



# AGAPÉ NEWS



Accountability | Compassion | Excellence | Integrity | Respect

## Reflections from Irene Kahler-Huff, BN, MS (retired)



Agapé Hospice for me personally was a dream come true. Upon returning from San Francisco, I felt that I had had my once-in-a-life time hospice experience. Instead it only prepared me for the next step in my nursing career.

The vision of Lt Col David Luginbuhl, Executive Director of Grace Hospital, to establish a Salvation Army hospice for Cancer and AIDS in Calgary allowed me to become a part of an organization who believed and supported my philosophy and values about living and dying. In July 1988, I began to fulfill my dream with the help and support of committed and dedicated persons comprised of the Board of Trustees of the Grace Hospital, the Administration of the Grace Hospital and those in the community who believed in the hospice concept, "a home-like place to spend one's last days where respect and dignity are primary in the care of the dying and their family."

The first several years were spent writing the program, making the vision known and helping the community understand why a hospice was needed. This took much time and energy but the fulfillment of that vision never wavered for those of us who believed it could and would happen.

There are many memories accompanied with writing the program. A few of these memories relate to the several sessions that Lt Col David and Marilyn Luginbuhl, Marguerite Schumacher, and I spent at Marguerite's home in Canmore. On those days we would spread reams of pages from the documentation I had done for the background of our proposal to the government and city. Marilyn would make sure that we were well nourished during hours of brain-storming and documenting the important information. We would come away from those sessions exhausted but found that they were most memorable and that much had been accomplished.

During the transition of Sunset Lodge from a Seniors Lodge to a hospice, the terminal illness of a dear resident demonstrated why hospice care was needed and how it allowed her to die with dignity with the support of her grieving family. This was the beginning of what is today a tranquil, caring, home-like environment where persons live in their dying, with those they love receiving the care and support needed to help them in the last days of life's journey.

The words of Dr. Cicely Saunders, "You matter because you are you. You live to the last moment of your life and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully but also to live until you die," continue to be the philosophy at Agapé which is demonstrated daily by those who care. For me personally, Agapé Hospice has been all it was meant to be, a place where unconditional love is demonstrated. Meeting the physical, psychological, psychosocial, and spiritual needs of the dying and their families continues to be the reason for its existence. Agapé Hospice will always be that place if its philosophy, mission, and values are first and foremost in the minds of those who enter its doors to care for the dying and their families.

Thanks to Lt Col Luginbuhl and Marguerite Schumacher whose expertise in leadership and knowledge in governmental protocols made my dream of being part of the hospice movement in Calgary become a reality. We have now bid our goodbyes to both Marguerite Schumacher in June 2013, and Lt Col Luginbuhl who went home to glory on October 18, 2017. I am so grateful for being a part of his vision and experiencing his wisdom.



### *Our Mission*

*Led by Christian values, the community at The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice extends compassionate, holistic care and support to those experiencing the end of life journey.*

### *Our Vision*

*We envision a peaceful setting where The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice team honours people as they journey to life's natural end. It will be a home where the palliative resident and the bereaved experience compassion and hope through unconditional love so that each day will be the best day possible.*

### Thoughts from Lillian Nixon (retired nurse)

In the early days of the hospice, we admitted a lady named Mary. Mary was in her late eighties or early nineties. She had no remaining relatives to care for her at that time. I remember Mary for her optimistic nature, her resiliency, and her strong faith.



Although her mind was alert, she needed help with the activities of daily living. She was so appreciative of the help she received. On a daily basis she was grateful that The Salvation Army "took her in."

Mary had been a teacher. She maintained her love of reading and learning new things. It was during her stay with us that she learned to knit. Taught by Terry, a nurse, she practiced until she succeeded in making a pair of slippers!

Nature played an important role in Mary's life. She and her sister rode their horses between Calgary and Banff as young women. Mary would regale us with lots of stories such as taking a whole day to ride from Calgary to Banff. Mary and her sister started the hostel movement in Canada. She remarked that, just as those folks who stayed in hostels were glad to have a place to stay at the end of a long day, she was thankful for a place to stay at the end of her life.

Mary loved to look out the window in her room at Agapé to see the clouds, the trees, and flowers, and to watch the changing seasons.

As with many of the residents whose care I was privileged to be part of, I received much from Mary. Her memory has left a lasting impression on me.

### Greetings from Pat Wallace, Executive Director, BN, MSA



We are excited this year to be celebrating 25 years of The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice Ministry Unit. In those 25 years, the Agapé team of volunteers, nursing staff, physicians, administrative staff, maintenance staff, and kitchen staff, has been blessed to provide care to over 5,000 residents and their families.

In 2017, The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice was accredited with Commendation under the Accreditation

Canada Qmentum Program, and also achieved compliance in an Audit under the new Alberta Health Continuing Care Health Service Standards. The Agapé team worked very hard to meet the Accreditation and Audit requirements and continues to be passionate about providing high quality compassionate care to our residents and families.

Thank you to all of our donors who have allowed us to provide our comprehensive palliative care services through your generous financial giving. Wishing you all a very blessed Christmas season.

### Message from Ardell Seefried

In November of 2006, I was hired as Director of Human Resources at The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice. Because I had worked at the Grace Hospital in Calgary until it closed in 1994, I was twice blessed to be a part of both facilities. During my time at the Grace, I was able to support the planning committee in the transition of Sunset Lodge to Agapé Manor Hospice in 1992. I have been honoured to personally experience Agapé's growth over the years from three privately funded beds, to expanding from one wing (10 beds), to two wings (20 beds). Funds are provided by compassionate family members and community donors, with Alberta Health Services and The Salvation Army providing funding for operational costs.

During 2007, I experienced the loss of two precious family members at Agapé – my husband Ross in January and my mom on December 24<sup>th</sup>. I was privileged to spend the last 13 days of my mom's life with her in the Thistle Room. She loved watching the birds flying to and from her bird feeder; the volunteers and chaplains visited with her while I was at meetings or running errands – she appreciated their care and support so much, and she felt so blessed by the specialized care that was provided by each member of the caregiving team. When she had been at Agapé for only two days, I asked her if she was in pain (she had always been in extreme pain over the previous year). She looked at me and with this beautiful expression on her face and with a tone of wonderment said, "No!" I was in tears when she told me.

It is now 11 years later and I am still working at Agapé. I often hear visitors at Agapé remark on the sense of peace they feel when they walk through the hallways. As I reflect, I know that I have been blessed to be both a family member and an employee at Agapé.

What a privilege it is to personally experience how our staff daily live out the mission of Agapé:

*Led by Christian values...extending compassionate, holistic care and support to those experiencing the end of life journey.*



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- Please send information on how I can make an annual/monthly gift.
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- How can I leave a legacy gift to Agapé Hospice?
- Please remove me from your mailing list.

Enclosed is my gift of:  \$50     \$250     \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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My payment is by:  Cheque (payable to "The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice")  
 Visa     MasterCard     AMEX

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 Credit Card Number    Expiry Date    CSN

**With your donation of \$50 or more, we will hang a Holiday Stocking on our Memory Tree in memory of your loved one.**