

# HospiceMatters

SPRING/SUMMER 2023 NEWS AND STORIES FROM ROWCROFT HOSPICE



## Supporting families and children

**INSIDE**

**'WHAT MATTERS?'  
CONVERSATIONS  
A WAY FORWARD  
THROUGH GRIEF**

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# Welcome

Welcome to the spring/summer edition of *Hospice Matters* magazine, proudly sharing news and stories from Rowcroft Hospice.



The cost of living crisis, the public sector strikes and the pressures facing our national health service make these tough times

for everyone, but especially for people and their loved ones living with a life-limiting illness. At a time when families are at their most vulnerable, they are faced with endless additional worries that make an already difficult situation even harder.

Never before have Rowcroft's services been so needed. As we respond to the needs of an increasingly ageing population, not only are we seeing an escalating demand for our vital care, but we're also noticing that our patients are facing more complex symptoms, often from multiple conditions.

I'm neverendingly heartened to see Rowcroft's teams respond with abundant professionalism and compassion.

*"I'm especially proud of the team's expert communication skills that keep patients in control, loved ones included, and children's needs heard throughout every step of a family's journey."*

I'm in awe of these inspirational individuals, and also to you for supporting this crucial work. Because without you, none of this would be possible.

Thank you for your support.

**Vicky Bartlett**

Director of Patient Care

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**Keep in touch** @RowcroftHospice 'Rowcroft Hospice' @RowcroftHospice  
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# Hospice news

News in brief from around Rowcroft



## Hospice at Home award

Huge congratulations to our amazing Hospice at Home Team who recently won an award in the 'choice and control' category at the NHS South West Personalised Care Awards.

"As a hospice, all our teams give personalised care that places patients and their loved ones at the heart of their care choices, so it's great to have this recognised at such an important external awards ceremony," says Rowcroft's Hospice at Home Manager Karenne Weaver, pictured left in photo.

## Thinking of updating your Will?

During Rowcroft's Make a Will Week between 15–19 May 2023, our participating solicitors in South Devon will waive their entire Will-making fee in return for a suggested donation to the hospice. For further information, see: [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/maww](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/maww) or call 01803 217405.

## Corporate Club update

We are thrilled to announce that we are launching a new corporate club for 2023–24 and would be keen to hear from companies who would like to find out more about how they can make a difference in their communities. Please call Lisa on 01803 210821 or email [lisa.whittaker@rowcrofthospice.org.uk](mailto:lisa.whittaker@rowcrofthospice.org.uk) for more information.

Alliance Build Company – one of Rowcroft's 40@40 Corporate Club members – recently hosted a 'pig-racing' fundraiser at The Divers Arms in Babbacombe. ▶





▲ A mock-up of the remodelled Inpatient Unit

## Enhancing and extending our care

Torbay Council planners have voted in support of the hospice's plans to enhance and extend our care subject to finalising conditions and our ability to raise the vital funds to make it happen! At the heart of the hospice's ambition is the remodelling of the Inpatient Unit to create an environment that reflects a family home, giving patients even greater independence, privacy and choice during those precious moments with loved ones.

## Meals with meaning

Since its launch just two years ago, Devon Farm Kitchen has smashed the 55k mark in the number of frozen meals delivered to happy customers across the region. This is a tremendous achievement for such a young social enterprise!



## What's not to love about our lottery!

Play  
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Play Rowcroft's lottery for as little as £1 per week to be in with the chance of winning £1,000 every Friday, plus 21 other prizes including a twice-yearly jackpot of up to £4000! Your support will make the world of difference for local patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families. Join our lottery at: [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/lottery](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/lottery) or call 01803 210842.

"For each meal sold, every penny of profit goes to support Rowcroft Hospice in delivering specialist care to people with life-limiting illnesses," says Joe Bradshaw, Devon Farm Kitchen Manager. "Our delivery area now extends across over 500 square miles of South Devon, with our menu offering a choice of over 60 dishes." See: [www.devonfarmkitchen.co.uk](http://www.devonfarmkitchen.co.uk)

# Grandad's bears

A story of how teddy bears brought comfort and connection to children after the loss of their grandad.



▲ John and his wife Karen with their five grandchildren. For every patient we care for, there are often many other close family members affected, including children – all of whom are offered specialist tailored support from teams across the hospice. Please help us to continue caring for children by donating to our Hopes and Dreams Appeal today at: [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/donate](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/donate)

'Number 1, Number 2, Number 3, Number 4 and Number 5' is how John jokingly referred to his five grandchildren. He had a wonderful sense of humour and he was an important part of his grandchildren's lives. Soon after John had passed away in Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit, the children were each given a Rowcroft bear (with their unique number on its back). The children called these 'grandad's bears'; they knew that with these bears by their side, they could feel close to their grandad forever.

