



HONOURING LOSS, EMBRACING RITUAL: SPRING GATHERING FOR GRIEF

Spring Gathering for Grief 2025

On Saturday, May 31st, Vancouver Hospice Society hosted the Spring Gathering for Grief at Celebration Hall at Mountain View Cemetery. This meaningful afternoon welcomed individuals and families from across Vancouver to honour their loved ones through shared rituals, reflection, and connection in a peaceful and supportive space.

Rituals are powerful tools in grief work. They offer structure, symbolism, and the opportunity to express what words often cannot. The VHS Counselling team offered gentle and intentional activities to support participants in their mourning.

At the living altar, guests were invited to place a photo, memento, poem, or item of significance in tribute to someone they had lost. Nearby, the rock painting station offered a creative outlet for expression, with participants painting symbols or messages that spoke to their personal journey through grief.

The letter-writing station invited attendees to write messages to their loved ones on dissolvable paper. Placing the letters into water symbolized emotional release and the ongoing process of letting go. One participant shared, "The Letter Writing activity was the most meaningful for me. It was a chance to express your thoughts and feelings with a 'No Holds Barred' approach."

The gathering concluded with a flower release ceremony at the Hall's reflective Water Mirror feature, accompanied by live acoustic music by Josh & Jenny, which was well received by all attendees.

As one participant reflected, "The end with the flowers in the water and the beautiful music playing was just what I needed." Another added, "Putting the flowers in the pond was very significant to me. It was like having a little goodbye to my Mom and my wife."

In addition to these rituals, several social and educational resources were made available. A pop-up Grief Library by Place to Be Books offered participants the chance to borrow grief-related titles at no cost, making compassionate literature more accessible to those navigating loss.

The Collective Resource Share station invited attendees to contribute their own coping strategies—ranging from healing touch and puppy yoga to karaoke and light exercise—creating a communal mural of shared wisdom and support.

The Energy Model station visually mapped the evolving stages of grief, helping participants understand the non-linear journey of adjustment, survival, and renewed connection to life. As one guest remarked, "The diagram of where I am at in my grief was also helpful as it showed me I have come farther than it feels like some days!"

We are deeply grateful to have gathered in such a peaceful and meaningful setting. To all who attended, thank you for your presence, your openness, and your willingness to share. This gathering reminded us that grief, though deeply individual, can be held and honoured together.

GUIDED BY PURPOSE: SOPHIA'S PATH TO NURSE PRACTITIONER

Since joining Vancouver Hospice Society in February 2023, Sophia Hayward has brought warmth, compassion, and a deep commitment to patient-centered care. As she prepares to begin her studies at the University of British Columbia to become a Nurse Practitioner, we reflect on her contributions and the impact she has made during her time with us.

"I've always felt passionate about caring for aging people," Sophia shares. "That naturally led to an interest in end-of-life care." Her first experience in hospice came during an elective rotation, and it left a lasting impression. "Hospice felt like the most patient centered care I had ever experienced. It is about what the patient wants. The longer I worked here, the more I realized how aligned this work was with my values."

Sophia's time at VHS has been filled with heartfelt moments. One patient loved hearing stories about her adventures with her grandfather. "I would show her photos and she would share pictures of her garden," she recalls. Another memory that stands out is from her travels. "We had a patient who was born in London. When I mentioned I was going there, she lit up. I brought her back some tea and it meant the world to her."

"Nurse Log" Sophia - Halloween 2024



"I've always wanted to work in rural communities and improve access to palliative care. That has stayed with me."



Sophia Hayward

Becoming a Nurse Practitioner has been in Sophia's heart since high school. "I've always wanted to work in rural communities and improve access to palliative care. That has stayed with me." Working at the hospice gave her the confidence to move forward. "This place helped me build leadership skills and to feel more independent in my practice. I started believing I could actually do it. I also had a lot of encouragement and support from the team."

She plans to carry the values of hospice care into her future work. "This experience has taught me how to truly listen. It is not just about symptoms. It is about presence and dignity. I hope to bring that same approach into communities where care is often harder to access."

When asked what she'll miss the most, Sophia doesn't hesitate. "Everyone. It's been an honour to witness the level of care here. I will miss my coworkers and the quiet moments we share with patients."

To nurses just beginning their hospice journey, Sophia offers this: "Just be present. You do not need the perfect words. Showing up and listening makes a huge difference."

When asked to describe her time at Vancouver Hospice Society in three words, she replied without pause: grounding, meaningful, joyful.

We are so proud of Sophia and look forward to seeing the incredible difference she will make in the years to come.

STICHING WITH COMPASSION: THE QUILT ANGEL'S SECOND SHROUD

When the Quilt Angels first came together in 2013, their vision was simple but profound. They wanted to use their time and talent to bring comfort to those nearing the end of life. The very first request Vancouver Hospice Society made of this newly formed group was not for a quilt, but a shroud.

A shroud is a respectful, hand-sewn covering for those who have died, honouring their dignity and offering warmth on their final journey. That first shroud, presented at our Grand Opening in 2014, became the foundation of a lasting partnership and years of thoughtful creations.

Now, the Quilt Angels have returned with their second shroud and it is rich with meaning: It features hand-sewn maple leaves arranged in patchwork blocks. The autumn leaf motif reflects themes of transition, change, and the quiet beauty of letting go.



The Quilt Angels & The Second Shroud

Every stitch has been placed with care and intention. From choosing the fabrics to finishing the quilting details, Bonnie, Linda, Nancy, Carol, and Kathleen each contributed their skill and heart to this beautiful piece.

The Quilt Angels are more than just volunteers. They are artists and companions in grief who offer families a lasting expression of care. They are already working on their next creation, continuing their legacy of love and service.

MODERNIZING THE HOB: DATA, SALES, AND SMARTER SHOPPING

This year, volunteers at The HOB successfully led the transition from a traditional cash register (a Casio PCR-T2600) to Square, a modern point-of-sale system that enables real-time sales tracking, inventory management, and detailed reporting. To implement the new system and train over 70 volunteers, the team used a train-the-trainer model, offering hands-on support to a core group of 20 volunteers. Their dedication and teamwork made the transition seamless.

With Square now fully in place, The HOB has access to valuable insights, including peak shopping times, the number of returning customers, and total items sold. This data is already helping the team make informed decisions and enhance the overall shopping experience.

The shift also brings improved record keeping, accountability, and financial reconciliation. By replacing the former system, which made it difficult to correct errors, the new platform is expected to save paid VHS admin staff hundreds of labour hours every year.

Following the success of this rollout, the team is preparing to implement Square at HOB Too, applying the tools and lessons learned to ensure another smooth and efficient transition.



Casio PCR-T2600



Square Register

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BOB'S JOURNEY IN HOSPICE CARE

For the past eight years, Bob Fortier has been a steady and compassionate presence at Vancouver Hospice Society. A former teacher who spent 22 years working with children with behavioral challenges, Bob now brings that same sense of calm, understanding, and deep listening to his role as a hospice volunteer. His background in helping children express their feelings and navigate complex emotions has naturally guided him in connecting with people at the end-of-life and supporting their families.

What drew Bob to hospice work was a personal curiosity about death and dying. He shares, "My desire is for people to have a peaceful passing. I like to know people on a deeper level." Supported by a strong meditation practice, time in nature, and walks with his dog, Bob approaches each shift with care and mindfulness.

A typical shift involves checking in at reception, speaking with families, identifying who would like visits, and spending time at the bedside. "Visiting the bedside is the most meaningful part of what I do," he says. While it is difficult to name just one moment that stands out, Bob reflects on the heart-level connections he has formed over the years. "It's hard to put into words. The connection is what stays with me."



Bob Fortier

Volunteering at the hospice has deepened Bob's appreciation for life and strengthened his values around death. "It's a place I want to come when it's my time," he says. He also wishes more people understood the difference hospice care can make. "It's not good to die in a hospital," he adds. "Hospice is different."

When asked to describe his volunteer experience in three words, Bob says it has been fulfilling, interesting, and joyful. His calm presence and open heart are a gift to everyone who meets him. We are incredibly thankful for Bob and all the ways he helps make Vancouver Hospice Society a place of peace and connection.

WELCOME OUR VOLUNTEER CLASS OF 2025!



We would like to welcome our Volunteer Class of 2025. These compassionate individuals have just completed a 30 hour comprehensive training program led by our Volunteer Coordinator, Andrea Hernandez. Their training covered the foundations of hospice care, active listening, grief and bereavement, cultural sensitivity, and self care, equipping them to support patients and families with empathy and respect.

Our newest volunteers will soon begin offering essential services including bedside companionship, caregiver respite, and bereavement support. Their presence will ensure that no one feels alone during life's most vulnerable moments.

We are deeply grateful for their time, care, and commitment to the community. Welcome to the team.

VHS TEAM ATTENDS DEATH, DYING, & BEREAVEMENT RESOURCE FAIR



Cecilia Abreu & Bev Nolan

On April 3rd, our team took part in the Death, Dying, and Bereavement Resource Fair, hosted by Jewish Family Services (JFS). This event created space for meaningful conversations around end-of-life planning, grief, and support for seniors and their families.

