

HOSPICE HIGHLIGHTER

January 2024

Art, music, and an award-winning poet: inaugural Stars for a Dark Night creates space to remember



Pictured above: Spoken word poet Sarah Lewis shares poetry with attendees of Stars for a Dark Night on December 12, 2023. Photo by David Bui.

On December 12, 2023, a small crowd gathered to grieve and remember loved ones at the Peterborough Square Courtyard for Stars for a Dark Night: a gathering to remember loved ones who have died. The inaugural community memorial featured paper stars for attendees to write the names of loved ones who had died as Grief Story Listener volunteers attended to their memories. The Hospice Singers serenaded the Square. And a spoken word performance by local poet Sarah Lewis became a significant highlight of the event, adding a powerful and deeply personal touch for fellow attendees experiencing grief.

A few weeks prior to the event, Sarah expressed a desire to volunteer at Hospice Peterborough, noting how her experience as a spoken word poet could be engaged at events.

She had a personal connection to the organization as well. Sarah's father died at Hospice Peterborough in 2022 and she was eager to support the organization to acknowledge the care he received in his final days. "I have been extremely grateful for the kindness, care, and perspectives that Hospice Peterborough offered my family during my father's end-of-life stage as well as the support after his death," Sarah shared.

Sarah's reaching out could not have happened at a better time. With Stars for a Dark Night on the horizon, Sarah's compelling words would reach those who need to hear them most at a time that is notoriously difficult for those who are grieving: the holiday season. She added, "when I found out that Hospice was hosting this beautiful event, I wanted to share that journey through poetry and honour all those we've lost."



Pictured above: Attendees write names of loved ones who have died on paper stars. Photo by David Bui.

Sarah's poetry has garnered local and national attention. In 2021, she was named Peterborough's first Poet Laureat and was a semi-finalist at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word in 2019. She has been featured on CBC, Global News, Toronto Star, and has led countless workshops, motivational talks and presentations. She has been lauded by many for her ability to speak out on the importance of reclaiming Indigenous identity, strength, and sovereignty, drawing heavily on her lived experience as an Anishinaabe Kwe with roots in nearby Curve Lake First Nation and in Pukatawagon, Manitoba. Additionally, poetry has been a way for her to explore topics of grief, loss, and healing following the death of her father.

Sarah van den Berg, Fundraising and Communications Coordinator, who helped organize the event noted: "Sarah is a powerful force in this community and her enthusiasm to get involved with Hospice is so exciting. Her poetry greatly enhanced Stars for a Dark Night and many expressed how moved they were by her performance."



Pictured above: The Hospice Singers, a Hospice Peterborough volunteer bedside singing group, serenade the square. Photo by David Bui.

One of the poems Sarah shared at the event, entitled "Is Love Alive," addresses the unexpected gifts of grief and the ways our loved ones stay with us even after they are gone:

"I used to run from ice wind biting scarf afraid to choke on winter breath /
 Afraid I would freeze leftover summer honeydew belly /
 But your leaving taught me to embrace the uncomfortable /
 That honey will stay sweet and that deep dark night of the soul will pass /
 That to feel grief and longing is still a gift."*

Hospice Peterborough is deeply grateful to Sarah Lewis, the Hospice Singers, and all of the incredible volunteers and staff who helped make Stars for a Dark Night possible. Thank you!

**A video of the full poem can be found on Hospice Peterborough's social media channels.*

MARY-FRANCES O'CONNOR, PhD

The Grieving BRAIN

The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss

COMING FEBRUARY 14:
An interview with Mary-Frances O'Connor

What happens in our brain when we grieve? In an exciting new episode of our What Now? podcast, our hosts interview Mary-Frances O'Connor, author of *The Grieving Brain: The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss*.

The episode airs on **February 14** and is available wherever you listen to podcasts!

PODCAST AVAILABLE ON:



Presented in partnership with...



HOSPICE PETERBOROUGH



WHAT NOW? On the threshold of life, death and grief.

WITH JULIE BROWN, RED KEATING AND DAVID KENNEDY

Holiday cheer at Hospice Peterborough

Holiday spirit was alive and well at Hospice Peterborough throughout December.

Staff participated in spirit weeks, were treated to a scrumptious holiday board breakfast, and adorned the residence with festive decorations. Carols were sung and gifts were exchanged. Our incredible palliative doctors also led "Spirit Check-ups": Dr. Blake hosted a gingerbread decorating contest, Dr. Webster prepared a high stakes marshmallow game, and even recently-retired Dr. Beamish made a guest appearance for a dramatic reading of the Polar Express. On Christmas Eve, our amazing chef Andrea Barrett prepared a delicious turkey dinner for residents and their families. T'was the season!



