



Resident David Hamilton says he gets to hear from people who are going through similar situations during the program's weekly outings. He has been participating in the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice programming since January.

## Hospice day program 'an outlet' for those with life-limiting illnesses

BY COMMUNITY VOICE STAFF

For many people who use the day programs at Hospice Care Ottawa, it's an opportunity to socialize, eat a good meal and take part in activities, while also giving their caretakers some time to themselves.

Bridlewood's Fergus Lyons has been attending the programming at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice for about a year and said it's an opportunity to give his wife a break.

"She's perfectly healthy and when I was diagnosed, I was given 10 months to live. And so it became imperative that I have an outlet, a place to go," said the retired Catholic school principal.

"It's a break for your healthy family members so that they can do things in this four-hour window, even if it's to get their nails done."

Diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, Lyons had never heard of hospice until he was referred by his doctor. The program,

he said, provides a level of mental and physical comfort.

"I've met some really great friends," said the 70-year-old, who has outlived his prediction by a year. "We all have the same prognosis but we don't talk about it really. We share our stories of success, happiness, good times and bad times."

Hospice Care Ottawa hosts day programs at four locations throughout the city—at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in Kanata; St. John's Anglican Church in Richmond; the May Court Hospice in Ottawa; and at La Maison de L'Est in Orleans.

The morning begins with a warm beverage and some baked goods, a fun brain teaser and conversation.

Everyone then sits down to a homemade lunch in the dining room, and in the afternoon guests can participate in activities such as board and card games, therapies that include massage, reiki and therapeutic touch, music, or just to relax.

"We offer friendship,

camaraderie, good food, laughter," said Joan Morris, community care co-ordinator. "I think what people really enjoy with day hospice, they like to be able to talk to people who are going through the same thing."

That's what David Hamilton enjoys about the weekly outing. The 71-year-old has been participating in the program since January.

"It's social time where you can sit and talk about what's going on in life how we're ourselves going on," said the Munster resident. "You get feedback from people who are going through (something similar)."

Anyone can make a referral to the day program. The only criteria is a diagnosis of a life-limiting illness. The day program, as well as all other services offered by Hospice Care Ottawa, are provided at no charge. For more information, visit [hospicecareottawa.ca](http://hospicecareottawa.ca) or call 613-680-0306.

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Clients, staff and volunteers sit down to lunch during the day program at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in Kanata.



Bridlewood's Fergus Lyons has been attending the day programming at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice for about a year. The weekly outing provides a social connection with others while also giving his wife some time to herself.