# Loss is tie that binds hospice volunteers

Evergreen Hospice volunteer massage therapist Marita Concil uses touch to comfort clients.

"We're all going to die, these people know it's going to be sooner rather than later."

People who come to help the hospice are a different kind of volunteer, Collins says. A lot of them have caregiving experience, and most have already thought about the issues. Only a very small percentage backs out.

"Life is losses," she adds. "You lose friends, family, relatives. If you can make it a bit better for somebody, then that's what you're there for."

Brooks, who parts from Tom with a cheerful "See you next week, old timer", is not a trained volunteer. Three years ago, his wife, a hospice client, died of cancer.

Now, he comes to sit with a fellow ex-cop, his being there as valuable to Tom as any stamp was to the collector.

Each person has his own pattern, Marita Concil says, standing by her massage table in the room across the hall. Sometimes people feel really sick immediately after they've had a chemotherapy treatment; others have a space in between.

A registered massage therapist, she's here twice a month, asking clients what areas are bothering them, working over the clothes just for their comfort.

Most have some form of cancer, and at some points massage may not be appropriate. For those times, Concil can do therapeutic touch, working with energy around the body.

"But most people want touch, and touch is very important, especially at this time. It's a way of being present to a person there, in physical contact."

Sometimes, Concil has worked with people at the hospice only once, then read that they've died. She believes she shares precious moments with them.

Concil never went through this process with the dying until her sister-in-law's brother and a patient in Stouffville both died of cancer. "That really showed me the specialness", and made her want to volunteer.

"There are some people who would say to me, 'I couldn't do that'", she concedes.

"If anything, it fills my spirit; it nourishes my spirit rather than depressing me."

Even if the clients say nothing, "There's something special about being there and knowing that, for me, this person is going home".


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