For 9 years, Mel* belonged to a group she called her guardians: the women of Hospice Peterborough's Day Hospice Group. She rarely missed a week with the exception of holidays or medical appointments. Beyond family time, it was the highlight of her week.

For two decades, Mel worked as a community RN, caring for ill patients, and working with families to keep their loved ones out of the ER. She knew the drill. When she received her diagnosis, she was determined not to overwhelm her husband and kids, finding the support she needed through Hospice staff and the Day Hospice group.

Every week, the group gathered at Hospice over coffee and muffins to share life's highs and lows. While the group changed from week to week, the comradery was easy and supportive. Each member sacredly held each other's inner most confidences and feelings. They talked about children, spouses, marriage, health issues, fears. Nothing was off limits, it was a safe space: without judgement or recrimination.

Mel's diagnosis came with a life expectancy of two years and many treatment options and medical trials. She followed every piece of medical advice, wishing only to watch her children grow and share their milestones.



Mel's Legacy

'I was lucky' she was often heard saying, 'I survived long enough to see both of our children graduate and find partners. I know I outlived my diagnosis because of the love and support from Hospice.'

But her heart still broke knowing she wouldn't get to meet the grandchildren she hoped would one day follow. To be included in her families' future, she enlisted the help from the group to compile an archive of her legacy: a scrapbook with notes to future grandchildren, recordings and videos for both of her children to impart her wisdom and bring them strength in the difficult times ahead, a collection of her favourite recipes, and a photo album for her husband.

Her legacy also included a gift to Hospice Peterborough to support the Women's Day Hospice group, *her guardians*, so women like Mel could receive the support she did. **What's your legacy?**

To learn more, please email: legacy@hospicepeterborough.org or call (705) 742 - 4042 ext. 263

Community Programming

Moving with Grief



What is it?
A **community walking group** for people who have experienced the death of someone they love and who would feel more comfortable **sharing their grief while walking.**

When: Second and fourth Monday of each month, starting Monday, January 8 from 2 to 3pm.

Where: The indoor walking track at Cavan Monaghan Community Centre, 986 County Rd 10, Millbrook.

Confirm your spot: Call or email Amy Watson, Intake Coordinator, at (705) 742-4042 ext. 230 or awatson@hospicepeterborough.org

Grief Chats



What is it?
Grief Chat is a free group that offers flexible format where **recently bereaved individuals can connect with others who have experienced a loss.**

When: Choose between chats on the second and fourth Tuesday from 6:30 to 8pm or the first and third Friday of each month from 10 to 12pm.

Where: Hospice Peterborough, 325 London St., Peterborough.

Confirm your spot: Call or email Amy Watson, Intake Coordinator, at (705) 742-4042 ext. 230 or awatson@hospicepeterborough.org

Mindful Nourishment



What is it?
Mindful Nourishment is a free, one-hour meditation program for everyone connected to Hospice. Mindfulness can help you relax, reduce stress and connect what you are feeling and thinking.

Led by Julie Brown, psychotherapist and co-host of our What Now? podcast.

When: Second and fourth Thursday of each month, starting January 11, from 1 to 2pm.

Where: Zoom

To receive the Zoom links for future sessions, please email admin@hospicepeterborough.org



Do you love to sing? Are you looking for a meaningful volunteer opportunity that engages your gifts and talents?

Join Hospice Singers!

All experience levels are welcome however we are especially seeking *tenor and bass singers as well as strong singers who can lead sections.* Please email svandenberg@hospicepeterborough.org to learn more.

Darkness to Light brings together and raises funds for those impacted by Suicide and Overdose

On December 21 at sunrise, a small group gathered to remember and honour loved ones who died by suicide and overdose. Julie Brown, psychotherapist and Co-host of our What Now? podcast led a reflective ceremony on the shores of Roger's Cove, highlighting the importance of having compassion for ourselves and others as we navigate grief.

The event was hosted by GPHSF, Your Family Health Team Foundation who also **donated \$825** (thanks to generous community contributions and sponsorship) **towards Hospice Peterborough's suicide and bereavement programming.** GPHSF's Susan Owen and Vince Bierworth (pictured below, left and right) presented this cheque to Hospice Peterborough's Sarah van den Berg (pictured below, middle).



Kawartha Tri-Sport Tournament raises \$8,000 for Hospice Peterborough



A warm Hospice Peterborough thank you to the incredible Kawartha Tri-Sport committee who donated \$8,000 of funds raised at their 2023 annual tournament. We are so grateful to be one of the local charities chosen for this year's amazing event. The committee stopped by to drop off a cheque and tour our building. *Pictured from left to right: Christina, Matt, Hospice Peterborough's Aimee O'Reilly, Jay and Katelyn. Thank you!*

Meet our new residence staff!

