

My friend Ann died last Friday in the gentle care of the Renfrew Hospice. It was no longer possible to manage her end-of-life needs at home, despite a loving circle of family, friends and professional caregivers. Hospice was the best alternative and we were lucky that one of the six Renfrew beds became available.

Ann was made comfortable in a bright room overlooking the garden. Goodbyes were said. Guests had quiet visits in the cheerful kitchen and lounge. Volunteers baked cookies and muffins and brewed tea and coffee.

I was astonished to discover that Canada has only 88 residential hospices, the majority in Ontario and in the Montreal area. Within Renfrew County, we can lay claim to two hospices: one in Barrys Bay and one in Renfrew. Like most hospices, both are responsible for raising up to half of their operating costs through private donations and rely heavily on volunteers to support their palliative care programs. In other words, without the financial, emotional and volunteer support of the community, local hospice care would not exist.

The goal of Hospice care is to enable the patient to have an alert, pain-free life to live each day as fully as possible. Care focuses on quality of life rather than a cure. Hospice also provides short term respite care for families who need to recharge their

A View from Bulger's Corners

(and Wilno and Douglas and Barcelona)



Johanna Zomers

energies and they also offer short patient stays to help prevent or manage pain or other distress. The palliative team works with the medical team to design a personalized program of care combined with emotional and spiritual support. When it becomes clear that a cure is no longer likely, Hospice can be an alternative to returning to hospital.

Time to plan is always an asset in managing end-of-life care and Hospice welcomes inquiries and extends invitations to arrange for a tour of the facility. Hospice speakers are also available for groups and there are a number of outreach programs and service for

families, community members and health care professionals.

The beautiful Rural Reflections Legacy Wall mural, crafted by Don Burchat of Wilno in memory of his wife, Audrey, who passed away at Hospice Renfrew in 2011, pays tribute to the generosity of donors. Constructed of various local woods, the mural depicts rural Renfrew County and the funds raised by memorial donations sustain Hospice programs and services. Money is also raised by the annual *Hike for Hospice*, by the United Way and countless local initiatives.

Facilities such as Hospice come to the forefront mainly when we need to deal with them on a personal basis. Our aging population in Renfrew County means that more and more of us will be exploring the options of care for aging parents, spouses, siblings, friends and for ourselves. We are truly blessed here in the Ottawa Valley to have a growing network of state of the art medical and support services, many of them affiliated with the major hospitals in Ottawa. Knowledge and technology combined with our traditional Valley looking after our neighbour attitude provides both competence and compassion. Many local families can attest to that.

More information about Hospice Renfrew is available at www.hospicerenfrew.ca - 613-433-3993 or Madawaska Valley Hospice at 613-756-3054 ext 350 www.mvhospicepalliativecare.ca