



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

## Mission Hospice Society

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## Our Vision

To support ALL individuals in our community through the process of grief and loss  
and end of life transition.

## Our Mission

To enhance the quality of life for individuals and families who are facing grief and loss  
or end of life transition through compassionate care, resources and advocacy



## PRESIDENTS REPORT

It has been my utmost privilege to serve as the Chairman of the Board this year. It has been a challenging year in many ways but in light of all the challenges we have also had success and continue to improve end of life care. Our support has been invaluable to our community. In our recent outreach to keep our hospice beds strictly for palliative use only has shown us how much the community needs and supports the Mission Hospice Society.

Thank you to all our amazing board members who have dedicated their time to provide this organization with direction and positive change for our future and for our community.

I want to also thank our Executive Director Angel Elias. This has been a very tough year for her with personal losses and health concerns yet her passion, dedication to our cause, and her love for the community has not wavered one bit. She spends countless hours of her own personal time to ensure the Mission Hospice Society has the necessary funding it needs to operate all of our much needed programs as well as leading her staff and advocating for the Hospice Society.

Even though this year we did not have the opportunity to have our annual Gala due to Covid-19 our Mission residents and businesses continued to support the Mission Hospice Society and we are so grateful for their contributions at such a difficult time. Without their support we would not be able to offer such amazing programs.

I also want to thank all the wonderful volunteers who have been there to give their continued support as much as they can with all the restrictions that have been put in place at this time. Without these special people we would not be able to provide our services.

Lastly I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve the community alongside you as your Board Chairman. It has been an honor and a privilege.

Sincerely,

Tammy Miller  
President

# TREASURER REPORT



## Balance Sheet:

The Society remains in solid financial position. I am going to break down the funds on deposit to establish clearly what is available to cover operating costs and what is restricted. Unrestricted funds total \$337,663.21 of which the following allocations are applicable, \$86,691.57 are Gaming funds and \$52,072.01 are CMH Comforts and \$29,946.84 are Gala funds. This leaves \$168,952.79 for day-to-day operations.

Restricted Funds are \$416,050.26 and remain to be allocated as needed to fund future projects/programs or as needed and approved by the Board.

Vacation pay available is a liability on the balance sheet for \$4,173.62. Wages payable are unchanged at \$4,912.28.

## Revenue:

**YTD Revenue:** Miscellaneous Grants are over the whole year budget by about \$8,477.65. Donation income is over the whole year budget by \$39,860.21. Most of the subcategories were over the fiscal budget. Community support remains strong and tangible. Fundraising income, as expected, is under budget -\$42,546.75 as the annual Gala did not happen.

For the fiscal year ended December 31, revenue was \$319,256.05 or \$4,640.05 over the budget.

## Expenses:

**YTD Expenses:** Payroll to the end of December is over budget by approximately \$21,885.64. Under CMH comforts the categories of Comforts Misc., and General Maintenance are over the whole year budget by a combined \$2,264. The overall category was under budget by \$4581.72. Office Supplies and Postage were over budget by \$1,088.

Many other expense budgets were under plan, as a result the net expenses are under the fiscal budget by about \$31,500.85, but mostly due to the cancellation of the Gala.

## Net Income:

Net income for the year was \$128,741.20 of which the COVID relief subsidy received was \$86,620.06.

**Other notes:** This is the year end “draft” report. Numbers may change slightly after our Accountant has reviewed and prepared the Society’s year end statement.

**Sean Melia, Treasurer**



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

2020 started out as every year, the hustle and bustle of grant writing to support our programs and services and organization of our Annual Events, mostly our Gala. Sponsorship was secured and marketing completed and we started asking for donations for the Live & Silent Auction.

AGM reports were completed and we started to look for new Board members to join our Board of Directors as we had 2 upcoming vacancies to fill.

March came and the world as we knew it changed. March 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting we postponed the March 18<sup>th</sup> AGM, cancelled our Annual Gala in April, postponed our 5k & 10k run, closed our offices to the public and all volunteer training was suspended until further notice. Bereavement one to ones moved to facetime or the phone. All volunteer activities, including CMH shifts were suspended.

Staff worked from the office until the orders came in to close everything down. From there on we all worked from home and went into a world of virtual support. Impact of the unknown due to COVID 19 created fear and uncertainty in the entire world.

Together we continued to support our Grief and Bereavement needs and shifted from volunteers support/training to supporting the CMH nurses and patient needs from afar.

We returned to the offices to work on staggered days, social distance, with full COVID 19 safety protocols in place by end of April. Still doing everything virtual, we started to look at new ways to adjust our programs to serve our community during a pandemic crisis.

Financial uncertainty also started to play a factor, as we had to cancel our largest fundraiser of the year and I just did not know what we could do for fundraising in the upcoming year. However the Federal government announced the wage subsidy program and we accessed this, which helped tremendously.