"Dad was a big character and we were such a close family," say John's daughters Becki and Katie. "When he was diagnosed with sinus cancer, everyone was affected. It was hard to know how to break it to the children – when to tell them and what to say, especially when his appearance began to change. We explained that Grandad was going to die but that they could still visit him at the hospice and ask as many questions as they wanted.



"Rowcroft supported us throughout this whole process and it really helped. They provided us with advice and booklets which explained how children feel when someone they love is affected by life-limiting illness and how best to support the child through this."

Helping children to capture and call upon memories as part of the adjustment to loss is a key part of the hospice's work with children. To support with this, Rowcroft offers a range of important tools such as memory cards, memory boxes, journals and teddy bears.

Rowcroft's social workers liaise closely with families, ensuring that children are included and that their voices are heard, giving parents the confidence and skills to communicate, and signposting to a wider range of resources and support.

"All the research and evidence points to the fact that children manage things much better when they're involved and included, and where there are open and honest conversations," says Emily Madsen,

Rowcroft's Social Work Team Leader.

"We recognise that a death in the family affects everyone. Just because children may not be able to verbalise their anguish, they are still feeling it and they understand that something very difficult is happening. We support them to express that

if they want to, or to ask questions, or to be involved. We work alongside families to help ensure that children have a choice in things and that communication is as clear as possible."

*"When Dad died, it was important that the children had something more to remember him by. Rowcroft provided the teddy bears, and these symbols of Grandad carry enormous meaning and comfort. They say 'I can cuddle Grandad, he's still there' and they cuddle the bears at night. They've still got something of Grandad left."*





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# News from Rowcroft's shops

## Feel-good shopping in Preston



We're thrilled at the successful launch of our brand new 'lifestyle' shop in Torquay Road, Preston. The store sells predominantly preloved items including gorgeous clothing and accessories, stunning homeware and furniture, and a wonderful range of books, toys and DVDs – all at great value prices. All profits raised from the outlet go to caring for patients across South Devon.

There's also a beautiful in-store café lounge coming soon – where you'll be able to treat yourself to coffee and locally baked cakes or a scrumptious lunch. The menu will boast a mouth-watering selection of delicious meals including homemade soup, artisan pizza, sourdough toasties, quiches and tasty salads.

▲ Local legend Patrick the Pony was the guest of honour at the opening of the new lifestyle shop in Preston recently. Read more about how Patrick the Pony is supporting Rowcroft's patients and families on page 19.

## Donate your unwanted goods and care for local patients

If you're having a spring clear-out, then please think of Rowcroft and help us provide essential end-of-life care for local people. Our shops across South Devon welcome good quality donations of all kinds, including ladies and gents clothing and accessories, books, homeware, toys, furniture, white goods and electricals. Every item you donate makes such a difference for our local community.

For more information about donating goods to Rowcroft, please see: [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/shops](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/shops)

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# "Walking with my patients from day one"

Asked to imagine the day-to-day life of a nurse, most people would picture a busy hospital setting or a GP surgery. But at Rowcroft, did you know that the majority of our nurses work out in the community, far and wide across South Devon, in people's homes and even in care homes?

Here Julie Laing, one of Rowcroft's Community Nurse Specialists, sheds some light on her role in helping people with life-limiting conditions to maintain their independence and wellbeing, as their illness progresses and their symptoms change.

"My role is about assessing where each patient is on their illness trajectory, and working out what support they may need, for example, physiotherapy, special equipment for the home, expert advice or medication," explains Julie.

*"Supporting a patient to manage their symptoms is about helping them to be comfortable, but it's often about much more than that – it's about enhancing the quality of life."*



"People are all different and have different goals and wishes. It's all absolutely centred around each individual person – I'm walking with my patients, and that's the crucial point."

## The gift that keeps on giving

To support this amazing work, please would you consider making a regular donation to Rowcroft? Go to [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/donate](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/donate) or call 01803 217642.



Each year our Community Team of nurses, physiotherapists, social workers and other specialist practitioners provide expert support to over **1400** patients and their loved ones.

# A way forward through grief

After 32 happy years together, in February 2022 David and Ruth Archer's wonderful world was shattered when David was diagnosed with life-limiting pancreatic cancer. Here, Ruth describes how Rowcroft's bereavement support and nature project helped her to face the future following David's passing.



"When David was diagnosed, the devastation we felt was indescribable," says Ruth. "Rowcroft from the outset provided crucial kindness, advice

and support to both of us at the worst possible time of our lives.

