



# WINTER

## newsletter

DECEMBER 2025



## ABOUT US:

### Our Vision

Compassionate end-of life care in an environment of choice.

### Our Mission

South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society promotes compassionate, accessible end-of-life care through partnerships, education, and the provision of resources.

### Our Goals

- Promotes the enhancement of community and staff knowledge related to current palliative care practices.
- Promote the expansion of existing palliative care services,
- Support the individual needs of palliative care patients and their families.
- Promote and support the establishment of a free-standing hospice for Lunenburg and Queens County residents.
- Promote and support the creation of designed acute palliative care beds in the South Shore Regional, Fisherman's Memorial and Queens General Hospital.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



As we rush quickly into this holiday season, we pause for a moment to reflect back on the busy 2025 that will soon be behind us. Our year began with our inaugural Starry Night Gala, sponsored by Michael Anderssen of TD Wealth. The sold out event was proof that the community was looking for a reason to dress up and have an evening out in support of a good cause.

The Gala was followed in June by the LaHave Seafoods, Irving Oil, Mersey Seafoods Hope for Hospice Tournament at Osprey Ridge Golf Course. Golfers in this sold out event enjoyed a day of sunshine and camaraderie.

The proceeds from these two events helped us launch our Volunteer Visitation Program. Coordinated by Tara Jaskowiak, specially trained volunteers are matched with palliative patients in Lunenburg and Queens Counties who are experiencing loneliness and would benefit from a visiting friend. More details on the program are included later in this newsletter.

Our Beacon of Hope Fund, designed to provide financial assistance to palliative patients who choose end of life at home, has been very busy. In 2024, thirty eight requests were received. To date in 2025, over fifty requests have been approved. Given current economic conditions and an aging population, we see this trend continuing into 2026.



## MESSAGE FROM CHAIR CONTINUED...

We have begun a new initiative, Kindred Connections, in partnership with Stonemont by the Shore. Activity afternoons are held at the Stonemont Facility for residents and palliative supporters that includes, games, music, and always fresh cookies. This provides an opportunity for those who have experienced a significant loss to meet new people, in a warm and welcoming environment.

Throughout the year our other events have continued, buoyed by the support from our community. These events are covered throughout this newsletter.

To each and everyone who has supported us and our mission a most sincere thank you. Our palliative patients and their families are grateful.

For some of you, you may enter this holiday season with an empty place at the table. May you find peace in the memories of your loved one and comfort in the love surrounding you.

As 2025 comes to a close I share my gratitude to those who have supported us in any way, to our Board members and dedicated volunteers, and to Nikki and Tara our wonderful staff. Thank you all.

Best wishes for a peaceful holiday season.

Trudy  
Board Chair



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Andrea Weagle

Our AGM brought together members, volunteers, and supporters in a warm, collaborative atmosphere at the Chester Art Centre on September 23rd. We were honored to welcome Andrea Weagle as our guest speaker.

While Andrea did not experience hospice care firsthand, she deeply understands the difference that compassionate, supportive care can make in a loved one's final days. Andrea shared the heartfelt story of her father's final days in hospital. She spoke openly about how the staff provided compassionate and professional end of life care, in an environment that was not conducive to providing comfort at end of life. Andrea offered suggestions on how that environment could be improved for both patient and family.

We extend our sincere thanks to Andrea for sharing her experience and to everyone who joined us.



# ALZHEIMER'S PRESENTATION



On September 24<sup>th</sup>, the Society took part in a program with the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia "Fostering Community". During this presentation there were local speakers and community exhibitors with resources available to help.

Pictured here is Education Committee members - Kim Carlow Berkley and Joanne Purchase Renaud at the Alzheimer's Presentation



## KINDRED CONNECTIONS

### Activity Afternoon at Stonemont by the Shore



To celebrate our partnership with Stonemont by the Shore and the season, we hosted an activity afternoon that brought people together. The air was filled with the sweet scent of fresh baked cookies baked by our volunteers and shared with everyone. We also enjoyed listening to familiar classics and beloved carols that brought smiles to everyone's faces. Thank you to all who joined us and to the volunteers who poured warmth into the afternoon. Your energy made the space feel like a true community living room.

