

Media Release



New Residential Hospice Offers Alternative to Hospital Stay for the Dying

TORONTO, February 27, 2009 – What started 25-years ago as a search for a better way to care for someone in the final throes of cancer has culminated in the opening of The Dorothy Ley Hospice Palliative Care Centre in West Toronto. This new Centre, which opened today, will provide 24-hour care in a home-like setting to more than 150 people a year during their last weeks of life.

“What started as a vision 25 years ago when my good friend Joan was dying, has become a reality today,” said Marjorie Pitchford at the Centre’s opening. Pitchford is one of two remaining founding members of the Hospice and continues to sit on the Board of Directors.

“We consulted with palliative care pioneer Dr. Dorothy Ley as to how best to achieve a free-standing residential hospice offering people compassionate care in a home-like setting, close to family and friends. Today, 25 years later, we could not have achieved that goal without Dorothy’s leadership and wisdom, the incredible support given by selfless volunteers, and generous donors. Dr. Ley died 15 years ago but her legacy is very much alive.”

Studies conducted by Ipsos Reid show that as many as 90% of Canadians would prefer to be at home at the end of their life, but few have the ability to do so. The Palliative Care Centre will help meet this demand by providing a home-like, peaceful alternative to a hospital setting for people who are living with not just cancer but any life-limiting illness. This includes Lou Gerhig’s disease (ALS), HIV-AIDS, and congestive heart failure to mention just a few.

In addition to offering residential care, the Palliative Care Centre provides the Hospice with a permanent home its community programs. It is the first centre offering community and residential care to open in Toronto since Casey House was founded in 1988,

“Today marks a significant milestone in the Hospice’s 19 year history,” said Executive Director Ron Lirette. “The opening of our new home provides us with the space needed to expand our core programs such as community support in people’s homes, Case Management, Bereavement Support, Integrative Wellness, Day Program, Spiritual Care, and Volunteer Support. Our goal is to meet the needs of our aging population and provide support to both the palliative individual and to their family members. A life-limiting illness affects the whole family and we want to provide them with the support and tools they need to meet the challenges they are facing.”

The Dorothy Ley Hospice provides care to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual and supportive needs of more than 500 individuals a year. When you consider the members of the families it helps, its services touch the lives of more than 2,000 people annually. All of its services are provided at no cost to the individual thanks to the generosity of donors, government partners and community sponsors.

Although the final finishing touches to the exterior of the building and landscaping will have to wait for warmer weather, the Centre will begin accepting palliative individuals to the residential area starting March 18. “It’s been a long journey”, says Jack Cooper, Board President. “The founding members of The Dorothy Ley Hospice had a vision for a residential home that began in 1984. Today, I’m humbled and proud to be here to see that dream become a reality.”

The Dorothy Ley Hospice is a volunteer-driven, staff managed organization offering compassionate care to people living with the challenges of a life-limiting illness or loss and helps them live their lives to the fullest.

- 30 -

Contact: Fran McBride
Strategy and Innovations Director
416-626-0116 ext. 234