



ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2020
to
March 31, 2021

OUR MISSION

Evergreen provides support to people of all ages in Markham, Thornhill and Whitchurch-Stouffville living with a progressive life-threatening illness or grief while respecting their culture, faith and language.

Table of Contents

Board and Staff List	Page 3
President's Report.	Page 4
Executive Director's Report	Page 5
Client Services Report	Page 7
Volunteer Report	Page 11
Fundraising Report	Page 13

Board List for April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

BOARD CHAIR

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CEO Canadian Breast Cancer Society

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Chartered Accountant

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Professional Services and Product Leader

Andrew Salo

CPA, CA LPA

Chris Collucci

Business Development Consultant

Staff List for April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Jan Pearce

Executive Director (to January 15, 2021)

Lerryn Pitcher

Executive Director

Lerryn Pitcher

Community Hospice Manager (to Jan. 15, 2021)

Tricia Stanton

Coordinator of Volunteers

Rebecca Simkin

Fund Development Coordinator (retired April 9)

Karen Yates

Fundraising Coordinator

Caroline Allen

Major Donor Fundraiser

Heidi Spiar

Living Room Coordinator

Bonnie Strand

Counsellor

Michelle McMinassian

Counsellor

Stephen Ashley

Counsellor

Cindy Knowles

Administrative Assistant

Janet Chippin

Connection Café Coordinator

President's Report

As we entered our second year of the pandemic, there were changes in how service was delivered, but Evergreen continued to support the community and provide service to the best of our ability. Evergreen's stakeholders including staff, board, donors, volunteers and other community supporters displayed outstanding commitment. The staff and their dedication were able to service the community reaching over 1000 families in the Markham, Thornhill and Stouffville area. To say that Evergreen has outstanding loyal staff and volunteers would be an understatement. Each one of our staff and volunteers that supports the families we served last year deserves more respect and gratitude than I can express. A simple thank you seems insufficient, but I extend a sincere and genuine 'Thank You' to each of them.

The residential hospice project saw a pause in progress as we all dealt with the pandemic and the issues surrounding lockdowns and modified services. Our positive steps from last year: securing the land and developing partnerships continue to exist and we are encouraged that this coming year will allow us to again move forward with this project. We are grateful that the foundation we put in place last year remains strong and viable, and we, as a team are working together to see this project initiated again.

Evergreen cannot deliver the service we do without the generosity of our donors. Only 30% of Evergreen's funding comes from the government. The ongoing support and commitment of our donors means that Evergreen is able to deliver service that is in growing demand. A heartfelt thank you to our donors for the support and kindness that enables Evergreen to support our community.

I am hopeful that this coming year will show the resilience of our community and we will once again be able to deliver service in person. Evergreen fills a vital and important role in our community and as the pandemic extends, our services are in higher demand than ever. On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend a warm thank you to all our stakeholders and we look forward to a time when we can thank you in person for your ongoing commitment and support of Evergreen.

Warmly,
Kimberly Carson

Executive Director's Report

This past year has been a challenge for all, especially those who are living with a life-threatening illness, their families and caregivers and those who are grieving. Our fiscal year began on April 1, 2020 with the entire province in lockdown due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Everything had changed. Our staff set up home offices, and we worked hard to find the best ways to still service our community.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, all our services were held or conducted virtually, through phone or online platforms. We at Evergreen are proud of the quick turnaround we made in adapting all our programs to virtual ones. There was little or no delay in providing one-on-one support for our clients. By August of 2020, all our programs were up and running virtually, with the exception of in-home volunteer visiting. Our support of those with a life-threatening illness included calls from volunteers, as well as one on one counselling sessions, our Living Room Day Program and support groups – all running virtually. Our support for caregivers and the bereaved continued virtually as well.

Evergreen continued to inform and educate people about palliative care, bereavement and health care navigation. This year, Evergreen included sessions on Advance Care Planning and Compassion Fatigue and Complicated Grief.

Our funding, from the Ministry of Health, funnelled through the Central LHIN and distributed to Evergreen and the other York Region hospices through Better Living Services, continues to flow, providing 30% of our income. Number of served clients increased to 1034, and we were able to provide 16,935 visits, despite the limitations. This is well above the targets imposed by our funder (by 250%).

