

HospiceMatters

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

NEWS AND STORIES FROM ROWCROFT HOSPICE

Rising to the challenges

INSIDE

NEW HORIZONS
WITH HOSPICE
AT HOME
DEDICATE A
FLOWER IN
MEMORY

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Welcome

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



Through the dark and difficult times of this pandemic, our devoted teams on the frontline of care have had to cope with unbelievable challenges,

including an unprecedented demand, particularly for our community and Hospice at Home services, that has stretched our care teams to their limits.

In the ten months after the pandemic hit, our Hospice at Home service – that provides essential care and comfort to patients at home in their last two weeks of life – saw referrals increase to over 500 (up from 440 for the whole of the previous year). As a charity, we have also suffered from a significant loss of income due to the

“ I see bright rays of light on the horizon ”

temporary closure of our shops and the cancellation of fundraising events.

While we know that the vast majority of people would prefer to die at home, in Devon less than a quarter of people achieve this. But through our Hospice at Home Appeal, we're hoping to expand our vital Hospice at Home service by recruiting more nurses and healthcare assistants – so that we can care for more patients in the comfort of their own homes and help more people to fulfil their wish to be at home when they die.

Because of the incredible support from our local community, I see bright rays of light on the horizon.

Karenne Weaver
Hospice at Home Manager,
Rowcroft Hospice

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Rowcroft Hospice, Avenue Road, Torquay TQ2 5LS, Registered Charity Number: 282723
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Hospice news

News in brief from around Rowcroft

COVID update

In order to protect our patients, families, volunteers and employees, we have completed the roll-out of the COVID vaccine for most of our frontline health and social care staff. Of course, we're still following all the government safety guidance and procedures to keep everyone safe.

We'd like to say a massive thank you to everyone who supported our COVID Appeal. We are so grateful for your kind donations at such a difficult time. Your generosity enabled our clinical teams to continue providing expert care through the pandemic for patients with life-limiting illnesses, and you helped families to make the most of precious moments with loved ones.

Devon Farm Kitchen

Devon Farm Kitchen is an innovative new business delivering deliciously satisfying frozen meals to people in their own homes, with all profits going to support the hospice. Launched in March, Devon Farm Kitchen offers a mouth-watering range of high quality, nutritious meals and desserts – all handmade using the finest locally sourced ingredients. For further information, please see: www.devonfarmkitchen.co.uk



Shop online with Rowcroft

Rowcroft is ramping up our online sales big-time with the launch of two new online shops at Etsy and Depop – to complement our existing eBay shop. These online shops offer fabulous pre-loved and sustainable women's fashion and menswear, including a wonderful range of vintage clothing and some well-known designer brands, all hand-picked from the kind and generous donations of our wonderful South Devon community. Search 'Rowcroft Hospice' at www.etsy.com/uk and www.depop.com.



Grand Gestures Club

To help fund the expansion of our Hospice at Home Appeal, we have launched an exciting new supporter club – the Grand Gestures Club, so that we can care for more patients and families in their homes across South Devon. Members will make a significant contribution of £1000 a year for three years which, when gift-aided, will pay for the care of one Hospice at Home patient each year. Membership of the Grand Gestures Club will make it easier for supporters to forge a deeper and more involved relationship with Rowcroft and they will receive regular updates about the Appeal. To find out more, please email Alison Upton at: alison.upton@rowcrofthospice.org.uk or call her on 01803 210835.

New beds for the Inpatient Unit

We're thrilled to announce that our Bed Appeal has smashed its fundraising target, enabling us to purchase 14 much-needed new beds for our Inpatient Unit, including some pull-out beds so that patients can share their bed with a loved one – giving patients and their loved ones the chance to lie together for precious cuddles. All of these newly purchased beds are vital pieces of equipment in the expert care that we provide, and they will bring



great comfort to our patients. Thanks so much to everyone who donated. We are so very grateful.

Exploring new horizons with Hospice at Home



Rowcroft's Hospice at Home team cares for patients at home in their last two weeks of life. Over the last year, the team has seen a huge increase in demand for care, due to the COVID crisis and the needs of an increasingly ageing local population.



Last year, Senior Healthcare Assistant Donna Powell transferred from Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit to lend a hand in the Hospice at

Home team. Donna fell in love with the role and subsequently became a fully-fledged member of the team, travelling widely across South Devon to care for patients. Here she reveals what motivated her to go into nursing, and what it's been like caring for families through the pandemic.

