



NPO 015-960
PBO 93 00 08 081

Dear Friends,

The Holiday season is upon us, and the end of another busy year for Hospice White River. Here is a little of our news of the last few months as well as other items of interest. You are most welcome to pass on this publication, and we hope it may be helpful and informative. Included in this issue:

- **Our team has been busy** - Statistics for the last 6 months
- **Hospice Happenings** - what we've been up to
- **The Importance of 'Being There'** - the simple way to help a loved one
- **The Fifteen Minute Gift** - an article submitted by Andrea Matthews
- **Candle of Compassion this Christmas**
- **Season's Greetings!**

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Please enjoy this newsletter! Your feedback and constructive criticism are most welcome.

A busy time for our Hospice team

Members of the public are often surprised to hear how very busy the small team at Hospice White River is. When we review our stats, or the record of our activities, we are amazed at how much we actually manage to do, considering our small staff and our limited resources. Here is a break down of what we've accomplished over the last six months.

Our professional nurses and supporting staff have made 868 visits to 44 patients. This incorporated a total of 2851 interventions which includes Clinical, Psychological, Social and Spiritual care. For your interest, our interventions can be detailed as follows:

Interventions provided at:	Visits	Interventions
Day Care	232	630
Frail Care	19	33
Home	383	1697
Hospice Clinic/Office	70	235
Hospital	4	21
Other (mostly at patients' work place)	16	59
Telephone	144	176
Total	868	2851

Between 26 May and 25 November 2016 we cared for 44 patients, aged as follows:

- 36 – 45 years: 4 patients
- 46 – 60 years: 6 patients
- 61 – 70 years: 4 patients
- 71+ years: 30 patients

14 new patients were admitted onto our program during this period. 8 patients passed away, and 1 patient was discharged.



Hospice Happenings!



A new member of the Hospice team!

Hospice House hasn't been the same since the arrival of Sasha, a delightful fox terrier who was adopted as a tiny puppy by our administrative co-ordinator Jana Fourie. Sasha very quickly won the hearts of our entire team and is an added delight at the Wednesday morning support group tea. She has become the Hospice mascot and accompanies Jana to many fundraising events, making friends wherever she goes! She adds a touch of fun to some serious meetings too!



Civvies Day fun at local schools

Our wonderfully dynamic brand ambassador Renata Stewart organised yet another successful Civvies Day at Uplands Prep this last term. The children wore a touch of orange and snacks were sold with proceeds raised going to Hospice. Thanks to Uplands Prep for always supporting us! Thanks to White River Primary who also kindly hosted a Civvies Day with Hospice as their featured charity. Renata addressed the school at their assembly, informing the children about Hospice. Thanks to Renata for her fund raising activities and for continuing to raise awareness of our organisation in a way that is fun and accessible to the younger generation.



Uplands Christmas Fair

We took part in the annual Uplands Christmas Fair which this year was held at Casterbridge Lifestyle Centre. Hospice hosted a cookie decorating station, which attracted all ages. For a small fee children were able to decorate their own festive cookie using an array of icings and edible decorations. Funds were raised for Hospice and as always we enjoyed interacting with the community.

A successful Fit to Go Fundraiser!

Hospice White River was the charity of choice for the Fit-to-go Trail Run, supported by Magnolia Restaurant, on 12th November. There was a great turnout, and many runners and walkers wore a splash of orange! There was the option of a 5km and a 10km trail through the countryside between Bagdad Centre and Uplands. The weather was perfect for the event. Participants were awarded with spot prizes as well as medals for those who lead the field. A lot of fun was had by all. Thanks to Fit-to-go, to Magnolia Restaurant and all those who showed up on the day. We appreciate your support!



Brand ambassador Renata Stewart with Andre Visagie of Magnolia Restaurant



A whole lotta orange!



We Are White River 'Night of the Lights'

We were delighted to take part in We Are White River's initiative 'Night of the Lights' on Friday 2nd December, an event designed to bring together our local community. Hospice had a place in the municipal gardens and we invited members of the public to light a small candle in celebration of life, or in memory of a loved one. It was a wonderfully festive evening, full of lights and music, as well as lots of interaction between our staff and the public. We were very grateful for all the donations that we received - many folks kindly popped a donation into our Candle of Compassion collection jar. Thanks so much to all who contributed.



Christmas Tea at the Premier Hotel the Winkler

Our Wednesday Support Group and invited guests attended our traditional annual Christmas Tea on 7th December, this year kindly hosted by the Premier Hotel The Winkler in White River. Delicious eats and refreshments were laid on by the hotel management, and the tables were decorated with festive cheer. It was a great treat for all who attended,

including the Hospice staff as staff and volunteers were able to relax and enjoy the event without a lot of preparation on our part.

Our huge appreciation to the management of the Premier Hotel The Winkler for their generosity and hospitality.



Christmas roses at Mario's

A reminder for your Christmas shopping list: Beautiful roses are delivered fresh to Mario's at Parkville on Tuesdays and Fridays, and Hospice receives a portion of sales. Roses add a special touch to your Christmas décor. Buy your roses from Mario's and support Hospice!