We were fortunate enough to receive rent subsidy grants and wage subsidy grants through the federal government. As well, Evergreen was the recipient of a Resilient Communities Fund Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This grant allowed us to hire another counsellor and fundraiser for a year, buy PPE supplies, replace our cloth furniture, install HEPA filters in the office, and other supplies to navigate the pandemic. We are in the process of getting our offices ready to re-open, hopefully in the fall or early 2022. Even as we return to in person services, Evergreen will continue with virtual components, as these platforms have served some of our clients better.

Evergreen continued with its many community partnerships, including:

1. Attendance at HPC Team monthly meetings
2. Attendance at HPC Team daily "Huddles"
3. Evergreen Palliative Doctors
4. CHATS
5. Markham Stouffville Hospital
6. Speak Up Ontario
7. Mackenzie Health
8. Southlake Regional Health

9. York Region Paramedics
10. York Region District School Board
11. Ontario Caregiver Coalition
12. Community Support Services Network
13. Hospice Palliative Care Ontario
14. PAIL
15. REENA
16. University of Windsor (Compassionate Community Program)
17. Numerous Faith Based and Cultural Organizations

Evergreen continued to work with Better Living Health Services and the other five York Regions hospices as part of a leadership team across the Region. Collaboration continued to reduce competition and increase the cooperation across borders while improving the services we can provide to our clients. This group met frequently with the Executive at HPCO to determine the best direction to navigate this pandemic based on the latest information relayed to us from the Ministry of Health.

There were changes in staffing at Evergreen this past year. The biggest change was the retirement of our long-time Executive Director, Jan Pearce, in January of this year. For 14 years, she brought so much to Evergreen and our communities. It was so important to Jan that Evergreen continue to grow to serve the changing needs of our communities. She was always thinking outside the box. Some of her many achievements include:

- Increased and diversified programs to meet the needs of our communities, especially caregivers, who are often overlooked
- Amalgamation with Hospice Thornhill
- Partnerships with and connections to the community and community agencies
- Increased education for staff, volunteers and the community
- Development of online training for Hospice Palliative Care Ontario
- Connections with hospitals and other hospices
- Compassionate Communities
- Connection with the provincial and federal governments to advocate for hospices and clients
- Increasing knowledge of hospice and palliative care in the community
- Encouraged diversification in language and culture, including translation services

I could go on. Not only did she nurture Evergreen, but the staff as well. She was always looking out for the health, both physical and mental, of every one of her employees. She made Evergreen a safe and happy place to work. We will all miss Jan, but we hope for a happy and healthy retirement for her.

In March, we welcomed Karen Yates as our Fundraising Coordinator. She works on raising funds and awareness for Evergreen, along with taking care of our social media accounts. Karen had recently moved home to Canada from the UK, where she worked in fundraising for all of the children's hospice across the UK. We are excited to have her on our team.

For the latter half of 2020 and beginning of 2021, Tricia Stanton and I worked on fulfilling the needs of accreditation with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario. This required the preparation and submission of over 270 documents. Evergreen passed with a score of 99.62%, with 32 special commendations. An excerpt from the accreditation report: "The evidence provided reflects a commitment to providing high-quality, volunteer-based hospice services to your clients."

In November of 2020, Evergreen was named the Diamond winner in the Toronto Star Reader's Choice Awards in the bereavement counselling category.

Evergreen is focused on the challenges ahead: re-opening safely, figuring out how best to provide a virtual/in-person hybrid service to clients and dealing with the increased demand for our services.

I would like to thank our clients and our community members, including community groups, foundations, service clubs, and faith groups for your support during this difficult time for everyone.

I can't thank our volunteers and staff enough for all they have given to Evergreen and the clients we serve.

Lerryn Pitcher
Executive Director

Client Services Report

Evergreen's focus, as always, has been extending services to more residents of Markham, Stouffville and Thornhill while maintaining the best possible quality of service.

All of Evergreen's small staff provided service to clients and their families every day. Some support is provided in one-to-one sessions (by volunteers or staff), and some support is in the group format. Our front line staff devoted all their time to client services while the rest took on specific client support roles, in addition to other activities. As always, all of the staff supported the dedicated volunteers working within their sector of service.

With the amazing support from our over 89 active client volunteers, Evergreen care is able to focus on quality of life for the whole family starting at the initial diagnosis, through difficult treatment and, if necessary, through to end-of-life care and bereavement. With the combination of the staff team and trained volunteers, we were able to offer quality support to families despite the pandemic. All our services, provided virtually, included client support, caregivers support, wellness focused services (including *The Living Room*, *Support Groups*, and *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*), as well as provide one-to-one counselling and bereavement support to hundreds.

During the year April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, Evergreen served more than 1034 families, held 264 groups with 2493 participants, sent 1378 bereavement support monthly mailings, sent 522 caregiver mailings, spoke to about 1000 community members at

meetings and presentations, and celebrated 2 memorials. Our volunteers and staff provided 17,877 visits, and this was only possible because of the generous donation of about 7,000 hours by our committed volunteers. In addition, many hours were provided by volunteers involved in office work, the all-important fundraising activities and, of course, on the Board of Directors.

Having spent the past year working virtually due to the pandemic, Evergreen learned how to support our clients differently. We pivoted quickly from in-person support to telephone/virtual support very quickly. Staff and volunteers made a point of being in contact with every client on a regular basis. Evergreen came to understand that virtual platforms made our services more accessible for some people. As Evergreen moves forward and plans for the re-opening of our offices for in-person support, we are committed to maintaining a virtual component to our support services.

The Living Room

As well as one-on-one counselling for our clients, Evergreen also managed to continue our much loved day program, The Living Room, in a virtual format. The following is a report by Coordinator, Heidi Spiar:

The cancellation of in-office service challenged Evergreen to develop and implement innovative programs for the Cancer Group for Women and Living Room Group on a virtual platform. Evergreen met the challenge of COVID-19 in the following ways: for clients who lacked the computer means to attend, Evergreen volunteers provided regular telephone calls; the facilitator arranged a Peer To Peer call network; and, put together a light-hearted newsletter with submissions from the peer group and with client consent.

Virtual groups enabled some clients to attend, where previously they could not attend due to transportation, caregiving, medical appointments or mobility constraints. A virtual component will be explored moving forward once we are back in the office.

An on-line platform made way for digitally-manipulated graphics and content that promoted diverse program delivery and, especially during COVID-19, provided an interactive diversion from stress, isolation, anxiety, grief, and depression. Examples of new modules introduced were: Travelling Aboard Air Evergreen to countries around the world (with virtual passport stamp); live concerts and Rhythm and Movement; experiencing a virtual Mindfulness Retreat; participate in a virtual dance and movement party; partake in a Pet Show by clients; Show and Tell mementos from a client's home country or ethnic background; gently address stress management, anxiety, grief and isolation strategies, and pay tribute to the many clients of these cohesive groups who died during this period.

Four Quotes:

Thank you for all you do and for keeping us together. Evergreen is amazing.

8

This group got me through this horrible time-you treat us like we are all special and make us feel like a friendly family group.

I really feel like you all care genuinely and it keeps me wanting to keep going.

We learn so many interesting things, we laugh together, it is organized, I forget about the pain and it helps to feel normal.

C-care Support Programs for Women Experiencing Cancer

This seven week closed support group is facilitated by professionals and survivors to provide women experiencing cancer with useful skills and helpful information. In 2020 – 2021, we offered 79 sessions.

Men's Serious Illness Support Group

In May, 2019, we started our first closed support group for men with a serious illness. This group is facilitated by experienced volunteers and offers useful skills, helpful information and peer support. We offered 21 sessions last year.

Caregiver Support

Evergreen remains committed to helping families stretch their limited resources by assisting family caregivers through counselling, support groups, and informational mailings. Caregivers are contacted directly about their needs, which legitimizes their position in the family and society. This helps the caregiver recognize the pressures they are under, as well as their limits - often leading to earlier intervention.

The *Circle of Care* support group, facilitated by caring, experienced volunteers or staff, is a place for caregivers to meet with other like individuals, to learn from and support each other. Telephone support on alternate weeks helps relieve some of the difficult emotions typical in caregivers struggling to cope when overtired and stressed. Counselling by Evergreen professionals is also available for caregivers when their stress is interfering with their ability to continue.

Evergreen also offers the program, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*. This Stanford University developed program is run in conjunction with CHATS. This six-session workshop focuses on self-care as a way to provide better care to a loved one. There are opportunities to talk about their own situation with others who understand and a great way to learn new strategies. Communication techniques and dealing with difficult emotions are other topics that are addressed. Graduates are very positive about how the sessions impacted their lives.

We also provide informational mailings for caregivers. These mailings, sent once or twice a month, provide information about resources, self-care and support. It is a good entry point for caregivers who feel that their personal care is not important when their loved one is sick.

