

?She soared like an Eagle?: Husband honours late wife at hospice hike]

By Zachary Roman

James de Wet has made participating in the Hike for Bethell Hospice an annual tradition.

Bob Fines has been de Wet's car dealer for decades, and since Fines Ford Lincoln has long been a supporter of Bethell Hospice, de Wet first heard of Bethell Hospice through Fines.

When de Wet's wife, Nina, was dying of cancer, de Wet said they were fortunate enough to get referred to Bethell Hospice, which is located in Inglewood.

?It was a place that made a hell of a difference,? said de Wet. ?I wasn't aware of places that beautiful for people to pass away at.?

Nina passed away in April of 2016 and de Wet has been walking in the Hike for Bethell Hospice ever since, under the team name Nina's Eagles.

The hike is one of Bethell Hospice's largest annual fundraisers, and this year the Bethell Hospice Foundation is looking to raise \$255,000 from the hike.

Bethell Hospice is a not-for-profit hospice care home that provides care at no charge to those it serves.

This year, de Wet's team name is Nina and Norma's Eagles. His daughter-in-law's grandmother, Norma, passed away this past year, and de Wet said it's a nice way to remember her by hiking in her honour too. The hike has become a family event for de Wet. Each year all his grandkids and other family and friends join him on the hike.

Before going to Bethell Hospice, Nina was in Mount Sinai Hospital for a year. Every day, de Wet would wake up at 4 a.m. to go visit her before coming back to his job at Howard the Butcher. He said his employer was so accommodating during that time as they knew what he and his wife were going through.

Before Bethell Hospice, de Wet also spent time taking care of his wife at home.

?My wife, she soared like an eagle. She was a teacher? a great teacher,? said de Wet, recalling that at her funeral, former students showed up to pay their respects. ?She used to teach people to soar like eagles too.?

Six weeks was how long Nina spent at Bethell Hospice, and de Wet said it was amazing for them to wake up in a beautiful place and look at the gardens and birds.

?Bethell is a great place (with) great people,? said de Wet. ?There's a lot of love there.?

The 2023 Hike for Bethell Hospice is set to be held on May 7. It begins at 8 a.m. at Lloyd Wilson Centennial Arena in Inglewood. There's also the option for people to complete their own hike anytime in the month of May, with donations to Bethell Hospice being accepted all the way until May 31.

To register for the hike or donate to a team, those interested can visit hikeforbethellhospice.ca and learn more.

This year, five Caledon public schools have decided to do their own Hike for Bethell Hospice on May 5.

Kelly Stronach, Senior Manager of Marketing and Communications for the Bethell Hospice Foundation, said it's the first year for

students to be participating and she's excited to share the news.