Erin O'Brien Residence Manager

What are you enjoying about the role so far?

I started with Hospice in September 2023; In the short time that I've been here I've really enjoyed the collaborative nature of the work we do. I've enjoyed getting to know the team at Hospice and our partners. I've been very fortunate to find myself working with a group of talented and passionate people who are committed to delivering the very best end-of-life care for our clients and their families. I find it very fulfilling to know that the work we do here is making a positive difference in the lives of those we encounter and for the community of Peterborough.

Fun fact about you?

I love gardening but, I do not have a green thumb. Plastic plants struggle to thrive at my house! In my previous employment at Home and Community Care Support Services there were some gifted gardeners that would try to coach me through the finer points of keeping a garden. It's a work in progress and I'm looking forward to getting back in the garden this spring.



Danielle LeMoine Clinical Lead

What are you enjoying about the role so far?

I started working at Hospice in August, and I have lost count of the number of times I have said to someone "working here is so wonderful!" I feel grateful to work with such a skilled, passionate, and playful team. I love how my role allows me work both behind-the-scenes, supporting the systems of our organization, and at the point-of-care, interacting with our residents and families regularly. It's a lovely balance that I have always wanted but never knew quite how to find.

Fun fact about you?

I really enjoy making piñatas! My previous work was in public health, and back in Summer 2021 I teamed up with a colleague to make a giant coronavirus piñata for a celebration to thank everyone for their efforts in vaccinating our community with their first two COVID shots. I have never seen a piñata smashed with such vigor!

**Thank you,
Erin and Danielle!**

New social media series shines spotlight on Hospice Peterborough's palliative doctors

We're so lucky to work with so many incredible palliative doctors in our community! If you're following us on social media, you've likely noticed our new spotlight series where we've been interviewing our palliative doctors on what inspires them about the palliative approach, their standout Hospice Peterborough memories, and a fun fact about them. Excerpts from these interviews are included below but you can read the full interviews on our social media channels!

Reflecting on your work at Hospice Peterborough, what stands out for you?



Dr. Laura MacMillan-Jones

LMJ: It is astonishingly rare to be able to work somewhere where every single one of your colleagues excels at and feels fulfilled by their job and is **clearly joyful to be at work**. I think that spirit is felt as soon as you walk into the building and is certainly reflected in the quality of care we are able to provide our residents at Hospice. **I really cherish the opportunity to be able to provide top-quality, loving care to our residents with such an incredible team of colleagues.**



Dr. Christopher Blake

CB: **Some things are more than the sum of their parts.** Hospice Peterborough is one such thing. It isn't just the compassion and competence of the staff. It isn't just the beauty and serenity of the space. It's Christmas trees in December and hidden eggs at Easter, a choir singing in the courtyard, baked goods and coffee in the lounge, a therapy dog laying its head on a bed. It's the big game on a big screen. It's a favourite tippie sipped in the soaker tub. It's the smell of bacon frying in the kitchen. It's a steadying hand on a shoulder, a little laugh you didn't think you had in you anymore. It's relief from pain, and other symptoms too. It's a safe place for people who have lost someone or will lose someone. It's finding the words to comfort the little boy whose grandpa died. It's being a husband or wife again, and not just a caregiver. It's letting out the breath you didn't know you were holding in. **It's knowing that your story is unique, but that you are not alone. You are never alone.**



Dr. Colin Matheson

CM: I love caring for patients at Hospice Peterborough! **It's amazing the difference in patient comfort and well-being that relatively simple factors can make.** Factors like a nice meal, peace and quiet, and a comfortable space to meet and gather can go so far. Hospice was designed and is run with these simple factors for patient comfort at the forefront, and it shows. I love seeing patients and families there and seeing the relief and gratitude on their faces when the patient is in care at Hospice. **We must protect this culture and environment fiercely.**

Join the...

Hospice Peterborough Book Club

10-11am

Friday, March 22, 2024



Please join us at our next Hospice Peterborough Book Club meeting as we discuss *The Company We Keep* by Francis Itani. Copies are available to borrow in the Hospice library.

To join, please email Barb Ross, Volunteer Services and Rural Program Coordinator, at bross@hospicepeterborough.org

Therapy dog Arlo visits Hospice Peterborough

It is always a delight when our friend Arlo of East Central Therapy dogs comes to visit! Each week, clients, visitors, staff and volunteers are treated to a visit from our furry friend. A warm thank you to Arlo and human companion Chantal for gracing Hospice with your joyful presence!



Let's Connect!



@hospiceptbo



@HospicePeterborough



@hospiceptbo

Support Hospice Peterborough

YES, I want to support vital hospice palliative care!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please contact me to discuss my legacy gift 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 St
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:
