



HOSPICE FUNDRAISER: Abbamania, a tribute band featuring the music of ABBA, rocked the Acton arena/community centre at its recent show, a fundraiser for CASHh – Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills. – *Ted Tyler photo*



Nick Pattison



Monica Tietz



Ewan Fernie



Cristal Jackson

Hospice would offer a dignified death

Terminally ill Halton Hills residents who don't want to die in hospital, and can't die at home, must leave the community for their final days because there is no local hospice offering palliative care beds.

That could change thanks to the concerted effort of a local group, loosely affiliated with CASHh – Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills – which are raising money and awareness of the need for a residential hospice with fundraisers like last week's ABBA band tribute concert in Acton.

CASHh Board member Bob Johnston said they need a hospice "sooner than later" but knows it will not happen without government funding and community support. "It will be a multi-million dollar affair and we certainly can't do it alone," Johnston said on Monday, adding the hospice is both a "goal and a dream" which would require a separate Board to steer the overall direction and formation.

Johnston estimates it would cost \$2-million annually to operate a 10-bed hospice – half from the community that would have to purchase, renovate and cover start-up costs, and another million from the government in annual operating costs. "So, the community has to have a fundraising arm, specifically aimed at the hospice and (the CASHh) focus is on our clients at their doorstep in Halton Hills for the services that CASHh offers – that's where our money goes first," he said, adding to date, approximately \$540,000 has been raised for a hospice.

Johnston said the need is readily apparent. "Two days before the (ABBA fundraising) concert, we lost a young 42-year-old Acton mother...she had to go to the Wellington hospice, and it was a shame that she had to go there because there was nothing in the north to accommodate her needs."

Shelia Smith, Director of Operations at CASHh said the organization is supporting two or three

groups who are organizing the project for the community. "CASHh is very supportive and any excess funds that we have after our programs are paid for, will go into this hospice fund," Smith said on Monday.

"It is like a 10 or 12 year project – we've already started – so hopefully you know, the community is very generous to support us and we will continue to increase or fund to support it and get the shovel in the ground, but it is not a CASHh program..." she said, adding a hospice is a "beautiful serene place to have your last days."

There are 24 hospices in Ontario, funded by the Ministry of Health, which announced five years ago it would fund the care costs of 34 residential hospices across the province. They receive \$90,000 annually per hospice bed, which is half of the total cost. An acute care bed costs between \$350 and \$1,100 daily, while a hospice bed costs approximately \$440 per day.



THE GIFTS OF LIFE: Fifty-eight units of blood were collected at the Canadian Blood Services clinic last Thursday at the Acton arena/community centre. Acton's Al Irwin (right photo) made his 80th donation. Acton's Robert Bohlken (right) had to wait until his recent 17th birthday to make his first donation, a tradition started by his father Richard Bohlken. – *Marie Shadbolt photo*



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