



NOVEMBER 2018

# AGAPÉ

## H·O·S·P·I·C·E



Accountability • Compassion • Excellence • Integrity • Respect



## Counting the Days

A MOST IMPORTANT TIME OF LIFE



In a world that can often feel rushed and impersonal, the staff and volunteers at Agapé offer life's most precious gift: time. We take the time to discover the life goals of every resident and help them achieve those goals.

Our work is scaled to the human spirit and every aspect of what we do is designed to offer dignity to all as they take the final steps on life's journey. We believe that compassion is both a process and an orientation, and our values call us to the highest standards of care.

Over the years Agapé has impacted thousands of residents and their family and friends, and in the years to come

we see that impact growing ever more important. Thank you for being a community that cares, and for your continued support of Agapé as we tend to those living in their final days. We rely on your support to continue giving hope today.



Pat Wallace | Executive Director

## Elephant in the Room



A team approach to care is an Agapé strength. Residents benefit from the range of expertise available from a cross section of professionals, all dedicated to helping each resident's final days be the best possible. Social worker Shizuko Boga is a key member of the team. She identifies gaps between what the resident wants to achieve and what is missing. One of her roles is to work as a connector between inside and outside,

being a bridge between the resident's needs and community resources.

Shizuko's assistance is not just for adults alone but extends to the very young. Some time ago she started an on-site children's grief support program called the Elephant Club, focusing on children up to the age of 13 who visit Agapé's residents. Adults often don't know how to speak to kids about illness, death and dying. "The grieving person is the elephant in the room," she says, "and people don't know how to, or can't, talk about it."

Elephant Club offers educational information on children's grief to adults, and individual and group support to children through crafts and activities. These help them express their feelings, thoughts and questions. "Kids may want to be included, to have opportunities for their voices to be heard and these activities often fill in for words."



### 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.

- ✦ In praise of volunteers
- ✦ Seeing clearly
- ✦ We need your help

### Inside



# Clarity of Focus

AGNES WAS BLESSED AT AGAPÉ

The ravages of pancreatic cancer forced Agnes Bethune from her Calgary home, where she lived on her own well into her 90's. "Some people have to go through this with little care," she said. "But here at Agapé I am totally blessed."

Generally people come to the hospice when it is determined that they have about two weeks left to live. Upon arrival at Agapé, they often rally, thanks to the quality of care.

Agnes was one who revived for a time and her joyful personality graced the staff and volunteers. She appreciated the clarity of focus she found at the hospice. "Here they understand that this is an end of life thing whereas in a hospital they tend to be upbeat and tell you that you are getting better and that things will be fine. It's false hope. Here you face reality and feel less pain because at this point, there's no cure." Agnes passed away at Agapé in October, 2018.

**“Hospice is a place of meeting. Physical and spiritual, doing and accepting, giving and receiving, all have to be brought together; the dying need community, its help and fellowship... the community needs the dying, to make it think of eternal issues and to make it listen.**

In 1967 Dame Cicely Saunders founded the first modern hospice in England. Agapé's Dr. Raj Sharma keeps her quotation on his phone.



It's a Calling

Nav Mann so desired to work at Agapé that she applied three times before being hired as a resident attendant. She wanted to be part of a place that took the time and offered the care needed by those who are dying.

Nav works closely with the residents, making them comfortable and coordinates with the nurses to ensure the whole person is well tended. For Nav this is more than a job: it's a calling. "You are not just serving a human being, you are serving God," she says.

# Community of Compassion

THE CHALLENGE OF CARING FOR THE DYING



Dr. Raj Sharma is Agapé's medical director and one of five attending doctors who visit residents three times a week. He thrives on the challenge of working with the elderly and those who are dying. And while that may sound a bit depressing, for Raj it's a calling. "It's humbling, grounding and interesting medicine," he says. "Seeing people who are tremendously challenged and trying to do something to help pushes you as a physician but also as a person."

Raj and others who work and volunteer at Agapé strive to make a connection with all aspects of the people who are ending life's journey at the hospice. "It takes compassion, empathy and humour to help residents live life as well as possible in their last days," he says. The strength of the team of nurses, health care aides, clerks and volunteers offers a holistic and community response to those who are dying, adds Raj. "Because at the end of the day that is who we are, community."





## Customized Care

SEEING EVERYONE'S UNIQUE NEEDS



As Agapé's nursing lead, Sarah Foster supervises more than 60 clinical staff. Their job is to ensure the days that remain for each of their residents are as engaged and meaningful as possible. "We help everyone live fully until they die," she says.