"I went into nursing to care for others. Having fought off cancer twice in my life with the help of expert care and treatment, I wanted to give something

back – and my work with Rowcroft enables me to do this. Rowcroft is such a special place, full of dedicated people who go above and beyond. I see on a daily basis the amazing care and support that is given and the invaluable service that we provide both in the community and in the Inpatient Unit.

"The Hospice at Home team is a small but dedicated team providing end-of-life care for people in their own homes across 300 square miles of South Devon. One of the things I love about my job is that one day I could be driving across our beautiful Dartmoor (in all weathers) dodging sheep and ponies, and the next day I could be catching the ferry back from Dartmouth after visiting a patient in Slapton or Strete.

"I see on a daily basis the amazing care and support that is given and the invaluable service that we provide both in the community and in the Inpatient Unit "

"As a Senior Healthcare Assistant within the team, I offer palliative care to patients, and by spending time with them, I really get to know any issues or fears they may have. I also assist families with any practical help and support they may need. Sometimes the very act of holding a hand or just sitting and listening to a patient or their loved one 'off-load' is all that is needed, and a big hug. Obviously physical contact is not allowed at the moment. I really struggle with this as I believe human touch goes a long way and plays an important part when offering emotional support. I'm a big hugger!

"After visiting COVID-positive patients and wearing a full set of personal protective equipment (PPE) including gowns, gloves and face shields (or in my case a mask with a filter that makes me look like and sound like



You can make a difference too

By making a donation, you can help care for patients at home at the end of their lives. Please make a donation to our Hospice at Home Appeal today at: www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/home

Darth Vader's wife!), I return hot and thirsty to the hospice to immediately shower and change into clean scrubs or uniforms. This can happen several times a day and/or night. It is hot and dehydrating (as I'm unable to drink while wearing the mask) and it can be exhausting wearing the full PPE. My skin does suffer, but it enables me to keep safe and continue to help and support those who need us.



"As a member of the Hospice at Home team, it is such a privilege and an honour to be welcomed into a patient's home at such an emotional and vulnerable time in their lives. We go above and beyond whenever possible, because we are all passionate about what we do."

Donna's dedication to the hospice is taking her to new heights. On 10 July, she's jumping out of a plane to raise crucial funds for the hospice! If you'd like to sponsor Donna's skydive, you can do so at: www.justgiving.com/donna-powell13

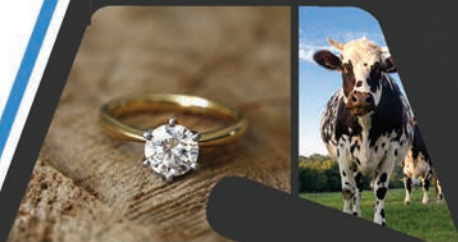
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Our super trooper Ella's Mobile Café

Rowcroft's iconic vintage H-van – Ella's Mobile Café – has been a little trooper through this pandemic by raising vital funds for the hospice.

Serving a delicious range of teas, Devon-roasted barista coffees, hot chocolate, iced coffees, locally baked cakes and light lunches, she's been out and about at wellbeing days at Newton Abbot and Totnes hospitals, and she's been brightening people's days at Torquay Harbour, offering scrumptious treats to those on daily walks.

Affectionately named Ella's (after Ella Rowcroft – whose generosity led to the foundation of the hospice) the quirky 48-year-old van, was lovingly restored over recent years by students from South Devon College, with support from a range of local organisations.



As lockdown restrictions lift, Ella's Mobile Café can be spotted on the slipway at Torquay Harbour and is available for hire to add a little vintage glamour to celebrations such as parties, weddings and other social gatherings. So if you're planning an event, please do get in touch. Ella can stay for as little as two hours, or for the day, or she can party the night away with you! Please see: www.ellasmobilecafe.co.uk



Ella's Café Lounge at Chelston will reopen from the 17 May when we can finally meet inside again to enjoy on-trend light lunches including wonderful handmade pizzas. Our Chelston café also plans to offer evening takeaways. All profits go to providing essential care and support for our local patients and families.



While we know it's been such a tough year for all our customers, volunteers and staff in our shops and cafes across the region, we're so grateful to everyone for supporting us through this pandemic.

