

HOSPICE TIMES

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Two East Rand families who learned the to make the most of the precious time they had left with their loved ones: Moira Kretzmann and her father, Ian MacConachie (left) and (right) Lorna Richards with her youngest daughter, Ruth.

Making most use of this precious time

Time is at its most precious when you have very little of it left. And perhaps the most precious and poignant time anyone will ever have in their lives, is when they are diagnosed with terminal illness, when the time left to live is coming to an end. Suddenly, for many individuals, they realise how infinitely priceless time truly is.

Some use that time to fulfil a dream, see someone long-forgotten, make amends, and put their affairs in order. And some use that time to experience and practise unconditional love in their lives, when loved ones can simply enjoy just 'being' and appreciating that they still have special time to be together. Sound easy? In reality, when a loved one is terminally ill, practising unconditional love can actually be quite difficult, especially at first: we often feel *we know* what is best for someone we love and, because emotions are intensified, there's a "last chance" feeling to whatever we want to do or want to persuade someone else to do!

Thanks to years of hands-on experience, Hospice can often be the catalyst in making the most possible use of the time left to someone who is terminally ill. *After all, death has a way of putting the important things in life into perspective.*

Author Anne MacDonald wrote in her book 'Widowed' of the unconditional love she and her husband shared when he was dying: "... *something inside me told me that never again would I have the opportunity to do anything that mattered so much and would contribute such a great deal to the peace of mind of another human being.*"

June MacConachie's family learned what a difference unconditional love makes when cancer was found in June's lungs after several years of remission. Her daughter, Benoni Mom, Moira Kretzmann, was devastated when her Mom's condition went from bad to worse: she had a stroke which left her paralysed down one side. Then a brain tumour was discovered; another crippling stroke followed.

The family has always been a close one: now that closeness became the foundation that helped them talk openly. June told her family that, with 71 wonderful years of life behind her, she was not afraid to die, but that she wanted to stay at home, surrounded by her family, she wanted to be part of their lives to the end. *Her family's love mattered most.* The family agreed, though Moira and her father, Ian, didn't know how to nurse her or how they'd manage. *to page 4/...*

Baby: no ordinary lady

Fifty-one year old Baby (*below with some of her crafts*) is not one who wastes time on thinking of the past or on wishing it had all been different – although, frankly, no-one could blame her if she did! Life has been hard for this Vosloorus Day Care Centre patient, who was left homeless with two

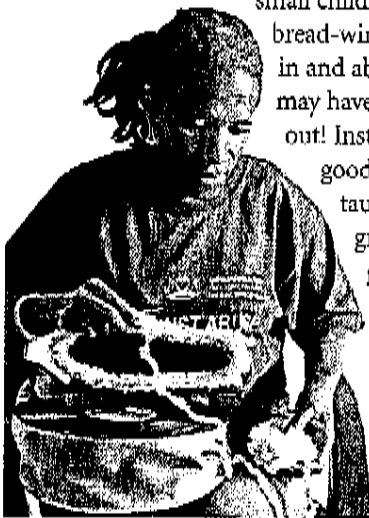
small children years ago when their bread-winner sold the house they lived in and abandoned the family. Baby may have been down, but she was not out! Instead of being bitter, she put to good use her great range of skills – taught to her by her

grandmother when she was a girl – and began making unique handbags out of old vinyl records which she covers, specialised beaded items, slippers from raffia and feather cotton and many other items. With a school-going daughter still

to support, Baby scrapes together a living from selling plastics and taking orders for traditional beadwork too. And she visits the Day Care Centre most Tuesdays and Wednesdays, where she enjoys a nourishing lunch, and spends time teaching other patients her crafts. You won't hear this plucky lady bemoan her situation or blame others for her problems. Her life is a constant struggle, but she believes in getting on with her life and making the best of the little she has. *We salute her talent, her courage, and her dignity; she's a great example, not only to her peers and fellow patients, but to us all!*

On Wednesday 30th November, Vosloorus Day Care Centre will be holding an event for World AIDS Day with guest speakers, patients with 'telling it like it is' stories, and a lunch. As always, a party will be held in December for Day Care patients and their children.

IF you have any raffia, cotton thread, feather cotton, knitting needles, wool, material, or any other items that can be used for creative activities, or any vegetable seeds or non-perishable foods, please phone Hospice on 011 422-1531 and talk to David Seruto. We need them!