We held our AGM in June of 2020 virtually, where we welcomed 2 new Board members.

I moved our Annual Ride for Hospice and Hike for Hospice to virtual events and they did surprisingly well considering the virtual aspects of the event.

Staff continued to adapt to the new way of operating and delivering our programs and services and in June we opened our resource room to one to one in person and small group supports. COVID 19 safety protocol were in place, and the rest of the house still remained closed to the public.

When schools re opened in September the calls for one to one child and youth support was in high demand. The physic social impacts of COVID 19 have become a big factor in our grief support.

Our volunteers are still unable to be up on the Hospice Floor and with no volunteer activities we shifted our focus to advanced care planning and we hosted a 3 part series on Advance Care Planning via Zoom.

As the second wave hit, we decided that group supports needed to be moved to virtual again, however we continued to do one to one support with our COVID 19 safety protocol and measures in place.

We did not host our Annual Christmas Open house due to COVID 19 second wave and we did not do our tree of remembrance, instead we did a Lights of Hope campaign, we decorated the house in a beautiful Christmas Display and encourage the community to drive by with their families to enjoy the light display.

We hosted 3 evenings where you could drive by and get your COVID friendly tree ornament in memory of your lost loved one.

Overall, even during a pandemic we adapted very well and continued to support our community and their end of life care needs and grief support.

We ended 2020 strong and we were blessed with a Bequest donation from The Estate of Patricia Audrey Hoydal, which will allow us to expand our resource center and do a complete building upgrade.

Sincerely,

*Angel Elias*

Angel Elias

# VOLUNTEER SERVICES REPORT



**Total Volunteer Service Hours in 2020 5219**

In 2020 and under the backdrop of Covid 19, the Mission Hospice Society (MHS) goal was to provide much needed support to the community of Mission during such a challenging time with special emphasis on the Christine Morrison Hospice (CMH) and our very own MHS volunteers.

In the early months of 2020, following the MHS mandate, our programs provided compassionate care and support to people who were facing in their lives, life limiting illness, end of life and grief and loss support.

Once Covid hit however by the middle of March our volunteer roles as “support providers” were suspended. Everything was shut down. Volunteers including myself were unable to be on the hospice floor or provide any one to one care in the community. My role as the Volunteer Coordinator required adapting and redefining my scope of work. Upon reflection, I identified 4 main areas to focus my energies; the community, our volunteers, the team at CMH, Advance Care Planning sessions.

## **CMH**

The loss of volunteer services was felt by everyone.

For CMH, this was a huge hit. One of the goals of hospice is to make the residents/families/friends feel like they are in a home rather than a hospital for their end of life journey. As such, MHS surrounds them with the comforts of home. While residents and their families continued to receive excellent care from the CMH team, the ability to execute an end of life holistic approach was not possible.

When the hospice floor lost its volunteers everything changed. The “extras” that made hospice uniquely special were no longer. No more comforts of home; fresh baked cookies, daily tea service, float Fridays, legacy work, music/art therapy, reiki. Answering resident’s call bells, requests for water, lost eye glasses/TV channel changers now had to be handled by the nursing team. There was no decorations or festive feel for holidays, no lovely garden patio for all to enjoy, (our gardener volunteer Barb was unable to sprinkle her brand of magic outside as she could not come up either) no classical guitar being played by volunteer Charles. And most important of all, those extra set of hands to hold, a compassionate listener when it was all too much, a witness to sit vigil as end of life neared were gone.

The team up at CMH felt the loss of the volunteers immensely. Many volunteers have been working up at CMH for years and are like family to the staff. Each day, new fresh faces/energy on the floor/laughter and funny stories adds an unmeasurable quality. Workloads increased for the team. As mentioned above, having that extra support can mean all the difference.

To keep team spirits high, every holiday or change of season my goal was to figure out how to bring a smile to the CMH team by coming up with creative ideas to provide a little special something to team members. With a lot of help hands at my end, we created Easter goodie bags, Dairy Queen Fridays, nurse’s appreciation, let us spoil you lunch week, tea/scone parties, culminating with Santa and his elves delivery of twenty five “glittered, decked out” Christmas packages for each team member. The “goodie list” continued☺. When energies of team members were really low, I had our volunteers write notes/poems, I sent photos of our therapy dogs saying Hi, funny jokes, personalized notes of encouragement. Our weekly shopping for the hospice floor, always included special treats; chocolates, ice cream bars, fresh fruit, popcorn/chips.

## **Our Volunteers**

Our MHS volunteers are the best!! Having the hearts that they do, reaching out to others is 2nd nature. What isn't always, is prioritizing themselves and their own self care plan. With Covid numbers climbing and self-isolation the norm, the question for me was how do I support my own volunteers? For many, their volunteerism filled meaning and connection in their lives and they missed it a lot. Working at the Hospice and in the community was part of their weekly schedules. Not having that work had a big impact on them.