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Finding a way through pain

In end-of-life care, managing pain successfully is critical. It enables patients to live out their final days in comfort and peace; and it enables families to make the most of precious last moments.

Pain is often managed using an essential piece of kit called a syringe driver – a small battery-powered pump that delivers medication at a continual rate throughout the day and night. Gently pumping medicine via a soft plastic tube, syringe drivers are essential for people who are finding it difficult to swallow or to absorb oral medicines.

"Syringe drivers are crucial in managing pain, and we use them in our Inpatient Unit and the community," says Dr Gill Horne, Rowcroft's Director of Patient Care. "Having syringe drivers for use in patients' homes often makes it possible for our patients to receive care in their own homes. In 2019, we were able to buy 16 new syringe drivers for the hospice, thanks to

the amazing generosity of our local community who responded to our Syringe Driver Appeal."

Lorraine Lewis from Torquay was admitted to Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit in December 2021. She found the syringe driver to be particularly effective at helping to control the pain.

"Pain management is the main thing, because pain is there all the time," says Lorraine. "So long as you've got the right dosage of everything, that is half the problem. When it's working well, I'm not in any pain. You want to try as much as humanly possible to be as much as you were like before all of this took hold of you.

"I've felt kindness ever since I've been here. It's a very nice and relaxing atmosphere, and the staff and doctors are lovely. With this pandemic going on, I'm very lucky to be here. Everyone is working remarkably well and keeping their spirits up."

We are extremely grateful to Lorraine for letting us share her words with the permission of her family, following her death in March 2021.

Rowcroft's Meadow of Memories

Meadow
of memories

Dedicate a flower in memory of someone you love

Each spring, a beautiful wildflower 'Meadow of Memories' is sown in the gardens of Rowcroft Hospice. The flowers in the meadow are dedicated to those who are no longer with us, and the meadow is a touching symbol of love, remembrance, hope and peace – all the more meaningful through this pandemic.

Rowcroft invites you to dedicate a flower in the meadow, as an inspiring way of remembering and celebrating an adored person in your life. Your flower will bloom between May and July and the meadow will become the most soothing place to visit to reflect on special times spent with those who are dearly loved and deeply missed. You are warmly invited to come and enjoy the meadow at any time.

On Sunday 11 July, we'd love you to join our Meadow of Memories celebration – an online event at www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/meadow – where you can listen to inspiring readings, poignant poems and restful music, and reflect on precious memories. If restrictions



allow, we may also hold an event at the meadow itself.

How your dedication will blossom

When creating your dedication, you are invited to make a donation to support people with life-limiting illnesses in South Devon. Your donation will make such a difference in helping Rowcroft to care for people at a time when they need us most, enabling families to make every day the best day possible and to create special memories together.

Everyone is able to make a dedication – not just families cared for by Rowcroft.

To make your dedication, please go to: www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/meadow or telephone 01803 217450.

Angie and her sister Madsie first discovered the beauty of the wildflower Meadow of Memories when they visited their mum who was being cared for in Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit. They took great comfort from walking through the colourful meadow in the hospice gardens.

"The vibrant colours of the flowers, the bees and the singing of the birds brought Madsie and I great peace," says Angie. "We took that peace to mum, by recording the birdsong on our phones and playing it to her. Mum spent her last day in the hospice garden with the sounds of nature all around her and her family there."

Following their mum's passing, the sisters visited the meadow each year, as a special way of remembering and honouring their dear mum's life. But then sadly, aged just 54, Madsie was diagnosed with breast cancer. Angie's instinct as a district nurse and a 'Queen's Nurse' was to care for her little sister herself, but she accepted help from Rowcroft who organised care for Madsie at home.

"The Rowcroft team were a breath of fresh air. They reassured and supported me throughout Madsie's last few days and gave me



▲ Angie pictured left with her sister Madsie

permission to be a sister as opposed to her nurse. Thanks to Rowcroft, we had lots of laughs together and we were so lucky to have that special time. I was the first to hold Madsie as she was born at home and I felt so privileged to be the last to hold her when she died.

"I donate to the Meadow of Memories each year because of the connection with my mum and with Madsie and because the meadow is a much-needed special place for peace and reflection. Rowcroft's care has had a lasting impact on me and my whole family; it gave us precious time with our loved ones."





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A Lottery that changes lives

Julie Fletcher, Rowcroft's Lottery Coordinator describes the impact of a regular weekly entry to the Rowcroft Lottery.



