

Guest Editorial

Mary Brennan-Taylor

Niagara Hospice Board Member and daughter of former Hospice Patient, Alice Brennan

“Mary, if Alice were my mom, I would turn to Hospice for help”...these words offered by a family friend familiar with Hospice were honestly the last words that I wanted to hear when considering healthcare options for my frail and infection-wracked mother...but they were words that were prophetic in so many ways.

Little did I know at that time, seven years ago, what a remarkable gift Niagara Hospice was to be for my mother and our family during the last days of her life. Once mom arrived at Niagara Hospice House, an exquisite facility that resembles a five star hotel more than a health care facility, a metamorphosis transpired before us. Within a short time, mom went from being in a pain-ridden, semi-conscious, uncommunicative state to a woman who could sit up in a chair and greet friends and family, smiling, laughing and squeezing joy out of every minute.

What I came to viscerally understand is that Hospice is not about dying...it's about living. It's not about death...it's about pain, agony and despair giving way to peace, dignity and hope. Unfortunately, I learned these things too late.

Like thousands of other families who experience the unparalleled care provided by dedicated Hospice nurses, doctors, physical therapists, social workers and spiritual care staff, albeit in the last days of their loved one's life, I wish we had turned to Hospice much sooner, so that mom could have had even more days measured by the Hospice philosophy of comfort, care and respect and the belief that every minute counts.

For those who may doubt that angels walk among us...they have not encountered the staff at Niagara Hospice. They gave my children back their funny, irrepressible grandmother, if only for a brief time. They put a focus on maximizing the life in her remaining days and allowed her to spend those last precious days thoroughly enjoying what mattered most to her; her family, her friends on her terms.

If you or a loved one is faced with a terminal illness, don't wait as we did. Instead, call Hospice as soon as possible so that you can get back to living and making memories that will remain with family and friends for a lifetime.