



## Hospice Northwest defined by quality care

BY KATHLEEN BUSO

‘I need some Venetian masks.’ It’s not the kind of request we usually get at Hospice Northwest.

But Edith, one of our long-term volunteers, had a plan.

She wanted to do something special for her dying client and his wife. It was a Venice-themed “staycation.”

The couple had always dreamed of traveling, but Bob’s illness interrupted their plans.

So Edith found a travel video of the scenic Italian countryside to play for them. Venetian music and antipasto would accompany the film. The masks will be props for a photo shoot so they have keepsake photographs of their ‘trip.’ The evening even included snuggle-time for the couple in Bob’s hospital bed.

This is just one of the many ways Hospice Northwest volunteers help clients make every moment matter.

Hospice Northwest is a hospice without walls. While many think of hospice as a place where people go to die, we see it as a way to care for people until their final moments.

Our specially-trained volunteers meet people where they live — in homes, in long term care facilities, and in hospitals, including the hospice unit at St. Joseph’s Hospital.

But Hospice Northwest is not defined by the places we meet our clients. We are defined by the kind of care that Edith provides for Bob — emotional and spiritual support unique to our organization.

People are sometimes confused about who Hospice Northwest is and

### MAKING MOMENTS MATTER



how we differ from St. Joseph’s hospice unit. Hospice Northwest works collaboratively with St. Joe’s hospice unit staff to ensure that appropriate patients on the unit are matched with our caring volunteers.

Although our two organizations share the same philosophy of hospice care, we are completely separate from each other.

Hospice Northwest is a small but mighty organization delivering services in Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Schreiber/Terrace Bay, Marathon, Manitouwadge and Geraldton. We have a staff of five, but a volunteer base of 188 strong. Our volunteers are the heart and the soul of our organization.

Hospice Northwest volunteer coordinator, Thomas Bentz is proud of the compassion our volunteers show on a daily basis.

“The general public would be amazed at what our volunteers can do for clients and their families,” says Bentz.

While Hospice Northwest volunteers don’t provide personal or home care, they do provide simple, comforting acts of good will. Those range from fluffing pillows, preparing light refreshments, assistance with feeding and grooming and help



HOSPICE NORTHWEST PHOTO

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However, their most important role is the time they share with their clients and families — the simple act of quiet listening, the loving presence of another human being there solely for them, to provide comfort and companionship, to do everything in their power to ensure every moment matters.

Sometimes it’s the tiniest gestures that have the most impact in a client’s quality of life — such as a volunteer dropping by with a bucket of fried chicken. Sometimes the offerings are bigger — a client with a love of hockey is presented with a signed jersey from his favourite hockey player.

In more urgent cases, our Quick Response Volunteer Team is called in. These volunteers are ready to re-

spond within 24 hours if a client and his/her family needs immediate support in the last hours or days of life.

“When we call on our QRV/T members, they know they are needed quickly but for a shorter period of time,” says Bentz. “With these referrals, we often assign two or three volunteers to be with the client for as many hours as possible. We do our best to ensure no one dies alone.”

Hospice Northwest is making every effort to assist all who need our services — including those who have no homes of their own. Hospice Northwest is currently working on developing a program to serve the vulnerably-housed population during their end of life journey.

Shelly Wall, education and special project coordinator with Hospice Northwest says, “We are seeking vol-

unteers to support clients who don’t have a traditional home. These clients have special needs and it is our hope that we can train a group of volunteers to meet those needs. We are working on launching this new program by fall 2019.”

At Hospice Northwest, you are not alone. Our caring volunteers are there for you, wherever you are, as you face the most difficult challenges along life’s way.

*This monthly column from Hospice Northwest examines various aspects of palliative support and bereavement services. It appears on the Healthstyle page of The Chronicle-Journal on the first Tuesday of each month. Call Hospice Northwest at 626-5570 for more information.*

## Make self-care a priority

BY MEGHAN HAGBERG

SELF-CARE is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly. The subject of self-care is broad and everyone’s needs are different so when thinking about how to implement self-care activities into your daily practice it can be challenging to know where to start.

Self-care is anything you do to care for yourself; being compassionate with yourself, recognizing when you’re running low on “fuel” (physical or emotional), and putting a pause on the resources you are putting towards other things to give yourself a chance to refuel.

Self-care is not adding more to your to-do list. It is identifying your needs and making them a priority. It is not something you wait to do when you’re already feeling stressed out, if you incorporate it into your routine, it will help to prevent you from feeling stressed out and run down.

It is creating healthy behaviours and habits you practice regularly to stay fueled up.

It is not selfish — it is about looking after yourself first so you can best help those around you. You can’t pour from an empty cup.

Self-care is important because it helps boost and maintain mental and physical health and allows us to get to know ourselves better. Self-care also enhances self-esteem — taking time for ourselves sends a positive message to our subconscious that we are worthy and have value, therefore helping to reduce getting stuck in negative thinking traps.

Although this may feel selfish at times, if we prioritize and fill our cups first — and this may mean saying “no” to some requests — we are healthier moving forward and better able to help ourselves and others including family, friends, clients and co-workers.

Wondering where to start? We can break self-care into categories: physical, psychological, emotional, social, professional, and environmental. Seems like a lengthy list but many self-care activities can cover more than one category and you may be doing some already. It’s important to note that everyone’s self-care needs are different, and ideas for each category will vary depending on the person.

**Physical:** Involves movement of the body. It could mean going to the gym, going for a walk, hiking or doing simple stretches. Physical self-care also includes keeping up with medical appointments, eating healthy and getting adequate rest and sleep.