"It is death that gives life its weight, its importance, its dignity, its meaning and its infinite perspectives." Maurice Maeterlinck

wen Beer can testify to the veracity of the wise words of Nobel prize-winning writer and poet Maurice Maeterlinck – because it was only when she herself was diagnosed with breast cancer and thought she was going to die, that she came to realise just how precious life truly is!

"Cancer always seemed to be something that happened to someone else," says Gwen (*right*), whose friendly voice at our Hospice reception is known to many. "I came to work at Hospice more than 12 years ago after a great friend in the UK died of a melanoma."

When Gwen discovered a lump in her left breast, her husband insisted she go to the doctor right away. The lump proved malignant but, caught early, the breast was removed and, beyond a daily tablet, no treatment was required.

But the effects of knowing she had cancer sent Gwen into a downward spiral that her family found hard to deal with. She and her husband of over 50 years have always been close, doing everything together. "But cancer made me feel different: I felt so *down*, I didn't want to see anyone for months after my operation and kept wondering how long I had to live!" Gwen lost weight and withdrew from her normal, busy life. Looking back, she thinks that her dislike of having people feel sorry for her, the pride she has always taken in her appearance and that, now, others might see she had only one breast,

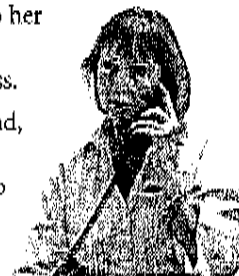
all added to her sense of hopelessness.

Her husband, Harold, desperate to help Gwen get back to her usual

happy, vivacious self, took her on a holiday to the KZ-N coast. In spite of herself, Gwen began to feel a little revitalised. *It was a start, but things still weren't right in her life.*

But there's *always* a catalyst in such situations – or almost always, anyway – and Gwen's came when a neighbour died and her husband was absolutely insistent she go with him to the funeral. Despite her protestations, she went along. She was surprised: "*No-one* felt sorry for me, they *didn't* avoid me, and friends came up to talk to me and tell me they'd missed seeing me around. I realised I'd missed them, too, and I'd missed eating proper meals and going out with my husband. I saw, too, how wonderfully supportive Harold and my children had been through it all."

"Suddenly I realised that I *could* push through the barriers I'd put up," says Gwen, "that I had choices, that I had a lot to be grateful for. There is a higher power looking after me and I know now, through my own experience, that you have to live your life the way you want to live it. *Life is too short to live it any other way!*" Hear! Hear!



Care Club is incubator for Hospice 'campaign ambassadors'



If YOU have an interest, or skill, in one or more aspects of holding events – from planning and organising to the end product – then friendly Hospice East Rand PR, Gerda Baverstock (*left*), would love to

chat with you.

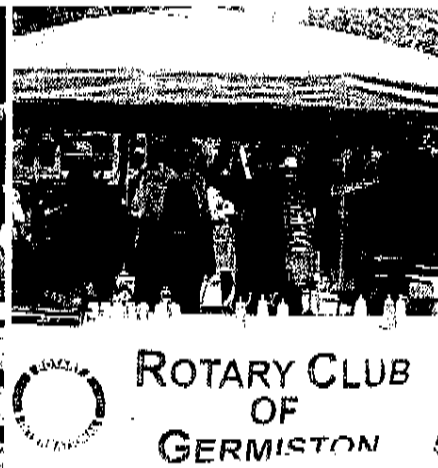
Even if you don't have these skills yet, but would be interested in acquiring them and

giving some hands-on assistance, Gerda will be happy to have you on board. The **HOSPICE CARE CLUB** – which so far has five of a potential 10 'campaign ambassadors' – will be meeting monthly with Gerda for tea and discussions. Gerda is responsible for organising events that raise both funds and awareness of what Hospice does and means in the community... and there's a great deal of fun to be had.

"Plans are getting underway now for four major events in 2012," says Gerda, "and the campaign ambassadors, or Care Club

members, will be working together on all aspects of organising, decorating, catering, advertising, public relations, selling tickets and being part of the actual occasions too."

So, if you have some spare time, if you have lots of creativity just bursting to get out – or if you think you have no creativity (and Gerda has a great knack for getting people's creative juices going!) but are interested in doing something worthwhile and exciting – please phone Gerda on 082 492 0302 or call her at Hospice on 011 422-1531. The Hospice Care Club may just be the spot in your life you've been looking for!