Grief and Bereavement Programs

The feelings one experiences after the death of a loved one can frighten and sometimes immobilize the newly bereaved. Indeed, when a loved one dies, the initial shock and bewilderment may well last weeks or months. A great deal of bereavement support and counselling focuses on the normalcy of the grief reaction, in spite of how abnormal it feels, removing the additional burden of feeling inadequate or “crazy” as a result. This allows bereaved family members to really feel the loss and work through the grief experience in the way that is best for them. Understanding the normalcy of grief does not eliminate the pain of loss, but it can reduce the anxiety about their feelings and help them create more reasonable expectations about their progress.

Drop-in adult support groups are offered monthly and facilitated by trained volunteers, providing ongoing support to families struggling with the death of a friend or family member. These groups may help individuals work through a particularly difficult time of year (holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, for example) or may be a person’s first introduction to Evergreen’s services.

Circle of Hope, an adult support group series facilitated by experienced volunteers, was offered several times this year.

Support for children and teens is also available. Evergreen takes referrals from school staff, parents and other agencies that may know of a child or teen who is having difficulty coping with a death or the serious illness of a loved one. Groups are age specific, teach about normal grief, and often involve activities that encourage the sharing of feelings about the loved one they have lost.

In November and December, Evergreen also provided virtual “Coping with the Holidays” presentations for those who are grieving. As well as helpful tips, the evening included a virtual memorial candle lighting ceremony.

Evergreen’s Front Line Client Service Providers:

Bonnie Strand Counsellor
Michelle McMinassian Counsellor
Stephen Ashley Counsellor
Heidi Spiar Living Room Coordinator
Janet Chippin Connection Café Coordinator

Volunteer Report

Evergreen Hospice would not exist without the efforts of all our volunteers and that statement is true more now than ever before. Due to COVID-19 restrictions this past year, we have had to be creative about the way we support our clients, offer education and information sessions to our communities, keep connected, and raise the funds to keep Evergreen going. Our volunteers stepped up to the challenge, to ensure our supports to our clients and our communities continued with minimal staff. Evergreen's volunteers are an amazing group of people, and we are forever grateful to all of them!

Because of pandemic restrictions, our client volunteers switched from in-person visiting to providing consistent phone calls to support our clients with life threatening illnesses, their caregivers, and our clients who are grieving. They worked with us to figure out how to offer our groups virtually using online platforms. Their willingness to attend, contribute content to, and facilitate these groups, have helped make our virtual presence a valuable asset to our clients. Thanks to their efforts and feedback, we will continue to offer a virtual component to our services long after the COVID-19 restrictions end. We will then be able to ensure we are offering our services to those who are unable to come into the office. Thank you to all of our volunteers and clients who worked with us to make this is a viable and successful new way to deliver our services to our communities.

The members of our volunteer Board of Directors also switched to supporting us virtually. They offered their expertise to set policies, worked on committees, and provided direction for our organization during this unprecedented time. They continued to work with our communities to make new connections as the landscape of healthcare adapted. Their leadership provided much needed support to staff so our policies and procedures could also adapt to ensure we were able to continue to meet the needs of our clients and our communities.

Our administrative volunteers were not able to come to our office, so they continued to provide valuable support by editing materials and writing thank you cards to our supporters from the safety of their homes. They also have attended online information and training sessions and contributed to adapting our new virtual services.

Our fundraising volunteers probably needed to be the quickest at coming up with creative ideas as we pivoted with COVID-19 restrictions. Our fundraising Gala had to be adapted to a virtual event on October 22, 2020. They did an outstanding job of ensuring we were able to still raise the financial resources needed to fulfill our mission this year. They continue to plan and brainstorm new ways of reaching people in our communities for the much needed financial support that keep our services running.

All of our volunteers are invited to attend Evergreen training sessions throughout the year to enhance their knowledge and skills, and this past year we offered these virtually. This year, volunteers attended sessions on Advance Care Planning, Legacy Work and Memory Making, Music Therapy, Therapeutic Touch, Zentangle, Bereavement Support, Supporting Caregivers, the importance of Self-Care, and Complicated Grief Support for frontline workers. In addition to Evergreen's training programs, our volunteers also attended some amazing training opportunities offered through our partners in our communities.

The Evergreen Connection Café also began this year. It was developed from our Compassionate Communities initiative. This group meets the first Monday of the month to discuss and explore activities and resources being offered in our communities and beyond. Many of our volunteers and clients have contributed and joined. This group is open to anyone, and we hope to be able to grow the initiative when we are able to be in person again with actually exploring some activities together in person.