"After losing David, I was completely overwhelmed by grief and found myself in a very dark place. Rowcroft offered me one-to-one bereavement

counselling to help me cope with the gaping hole left in my heart and the myriad of complex, distressing emotions.

"I also attended Rowcroft's pilot group project, 'Space for Nature'. Each session had a different activity, for example, we took mindfulness walks in the beautiful grounds, made music, had a tea ceremony, learned about Rowcroft's bees, and worked with clay.

"The support and kindness I was given were instrumental in helping me start to find a sense of purpose and a way forward at the lowest point in my life."





# Love in full bloom

When Pat Willcocks was told she had less than three weeks to live due to cervical cancer, she took the decision to spend her final weeks in the comfort of Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit.

"Mum was such a loving, kind person with a good sense of humour," remembers Pat's daughter Debbie. "She lived life to the full, cared about other people and was well loved by everyone.

"Mum adored the gardens at Rowcroft, and the staff kindly took her outside in her bed to spend time surrounded by the flowers, plants, birds and trees. The Rowcroft angels gave her outstanding care and love and made her feel comfortable and supported. She was laughing until her last moments. I dedicated a flower in the 'Meadow of Memories' for Mum as she would've loved the wildflowers."

*"I was able to be with Mum when she passed, holding her hand with a nurse while she took her last breath. I cannot thank Rowcroft's amazing people enough and they will always hold a place in my heart for their special care and love."*



▲ Pat loved the gardens at Cockington.

To find out how to dedicate a flower in our beautiful Meadow of Memories please see page 20.

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Hundreds of people attended our Light up a Light celebration, dedicating a light to loved ones lost and raising a fantastic **£29,288**.

At The Big Tackle eight-mile walk we raised a fabulous **£75,000** for the hospice.

Over 6,000 amazing pupils and teachers from 34 schools took part in Rowcroft's Rudolph Run, raising **over £35,000**.

A whopping **£40,000** was raised at Rowcroft's Ruby Ball at The Grand Hotel in Torquay.



# EVERY PENNY RAISED MAKES SUCH A DIFFERENCE

We'd like to say a big heartfelt thank you to everyone for supporting our recent campaigns and events and making a huge difference to patients and their families across South Devon. Here are just a few examples.

Our amazing 40@40 Corporate Club members have raised an astounding **£85,662** over the past 12 months through a range of ideas such as fancy dress sponsored walks and quiz nights.



Rowcroft's Hospice at Home Appeal has so far raised a fabulous **£410,000**, enabling us to recruit more nurses and healthcare assistants to care for patients in their last two weeks of life.

Around 1,200 children visited our Santa's Grotto at Marldon Christmas Tree Farm raising **over £20,000**.



*K.J. Lack* 

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# 'What Matters?' conversations



Many of us find it difficult to talk with loved ones about what matters to us at the end of our life. Too often we put these conversations in the 'too difficult to face' pile and shy away from them because they can create uncomfortable emotions, or we fear hurting someone who isn't ready. However, we have learned from research that actually many people do wish to talk and plan for their futures, and welcome the chance to share their thoughts with someone willing to listen.

"While it initially takes courage and confidence to discuss death because this is still a taboo topic, talking about it helps to normalise these conversations so that they become a part of our lives," explains Rowcroft's Education Facilitator Catherine Hughes. "And sharing what really matters with others about our future and our decisions, means we are far more likely to have our wishes fulfilled as well as providing some comfort for family and friends in helping achieve what was wanted.

"By starting these conversations early, we give ourselves a voice for the future when we may no longer be able to speak for ourselves. It's also really helpful for those who are caring for us to know what matters to us so that our future care can be shaped by what's important to us."

For practical tips about how to start a conversation with those close to you, please see: [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/planning](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/planning).



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# Pony therapy

Meet Patrick the Pony, VIP. He's a Very Important Pony who brings therapeutic benefits to patients and families on his regular trips to the hospice. His lovable four-legged presence, complete with fancy shoes and his Rowcroft rug, is the source of much joy and comfort.

"Originally, I asked Patrick to visit a patient who had a great love of horses," says Claire Hellier, one of Rowcroft's Clinical Nurse Specialists. "The success of Patrick's bedside visit led to more visits to other patients in the Inpatient Unit, with really positive feedback from both the patients and their families.

"Patrick brings a sense of wellbeing and an aura of magic, creating unforgettable memories for loved ones. He also provides patients with some respite from this stressful period of their lives, to connect with the non-medical world again and to forget about their illness for a short while."



◀ Rowcroft's inpatient Jenny enjoyed a surprise visit from Patrick the Pony. Her daughter Karen said: "Seeing her smile and talk to Patrick leaves a really nice image for us to remember."

