

Bethell Hospice host lights and love tree lighting ceremony

Written By KIRA WRONSKA DORWARD

"Aren't we glad it's not -20 and snowing?" asked Bethell Hospice volunteer Gillian Vanderburgh as she led the opening remarks for the hospice's Light & Love Tree Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 13.

There were nearly 400 friends and supporters of Bethell Hospice in attendance for the candlelit procession, led by the Orangeville Chorus, which was led from the Inglewood Community Centre to the front doors of the hospice.

The night was clear and the temperatures mild, a perfect December evening to remember those who have passed in the annual outdoor ceremony.

"Each of you are giving the gift of light to someone special," Vanderburgh continued, who then went on to announce that thus far the fundraiser had raised a record \$125,000 in support of Bethell Hospice, making this year's event the largest and most successful to date.

As former friends and family members of hospice patients made their way down the snow paved driveway of Bethell Hospice, there was a reverence to the procession that harmonized well with the echoes of the Chorus ahead.

Each participant held a candle, symbolizing the memory and life of a loved one to light their way.

Once the audience had made their way to the steps of the hospice, and after a haunting rendition of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah, the lights on the trees were lit by hospice nurse Connie McLellan, on behalf of the entire care team.

"The candles you hold are a symbol of love and remembrance," said Master of Ceremonies and Peel District School Board chair Stan Cameron, who then proceeded to recite a poem entitled We Speak Your Name, written by hospice volunteer Jeff McArthur for the first Light and Love ceremony in 2012. "We celebrate the way you made your mark/with smile and tear once more/we bid adieu."

Cameron then proceeded to read the names of over 425 individuals who were remembered with Light & Love gifts, each communally repeated by those gathered. Among those names were Lorna and Tony Bethell, the former being the Founder of Bethell House, and the latter being her husband and inspiration behind its founding.

Each gift or donation illuminates a light on the trees. Each light on the trees represents a life and memories that live on forever. While many of those remembered are individuals whose lives have been directly touched by Bethell Hospice, many members of the community also take the opportunity to remember special people in their lives with a gift to help others in their time of need. Each Light & Love gift makes a real difference, and helps to usher in the holiday season in a very meaningful way.

"Community support for this event has been absolutely overwhelming," said Julie Hymers, Manager of Marketing & Communications for Bethell Hospice Foundation. "While we continue to receive gifts throughout the holiday season, we have never before had so many contribute by the time of our Tree Lighting evening, and join us to light the trees."

There is still time to add a light to the Bethell Hospice trees in memory of your loved one, and to add their name to the scroll of remembrance. Celebration of Light & Love gifts will be accepted online at foundation.bethellhospice.org, or by phone at 905-838-3534, until Jan. 15, 2019.

All proceeds from the Celebration of Light & Love directly support Bethell Hospice programs and services, and ensure that care is always available at no cost to all in need. Bethell Hospice is the only residential hospice serving Caledon, Brampton and Dufferin

County, and also provides Community Programs throughout Caledon and Brampton.