**Psychological:** Involves practices that make our thoughts healthier. Practice mindfulness and being in the present moment. Yo-

### NORWEST WELLNESS



NorWest Community Health Centres  
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ga and meditation are terrific for this. Give yourself a break from social media — try reading a book or journaling instead.

**Emotional:** Involves being aware of and navigating our emotions, increasing empathy, stress management and developing compassion for self and others.

Try starting a gratitude journal (three things a day you are grateful for), be cognoscente of boundaries and say no when needed. Encourage rather than criticize and treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

**Social:** Involves having a trusted and supportive group of friends and/or family around you who you can turn to when needed. Having caring and supportive people around you builds a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Try joining a committee or group outside of work, help others by getting involved with a community project, charity work or help someone you know and ask for help when you need it.

**Professional:** Sharing your strengths and skills and having clear professional boundaries. At work try eating a healthy lunch every day (away from your desk), know your roles and responsibilities and maintain boundaries in that role. Embrace professional development opportunities and develop connections with co-workers, like going for a walk at lunch together.

**Environmental:** Aim to keep your space organized and clutter-free by minimizing waste and monitoring technology time.

Declutter, recycle, reduce screen time and maintaining a safe and clean living environment.

An empty lantern provides no light. Make self-care a priority this month.

If you need assistance getting started or improving your self-care, or for more information about self-care groups, including free yoga and mindful movement classes, check out NorWest Community Health Centres on Facebook. Our monthly calendar is also posted on our website at [www.norwestchc.org](http://www.norwestchc.org)

*Norwest Wellness normally appears on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Visit [www.norwestchc.org](http://www.norwestchc.org) to find out more about NorWest’s services.*

## Coffee boosts protection against Alzheimer’s Disease

BY W. GIFFORD-JONES

I RECEIVE a lot of questionable mail. One says I can invest \$1,000 and make an easy million. Another, that a simple lifestyle change will cure anything that ails me. Still another arrives that I initially believe is rubbish until I read on. It’s a report from The Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease. It states that researchers from the University of South Florida claim that coffee could decrease the risk of this mind-robbing disease. But is this possible? Or just another hoax?

Previous studies in humans have suggested that daily coffee intake during middle and older years has decreased the risk of this frightening disease. They credit caffeine with lowering the production of beta amyloid, a protein that has been linked to this illness.

To prove this conclusion, researchers developed a breed of mice that developed symptoms similar to Alzheimer’s disease. They discovered that caffeine caused the increase of a critical growth factor called GCSF (granulocyte colony stimulating factor). It was discovered that GCSF helped to improve the memory in Alzheimer mice. This was encouraging news as patients suffering from Alzheimer’s disease do show a marked decrease in GCSF.

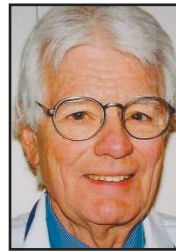
Dr. Chuanhai Cao, the neuroscientist heading this study, reports, “Caffeine coffee provides a natural increase in blood GCSF. The exact way that this occurs is not understood. But there is a synergistic interaction between caffeine and some mystery component of coffee that provides the beneficial increase in blood levels of GCSF.”

One aspect of the study was to compare the effects of caffeinated coffee, decaffeinated coffee, and caffeine alone, on Alzheimer’s mice and normal mice. The only positive result was found with caffeinated coffee. Researchers added that they used only “drip coffee” in their studies so they do not know whether “instant caffeinated coffee” would provide the same response.

But what is it about GCSF that enhances memory? Researchers claim that GCSF triggers several responses. First, it recruits stem cells from bone marrow to enter the brain. It also removes harmful beta amyloid protein that initially initiates the disease. GCSF also creates new connections between brain cells and also increases the birth of new neurons in the brain.

The doctor adds that, “all these mechanisms compliment caffeine’s amazing ability to suppress the production of beta-amyloid protein. But it only occurs if you drink moderate amounts of caffeinated coffee.”

Cao adds that coffee is also high in anti-in-



THE DOCTOR GAME

flammatory compounds that may provide protective benefits in fighting Alzheimer’s disease.

There is also an increasing body of evidence that moderate intake of coffee decreases the risk of several other diseases, such as Parkinson’s disease, Type 2 diabetes, and stroke. And more recent studies indicate that it may reduce the risk of breast and prostate cancer. I’m sure that readers are saying, “But these experiments were conducted on mice and not humans.”

I agree that what works in mice may be a different story in humans. Yet researchers respond that they “have collected evidence that caffeine coffee has the ability to protect humans and they will publish their evidence soon.”

Dr. Gary Arendash, another researcher associated with this study says, “Hopefully the coffee industry will become an active partner with researchers to find the protective ingredient in coffee and be able to concentrate it in other dietary sources. But for the moment there is no evidence that caffeine in other drinks such as tea, or carbonated beverages, is effective.”

I’ve never been a coffee drinker. But if I were one, I’d certainly be pleased to hear this news. Coffee is safe and most North Americans drink an average of four to five cups daily, which is more than the amounts researchers say protects against Alzheimer’s disease. Besides, coffee is much available and less expensive than prescription drugs.

And prevention is better than cure. So the next study will see if coffee can prevent patients who have early signs of dementia from progressing to full-blown Alzheimer’s disease. But as Arendash remarks, “Wouldn’t it be ironic that pharmaceutical companies are spending millions to develop drugs to treat Alzheimer’s disease when an effective natural remedy is under our nose every morning!”

*The Doctor Game runs each Tuesday in The Chronicle-Journal. Dr. Ken Walker (aka W. Gifford-Jones) has a private practice in Toronto. Please send comments to [info@docgiff.com](mailto:info@docgiff.com) or visit [docgiff.com](http://docgiff.com).*

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