The Importance of 'Being There'

The most basic and powerful way to connect to someone is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention. A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well intentioned words. - Rachel Naomi Remen

It's difficult when a friend or loved one is ill as naturally we long to say the right words or to do something that will help them. It is easy to add our own anxiety to theirs, if not careful. Often, all that is asked is for us to accept a patient where they are and to acknowledge what they are experiencing. Our acceptance, rather than our resistance to their situation, helps the person to feel safe. It says to them *'It's alright, no matter what you are going through, I'm here with you'*. The easiest way to do this is simply to be there - to hold a hand, to sit with them, and to listen; to really hear their feelings. If you sense there is something they need, rather than pre-empting with advice or your own ideas, it can be most helpful and loving to simply ask the question 'what can I do for you?' - and they may say 'nothing, just be here with me'. ♥



The Fifteen Minute Gift

Those of us who have witnessed someone we love afflicted by cancer will know what a heart-breaking experience this is. In my mother's case the disease affected not only her body, but managed to infiltrate her brain too, rendering her incapable of communication or response. When her condition had deteriorated to a state where it was not practical to have her at home, my family admitted her to a frail care facility.

Daily I visited her, watching helplessly as she deteriorated into a tiny, frail shadow of herself. Physically she was declining in alarming ways, but most distressing to me was the very sudden "loss" of her mind.

I was filled with panic as I did not know how to relate to this stranger, my once gregarious mother who no longer responded to me. In desperation I would chat away, telling her the trivialities of my day – the activities of her grandchildren, the new puppy and how sick he had been, the new kitchen, anything I could think of. It's not easy to maintain a one way conversation, but I clung to the idea that people who are brain damaged (and who do not respond to us), can hear what is being said on a deeper level. I persevered, day after day, and would often leave the nursing home in a state of despair and bewilderment.

These daily visits went on for 3 long months, as my mum defied the prognosis of Hospice staff, nurses, friends and family. At the time I thought that she was afraid of death (my assumption) and I wished we could talk about it, but the time for that was well past and the loss of this connection left me bereft.

One evening after a busy day caring for my 3 small children, as well as visiting Mum earlier in the day, I remember feeling exhausted as we sat down to eat. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by an urge to get back into the car for the umpteenth time that day, and go straight to the nursing home. I had never visited my mother at night time so it was unusual for me to think of doing so, but I automatically responded.

When I arrived all was peaceful in the frail care centre; not the usual clatter of serving trolleys, visitors' chit-chat, nurses' voices, or the incessant drone of television. When I went into her room Mum was sitting up in bed, and she greeted me softly with "hello darling" – words I had not heard for nearly 3 months. Enchanted by this unexpected greeting, I sat down on the edge of the bed and reached for her hand. She asked me how the puppy was doing, (was he better?), how was the kitchen coming along, the children and how was I? Realising the enormity of this opportunity, I told her how sorry I was for her pain, her discomfort, what had happened to her and how brave she had been throughout. And I told her I loved her. After a short while she grew sleepy, and I left her peacefully tucked up in bed, and drove home marvelling at what had just occurred.

This encounter was extraordinary to me as for 15 minutes my mother was completely present. This was such a gift to me! It dawned on me that she had absorbed all I had gabbled at her over the last few months, affirming for me that yes, people in these states are still "there" in the deepest recesses of their beings and how important it is to remember that. At the time I could not understand why she seemed to cling on, despite her dreadful state of suffering. In hindsight I can understand the perfection in it, and marvel at the gift I feel she engineered. This particular gift, it seemed to me, was a precious 15 minutes, in which she affirmed that within each of us, no matter our physical or mental state, is a presence that is constant; a calm and peaceful centre of loving awareness.

After that night my mother withdrew from the world, and passed on a week later. I have no explanation for the brief lucidity she experienced or for why I rushed to her side at that particular time. There is no doubt in my mind that those 15 minutes were orchestrated by something on a higher level. Was it my intuition, angelic intervention, or perhaps it was my mother reaching out to me on that "soul level" we have heard about? Whatever it was that nudged me into the car that night I am so grateful, as I will carry the memory of those moments with me always.

My wish is that this story will help someone who is experiencing similar heartache with a person they hold dear. Try to remember that our connection to one another is never broken, even if it seems so. And for everyone else, remember to listen to those gentle whispers, those intuitive "nudges", as I did that night. If you act on them they may just bear a precious gift for you. ♥

This piece submitted by Andrea Matthews

This Christmas please help keep our Candle of Compassion burning



We invite you to consider making a donation of **R50 a month** to Hospice, (or more if affordable).
Your act of kindness will help greatly to enable us to provide professional nursing care and holistic comfort and support for individuals in need, and their families, within our community.

R50 can be pledged to us by setting up a recurring payment via internet banking, to the following account:

FNB White River Branch Code 270 552

Hospice White River

Cheque Account: 6202 566 8304

Please mark ref field with your **NAME** and add **COC**

Your donation is tax deductible.

Every end of the financial tax year, you will be issued with a tax receipt on request

**We're pleased to announce that you can now donate
directly to Hospice White River ONLINE.**

Simply click on the button to the right and you will
be taken to the Pay Fast online donation facility.

Click here to

DONATE NOW

Please note that Hospice White River is responsible for raising its own funds; all funds raised remain within our community. Hospice White River is its own entity - we are not a national organisation.



Season's Greetings

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals and businesses within our community for their ongoing support of Hospice White River.

Your generosity enables us to continue with our valuable work in the care of patients and families who are facing the difficulties presented by life-threatening illness.

This Holiday Season may you and your family be blessed with the gifts of Peace, Love and Prosperity

***With best wishes from
All at Hospice White River***

013 750 3044

whiteriverhospice@tiscali.co.za

www.hospicewr.co.za