Held at the Canadian Memorial Centre for Peace, the fair brought together a range of community organizations dedicated to providing education, guidance, and support for those navigating aging, loss, and bereavement. We were proud to share information about our hospice services, grief counselling, volunteer opportunities, and upcoming community events.

Throughout the day, we connected with seniors, caregivers, and fellow service providers, offering resources and listening to stories of lived experience. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the chance to explore these topics in a safe and compassionate environment.

Our team was especially moved by the openness and curiosity of the participants. These conversations are not only necessary but deeply welcomed when approached with care and respect.

We extend our sincere thanks to JFS for inviting us to be part of such a meaningful initiative. We look forward to continued partnerships that help foster dignity, compassion, and community care at every stage of life.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Philippe Mendelson - Director

Philippe Mendelson is a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA, CMA), Licensed Insolvency Trustee (LIT), and Chartered Insolvency and Restructuring Professional (CIRP) based in Vancouver, BC. He is a Senior Director at

EY-Parthenon, and Vice President at Ernst & Young Inc. Philippe has had significant experience acting in corporate restructurings in Canada for various stakeholders including on behalf of debtors, shareholders, and lenders in formal court proceedings and informal consulting assignments related to debt and operational restructuring. Philippe's experience is primarily in matters relating to manufacturing, mining, real estate development, forestry, technology, and consumer products. Philippe holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Guelph and is active in professional organizations such as CAIRP and CPA Canada.



Pam Teetaert - Director

Pam Teetaert is an accomplished financial leader with deep expertise in strategic planning, financial reporting, and operational efficiency. As Director of Strategic Planning and Initiatives at Nicola Wealth, she leads efforts in financial

planning, forecasting, and modernization. Her career spans multiple sectors, including healthcare and financial services, where she has applied her strengths in financial analysis and project management. Pam holds a CPA, CA designation, along with certifications in Project Management from the University of British Columbia and in Data Management and Audit Committee governance from CPA Canada. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Cellular and Molecular Biology from the University of Calgary. Driven by a strong commitment to community, Pam is passionate about using her skills to support not-for-profit organizations and help families during their most vulnerable moments.

EXPANDING OUR CARE, DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENT

As we step into the summer months, we are filled with gratitude for the strength, care, and dedication that continues to flow through every part of the Vancouver Hospice Society community.

This Spring, we gathered with over 45 individuals and families at our Spring Gathering for Grief, where we honoured loved ones through ritual, remembrance, and connection. From the dissolvable letters to the flower release ceremony, it was a heartfelt afternoon that reminded us how powerful it can be to hold grief together.

Our work continues beyond events. In April, we participated in the Death, Dying, and Bereavement Resource Fair hosted by Jewish Family Services, connecting with seniors, caregivers, and fellow providers to share resources and spark compassionate conversations around end-of-life care.

We also marked the completion of training for 20 new hospice volunteers. These compassionate individuals will soon begin offering bedside companionship, bereavement support, caregiver respite, and more. Their presence will help ensure that no one feels alone during life's most vulnerable moments. Both HOB and HOB Too continue to shine and demonstrate their incredible skill and expertise in running the stores. We must also thank our incredible donors who contribute such beautiful items that greatly benefit the hospice.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share that we have been working closely with a consulting firm on our strategic direction as an organization that will eventually support a redesign and relaunch of our website.

The new platform will feature improved accessibility, more grief and hospice resources, and easier ways to connect, donate, and get involved. We have been conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews with key collaborators including volunteers, donors, staff, and families to ensure the new site truly reflects the community it serves.

We are also preparing for one of the most important milestones in our organization's history: the integration of Cottage Hospice. This 10-bed expansion will allow us to offer care to more people across more locations, while remaining grounded in our original commitment to provide compassionate end-of-life care to those facing death and bereavement. We will have further information on the timeline for opening in early fall.

All of this is made possible because of you. Your generosity sustains our work, our people, and our mission. If you have not yet joined us as a monthly donor, we warmly encourage you to consider doing so. Monthly giving provides steady support that helps us grow, adapt, and continue showing up for those who need us most.

Thank you for being part of this journey. With your help, we are building a more compassionate future together.


Sarah Cobb
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


David Gruber
BOARD CHAIR

Yes! I want to help: ☐ Monthly ☐ One-time ☐ \$100.00 ☐ \$50.00 ☐ \$25.00 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Cheque or money order enclosed (payable to Vancouver Hospice Society for one-time gift)

Credit Card: ☐ ☐ ☐

Cardholder Name: _____

Please print as it appears on your credit card

Credit Card #																	Expiry:				
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Signature: _____

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Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Yes, I would like to receive emails from Vancouver Hospice including e-newsletters, event invites, updates, and reminders.

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will

Vancouver Hospice Society, 4615 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3M1 - you can also donate online at vancouverhospice.org