Our next Kindred Connection activity will be a Carol Sing December 11<sup>th</sup>, from 2:00 - 3:30 at Stonemont.



Cookie masters, Angie Barry and Anne Mathews



Melina Coolen entertaining with favorite Christmas carols.





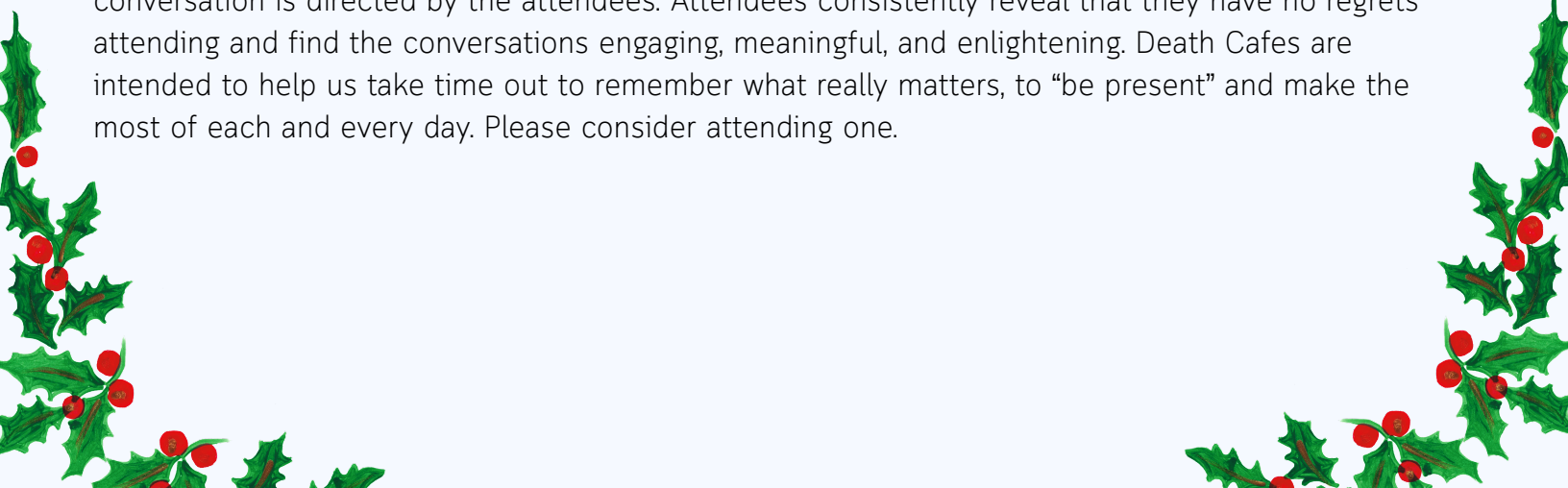
# WHAT ARE "DEATH CAFES"?

Written By Debbie Gowan

Jon Underwood hosted the first Death Cafe in his own home in Hackney, East London in September 2011, adapting the idea from a Swiss sociologist, Bernard Crettaz. The Death Cafe concept quickly gained popularity and after Jon developed a Death Cafe web page in early 2012 and together with his mother, psychologist, published a Guide to Host a Death Cafe. The Death Cafe website's opening remarks states its objective is, "to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives." It was felt by Jon that by talking more openly about death and acknowledging our own death that we would create benefit in how we live and live it fully. An obvious societal need internationally and that it is changing the culture.

Within it's first year in the UK, the first North American Death Cafe occurred in Ohio and they are now occurring throughout North America and in about 100 other countries around the world. Ironically, Jon died suddenly at age 44 in June of 2017, but he would be beyond please to appreciate how his idea has grown through an obvious societal need internationally and that it is changing the culture around death. His family continues to lead the movement and operate the website as a legacy to him and his vision of promoting these needed discussions of death in a death denying society. His initial goal for the first Death Cafe was to **bring strangers together over tea and cake (1), in a confidential, respectful and safe space (2) with no agenda nor intention to lead people to any conclusion or course of action (3) in a group directed discussion of death.** He wanted Death Cafes to be offered on a **non-profit basis (4)** and these four principles remain the hallmarks of Death Cafes world wide today. He felt that tea and cake, as comfort foods, would help to nourish the body while nourishing the soul to decrease the fear of talking about death. In its early days the Death Cafe movement captured the attention of international media including talk shows and the front page of "The New York Times" when Jon was still alive. Media coverage is still ongoing particularly in communities where Death Cafes are a first.

