



Finding Hope in the Hardest Moments

When Danny Sinagra lost his wife Maria, his world seemed to stop. "There was no way I was going to get any pets. No way I was going to volunteer. I wasn't even getting out of bed to check the mail," he recalls. "I was lost."

His home felt frozen in time, filled with Maria's things and the TV shows they watched together. "People said, 'get rid of it,'" Danny says. "But I'm keeping everything the way it is. I still sleep in the same bed, watch the same shows, and talk to her picture. It makes me feel closer to her."

Danny didn't begin to move forward until he connected with Carefor Hospice Cornwall's Grief and Bereavement Services. Shannon Ball, a Family & Patient Support Counsellor, met him early on. "Right from the beginning, Danny was open to trying support," she says. "Just showing up is one of the biggest factors in healing."

"At first, I didn't see it getting better, but every week people would say, 'It's going to get better, Danny.' And one day, it did."

At their first meeting, Shannon gave him a small stone engraved with the word "Hope". "That rock changed everything," Danny says. He began collecting others: Faith, tiger's eye, an amethyst in Maria's favourite colour, creating a small shrine that brought him comfort. "Grief can be overwhelming," Shannon explains. "A grounding stone helps keep people present and reminds them that healing is possible."

Through group sessions, Danny found a place to talk about Maria, his regrets, and his slow steps forward. "At first, I didn't see it getting better," he says. "But every week people would say, 'It's going to get better, Danny.' And one day, it did."

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Mike Dagenais: An Open Road and an Open Heart

At 68, Mike Dagenais could spend retirement restoring motorcycles and taking road trips, but what truly fills his time is giving back to his community. Mike is a proud member of the Seaway Valley Riders, a Cornwall motorcycle club that has spent the past eight years organizing the annual *Ride for Hospice*, raising funds for Cornwall Hospice. For Hospice staff, the event represents what happens when ordinary people choose to make an extraordinary impact.

"We started the club just to ride together," Mike says. Friday lunches turned into a growing group of riders, and eventually someone suggested they put their numbers to good use. Choosing Hospice Cornwall felt natural. "Hospice touches everyone," Mike says. "We all know someone who's been there."

Their first *Ride for Hospice* far exceeded expectations, raising \$12,000 instead of the \$5,000 they hoped for. "We just looked at each other and said, 'Well, now we can't stop.'" Eight years later, the event has become a local tradition. Last year alone, the group raised over \$43,000, with nearly half coming from year-round raffles, draws, and barbecues. "Every bit counts," Mike says.

Community champions like Mike are essential to charities that rely on donations. He admits he used to be shy about asking for support. "Not anymore. Once people see the money stays right here, they open up. Cornwall is a very giving town." Businesses donate prizes, pub patrons buy tickets repeatedly, and sometimes generosity arrives unexpectedly, like the man who handed Mike \$4,000 from an inheritance "to start the year off right."



Mike Dagenais (holding cheque at right) and the Seaway Valley Riders present their cheque for \$43,000 to Hospice after the 2025 Ride for Hospice

Mike knows motorcycle clubs can be misunderstood, but he and his fellow riders are changing perceptions. "People hear 'biker' and think something else. But we're just regular folks doing good things."

Mike and his wife, Sue, are at the heart of the effort, spending hours approaching businesses and organizing logistics. "It's not work," Mike says. "It's what we love to do." What keeps him going is the impact. "When someone tells me their mom or dad passed at Hospice, you realize you've made a difference."

As the Seaway Valley Riders prepare for their ninth *Ride for Hospice*, Mike has no plans to slow down. "I'll keep doing this as long as I can. And when I can't ride anymore, I'll still be helping. We can't stop now."

The ninth annual *Ride for Hospice* will take place on August 8th, 2026.

Hike for Hospice

May 3, 2026

Join us for a celebration of caring and community

carefor.ca/event/hike

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Carefor Hospice Cornwall offers one-on-one counselling and group programs where conversation, education, tears, and laughter all have a place. "It sounds strange," Danny says, "but we actually laugh a lot. You cry, you laugh, you share. It's comforting." Shannon adds, "Bereavement groups aren't just sadness. They're about rediscovering connection. You can move forward without forgetting."

Slowly, Danny began rebuilding his life. He started volunteering, driving for Meals on Wheels and helping at the Agape Centre's tax clinic. "I love it," he says. "I feel useful again."

The friendships he formed through the hospice have become a lifeline. "We still meet once a

month for dinner," he says. "We help each other out, sometimes through grieving, sometimes with shoveling a driveway."

For Danny, the biggest lesson has been that healing doesn't mean letting go of Maria. "I can move forward with her, not without her," he says. "I still talk to her picture, watch our shows, and volunteer. I miss her, but I'm okay."

He looks at the amethyst beside Maria's candle. "That first rock said Hope. At the time, I didn't believe it. But now? Yeah. There's hope."

Community programs like this are made possible thanks to the generous donations of people like you in our community.

A Garden for Sandy

If there is a name that has been synonymous with Carefor Hospice Cornwall over its 15 + years, it's Sandy Collette. The former Fundraising Coordinator was with Hospice from the very beginning. Sandy was instrumental in raising the funds needed to allow us to bring Hospice and its services to the community.

Up until her retirement at the end of 2023, Sandy, a lifelong resident of Cornwall and area, worked tirelessly to help build and sustain a resource she believed to be essential. Her dry wit and no-nonsense demeanor were recognized across the community as she hosted events and built relationships with the generous people of Cornwall and area.

Following Sandy's passing in August 2025 we wanted to honour her contributions to Hospice and the community of Cornwall and SD&G. Through the generous funding provided by Habitat for Humanity, we built a Memorial Rock Garden where families can now honour their loved ones in this peaceful space.



Thank you to our Wonderful, Generous Community!



Thank you to Former Domtar employees for your wonderful gift of \$2,805!



Thank you to the National Capital Chapter of the Widows Sons for their generous \$1,000 donation.



Thank you to Kawartha Credit Union for making Carefor your charity of choice for your "Chase the Ace" and "Hearts for Hospice" fundraisers.



Thank you to Royal Canadian Legion Branch 370 in Iroquois for giving back to our community through \$10,000 from your Catch the Ace fundraiser

Relocating the Heart of Hospice for Better Care

Our nursing station is at the heart of Hospice's care. Thanks to a grant of \$100,000 from the Outcare Foundation we can begin planning on relocating the nursing station to a more central location within the hospice allowing staff easier access to all 10 rooms.

The cost of these renovations is \$150,000 and so we are reaching out to our generous donors to help us make this project possible. If you believe in the importance of this much needed capital project, please consider a donation.



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