



Olds and District
**HOSPICE
SOCIETY**

Helping people live until they die.

Mailing Address:
6700-46th Street, Box 70026,
Olds, Alberta T4H 3Z0

Office Address:
5018 - 53 St, Olds

Phone: 403-586-9992
Email: hospice.olds@gmail.com

Newsletter December 2012

President's Message 2012

On behalf of the Olds & District Hospice Society, I would like to wish all of our volunteers and those who've supported us in the past year, the joy and peace of the Season.

If 2011 was a year of organization and preparation, 2012 has definitely been the year of firsts.

We connected with our first client immediately after securing insurance last December. In the following 11 months, O&DHS worked with 24 families as they faced end-of-life journeys.

The ranks of trained palliative care volunteers swelled to 21 after implementing our first volunteer training session and the society's first Bereavement Session began in November 2012.

In the spring, O&DHS registered with the nationally celebrated event "Hike for Hospice". We were overwhelmed by the support of the communities of Didsbury, Sundre and Olds and the surrounding county as 147 hikers (some with dogs, some with strollers) showed up to lend their support and raised over \$26,000.

In September, with the aid

of a Community Initiatives Grant, we were able hire our first employee. Bev Hallett has joined our team as our Service Coordinator and we are blessed to have her working with us.

We are grateful for the continual support of FCSS, as well as the financial and emotional support of the wonderful people at Nu-2-U. We are also overwhelmed by the donations that continue to be made to O&DHS by individuals and groups who believe in what we are striving to do.

To all who have lost loved ones, know that you are thought of and remembered at this time of year. The love that you've known will always be with you... and we are here to offer our support.

As we look forward to another year growing in awareness, education and support, we acknowledge gratefully, the spirit of our neighbors as we work together to 'care better.'

Merry Christmas and may the New Year bless you!

Kathy Kemmere



Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

The Olds & District Hospice Society has agreed to be a participant in a new research project funded through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

The project was proposed by Dr. Wendy Duggleby of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Nursing and is entitled: "Which Way From Here?". It deals with navigation competencies for the care of older rural adults at the end of life.

The proposal identifies the realities that modern society is now experiencing a historically unprecedented longevity coupled with a health care system ill-prepared for the growing number of seniors in Canada as well as the need to develop rural palliative care.

The planning grant proposal is to bring together experts in the area of rural aging, rural palliative care and navigation, as well as policy makers, researchers and rural community members to develop a preliminary set of navigation competencies for the care of rural adults at the end of life

The CIHR project runs March 1, 2013 to February 14, 2014.

Proudly supported by:



Nu2U



Upcoming Events

Volunteer Appreciation
January 28, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
Location to be announced.

Hike For Hospice 2013
May 5, 2013

Palliative Care Volunteer Training

Many thanks to Pansy Angevine and Kathy Kemmere for instructing the Palliative Care Volunteer Training held in Olds on November 2 and 3. Their experience and passion for end of life care, which was evident, greatly enhanced the learning experience. With 11 people in attendance, we have more than doubled our ranks of trained volunteers! It is equally exciting that there is also a growing list of those who wish to enroll in future training sessions. Hopefully one can be offered locally in the spring of 2013.

Our office is now open by appointment only!
Call 403-586-9992

Grief in Time of Celebration: The Empty Spot

By Glen R. Horst, MDiv, DMin, BA

Grieving the death of a family member or close friend is hard, exhausting work. This work may be especially difficult during holiday seasons, and other days that are filled with family and community traditions, such as anniversaries, birthdays, and mother's and father's days. During these times you may be keenly aware of the empty spot left by the one who has died, whether that death happened recently or years ago.

If your loss is recent, you may dread the approach of a holiday and wonder how you and your family will get through it. While others in your family or friendship circle may share your dread, talking about it with them can be difficult. You may believe that mentioning the empty spot that will be present during the holidays will simply deepen your pain and sadness. The tendency to avoid addressing this empty spot is so common that some have compared it to an elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about.

Other people who expect you to be over your grief and to get on with your life may add to your difficulty. Their excitement and happiness in the holiday season may feel like a mockery of your emptiness and a judgment on your sadness. As you and your family try to face the holiday season, you may feel alone and out of step with your community or culture. However, you are not alone. Many people around you are painfully aware of the empty spots left by death in their own family circles. Each grieving family faces a similar task of finding new ways to live through the holidays.

New ways to live through holidays

When bereavement is recent and grief is fresh, people often talk about "getting through" or "surviving" the holidays. This attitude may continue for years after a significant loss. It acknowledges and expresses the pain and distress of loss that wells up at special times of the year. This deep ache and sadness is normal. Recognizing the grief you and your family feel is the starting point for developing new ways of living through the holidays.

There is no one right way of facing holidays when you and your family are grieving. If those in your family circle can share with each other the feelings that come up before or during the holiday, you can think together about how to approach the holiday differently. Exploring ways of honouring old family traditions while creating new ones can give your family a sense of stability and hope in the midst of loss and change. Finding ways to include the reality of the empty spot, without making it the primary focus of the holiday, can help you to take new steps in the healing of your grief.

As you and your family seek new ways of living through holidays you may want to consider the following suggestions.

Honour your loved one

Consider ways of honouring the memory and continuing presence of your loved one as part of your holiday tradition.

- Light a candle in a special candleholder at a holiday meal or throughout the holiday season.
- Mark the empty spot at a holiday meal with a photograph, single flower, or some other memento. This could be particularly helpful within the first year or two after your bereavement.
- Visit the gravesite and leave a holiday symbol, such as an ornament, ritual object, or personal note.
- Set up a small memory tree and invite family members to hang remembrances on the branches. A memory bowl or basket may be an appropriate alternative.
- Write a letter or poem to your loved one in your journal. You may want to read it at a family gathering if others are open to this.
- Have photo albums or slide shows at hand so that family members can reminisce together. This sharing of memories is likely to be bitter-sweet and may include both laughter and tears. The sharing of memories and stories can affirm the strength and identity of your family in the midst of your sorrow.

In conversation or a prayer, express your gratitude for memories of times shared with your loved one and for family ties and the support of friends. Referring to your loss in such direct ways can be painful, but also very comforting.

Complete article can be viewed at Canadian Virtual Hospice <http://www.virtualhospice.ca> or Olds & District Hospice <http://www.oldshospice.com>