

Hospice Volunteers Lend a Hand at Celebrate A Life

Annual holiday event on now at Tillicum Centre until December 16

MEDIA ALERT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 11, 2019

Victoria – It is often said that volunteers are the heart of Victoria Hospice. Every day they play an essential role in Victoria Hospice’s programs and services. Now until December 16th volunteers will be extending that heart out into the community at the 33rd annual Celebrate A Life event at Tillicum Centre. Celebrate A Life offers a unique opportunity for the community to remember loved ones during the holiday season and is made possible thanks to over 160 hours of volunteer service.

Since 1985, Celebrate a Life has provided a meaningful way to honour a loved one by hanging a personalized tribute ornament on our festive tree. Dedicated hospice volunteers will be on hand to assist with this holiday tradition, provide information about hospice and lend a listening ear. This year’s tree is located at Tillicum Centre, at the Winner’s entrance, until December 16.

The holiday season can be a difficult time for many people who have lost a loved one. “It’s important to be there for people who might be struggling to get through the season,” says hospice volunteer Gail Aldrete. “Taking a moment to remember a loved one, and placing a tribute on the tree can help – it really means a lot to people.” Over the course of the week, the tree will fill up with hundreds of names of loved ones, with many visitors returning to the display year after year.

In addition to the 1-week display at Tillicum Centre, Victoria Hospice volunteers are also helping to expand the event to ten retirement communities, bringing awareness of Hospice programs directly to more local seniors. Tributes can also be made on the virtual [Celebrate A Life](http://www.celebratealifevictoria.ca) tree anytime at www.celebratealifevictoria.ca

Celebrate A Life supports Victoria Hospice’s commitment to care through bereavement services offered to family members and friends after a death. You do not need a prior connection to Victoria Hospice to access supports, which include volunteer calls and visits, professional counselling, grief support groups and information about grief. Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services rely almost entirely on community donations to support over 2,500 local families each year.

The Victoria Hospice website offers useful information for grieving families including [Tips for Coping with Holiday Grief](#).

Event info: www.celebratealifevictoria.ca

General info: www.victoriahospice.org

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TIPS FOR COPING WITH *Holiday Grief*

Decide how you want to spend the holiday.
Allow yourself to think about what you most need and want to do. It's OK if you want to change things completely, just a little, or not at all.

Plan your activities in advance.
Before the holiday season is in full swing, create a plan that can be adjusted according to your needs. Let people who are important to you know what your plans are and if you are open to invitations.

Expect things to be different.
Holidays are often spent with the people we are closest to and you are missing someone important. You may be feeling down and not up to your usual activities. However, you may also enjoy seeing people and participating in some events.

Take time to care for yourself.
Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel and to spend time alone or with others as needed. Take time out for rest and physical activity and avoid over-indulging in food and/or alcohol.

Be flexible about holiday traditions.
Without the person you've lost, you may not be able to do all the holiday things you'd normally do. Consider reducing or foregoing activities that aren't essential, and asking for help with anything you'd like to continue.

Give to others.
Sometimes the sadness and loneliness of grief during the holidays can be lightened a little by caring for others. Consider hosting a pre- or post-holiday gathering for friends and family or perhaps volunteering at a local shelter or charity.

Do something to remember your loved one.
You may want to continue a favorite tradition or start something new. Perhaps an annual walk in a special place, or creating a special ornament or decoration, or even making a holiday food item that your loved one particularly enjoyed.

VICTORIA HOSPICE

*Need more support?
Call Victoria Hospice
Bereavement Services
at 250-370-8868.*

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Hospice volunteers Gail Aldrete and Jan Bailey, give back to the community during the holiday season at Victoria Hospice's Celebrate A Life event, on now at Tillicum Centre until December 16th.