In some communities there are regularly scheduled gatherings such as, Close to Home, the monthly Death Cafe in Halifax. The South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society has hosted several Death/End of Life Cafes since its inception, the latest in Liverpool on November 1, 2025, with about 20 individuals in attendance. Discussions are led initially by a facilitator, but the content on conversation is directed by the attendees. Attendees consistently reveal that they have no regrets attending and find the conversations engaging, meaningful, and enlightening. Death Cafes are intended to help us take time out to remember what really matters, to "be present" and make the most of each and every day. Please consider attending one.





# "THE ENNIS SISTERS"

Organized by Gary Lohnes in support of the South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society, The Ennis Sisters Concert took place on October 3rd at the beautiful Bridgewater Baptist Church.

The venue provided an intimate, acoustically rich setting that elevated the Ennis Sisters' soul-stirring harmonies. Those in attendance enjoyed a night of nostalgia, exceptional vocal talent, and a strong sense of community that live, local performances uniquely deliver. Proceeds from the event supported the South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society, helping to fund compassionate care and end-of-life services for families in our region.

Thank you to the Ennis Sisters for sharing their gifts, to Gary Lohnes for his tireless organizing, and to everyone who attended and supported this important cause. Your involvement helps sustain meaningful cultural events while advancing compassionate hospice/palliative care in our community.



The Ennis Sisters, Maureen, Teresa, and Karen pictured here with MC for the evening, Jonathan Crouse

## SUCCESSFUL ONLINE AUCTION



A sincere thank you to all donors and supporters of our online auction. Through the generosity of the community over \$20,000 was raised to provide services to palliative patients in Lunenburg and Queens Counties.



Members of the online auction committee gathering to celebrate a successful event...  
Sue Taylor Foley, Nikki Selig, Dawn Curry, Karen Wall, Kelly Blair  
Missing from photo: Carmen O'Neil, Marlene Wheatley Downe, Trudy Johnson

# BLOG: CREATING ART DURING THE HOLIDAYS TO CONNECT WITH THOSE WE'VE LOST

As the holidays approached, I went up to the attic to find the precious boxes that held years of Christmas memories in the form of ornaments and craft gifts received from family and friends during our annual tree-trimming gathering on the second Saturday of December in the early 1990s. My daughter and I are still in awe when we see the boxes of ornaments and gifts unique to their time and place, a handprint of memory, a tradition that continued until my husband passed away in 2011.

Today, as I open the boxes, I think of him and all of my losses of the past few years due to the Covid 19 pandemic, and the collective losses we have all been through. How can we honor through art those whom we have loved and are now gone? I remember the first Christmas without him was hard. The yearly tree trimmings paused for a while. I took it slow, attending small gatherings and tending to my grief. I needed to be present to my struggle, my love of the holidays, and my grieving for him. I knew that grief was a healthy response to the loss of a loved one. I knew grief was an act of love, a timeless experience unique to each person.

I watched my grief with curiosity, how it affected me emotionally and how my thinking and behavior was impacted by my grief, but also how I tenderly tended to my grief. There was a time when grief used to come in large waves, all close together, a tsunami and then a rest. With time and care it shifted. I learned to sit with my grief rather than struggling with it. I asked for support when needed. Time passed. The holidays returned, and I moved forward. I laughed and loved again.

Now as I open the boxes of memories and feel the grief – but the grief accompanies me. I open the boxes of ornaments in an urge to honor the past and my loved ones. The ornaments are wrapped in white tissue paper, mummified. They include antique, hand-painted, crocheted ornaments, and Santas, angels to name a few. I sit here with these boxes that hold the memories of that time. I hear laughter, joy, and far away voices.

