

## Taste returns in support of Hospice Niagara

Melinda Cheevers

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BEAMSVILLE — Consider it the unofficial kick off to the Niagara Wine Festival: an all-inclusive evening featuring fine wine and great culinary offerings all from Niagara and all in support of a good cause.

The annual event is held each year in support of Hospice Niagara with the goal of raising not just funds for the organization, but also awareness about the work it does for the community. That work is focused on providing continuous, person-centered care while advancing knowledge and partnerships within Niagara. There's bereavement support programs, community palliative care teams, a day hospice program, as well as the residential hospice, the Stabler Centre, and visiting volunteer and palliative pain and symptom management program. While Jeff and Kimberly Hundertmark, organizers of the Taste event, can rattle off the various supports Hospice Niagara provides to the community, it hasn't always been that way, they admit.

In the mid 1980s, Jeff first started hearing a lot about this word "hospice" from his mom, Pat.

"I had no idea what it meant or what it was about. I just knew it had something to do with palliative care and people dying," he said. "It was one of those things that as kids, my brothers and I knew mom was really passionate about it but were not really aware of what it was all about... That's probably really synonymous with a lot of people in the region now. You mention hospice and they've probably heard about someone dying in a cancer hospice or an aids hospice, but don't really know a lot about it."

As he and his siblings got older, they saw their mom get more and more involved. Their dad started volunteering, doing a lot of day hospice visits acting as a support person for people who didn't require hospice bed care but still required support — someone to talk with, someone to get them to doctor or hospital appointments.

"It became a full on family passion project," he said. When Kimberly married into the family, she was brought into helping with the family's passion project as well. With her expertise in event planning and fundraising, combined with Jeff's work in the wine and service industry, Pat put them to work fundraising for Hospice Niagara. They started with Crush for Care, which eventually was put on hold during the capital campaign for the Stabler Centre.

"The opening of the Stabler Centre coincided with my return back to the region," said Jeff. "For me, it was my first real taste of 'wow, this thing my mom has been doing for decades is now a reality.'"

While they had all become familiar with the work at hospice, the Hundertmark family got a first-hand look few experience when Pat was admitted for end-of-life care.

"In all of the time since it had opened, we had been there for many different reasons - volunteer recognition nights, media events, or celebratory reasons, but we had never experienced it from the client side," said Kimberly. "When we experienced it first hand, it was like a switch went off. We knew we had to ensure that this legacy continued and that this level of care continued to exist... Her lasting impression upon us, was that as family and the family of one of the founding partners, that it was up to us to make sure we stayed involved as partners."

When the opportunity came along for the Taste event, Kimberly said they had no other option but to dig their heels in. They moved the event from Jackson-Triggs Winery to Mike Weir Winery, where Jeff is head winemaker. They brought on board other industry partners like Riverview Cellars, Niagara College, Dillon's Distillery and more. The result is a casual evening in the Beamsville winery with an all-inclusive ticket that includes award-winning wines and spirits, culinary creations by local gourmet chefs, a live band, as well as a "bucket list" live auction hosted by Barry Katzman. The Sept. 9 event kicks off at 7 p.m.

"Pat was very, very passionate about Gewürztraminer wine, so it's nice that we get to honour her in this way," said Kimberly, who added that the hope is through the event, they will be able to introduce more people to the work Hospice Niagara does.

Tickets are \$100 per person and are available through Hospice Niagara by calling 905-984-8766 or online at [hospiceniagara.ca/taste](http://hospiceniagara.ca/taste).



The annual Taste event for Hospice Niagara takes place Sept. 9 at Mike Weir Winery.

Melinda Cheevers is a reporter for Niagara this Week covering St. Catharines. She also edits Niagara Life and West Niagara Life magazines. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and on [Facebook](#)