**ROTARY CLUB
OF
GERMISTON**

aturday 5th November dawned bright and sunny, heralding in our annual Hospice Fête which was, as always, a resounding success.

Stallholders, volunteers and staff members arrived early to transform the lawns, pathways, parking area and outside pavements into a festive mass of tents and stalls and it wasn't long before visitors arrived in their droves. It was time to go walkabout, shopping for cute toys, to meet Sponge Bob and the clown, rest weary feet while having cold drinks, tea, light lunches or chilled beers, and listen to the uplifting sounds of bagpipes from the Kempton Park Pipe Band.

As always, our Toy Stall was a great hit with old and young – thanks to the enormous effort put in by fundraiser, Carol Simoni. With loving care, Carol makes clothes for dolls and washes and

irons any scruffy outfits, cleans up and mends teddy bears, and scrubs and paints donated toy cots and prams. Her efforts are rewarded: many children's Christmas gifts are bought at our Fête, all looking as good as new, and the stall is invariably a sell-out.

Our Craft Ladies, who are busy week in and week out, all year round, produced unique, beautifully-made items that were soon snapped up. Another popular stall sold items made by our Vosloorus Day Care patients, who enjoyed making slippers and sandals, peg bags and beaded jewellery to sell.

Funds raised from the fête go directly to the care of our terminally ill patients and their loved ones. Hospice East Rand says a sincere **Thank You** to all who worked so hard to make it happen.



Our Public Relations Officer, Gerda Baverstock (second from right above), was at the Benoni Sailing Club recently when the proceeds of their annual Regatta were handed over as a donation to Hospice East Rand. Seen above are Club Commodore, David Cutts, with one of the Benoni Sailing Club members, as well as his wife, Elaine (right), and Gerda. "It was a great day for contestants, for the Benoni Sailing Club, and for our Hospice which was the fortunate beneficiary of the event," says Gerda.

These warm words of thanks were sent to us by Mrs Mary Tsoku and her family members – Violet, Mirriam, Kopano, George, Kahliso, Ned and Kutloano – after Mary's mother died in Hospice Care:



"We cannot begin to thank East Rand Hospice staff enough for the compassion, comfort and professionalism you all showed in helping our Mother and us as a family, in our time of need. Seeing every one of you at work has taught us that there are still angels living amongst us. Thank you for your excellent care. You made it possible for our last days with our Mother to pass with dignity. May the Lord of Grace have mercy on you all."

Hospice East Rand provides a caring and vital service to the terminally ill and their families in communities on the East Rand. Our work is based on need only, regardless of the individual's race or religion. Many of our patients have no medical aid, most are unable to contribute towards the costs of Hospice's care – which includes a 24-hour In-Patient Unit, home care, careworkers, day care, and bereavement support. Our Hospice is reliant on the understanding and financial support of those we serve to be able to continue its very special kind of caring. Our contribution form and return envelope are enclosed. Thank you. The Executive Committee, staff and volunteers of Hospice East Rand wish you and your loved ones a festive season of love, peace and joy and a year ahead filled with personal happiness and fulfilment.

from page 11... Hospice was contacted and Sister Debbie came to visit. She supported June's wish to stay at home, and her practical, unflappable advice and support made Moira and her father realise that they *would* manage. Debbie was always just a phone call away. They knew June was in good hands - and that *they* were, too! So June stayed at home; Sister Debbie brought a special kind of *hope* and, yes, even *joy* into their lives, despite June's impending death.

What followed were wonderful, meaningful times. Happy memories were made, June was loved unconditionally, and she was a *real* part of it all. *Time was precious - they all knew it, and they all made the most of it.*

June's young granddaughters knew that Gran was dying and spent lots of quality time with her, allaying Moira's worries of how they would react to their Grandmother's impending death.

June had been an artist all her life, and the girls used her paints and pencils to create an ever-changing mural on the wall in front of their grandmother's bed. Each day new pictures and loving messages would appear, telling her they loved her, inviting her to tea, or drawing the flowers she so loved. Their love, joy and time were the best tributes a grandmother could receive: they simply made her a part of *their* everyday lives and kept *Gran* as a special part of theirs.

Moira says they'd *never* have coped without Hospice: "Sister Debbie was always reassuring and positive. She normalised the situation for us, even when my Mom's condition changed; she made us feel calm and able to cope." My Mom died peacefully at home, just as she wanted to do. Hospice taught us that Mom still had a role to play, right to the end. And it gave peace and meaning to her life and her death. *I will always cherish those last precious weeks we had with my Mom.*"

It's that kind of love and thoughtfulness that characterised the last months of Ken 'Porky' Richard's life, too, until his death in September. His wife, Lorna, made sure of that.

