

## Hike for Hospice

Submitted by Hospice Care Ottawa

It's time to dust off your sneakers, stretch your legs and get ready to participate in "Hike for Hospice" set for the Carleton University campus on Sunday, April 30th.

Hike is a major fundraiser for Hospice Care Ottawa (HCO), a community-based charitable organization powered by a small dedicated staff and more than 1,000 volunteers that offer home support, bereavement services, day hospice and residential palliative care for men and women facing end-of-life illnesses in a caring, comfortable home environment.

Young children, their parents and grandparents, folks in wheelchairs and people who just understand the need for hospice and palliative care have all supported Hospice Care Ottawa over the past years. They have helped to turn the 5km hike into a welcome rite of spring in Ottawa and the start of National Hospice Palliative Care week.

"I have been hiking for 13 years," says Cathy Allison, a long-time hospice volunteer. "The fact is you are doing something worthwhile and can contribute at a grass roots level to a service that is much needed in the community."

Allison got involved with the hospice movement more than two decades ago when she saw an ad in a west-end community paper, looking for volunteers. "My mother had recently died and end-of-life care was on my radar."

Allison won't be at Carleton University in person in April, instead the committed volunteer, who is expecting a new granddaughter in British Columbia, will be a virtual hiker. She will be raising important funds for hospice, which receives

about 60 per cent of its program funding from the province, relying on the public and donors to make up the difference.

Hospice Care Ottawa, which expanded to La Maison de l'Est in Orleans and is nearing completion of Hein House at Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in Kanata, has to raise 100 per cent of all capital costs in the community. Proceeds from the hike will go towards program costs and maintaining services.



"I can't wait for hike," says Barbara Davidson, who discovered the power of hospice when a close friend died at the May Court Hospice, located in Old Ottawa South, in 2007. "I felt a sense of calmness and caring. I am passionate about hospice."

Last year, Davidson and a team of three friends, raised \$4,000 for Hospice Care Ottawa. She raised \$3,000 and is on track to repeat, appealing to fam-

ily and friends for online support.

"It is so good to see families joining hands for the same cause."

Employees and family from Kelly Funeral Homes will be joining their General Manager John Laframboise on the hike, intent on adding to the \$50,000 they have raised since 2006.

"We have to increase awareness of hospice and spread the word," says Laframboise, HCO chair and a son who watched doctors give up their Christmas plans in 2005, staying in a small hospital in the Ottawa Valley, caring for his 80-year-old mother at the end of her life.

"The hospital did not have hospice staff, yet they made us feel so comfortable and eliminated the beeping machines," says Laframboise, who was approached the following spring to become involved with expanding hospice care in the west end of Ottawa.

"With our aging population, demand for our services continues to increase," says Lisa Sullivan, Executive Director of Hospice Care Ottawa. "Special events, like the "Hike for Hospice," help us raise the nearly \$2 million we require annually to continue to provide our services at no charge."

With your help we can ensure hospice care is available to those who need it.

The Tillium Dixie Land Jazz Band will welcome Hikers as they register. The Sons of Scotland Pipes & Drums will lead off hikers. Dance to the Retro-sonics and enjoy refreshments. If it rains, hikers will walk inside the field house. Young ones will enjoy the activities in the Kids' Zone. There is free parking on site.

Visit [www.hospicecareottawa.ca](http://www.hospicecareottawa.ca) to register for the Hike or donate money.