 23rd to raise funds for our "Nanaimo Bars" Cycle of Life Tour team, the 'Fashion For Compassion' Fashion Show on May 5th, the annual 'Hike For Hospice' on May 26th, and a 2nd Beer & Burger Night for the "Nanaimo Bars" in June. We appreciate any support you can give through your participation, sponsorships, donations, or word-of-mouth promotion.

As the new Executive Director of Nanaimo Community Hospice Society, I am truly amazed to see the dedication of our many volunteers. I've had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know some of you, and I look forward to meeting more of you and deepening these relationships in 2024.

Nanaimo Community Hospice has been blessed in so many ways, and we are committed to continuing accessible, compassionate, high-quality services to our community. I'm enjoying participating in various speaking opportunities that help to engage community members and educate them about the role of Hospice in the community.

As we move forward in 2024, I wish everyone peace and love, and I know our team will help individuals and families in Nanaimo to live their best lives and to find peace and comfort in their individual challenges and journeys.

In service,

Sharon Welch  
Executive Director



## A VIRTUE FOR REFLECTION



Soon after my mom died I was grocery shopping and, for some reason as I reached for a can of tomato sauce, I was hit by a wave of grief and began to cry. A stranger came up to me with obvious concern and asked me if I was okay, and then how I was doing. I hesitated for a quick moment, wondering if I should make up a story or simply turn and walk away. I sobbed out that my mom had recently died. That stranger quickly asked me if I wanted a hug and right there in the grocery store I told her a bit about my mom, received not one but two beautiful hugs, and then we both went on our way. What a gift it was to be able to have trust, be honest and receive support.

Sometimes when we're grieving, we try to withhold what we are honestly experiencing, thinking we can spare ourselves added discomfort, or spare the person who casually asks us, "How are you doing?". We ask ourselves if they really wanted to know or were they simply throwing out a common social greeting.

When this happens, we can either look past the person and respond that we are just fine or look them in the eye and ask them if they really want to know. Many caring human beings will say, "Yes. Tell me." And then we get to decide which option will benefit us the most – responding with polite avoidance or being honest. Being honest about grief can be difficult. Having trust that another human being can hold space for us in the presence of our strong emotions can be difficult. I invite you to speak the truth, to have trust, even if your voice falters, even if you cry.

In kindness,

Shannon Farahbakhsh, Intake Coordinator



### **Trust**

Trust is having faith, hope and a positive outlook. Trust is believing in someone or something. We have confidence that the right thing will come about without trying to control it or make it happen. We trust others to do what they say they will do and give them the space to be trustworthy. Sometimes it is difficult to trust when life brings painful experiences. Trust is being sure, in the depths of our being, that there is some gift or learning in everything that happens. We move confidently with the flow of life, gathering strength from adversity. We know we are never alone.

**“You must trust and believe in people or life becomes impossible.” Anton Chekhov**

### **The Practice of Trust**

I maintain my hope. I do not nag others or try to control them. I believe there is some good in everything that happens. I allow trust to heal my fears. I am confident in my capacity for lifelong learning. I rely on Divine assistance.

I am thankful for the gift of Trust. It renews my strength.

Adapted from the Virtues Project [www.virtuesproject.com](http://www.virtuesproject.com)



# PROGRAM UPDATES

## Program Updates



The **Knitting Group** meets every second Tuesday afternoon from 2-3:30. While providing a great outlet for building community, the group comes together to knit shawls and blankets to provide comfort for those who are on the Palliative Care Unit at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital as well as for those in the community who are bereaved. **Last year our knitters' hands were very busy as 388 shawls and blankets were donated to these causes!** Thank you to all who participated in this worthy cause.



We are very excited to welcome the **Scent and Grief** program. This much-loved program previously offered at Hospice will be held on the second Wednesday of each month from 1:30-2:30pm. Through scent and a short, guided meditation, the combination aims to calm the central nervous system and brings sense of peace and serenity.



The **Palliative Care Unit** volunteer base is growing, and we are very proud to offer increased support to the care team as well as to the residents and families staying at the PCU. Our volunteers offer a listening ear and comforting touch as well as spiritual, emotional and practical support. The value of PCU volunteers during the final days of life can be invaluable to a grieving family.



Nanaimo Hospice is also looking forward to an **Expressive Arts** program geared to bereaved adults. The program is intermodal, meaning it uses multiple different creative outlets. The program will start in April. More information will be available soon.

## Closing Ceremony



On January 21st, we hosted the Closing Ceremony for “Celebrate a Life” and “Gathering to Remember” in our Hospice Garden. Approximately 30 visitors attended the event. The importance of the event is to honor loved ones using fire and ritual and to support one another in a loving and safe space.



## VOLUNTEER NEWS

Hello,

I would like to introduce myself; my name is Erin Finnerty and I am the new Volunteer Coordinator with Nanaimo Community Hospice Society. I am still finding my way around Hospice House, but I look forward to connecting with all our volunteers over the next few months. If you are looking to join our Volunteer Team, please feel free to contact me at 250-591-8811, extension 110, and we can see what opportunities we may have for you. Here at Hospice, we like to say that volunteers are the heart of our organization, and if you have ever had the pleasure of meeting our volunteers, I know you will agree!