After an initial diagnosis of prostate cancer 10 years ago, Porky had treatment to shrink the cancer. Two years later, at Lorna's insistence, he had blood tests done: the cancer had returned and had spread to his bones. Chemotherapy, then radiation, proved a nightmare: a

Our Thanks to you all

Hospice East Rand extends its appreciation for the kindness and generous support of:

Ashton Junior College Epsom SA Mr Charles Lesia Nomads Chubb Security Lodge Douglas Bedfordview Garden Club St Dunstan's College, Benoni East Rand Funeral Directors Czechoslovak Sokol SA Electronic Defence Systems CTP Plastics Yaboo's Sir Harry Grauman Lodge Knit & Natter Group Mr AA Beutel Aurora Rotary Club Burg Family Charitable Trust Kendall Franks Lodge Golf Day Pick 'n Pay (crockery) Martin School, Boksburg Benoni Sailing Club Sunward Slipstream Cycling Club Ajay Sales (donation in lieu of gifts for their customers) Assumption Convent High School Debutants 2010/11.

BEQUESTS were recently received from the Estates of the late Lillian McGivern, MM Eden and K Henrys. We are deeply grateful for their thoughtfulness, even though we are unable to say our own, personal *Thank You* to them. If YOU are considering leaving a bequest in your Will to Hospice East Rand, we would be happy to come and discuss this with you - with no obligation to yourself, of course. Please contact Brenda Bisschoff on 011 4221531 (during office hours).



The late Bill Rogerson

The car Bill so wanted us to have

When Bill Rogerson was in Hospice Care, he told us that, when he died, he wanted Hospice East Rand to have his motor car. And, like the man of his word that he was, Bill left the car to us in his will. It has become one of our most useful assets, as we use it as our 'spare' vehicle. When a nurse has car problems, or someone needs a car to use for something specific, Bill's car is there. It's been in almost constant use since he died earlier this year and, although we thanked him for the gesture he planned to make before he died, we'd love to tell him now, in person, just how much we appreciate and rely on that car!

large, imposing man, Porky lost 30 kgs. "He decided we'd go on a trip to New Zealand to see our daughter and her family there - it was his 'goodbye' to them," says Lorna. They stayed three months. On their return, he went to the Pretoria Academic Hospital and had extensive tests. Lorna remembers sitting, shocked and silent, as the doctor explained that the cancer had spread to his spine, ribs and collarbone... "it's everywhere!" he told them.

Porky, now retired, had been a greatly respected diesel mechanic whose skills meant he'd travelled the country fixing machinery for many years. He was a kind man, friendly, fair and honest, with a great sense of humour, says Lorna, and he was greatly loved by his family - that included three daughters, a son, and five grandchildren. *His life had always been characterised by contentment with what he had.* But now, living in increasing pain, Porky's condition deteriorated; he became bedridden. He did not have long to live, and liked Lorna to spend time sitting with him. Those were precious times, she recalls. "We talked a lot and remembered the 51 marvellous years we'd had together." But for Lorna, now 70 herself, the struggle to lift and turn him was becoming too much. She was exhausted and simply couldn't cope.

The family discussed the situation and contacted our Hospice. Sister Debbie visited, talked and assessed the situation. Porky Richards was admitted to our In-Patient Unit, and even the staff there recall how there was always a family member at Porky's bedside. *The love, says one nurse, was almost tangible.*

Lorna can't praise the nursing staff, or Sister Debbie, enough. "We could visit at any time, they made sure he was always comfortable and that he had no pain. We often sat together in the garden."

Porky grew steadily weaker, and he was slipping in and out of consciousness, but still holding onto life. Lorna realised he felt he couldn't leave her behind, he needed to know *she* was going to be okay.

Quietly, with a courage born of great love and concern for his suffering, Lorna took his hands, spoke gently to him, and told him it was time to let go, it was okay. He heard and understood, she knows that. Still, somehow, she knows he wanted to spare her the pain of being there and, later that day, with two of his daughters at his bedside, Porky Richards - beloved husband, father and grandfather - slipped quietly away.

Two families, two patients... one objective: to make every precious moment left with their loved ones count.