It's hard work and can be emotionally and spiritually exhausting, yet Sarah says it's the best job in the world. And there's an innovative element to each day, simply because there are few routines. Every person is so different in their needs and personality that changes can sometimes be hourly. "You have to be very creative," says Sarah. "That's one of our strengths - the ability to be extremely flexible and solution focused."

**“ Just because you've come to a hospice doesn't mean your life is over. Agapé exists to make the last days and weeks the best possible.**

- Shizuko Boga, Agapé social worker

## Second Time Around

DEALING WITH LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS



From 2010 to 2012 Major Harold Aikenhead ran Agapé Hospice. Then he retired. Earlier this year he returned, this time as the chaplain. As a Salvation Army clergyman, Harold is now at the heart of the compassionate care Agapé offers to those near the end of life's journey.

"The calling is to meet them without imposing, to accept who they are, to see the true person and so enter, with their permission, the areas of their life where they struggle and have doubts," says Harold. "To me it's a gift."

While he is a Christian minister and the hospice is operated by a faith-based institution, Agapé is



open and welcoming to all. "My goal is not to thrust anything on anyone but rather to help them, as they are facing death, come to terms with all of life," he says.

As one of the team members who offers holistic care to all Agapé residents, Harold can be attentive to spiritual questions knowing that other aspects of care are well handled by colleagues. "One of the most common questions is 'what can I do with these moments of time I have left?' And I help them find answers that are meaningful for them."

## Long Lasting Letters

WRITING WORDS OF LIFE AND LOVE



For more years than she can remember, Jean Senn has volunteered at Agapé about ten hours a week. One of dozens who donate their time, Jean is inspired by the hospice's name to give unconditional love to those who are dying. "I especially like writing letters for those who want to offer final words to family but are too ill to write themselves."



## More Than a Quarter Century of Service

Since it was opened more than 25 years ago, The Salvation Army Agapé Hospice has journeyed with thousands as they walked the final steps of life. For us, care is not a commodity. Our team works together to relieve where they cannot heal. We are rooted in community and we welcome all.



# So Far From Home

BUT WITH A NEW FAMILY OF SUPPORT

Doaa Mahrous wasn't sure about Agapé. "We don't have care like this in Egypt and I was panicking; but the people here were so welcoming, this is where we came." Her husband Hassan was living with late stage brain cancer. Doaa had been looking after him at home following some surgeries but it was evident he needed greater care than she could offer. "Here they took care of everything... Hassan, even me, even my kids and though I know their first priority was the patient, they cared for all of us," she says, in a soft voice.

That care extended beyond the walls of the hospice. When the family was scheduled to become Canadian citizens at a ceremony in downtown Calgary, two hospice staff and a volunteer went with

them. Social worker Shizuka Boga spoke to the judge to explain that due to his illness Hassan had not been able to take his final exams. That requirement was then waived and in February 2016, two months before he died, Hassan, Doaa and their four children became Canadians.

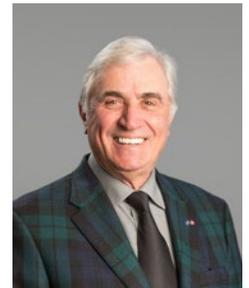


"Agapé took a very hard burden from us as a family," says Doaa. "I felt I was not good enough to help him but when the hospice took him I was sure he was in good hands. They did the job that was mine, to take care of him until the last moment."

“ The Agapé Hospice has touched the lives of more than 22,000 people including over 5,500 residents nearing the end of life. The professionalism demonstrated by the hospice's staff and volunteers goes a long way towards ensuring residents and their families are made as comfortable as possible during a very difficult time. Their

compassionate and caring ways are the embodiment of what the Agapé Hospice is all about.”

- Gerry Wood  
President, Wood Automotive Group and  
20 year member of The Salvation Army's  
Calgary Advisory Board



## We Can't Do This Without You



With just 70% of Agapé's funding coming from Alberta Health Services we rely on you for the other 30%. This is what pays for the building, food services, grounds, maintenance and administrative staff. Your support - of whatever amount - makes a solid difference in our ability to offer compassionate care to those who are near the end of life.

## Join Us

We are a team who works together to relieve when we cannot heal.

Join the Agapé team as a financial supporter. Our hospice is rooted in community and together we need each other. **Please use the enclosed remittance to support us today.**

*Thank you.*