Today, I invite you to honor your loss in whatever way makes you feel right – creating an ornament, a framed picture, or a memory box. You can honor a loved one by using images of their favorite things or a quote or word as inspiration for your artwork. You can create an abstract painting in colors that honors the loss. Feel free to honor a situation, a friend, a pet, or even yourself, your needs, where you are right now. Take a breath and sit quietly remembering the good times. Art is an invitation to open space to honor memories. This can be hard, but remembering the good times might make you laugh, and bring feelings to your heart and mind.

Creative projects that I have done include:

- **Ornaments:** Arts-and-craft shops offer many ornaments that are ready-made for projects involving collage, paint, image embossing, or whatever sparks your imagination. I recently bought a little house ornament to honor my old home with my late husband. I will paint the back, add images in honor of those who are gone, but live in my heart.
- **Frames:** Once, I created a 2 X 3 frame in honor of my father, who passed away in 2005. Folded inside is an accordion book, and when you open the back, my father's image pops out.
- **Quotes:** Create [Word Swags](#) with quotes. Word Swag is an app with copyright images that allows you to create quotes. In my series "Urban Grief," I put a grief quote to every chosen image. Another app, [Bazaart](#), offers similar options for creating collages with the free copyright images they have in stock.
- **Memory Boxes:** Find any box – even a shoe box – and decorate it as a memory box for keepsakes like images and quotes by your loved ones.

As I sit to explore my box of ornaments, I'm reminded that the holidays can bring new meaning into our lives. For me, the holidays are a reset, a moment to pause and remember what is most valuable, what has most meaning to life. I take a breath to explore the gifts given from those who are living and from those who are gone, and I hear the voices of my loved ones. What have you learned from me? How have you changed and grown as a result of my presence in your life? How can you continue to nurture the relationships with those who are still living?

**Anney Baez, Ph.D., LCSW**

Professor, Touro University Graduate School of Social Work

Windows Facilitator

New York, New York

Frame created in memory of her father.



# EXPANDING OUR VOLUNTEER VISITOR PROGRAM

Submitted by Volunteer Visitation Coordinator, Tara Jaskowiak

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, our Volunteer Visitor Program continues to grow and bring comfort, companionship and dignity to individuals receiving palliative care in our community. This month, we welcomed another cohort of dedicated volunteers, bringing our total number of active visitors to 24. Each of these volunteers commits to spending about an hour a week (sometimes longer) in the home of someone facing a life-limiting illness, offering presence, conversation, and meaningful human connection.

As part of their in-person training, volunteers participated in a wonderful presentation led by retired palliative care doctor, Dr. Debra Gowan. Her presentation was exceptionally well received, giving volunteers a deeper insight into the emotional landscape of end-of-life moments, history of the palliative/hospice movement in Canada and abroad, and the essential role that compassionate listening plays in supporting both clients and their families/community.

With just a bit of training left to be completed through the Hospice Palliative Care Ontario's online course, we are excited to begin matching this new group of volunteers with the individuals who are waiting for them.

We are grateful for the donations and support from the community which is such a huge part of making this entire program possible. Most importantly, you are a part of helping to create moments of comfort and companionship for people who need it most.

Thank you for supporting this program and for making a meaningful difference in the lives of our community members.



## HOT OFF THE PRESS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

What a N.S. palliative care unit tells us about Canada's rural health care challenges.

[CBC News](#)