Evergreen Hospice recognizes the very significant contributions of individual volunteers at our Annual General Meeting. Our 2020/2021 fiscal year has presented unique challenges for Evergreen as an agency and for our volunteers, staff, and clients as individuals. Some of our volunteers needed to take a step back from their role with us to take care of themselves and their loved ones during this pandemic year, and we want to let them know we are here for them when they are ready to return or if they need any of our supports.

It has become a tradition to acknowledge Evergreen volunteers when they reach 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of service with us. Receiving 5 year certificates this year are Nadia Scerbacov, Karen Rajendra, Bob Noble, and Hayley Pickard.

Thank you to all of our volunteers! I am in awe of you all, and you inspire me to be better every single day. It is a privilege to be on this journey with you!

Tricia Stanton
Coordinator of Volunteers

Fundraising Report 2020-21

After a leave to care for and grieve her husband, our long-standing Fund Development coordinator, Rebecca Simkin, returned on a part-time basis. (She would ultimately decide to retire in April of 2021.)

In March of 2021, Evergreen welcomed Karen Yates as our new Fundraising Coordinator. Karen works on raising funds and awareness for Evergreen, along with taking care of our social media accounts.

In May, Evergreen held a virtual Pass the Care Forward Memorial Walk. Evergreen asked the community to join us, virtually, to remember the special people in their lives who have died. The community did their own walk, or other activity, to raise fund the "Pass the care forward" to others in need. We ended the month long event with a virtual memorial candle lighting ceremony. This event raised almost \$22,000.

In August, we held a Virtual Cycle for Life event. Similar to the walk, participants rode their bicycles to support Evergreen. Over \$8,000 was raised.

Our programs were supported by a number of foundations and corporations, including: Alectra Utilities, The McLean Foundation, The Egan Family Foundation; the Eric and Cheryl Wright Family Charitable Trust, and The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Legacy Grant.

Our annual Gala, our largest fundraiser of the year, was postponed due to the COVID -19 lockdown. We came to realize that *An Evening of Fun, Frivolity and Murder!* had to go virtual. Our committee worked hard to turn it in a fun virtual event. The dinner was still provided by Angus Glen Golf Club, with curbside pick up provided for patrons. 100 versions of our Murder Mystery Game were created to accompany the dinner. Music by the Neil Chapman Band and hosting duties by Renee Deighton added to the enjoyment of the evening. This event raised almost \$53,000.



Walk on your own or create a team!

Register teams to participate virtually, walk around your neighbourhood, dance, skip rope, climb the stairs for 30 minutes.

Challenge your family, friends, neighbours and co-workers to join you. Participate in our virtual memorial activities.

Honour the memory of a loved one who has died while providing funds to carry on the services for other bereaved families.

Show the world that now, more than ever, our connections matter! "PASS THE CARE FORWARD" to others in need.


Visit our walk page for memorial activities and to upload your messages for our Virtual Memorial Walk as well as links to online fundraising and print brochures.

http://evgcares.org/?page_id=1925

Open from now until April 24th, you can join up and get sponsors or create a team to raise money for bereavement counselling and support in your community.




Donations will be accepted for this event until May 30th.

An Evening of Fun, Frivolity and MURDER



Thursday, October 22, 2020 at Angus Glen Golf Club


The event: An Evergreen Hospice Fundraiser
Cocktail and Appetizer Reception at 6:00 pm
Gourmet Meal at 7:00 pm - OPEN BAR

 Entertainment Music Dancing Mystery solving	 Great Live Auction Deals Last year's deals included a week at a cottage, Maple Leaf tickets and hotel packages, Caribbean Island Escape	 Dress Code Come as a Clue character or come as you are
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Loads of silent auction steals, dancing, and casino games for FUN

It is your job, if you wish, to discover who committed the murder, where they did it and what they did it with. Was it in the Casino and Games Lounge or, perhaps, the Silent Auction Library? This is an evening of fun and frivolity, but it is also an evening of MURDER. (Based on the popular board game, CLUE)

To buy tickets, to sponsor, or for more information call 416-499-2185 or email info@evgcares.org



A portion of your ticket price is eligible for a TAX receipt
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Thornhill Lutheran Church
United Way of Greater Toronto

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(A Night of Fun, Frivolity and
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Church
105.9 The Region

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