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Moving forward in the end-of-life journey

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(Fotolia)

For the wife and daughters of Peter Marcus, who passed away on May 4, 2014, the first step of their journey began the moment they learned he had a terminal illness.

In August 2012, Peter was diagnosed with ALS. When it became too difficult for the family to take care of him at home, a bed became available at The Stabler Centre residence — part of Hospice Niagara.

“Hospice Niagara became an integral part of Dad’s journey of struggle with this disease,” says Nancy Janzen, Peter’s youngest daughter. “The staff and volunteers were amazing and helped us through the whole process. They were able to meet his needs and take care of him when we no longer could. Having him live there allowed us to spend time with him without worrying about the care required for him. We could just be together in the final chapter of Dad’s life.”

For many of us, when we lose a loved one, taking that first step forward in our individual grief journey can be daunting, if not seemingly impossible. It comes with a sucker punch of reality, mixed with overwhelming waves of emotion that can temporarily paralyze us. If researched, the approach to loss and grief can be explained as a journey that takes many steps.

Being surrounded by loving, caring people can be very therapeutic and powerful — and is just one way to step forward in the journey. This community of love and care is what participants in the 14th annual Hike for Hospice Niagara will experience on Sunday, May 15. This event is open to anyone. The hike begins with a celebration of life, which is a community tribute to those who are struggling with a terminal illness and those who have passed.

“We hope to participate in the hike every year. It is a blessing to us to know that we are raising money to help other families on their end-of-life journey; a path that we have walked ourselves,” says Nancy.

National Hospice Palliative Care Week runs May 1-7. There is no better way to commemorate it than committing to support Hospice Niagara by becoming a hiker or donating towards someone else or Team Hospice Niagara. Go to hikeforhospiceniagara.ca or call 905-984-8766 for general donations. Funding from the hike will help Hospice Niagara to provide compassionate palliative care to families across Niagara.

About Hospice Niagara

The organization focuses on improving the quality of life for people living with life-limiting illnesses, death, dying, grief and loss. Through a variety of programs and services, Hospice Niagara is able to provide compassionate comfort and support to families throughout the care continuum. Programs and services are offered at no cost to clients and include:

Day hospice: Clients living with a life-limiting illness enjoy a day out enabling caregivers a day of respite.

Residential hospice: The Stabler Centre provides quality hospice palliative care in a home-like setting.

Visiting volunteers: Trained volunteer provide non-medical support and comfort in client's homes.

Community palliative care teams: Teams provide comprehensive care in client's homes, working in partnership with primary care providers

Bereavement support: Programs are geared towards children, adolescents and adults who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Hospice Niagara is an innovative leader in the end-of-life journey providing continuous, person-centred care while advancing knowledge and partnerships within Niagara. Hospice Niagara's vision is to provide exceptional and compassionate care to everyone, everywhere, every time. For more information, please visit hospiceniagara.ca or call 905-984-8766.

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