

Remember Your Loved Ones at Celebrate A Life

Annual free community event kicks off at Hillside Shopping Centre with special guests

MEDIA ALERT / PHOTO OPPORTUNITY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Victoria – The 31st annual **Celebrate A Life** by Victoria Hospice officially launches at Hillside Shopping Centre on Thursday, December 1st at 10 a.m. Since 1985, Celebrate a Life has provided a unique opportunity for the community to celebrate loved ones during the holiday season by hanging a personalized tribute ornament. (The tree will be located across from Bombay at Hillside Shopping Centre, near the Shoppers Drug Mart entrance, from November 30 - December 12.)

Two very special Victoria Hospice donors will kick off this time honoured event, alongside Mischelle vanThiel, Victoria Hospice CEO. Sophie, a philanthropic four-year old, has been raising funds for Hospice since age two in memory of her beloved grandpa who spent his last few weeks at Victoria Hospice. She will hang the first ornament with well-known community philanthropist and Victoria Hospice supporter, 93-year-old Rudi Hoenson, who lost his wife Sylvia some years ago. This year Rudi will donate \$2 to help provide care and bereavement support to local families in need (up to \$5,000) for every tribute hung on one of our festive trees or online at the virtual [Celebrate A Life](#) tree.

“Victoria Hospice holds a special place in our hearts,” says Sophie’s mother Erin Dopko. “Sophie had a deep bond with her grandpa and spent loads of time with him at Hospice – playing, reading, and even watching TV.” On her second birthday, Sophie donated a bird feeder to the Victoria Hospice Rooftop Garden; her fourth birthday party featured a game called Coin Drop 4 Hospice, and funds raised were matched by her generous family. “Each year we give a bit to keep memories close by,” says Dopko. “We want to encourage others to support Victoria Hospice so that other families in need can get the same high-quality care dad received.”

vanThiel acknowledges that **Christmas and the winter holiday season is a difficult time of the year** for many people. “Memories of past celebrations with family and friends who are no longer here can magnify feelings of loss. It can be helpful to share your concerns, feelings and apprehensions with someone. Let people know what is difficult for you, and accept offers of help.”

The event supports Victoria Hospice’s commitment to care through bereavement services offered to family members and friends after a death. The Victoria Hospice website offers useful information for grieving families including **Bereavement Tips for Special Holidays**. Here are a few to consider:

- Think about how you will respond to others when they offer holiday good wishes. You can simply say “Thank you” or “Best wishes to you.”
- Consider cutting back on your holiday traditions by not sending cards, or by enlisting the help of other people with meals and decorating.
- Consider alternatives such as developing new traditions, going away, eating at restaurants or buying gift cards.
- Create a special decoration and give it a place of honour.

Event info: www.celebratealifevictoria.ca

General info: www.victoriahospice.org

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