

News Release

For immediate release

**EMPATHY IS SEEING, FEELING AND UNDERSTANDING OTHERS; THIS DESCRIBES,
HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS**

Honoring Hospice Volunteers during National Volunteer Week

VANCOUVER, BC - March 29, 2022

From April 24-30, 2022, the BC Hospice Palliative Care Association (BCHPCA) will be celebrating British Columbia's and Yukon's estimated 3500 dedicated hospice volunteers, supporting over 120,500 people annually during National Volunteer Week..

The National Volunteer Week theme for 2022, Volunteering Is Empathy In Action, affirms the strong connection between volunteerism and empathy. Volunteering can help us develop empathy. It can connect people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, to expand their views. Empathy is seeing, feeling and understanding others; this best describes Hospice volunteers. At BCHPCA, *"Hospice volunteers are essential in the delivery of care. They receive comprehensive training with over 30 hours of initial basic training and an additional 20 hours of work-specific development annually,"* explains Pablita Thomas, Executive Director of BCHPCA. *"With only 350 full-time staff employed by B.C. hospice societies, skilled volunteers are critical to the delivery of quality palliative care and educational support programs offered by hospices."* Consistently going above and beyond, hospice volunteer retention rates are also high. Length of engagement is typically over seven years. Volunteerism for the delivery of hospice care is unique, as the majority of services are coming from the heart of our communities. This model of empathetic care supports a greater palliative care initiative in which our hospices are greatly entrenched.

"Without volunteers, there is a huge void in the support provided to patients. Hospice Volunteers support families in many areas, and during COVID have supported those who are experiencing greater distress, missing connection and family due to isolation, they continue to play an integral role in filling these gaps." says Natasha Girard, Executive Director of Central Okanagan Hospice Association and BCHPCA Board of Director. *"There is comfort in having accessible community*

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support to help normalize one's journey. It's intangible, yet so important to the quality of life and care of these people."

An aging demographic is putting further strain on our healthcare system. By 2031 more than 1.3 million British Columbians, or almost one in four people, will be over the age of 65. In the Yukon, it is expected that more than 15 percent of the population will be at least 65. *"Through the pandemic and as our population continues to age, hospice volunteers are becoming increasingly vital to supporting our communities, while simultaneously easing the burden on our healthcare system,"* explains Donna Flood, President of BCHPCA and Executive Director of Prince George Hospice Society.

During National Volunteer Week from April 24 to 30, please acknowledge and honor the importance of our hospice volunteers and the selfless work they provide to our communities. Visit <https://bchpca.org/campaigns/national-volunteer-week-2022/> for more information.

BC Hospice Palliative Care Association (www.bchpca.org)

The BC Hospice Palliative Care Association is a not-for-profit, public membership organization, which has been representing individuals and organizations committed to promoting and delivering hospice palliative care to British Columbians and Yukoners for over 34 years. Our members provide a broad range of hospice palliative care programs and services to people in need across the provinces of BC and the Yukon with serious illnesses, their loved ones who are grieving, and their caregivers. The services hospice societies deliver are accessible to all, regardless of the type of illness, age, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, and religious beliefs.

For more information, please contact:

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