

# Region's best kept secret changing stigma around hospice care

Lisha Van Nieuwenhove

*It's Heaven's waiting room where you're cared for by angels.* - Neil Orr

Walking towards the entrance of Oak Ridges Hospice in Port Perry, you feel a little tense, a sense of trepidation.

This is, after all, a place where people live their final days, and those who have been left behind are likely unspeakably sad. You take a deep breath and head inside. After crossing through the small entrance vestibule, you open a second door. The smell of something savoury and

decidedly homemade hits your nostrils - not the antiseptic hospital smell you expected. A head pops up

on your left, and a quiet but cheery "hello" greets you. The volunteer welcomes you, asks the reason for your

visit, then, while she goes about finding the person you want to see, invites you to take off your wet shoes and slip on a pair of hand-knit slippers - the basket by the door that holds them is full to the brim with various shapes and sizes of the kinds of slippers your grandmother used to make you for Christmas.

Oak Ridges Hospice, the only resident hospice in Durham Region, does much more than provide cozy slippers and homemade soup every day of the year. For those living with a life-limiting illness, or providing care for a loved one as they near end-of-life, the hospice offers an alternative to institutional care facilities and home care. It's almost a home away from home, where specially trained medical, nursing, support staff and volunteers provide compassionate care and comfort, at no cost to the resident or their loved ones.

"There's a stigma around hospice care," explains Michelle Betlam, fund development and communications coordinator for the hospice. "We showcase exceptional care. We want people to be comfortable here and let them live with dignity while they celebrate their final moments. Celebrate

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The visitors' nook and the kitchen at Oak Ridges Hospice.

Lisha Van Nieuwenhove

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from previous page

is a deliberate word choice - Betlam says that the hospice has seen several birthdays and anniversaries celebrated while families have had their loved ones in care.

A tour of the hospice begins immediately after choosing the perfect slippers and padding down a short hall to a large "industrial" kitchen. It looks anything but industrial, with dark cerulean blue cabinetry encircling a large workspace that boasts an island as large as a twin bed at in the centre. Jars of chocolates and biscotti sit on the island, ready for the taking by anyone who wants refreshment. All meals are made in this kitchen by certified staff and trained volunteers.

Tucked beside the kitchen, which is for staff and volunteer use, is a little nook that those visiting the hospice can use. The fridge is stocked with drinks, snacks, prepared meals, and coffee and tea are available, all 24/7. A large room across from the kitchen has dining tables and chairs, as well as a few easy chairs for family or caregivers to perhaps grab a couple of moments for themselves.

Continuing down the hall, you pass the current "Tree of Life" which hangs on the wall. When a resident dies, those caring for the individual

have the option of putting their loved one's name on a small wooden leaf, which is dropped into the large plexiglass-covered wooden tree, joining the names of others who have gone before. This ritual can be done on its own, or as part of the Honour Guard. After a person passes away, as the body is being moved to the funeral home, the care team assembles



in the front entryway, along with the deceased's loved ones (if they are not walking with the stretcher), where they stand in honour for a short ceremony as the resident is transferred to the care of the funeral home.

"The honour guard was very moving," says Nikki Francies, whose father, Paul, was a resident at Oak Ridges Hospice in 2023. "And the tree of life part still makes me tear up just thinking about it."

Francies has nothing but positive things to say about Oak Ridges Hospice.

"Oak Ridges is an amazing place. So much dignity and care...it's hard for me to put into words how strongly positive I feel about the place. They took such amazing care of not only my dad but of me as well. The volunteers were always checking in to see if I wanted any food or anything they could help me with. One came in and asked if she could sit and talk with me. The hand knitted slippers at the door - it's a small thing but so comforting."

"Being a caregiver is a lot of responsibility," says Betlam. "We're saying let us take that burden."

Oak Ridges Hospice has 10 palliative care beds, all in private rooms with en suite bathrooms. The electric beds are specially designed to accommodate someone who is laying down for extended periods of time. The rooms also feature a sofa/trundle bed, a recliner easy chair, a large television and a small refrigerator. Caregivers are encouraged to bring in photos and mementos of home for the resident in order to make the space more personalized and homey. Resident rooms feature large windows overlooking the surrounding

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Hospice care, from page 7

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of space for family and friends to sit, visit, even stay overnight.