With gratitude,

Erin Finnerty



NANAIMO COMMUNITY

HOSPICE SHOPPE

We are looking to add volunteers to our Hospice Thrift Shoppe Team. Did you know that we have more than 50 volunteers who contribute over 1,500 hours monthly? **100% of the profits** supports the services and programs that Nanaimo Community Hospice Society provides to the community. If you want to join this fun-loving team of volunteers, please contact Tiffany at 250-585-0885 or complete and submit the volunteer form at <https://www.nanaimohospice.com/hospice-thrift-shoppe>.

**Every Thursday is 30% off in the Shoppe!**

### Volunteer Opportunitites



Looking for volunteers to help out the Thrift Shoppe floor on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday **afternoons**.



Looking for volunteers to help out the Thrift Shoppe on Friday **mornings** and **afternoons** on the tool bench.

## MEET YOUR NCHS BOARD EXECUTIVE



**Wendy Smitka –President.** I am honoured to be serving as a Director of Nanaimo Community Hospice Society. My partner and I sold our business in 2008, which freed me to work on my passions instead of a pay cheque. I have served on numerous boards and committees, including Literacy Central Island, TheatreOne, and have spent 20 years with the Community Futures Network, including time as Provincial Chair, and National Chair. I reside in Lantzville with my spouse Brock and our very spoiled dog Willie. I am humbled by the commitment and compassion of Hospice staff and many volunteers. I believe it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a community to support each other through loss and dying.



**Paul Smith – Vice President.** My background is in the construction and concrete industries. I was responsible for project estimating, project scheduling, and overall management. I have served on the Nanaimo Community Hospice Board of Directors for a total of eight years, three of which were in the role of Vice-President. I currently volunteer at the Hospice Thrift Shoppe in addition to working with clients.




**Marilyn Ostercamp - Secretary.** I have lived in Nanaimo for 16 years and prior to that always in Alberta. While in Alberta, I was a career banker and was involved with many volunteer projects, including Food Bank and non-profit organizations for hard-to-house and mental health groups. I have previously been a member of the Nanaimo Community Hospice Board. I look forward to being able to again contribute as a member of this valued organization and am thankful for the opportunity to do so.




**Ron Tomlin – Treasurer.** I am retired from the Royal Bank, where I was Area Manager Central Vancouver Island. I have resided in Nanaimo for the past 26 years. Originally from Victoria BC, I have worked and lived in Montreal, Ottawa, Burlington, and Vancouver. I hold my undergraduate degree in Commerce and Economics from Simon Fraser University. I am a Fellow in the Institute of Canadian Bankers. I also served as Past President of the Port Theatre Society and Past Treasurer of the Nanaimo and District Hospital Foundation. For the past 8 years, I have volunteered at the Hospice Thrift Shoppe. I met my wife Alice at one of the grief groups at Hospice House. Hospice is very special to me.




## UPCOMING EVENTS




**Feb 24th: Putting the FUN in Fundraising with Loaves and Fishes at the Hospice Thrift Shoppe.** Bring in a \$5 donation of non-perishables, cash, or empties for a 30% discount in the Shoppe. The Wave Radio will be live on location from 10-2, and there will be Silent Auction Items and a chance to win one of 2 \$50 gift certificates for the Shoppe.



**March 23rd: Cycle of Life Beer & Burger Held at Legion 256, 6-9 pm, at 1630 East Wellington Road.** Silent Auction, 50/50 and Door Prizes. Live Music with the Dextones. Support our Cycle of Life Tour riders in their fundraising for NCHS. Tickets are \$35 and available at the Shoppe. Get yours now before they sell out!



**May 26th:** Save the date for the much-anticipated **Hike for Hospice, 10-2, at Westwood Lake Park!** This annual event promises a day of meaningful connections, stunning scenery and a shared commitment to supporting our community. As we gear up, we're reaching out to sponsors who want to play a pivotal role in our fundraising and make a difference in our community. Your sponsorship of Hike for Hospice 2024 ensures compassionate care for those navigating life's toughest challenges. Join us in this impactful journey – **become a sponsor today!** For more information, reach out to Events Coordinator, Sydney Hunt, at 250-591-8811 or [sydneyh@nanaimohospice.com](mailto:sydneyh@nanaimohospice.com). Hiker registration opens March 1st. Let's hike together, hand in hand, for a cause that truly matters.



**May 5th: 'Fashion for Compassion' returns from 1-4pm!** Tickets go on sale March 1st at KC's Boutique, Hospice House, and the Shoppe. Immerse yourself in a world where style meets heart. This isn't just a fashion show; it's a movement of compassion, a fundraiser for Nanaimo Community Hospice. Join us and KC's Boutique once more for an extraordinary celebration of fashion with a purpose! With a Silent Auction, 50/50 Raffle, Jewelry Grab Bags and the latest in women's fashion, you won't want to miss this!

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”**

**Margaret Mead**