

Hospice Dufferin seeking new board members

By Mike Pickford

With the organization experiencing one of the busiest periods of its 10-year history, Hospice Dufferin is putting out a call to the community as it seeks additional volunteers at both the front-line and board room levels.

With locations in both Orangeville and Shelburne, Hospice Dufferin is the region's primary palliative care service provider. Executive Director Maureen Riedler noted the organization has typically been serving 400 clients per year, although she expects that number to rise come the end of the 2017/18 fiscal year.

"Palliative care is all about caring for patients and families facing a life-limiting illness, starting right from diagnosis," Ms. Riedler said. "We focus on the emotional, spiritual and wellness needs of clients and their families. We help families face illness with strength and dignity!"

While numbers for programming are up about 15 percent this year, volunteer numbers have been dwindling for quite some time. Currently, the board has six active members, only half-way towards a full board. Ms. Riedler said the organization has been getting by with eight or nine board members for a few years but, with people moving on over the past 12 months, they must now recruit more members to get back to a manageable total.

Board members at Hospice Dufferin are responsible for attending one board meeting, every third Thursday of the month from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., participating in fundraising activities and sitting on one committee best suited to their skills and interests. Maureen says she is particularly looking for individuals with skills in fundraising, strategic planning, finance and governance.

"Through the diversity of experience, strengths and skills of our Board members, we seek to make a difference in the lives of our clients requiring a range of support services and programs," Ms. Riedler said. "Hospice Dufferin is making a difference in the lives of so many in our community. We are dedicated to supporting and enhancing the quality of life of individuals and families facing life-threatening illnesses and bereavement."

With the provincial government this year announcing it would be investing more money than ever before into palliative care services across Ontario, Ms. Riedler believes the time has never been better for someone to get involved in the organization.

"It's exciting times right now for palliative care in Ontario; the ministry has identified palliative care as a priority, which will make things a little easier for us and our board from a fundraising stand point," she said. "This certainly is a way for people who have had experience with palliative care to give back to the community at a time where we have an opportunity to really expand our services."

In total, Ms. Riedler estimates there are 1,600 people in Dufferin who could make use of Hospice Dufferin's end-of-life care. Listed as a non-profit, the organization is tasked with coming up with 75 percent of its annual budget through various fundraising initiatives, with the other 25 percent supplied by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). It should come as no surprise then that Hospice Dufferin has a steady flow of fundraisers planned between now and the end of the year.

"We have lots of things in the pipeline," Maureen said. "It's been an incredibly successful year so far, fundraising-wise. The cherry on top now would be filling up our board and getting more frontline volunteers to help with our programming."

Brianna Brown, Program and Volunteer Coordinator with Hospice Dufferin, says there are currently two programs running at the Orangeville facility to support the popular home delivery program.

"We just launched a new program in August called Gaining Real Importance for Every Friendship (GRIEF). That is a social support program for people experiencing bereavement or loss. It's a chance for people to come together and share their experiences, to help people that have gone through or are going through similar experiences," Ms. Brown said. "It's less of a counselling thing, more helping and communicating with each other."

She added, "We've had a solid number of people out for that so far. Each month we're getting more and more interest. Then, on top of GRIEF, we have our regular meet and greet, which takes place at the office. There, clients do everything from yoga to crafting classes to art therapy sessions. There's a wide variety of activities we provide."

For more information on Hospice Dufferin, or to enquire about becoming a volunteer, contact Maureen Riedler at 519-942-3313. Alternatively, visit their website at hospicedufferin.com.