"I'd like to express my heartfelt thanks to all our amazing supporters who play our Lottery each week. I can't tell you how much we as a

charity appreciate your regular weekly Lottery entries – and during this last difficult year your support has meant more than ever. Thanks to you, we have been able to help local people with life-limiting illnesses through the pandemic; we have been able to provide expert care, support and comfort to patients facing the hardest times imaginable; and we have been able to help families to make the most of every precious moment. Quite simply, we have changed lives. Last year, Rowcroft's

"We may not be able to add days to lives, but with your help, we can add life to days."

Lottery raised enough to fund the entire Hospice at Home service for more than seven months, enabling Rowcroft's nurses to care for over 260 patients in the last two weeks of life, supporting them and their families in their homes 24/7 across South Devon.

"If you'd like to sign up, you can do so at www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/lottery or please call our friendly Lottery Team on 01803 210842. Playing for just £1 per week, you are in with the chance of winning some fantastic prizes – £1000 every Friday and a roll-over prize of up to £3000."

A legacy for the future

When drawing up your Will, once you have made provisions for your loved ones and paid your debts and expenses, you may wish to consider leaving a gift to Rowcroft. This enables you to leave a legacy for the future – a legacy that makes such a difference in providing care, support and comfort to families across South Devon for generations to come. A legacy of kindness, generosity, compassion and love. If you haven't already made a Will, then you can do so this September during Make a Will Week. For one week only, from 13–17 September, local participating solicitors will waive their entire fee for simple Will-making (or updating simple Wills) in return for a donation to the hospice. For further information, please see our website at: www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/mawww

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Community beacon for learning

Although we cannot currently reach every patient who needs us in South Devon, our Education Team is continuing to share its expertise on end-of-life care with health and social care professionals across the region to benefit more patients and families. During the pandemic, our team has continued to act as a beacon of light, offering diverse and specialist online training and resources about caring for patients at the end of their lives.



▲ Kerry Macnish,
Head of Education

"The greatest impact for our team has been to step up to offer online learning as an alternative to our face to face workshops and courses" says Kerry Macnish, Rowcroft's Head of Education. "We started with a small weekly live webinar between Sept and Dec 2020 and now 91% of our teaching is online.

"The feedback from our online training has been really positive. Some participants have told us that online training is easier for them to attend without the travel time, however others are missing the face to face longer workshops in our beautiful surroundings too.

"We have delivered a range of topics supporting best practice in end-of-life care and some additional new sessions to support health care workers with

Covid 19. These include a series of events about communication such as sharing significant news by phone, something clinical teams have had to do during the pandemic." The Rowcroft website has a host of resources for both professionals and hosts the extensive carers library so please do look.

"I'm pleased to say that we are continuing to reach hundreds of learners, 400 have attended our 33 webinars and online teaching. We are also seeing new people registering for our programme using our new online booking system," says Kerry.

As a charity Rowcroft provides this training free of charge, made possible because of the generosity and support of our local community.

"Your training is absolutely first class! I know from personal experience how you practise what you teach and what a difference it makes. Thank you." Course participant

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Making the most of precious moments

Last year, when Martin Drein was alone in hospital with just days to live, his family was unable to visit him due to COVID restrictions. But with the help of Rowcroft's Hospice at Home Team, Martin was able to transfer back to his home in Paignton, to be cared for in his final days with his loved ones by his side.

It was the expert care provided by the Hospice at Home team and the loving comfort of having the family around that made the world of difference in helping Martin to pass away peacefully – he was able to feel the warmth and love of his family at a time when he needed it most, and his loved ones were left with treasured memories to cherish.

"What it meant to be able to see him and talk to him in the final days is hard to put into words," says Martin's son Joe. "It meant we could say goodbye on our terms and in our way and it allowed him to be in a place where he was able to relax and be himself rather than spending

his final days in hospital. It gave us those final few days to get to hear his laugh again, see his smile again and enjoy his company again. We were able to have our family as a whole again for one last time.

"The team were incredibly caring. My dad felt at ease with the Rowcroft team so there was no awkwardness or uncertainty, which meant he was comfortable and relaxed. This meant the world to us. Because he was relaxed, he could be his usual, larger-than-life self. We will be forever in Rowcroft's debt for giving us such an amazing service and enabling us to spend those final moments with my dad."

