

Annual Chair's Report for 2010/11  
Hospice Georgian Triangle Annual General Meeting  
and Annual Celebration of Hospice

What a Year This Has Been!

It is with great pleasure that I submit this annual report to the members of Hospice Georgian Triangle and also welcome you this evening to our *Annual Celebration of Hospice*.

This past year has been one that has seen one of our biggest challenges being addressed. For so long and far too often we hear that people just don't know what hospice does. Too many people are strangers to our services and programs until they need our help and support. But several things have happened this year to begin to turn that around. The spring issue of *On the Bay* magazine did more than a feature collection of articles about hospice; they gave hospice a face in the community by portraying real stories of our clients and volunteers in a way that was candid, poignant and heart warming. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the clients who shared their hopes and fears in this publication so that others could get a better understanding of the vital role that hospice plays in the lives of individuals facing life threatening illness. Because of their willingness to share their stories and photos in *On the Bay* many more people now know about HGT.

It wasn't long after that *Georgian Life* pictorial featured the caring compassionate faces of some of our long standing volunteers depicted as *The Village Elders*. There is so much truth in the saying that "a picture says a thousand words". When you look at these very special faces you can see the dedication and caring they have to give to others in need of emotional support, friendship, empathy and practical support. This feature also gave HGT increased awareness to those in our community.

Awareness about hospice became even more vigorous with the first annual *Hike for Hospice* held May 1. There are now over 300 individuals who not only hiked but now know what hospice is and does and untold more who know those hikers or saw the hike photos in local publications, on *My Colilngwood.ca* or heard the promotions on the 2 radio stations or saw it on cable TV. The *Hike for Hospice* was a "kick off" for a series of lunch and learn presentations in recognition of national Hospice Palliative Care Week. This series was organized by the HGT Education Committee and included an agenda of topics pertinent to hospice palliative care presented by local professionals that demonstrated what valuable resources we do have in the Georgian Triangle.

With these events and continued awareness endeavors, the word about hospice will continue to spread and people will say “I know about HGT and we need to support them.”

Not only is awareness about hospice on the increase but our hours of service continue to increase with yet another record breaking year and for the fiscal year of 2010/11 frontline volunteers gave 8,458 hours to 172 palliative clients and to those needing grief support in the Adult Bereavement Program and Rainbows program for children. Other volunteer hours include fundraising, board meetings, office and website support, library management, equipment lending and newsletter writing brought the total to 13,149 hours. That is a lot of manpower given from the hearts of those who desire to lift the spirits of others!

While this growth is great it does present some difficulties. Our office space is in near desperate status and our technical equipment requires updating to efficiently handle the increase of information and reporting requirements that go hand in hand with growth and government funding. This improvement is on our priority list along with other service enhancing projects and operating efficiencies. Already underway is an internal study to determine the real operating costs of the Susie Newton Respite Care Suite and then to implement a plan to increase occupancy using fundraised and sponsorship dollars since there is no government funding available for this service.

While it is evident that hospice awareness is increasing it is more evident that we at hospice need to connect with those who have the potential and desire to make bequests to a worthwhile and deserving charity such as HGT. To address that, a brochure on planned giving was developed last year along with a plan to personally contact lawyers, financial advisors and accountants to increase their knowledge of hospice activities and why they are vital to our community and more importantly, showing the benefit of making a bequest to HGT. To support the planned giving legacy program we are in the preliminary stages of establishing a foundation that will ensure that bequests will be secure and applied to where they are intended by the benefactor. (Look out CGMH here we come!)

The HGT Board of Directors is an incredible mix of talent, skill, expertise and yes even wisdom. Each Director actively participates in the best interest of hospice. While I always like to say that our frontline volunteers are the heart and soul of hospice I also know that the Directors are its architect and backbone. They are a real team working together without personal agendas and all with a common goal of making hospice an integral part of our community. The HGT board continues to evolve as each member accepts a specific role and responsibility as a main focus of their board position. This means that the great ideas that come forward are directed to a specific Director for review and action. These roles and responsibilities are directly linked to raising awareness about and fundraising for hospice. These roles will focus on a concentrated effort to secure sponsorship for such programs as

Rainbows, the respite care suite, a paid Bereavement Counselor and volunteer training and support.

The relationship of HGT with the Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN 12) continues with the signing of a 3 year Multi-Service Accountability Agreement that ensures agency adherence to high performance standards for operation and reporting. It is an ongoing challenge for hospice to meet the reporting requirements of the LHIN and the Financial Assistant works diligently with the Finance Chair to ensure it is accurate and on time. While speaking about the LHIN I want to say that their funding to HGT remains at one third of our operating budget but hopefully that will improve as time moves forward and we demonstrate our merit in supplementing the health care of our community through our volunteer hours. Can you imagine the impact those 13,149 hours would have if a dollar value could be assigned to them?!

HGT was instrumental in forming a Hospice Alliance for the 5 community and 1 residential hospice of both Simcoe County and the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN. The purpose of this alliance is to work collaboratively in securing funding, possible shared services such as a common auditor and increased recognition and support of hospice services through a united effort. To that end HGT also continues as an active participant of the North Simcoe Muskoka Palliative Care Network in advancing and enhancing hospice palliative care in our region.

HGT continues to be a grateful recipient as charity of choice for the Collingwood Cinema Club. The club and its members continue to show their support by forwarding club proceeds and member donations to HGT. As well, we are always indebted to Royal LePage Real Estate of Collingwood for their annual sponsorship of the fundraising ski day for HGT. Recognition goes to the 4 municipalities in which we provide service for their annual grants and this year hospice was not included in the pervasive budget trimming. That generosity reflects their understanding of the need for support in hospice palliative care to their residents.

The evolution of the board and the planning for the future will be guided by our new strategic plan that includes 4 main strategic directions; developing sources of sustainable funding for current programs and their expansion, improve public awareness through targeted education and promotion, improve utilization of staff and volunteers for frontline service and fundraising and expand current programs and implement new programs that support the mission of HGT.

So can you see what a year this has been?! We are riding a wave of recognition that must be kept in motion, we are growing and we need more space. Our growth says that we need more support and funding for client services including adult and child bereavement as well as more hospice palliative care support in the respite suite and client's home. There is an ever increasing need for end of life care outside of the clinical curative environment of the hospital. There are ever increasing numbers of individuals with life threatening illness, have limited life expectancy or are bereaved and HGT needs to reach these people to help them through a most difficult life transition.

There is, no doubt, a need for a hospice home in our community to house our programs and provide a home like atmosphere where those at the end of life can spend their days in circle of care provided by professionals, volunteers, family and friends. That is our Dream; to have a hospice home in this area. While it is a Dream today I know that our activities that increase public awareness, the strategic planning and the creation of a sustainable foundation will make it a Reality tomorrow. I believe and sense from all those involved with hospice that their passion and hard work will soon get us there.

Respectfully submitted, Rebecca Wall Board Chair