*"Specially trained therapy ponies like Patrick have a unique way of calming the nervous system, helping with pain and anxiety, and bringing smiles to all."*



# Get involved!

We're delighted to offer a fabulous choice of fundraising events listed here, or if you have your own ideas, then we'd love to hear from you. To get involved or to find out more, please call our Fundraising Team today on 01803 217450 or visit [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk)

## May and the rest of summer

### OPEN GARDENS

Our generous fundraising community will be hosting a wonderful season of beautiful open gardens to enjoy throughout summer 2023.



## June

### 14–18 June

#### THE ALPS TREK

Discover the Alps in this breath-taking journey that will take you through the beautiful Mount Blanc region where you'll enjoy magnificent views of stunning cliffs, gorgeous waterfalls and striking glaciers.



## July

### 7–9 July

#### JURASSIC COAST DISCOVERY

Join us for this two-day trek exploring the awesome Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dramatic coastal views and world-famous landmarks await!

### 9 July

#### MEADOW OF MEMORIES

Each year, a glorious wildflower meadow is sown in the gardens of the hospice to celebrate the lives of the people we love and miss. We invite you to dedicate a flower in our beautiful meadow, in memory of someone special, and to join us at our Meadow of Memories celebration at 2pm on Sunday 9 July. To dedicate a flower, please go to [www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/meadow](http://www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/meadow) or telephone 01803 217642.



## August

**5 August**

### **WINGWALK**

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**5–6 August**

### **SNOWDON AT NIGHT**

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## September

**6–10 September**

### **THE ALPS TREK**

See 14–18 June for details.

**16 September**

### **LET'S DANCE**

Rock the day and night away in the dancing marathon of your life at South Devon's ultimate dance event – Let's Dance! Get into the groove with your friends in this seven-hour sponsored dancing challenge where you'll be led through an awesome mix of different music genres.



## Dates throughout 2023

### **SKYDIVE**

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### **SUP – YOUR WAY**

In this fun stand up paddle board event, you create your own route and paddle 5km, 10km or another distance of your choice at any time that suits you this year.



### **RIDE FOR ROWCROFT**

This event is perfect for cyclists looking to complete their first challenge, beat a personal best or simply enjoy a leisurely countryside ride. Select any date, choose your route, get sponsored, and Ride for Rowcroft!



# Volunteer news

## BBC's 'One Big Thank you' for Chad

Congratulations to Rowcroft's amazing volunteer Chad Nelson who received a 'One Big Thank You' on the BBC's One Show earlier in the year for giving his all to so many organisations around Torbay, including Rowcroft.

At just 17, Chad was diagnosed with a rare brain tumour that's taken him through five rounds of surgery, left him with many challenges including short term memory loss, and turned his life upside down. Chad's wonderful sense of humour, positive life-loving attitude and his caring nature are an inspiration to us all, and he is one of our fabulous volunteers in Ella's Mobile Café at Torquay Harbour.

"The last few years have been a rough ride," says Chad. "I had a career all lined up with the Navy's Royal Fleet Auxiliary, but the brain tumour stopped me in my tracks. Since being diagnosed, my whole week is now geared around volunteering and raising funds for charities.



*"It gives me a warm fuzzy feeling doing this worthwhile work. It's a massive part of my life now."*

"I absolutely love volunteering for Rowcroft. I'm a people person, so it's great that I get to meet lots of interesting people and chat to them in my role at the mobile café. What I aim to do every day is to make a positive difference to people's lives."

---

## Confident, chatty and computer savvy? We have just the role for you!



We're looking for volunteers with excellent communication and computer skills to help us with researching and contacting local groups. As an integral part of the Community Fundraising Team, you'll also visit the groups to talk about Rowcroft and encourage them to take part in fundraising activities. Please contact Debbi on 01803 210833 or [debbi.shotton@rowcrofthospice.org.uk](mailto:debbi.shotton@rowcrofthospice.org.uk)

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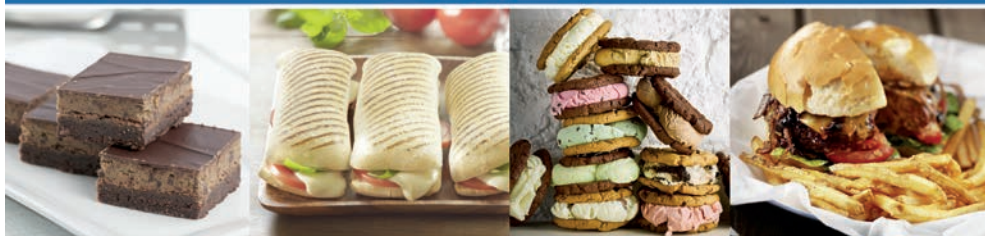
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