Neil Orr did just that when his wife,

Heather, spent her final week at the hospice.

"I lived there for a week. We had a toy box there for the grandkids. The hospice took care of everything - food, all the clinical issues, we never had to ask for anything."

Orr admits to having had preconceived notions of hospice care before connecting with Oak Ridges Hospice.

"I came from a mindset that hospice care was an old century home that

had been repurposed, with bad food and low standards of care. The minute we walked into Oak Ridges, that all changed."

Around 50 per cent of the operating costs of the hospice are covered by provincial government funding, the rest is earned through fundraising and charitable donations.

The hospice is currently in major fundraising mode, with a Chase the Ace online progressive jackpot lottery

in full swing (Draws occur every Tuesday at 7 p.m. If the Ace is not pulled, the progressive jackpot continues to grow until the Ace of Spades is pulled), and the Hike for Hospice is coming up on June 2. This annual fundraiser draws hundreds of people and raises both funds and awareness for Oak Ridges Hospice. The event has helped raise a total of \$346,525 to date. This year's hike will begin and end at Palmer



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Starting July 1, the Blue Box program will no longer be managed by Durham Region. It will be managed by Circular Materials, a Producer Responsibility Organization representing the producers of the products and packaging recycled in the Blue Box.

### What does this mean for residents?

- Reporting a missed collection and blue box replacement will be handled by Circular Materials' local recycling contractor.
- No changes to your current schedule or materials you can recycle.

Learn more about extended producer responsibility, [durham.ca/BlueBox](http://durham.ca/BlueBox).

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 311 (within Regional limits) or 1-800-372-1102.





Park in Port Perry.

"There is no cost for our care," explains Betlam. "No family will ever pay for the care their family members receive in any of the programs or for their stay at the hospice. It's free of charge to residents of Durham with a valid OHIP card. And if your loved one is not in the region, but you live here, you can bring them here."

Betlam does point out that the hospice is often at capacity, and she strongly recommends adding poten-

tial hospice care to the list of avenues to explore when you or a loved one is facing a life-limiting illness. Betlam advises people to visit the hospice and explore what it offers, and if it seems like a viable option, to register with the hospice, even though you may never use its services.

"We have intake 24/7," says Betlam. "If you decide that the hospice is your next step, and you're pre-registered, it makes everything much smoother to acquire a room."

The hospice opened in February 2021 after a years-long process to get a hospice in north Durham, and is officially named the Morgan & Sidu House, after two local philanthropists who donated a generous foundational gift. At the moment, 115 volunteers give more than 10,000 hours of service a year to the hospice, providing direct care, doing laundry, working reception or in the kitchen, gardening, doing administration and sitting on various committees.

To arrange a tour of Oak Ridges Hospice (and smell the homemade soup), make a donation, sign up for

the Hike for Hospice or buy a Chase the Ace lottery ticket, visit oakridgeshospice.com

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#### Financial Management

- Budgeting and Forecasts and related reporting
- Financial reporting - monthly and year end
- Cashflow management - daily and intercompany
- Audit and compliance workings
- Financial analysis monthly

#### Human Resource Management

- Employee recruitment procedures and management of employee files
- Employee relations, overseeing the finance department and all other department employee issues
- Benefits and related administration
- Compliance, policies, and liaison with Legal

#### Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in finance, human resources, business administration, or a related field. Experience as CPA or relevant professional certification preferred but not a requirement
- Proven experience in financial management, including budgeting, financial reporting, and analysis
- Thorough knowledge of HR best practices, employment laws, and compliance requirements as applied with experience
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to work collaboratively across departments
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## Frank Pinguet

March 26, 1930 ~ May 7, 2024 (age 94)



Loving husband of 67 years of the late JoAnne. Very proud father, uncle, grandpa and great-grandpa.

Frank was the Board Chairman for many years at the Uxbridge (Cottage) Hospital, a mentor, a friend, a lover of his dogs, an avid walker and loved being outdoors.

94 years young.

You will be missed and never forgotten, Dad!

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