Get involved

Thank you to our amazing supporters who take part in our fundraising events each year to raise much-needed income for the hospice. Your support is vital in helping us care for South Devon patients and families who are facing the hardest days imaginable. We're delighted to offer the fabulous selection of events listed here, or if you have your own fundraising ideas, then we'd love to hear from you. To get involved or find out more, please call our Fundraising Team today on 01803 217450 or visit www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk

May

RIDE FOR ROWCROFT

Join our cycle event – in your own way – throughout May. Take on our challenging Haytor route or one of your own creation. *Ride for a loved one. Ride for your community. Ride for Rowcroft.*



June

4 June–31 August LONDON TO PARIS CYCLE

This four-day, 311-mile bike ride is the challenge of a lifetime, taking you from the glorious English countryside to the quiet French country lanes. The pièce de résistance is the final cycle up the Champs Élysées before reaching the Eiffel Tower.

19–20 June

THE MALE TRAIL – YOUR WAY

Rowcroft's men-only event, The Male Trail, is back for 2021, and this year you can do it your way! Held over two days, this sponsored walk gives you the chance to get together with family and friends, take a route of your choice and raise crucial funds for the hospice.



July

3 July THE SLEEP WALK

Get ready for the return of South Devon's much loved Sleep Walk, this year's theme is super heroes! A fabulous female-only sponsored walk, where you can select a five-or ten-mile route raising funds for Rowcroft with every step.





10 July
(other dates available)
SKYDIVE

Experience the exhilarating thrill of skydiving while helping people in your local community. Our partners at Skydive Buzz offer 'jump for free' schemes for anyone jumping for charity throughout 2021.

11 July
MEADOW OF MEMORIES

Dedicate a flower in our 'Meadow of Memories' as an inspirational way of remembering, honouring and celebrating the life of someone you love dearly and miss deeply. We also invite you to join our online celebration on Sunday 11 July.



August

27 August 2021
(other dates available)
WINGWALK

Take to the skies on the wings of a 1940s Boeing Stearman biplane for an experience of a life-time! You will be teamed up with an experienced display pilot as you soar through the skies on a ten-minute ride. Dates available throughout 2021.

September

SUP – YOUR WAY

At any time during the month of September, glide your way across South Devon's beautiful waters on a standup paddle board to raise essential funds for patient care. Create your own route – of 5km, 10km or another distance of your choice.



12 September
TORBAY HALF MARATHON AND 10K

Join us for the 28th Ocean Healthcare Torbay Half Marathon – a popular seaside event consisting of a traffic-free two-lap route starting and finishing on Paignton Green. And this year there is a new 10k route!



13–17 September
MAKE A WILL WEEK

Make or update your Will with one of our local supporting solicitors who waive 100 per cent of their fee in return for a donation to Rowcroft.



November

4–9 November
SAHARA DESERT TREK

A sensational four-day trek across one of the world's largest deserts – the Sahara – taking you on a climb to the top of the enormous Chigaga Dunes where you'll witness the sunrise over the desert.

Thank you to our amazing volunteers



▲ Gilli Pattie,
Volunteering
Coordinator

I am in awe of our incredible volunteers for their amazing dedication and support through this pandemic, and I find it difficult to express my gratitude to you all. I know some volunteers have been able to continue with your roles through the COVID crisis, while others have been waiting patiently in the wings until you are able to return. I'd like to extend a massive thank you to everyone – thanks so much for being there for us.

For those of you who are at home and waiting to resume normal service, please keep safe and take care of yourselves.

We look forward to welcoming you back before too long. Let us hope that the vaccine rollout continues apace and brings some peace of mind for us all.

Katie swaps career in architecture for nursing

Mum of two Katie Herrity is leaving her career in architecture and pursuing her dream of being a nurse. Inspired by the care teams who looked after her mum in Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit, and by the healthcare professionals who saved her daughter's life in Bristol Children's Hospital, Katie has been volunteering in Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit since November 2020.

"I wanted to give something back – to say thank you to Rowcroft for looking after my mum at the end of her life and providing her with such good care, and to say thank you to the team at Bristol who looked after my daughter and saved her life," says Katie. "So I started volunteering in Rowcroft's Inpatient Unit. It's such a special place



and it always feels wonderful working alongside the team who are so devoted to their work, and it feels great being part of the dedicated care they provide."

Katie is hoping to start her nursing degree at Torbay Hospital this September.

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