# UPCOMING EVENTS MARK YOUR CALENDARS



## HOLIDAY MARKET



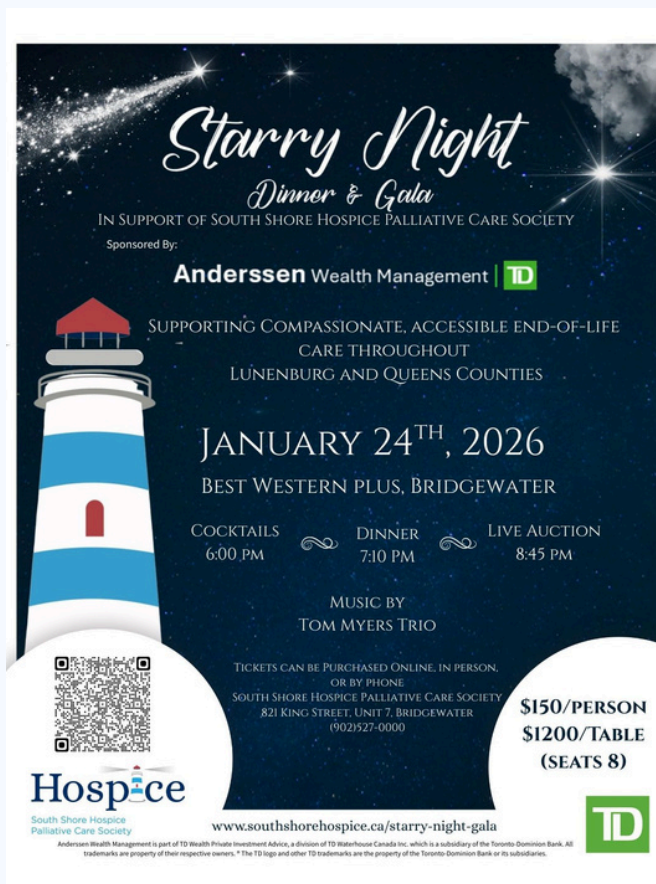
Join us for a drop-in Holiday Market at our office on Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. We will have a selection of jewelry, handmade gifts, and unique gently loved items - perfect for last-minute shoppers. Stop by at your convenience and discover something special while supporting South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society.

## ADVANCED CARE PROGRAM

Have you thought about who could make health care decisions for you if you are unable to do so? If not you, then who??

That is what Advance Care Planning is all about. There will be a presentation on Advanced Care Planning on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 from 1:30pm to 3:00pm at the Stonemont Retirement Residence (45 Nathan Cirillo Rd. Cookville) right across from the Best Western Hotel in Cookville. All are welcome!





## STARRY NIGHT DINNER & GALA

Join us for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Starry Night Dinner & Gala on January 24, 2026 at the Best Western Plus Bridgewater for a wonderful night of food, conversation, laughter, and giving. Tickets are available online or by calling our office. The evening will feature music, live auction, and inspirational speakers. Your presence directly empowers our mission of promoting compassionate, assessible end-of-life care throughout Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

[Starry Night Dinner & Gala](#)

## RESOURCES

### Bereaved Families of Nova Scotia

Bereaved families is a registered non-profit organization with a charitable status that operates with a volunteer board of directors, staff and facilitators. The program and services include peer support and one-on-one confidential support. They offer Support and Share Sessions, General Grief programs, Trauma programs, Adolescent Grief Programs, Resilience and Well-being sessions, and Death Cafes.

[Bereaved Families of NS](#)

### NS Health Palliative Care

Palliative care enhances the quality of life of people with a life-limiting illness. It does this by preventing and relieving suffering. For more information visit this link.

[Palliative Care](#)

### Healing Pathways - Grieving Well

[Grieving Well](#)



# CONTACT US

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Bridgewater, NS B4V 1B7

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Email: [office@southshorehospice.ca](mailto:office@southshorehospice.ca)  
[www.southshorehospice.ca](http://www.southshorehospice.ca)

## HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

The work, programs, and events held by the South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society are made possible by the generous support of our donors. Without them our work would not be possible.

## ONLINE DONATIONS:

Donate securely using [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)

[Donate Now](#)



Cheques can be made out to South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society and mailed to:  
**South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society**  
100 High Street, PO Box 159

## DONATE IN PERSON OR BY PHONE:

Call or stop by the office to make a donation in person.

Monday - Friday 10:00am - 4:00Ppm

821 King Street, Unit 7

Bridgewater, NS B4V 1B7

Phone (902) 527-0000

**Special Holiday Hours: Our office will be closed from December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026.**

## DONATE BY E-TRANSFER

Electronic funds transfer from your banking provider can be sent to:  
[treasurer@southshorehospice.ca](mailto:treasurer@southshorehospice.ca)