A large focus for me was on keeping connection with them. How was I going to stay in touch, keep spirits high and our volunteers engaged during the year? My plan consisted of phoning and sending birthday cards and notes to all but particularly those who lived alone, are introverted, or who experience mental health/health issues. I dropped by for tea on welcomed invitations, emailed MHS/CMH news/updates/photos regularly.

During the summer months, I hosted weekly group walk/talks, sit/talks, one/one sessions at Heritage Park. These were so well received I extended them into the fall. Following Covid protocols, these groups supported one another in amazing ways. They spoke honestly of their fears and challenges with Covid, Fraser Health Guidelines, how hard it was not to see their families, strategies/ideas for staying positive; gratitude list, chair yoga, Netflix's, music, walks and nature, zoom parties.

When it became apparent that our volunteer roles would not return back to normal soon, the reality of the situation began to hit home. With trained and dedicated volunteers available, how could we provide immediate assistance to Mission?

In those early days of Covid, I reached out to Mission Community Services Society, who requested needing a group of volunteers to place phone calls to identified high risk seniors to ensure all their needs were being met (do they family/someone checking, enough food, personal hygiene items, prescriptions). The volunteers were prepped with a phone script, a list of Mission senior's phone numbers and a request to phone the seniors every few days to touch in. This support of "Senior Buddy's" as the program was called, lasted over a 3 month period before MCSS was able to take back this responsibility.

Unfortunately, over time, the provincial Covid protocols impacted our ability to continue community support. What the community required were not activities that we could allow our volunteers to assist with without concern of jeopardizing their own health.

## **Advance Care Planning**

In collaboration with Fraser Health, I facilitated a 3 part series zoom session on Advance Care Planning (ACP). In a safe and collaborative environment, the goal is to introduce the participants to the topic of ACP, the 5 steps of ACP and provide information and support for getting started. Follow up topic offered; Creating a Life Box; an organizational tool used to store all important papers in one location (wills, bank information, insurance papers, digital passwords, ACP, organ donation, funeral arrangements, pet care, letters to family members...the list goes on ). This series ran three Wednesdays in October. Each session was hour and half.

## **Community Projects**

Lights of Hope/Tree of Remembrance Covid Style

In past years, a way for MHS to give back to our community during the Christmas holiday season was our Tree of Remembrance. During the month of December, folks shopping at Superstore/ Save on foods could come by our hospice table set up at the stores exit areas and talk to volunteers about loved ones passed/loss. In memory of



those loved ones, folks were encouraged to pick a Christmas ornament off our Christmas tree to take home. This tradition of remembrance for many families had become part of their holiday activities.

This year with Covid, the usual set up was not possible. Our alternative was introducing The Lights of Hope Campaign. During the month of December our hospice home was lit up with thousands of lights/decoration and each evening during December the community was encouraged to drive by to see the lights.

To promote the campaign on our website, I created a fun daily holiday activity, "Where at the house is the Grinch." People were encouraged to keep track daily of where the Grinch was hiding in the photos posted. At the end of December, participants emailed me their list of where the Grinch was hiding. Prizes were given for those who were correct.

During the Lights of Hope, our team hosted three nights as the Tree of Remembrance. These evenings include driving by the house to see the lights but also folks received a Christmas ornament for their own tree at home in memory of a loved one.

Feedback from the community was awesome! People were very grateful and asked if this was the start of a new tradition!

### **Volunteer Training Program**

**Total Volunteer Training Hours in 2020: 240**

We continue to provide two Basic & Bereavement 40-hour volunteer training courses a year (10 hours on- line, 30 hours in class). These training courses provide our volunteers with the life skills training needed to be an effective volunteer in what can be challenging volunteer roles.

The spring training that we started this year was unable to finish. We were about 80% of the way completed when Covid hit. The team made the decision not to complete the training using a web base model. The material being presented was too sensitive in nature and we would have no ability to emotionally provide support if needed. Once Fraser Health gives us clearance for volunteers to return to their regular activities, our plan is to resume the training in person with a review component built in.

### **Spring**

- |                                    |                     |                  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| • <b>Volunteer Training Course</b> | <b>8 Volunteers</b> | <b>240 hours</b> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|

### **Volunteer Support / Appreciation**

**Total Volunteer Support / Appreciation Hours in 2020 550 hours**

We as a society throughout the years always wish to recognize, support and show our appreciation to our volunteers. In 2020, while uniquely different, we celebrated our volunteers by providing support and appreciation.

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| • <b>Volunteer Summer Semi Monthly Support</b> | <b>450 hours</b> |
|--|------------------|

walk/talk/one to one sessions

Appreciation Activities

100 hours

### Volunteer By-Weekly Update

Volunteers received quarterly updates. This update allows volunteers to stay well informed with Covid and Fraser Health updates, the Society and CMH happenings.

Volunteer Birthday / Christmas Cards

Volunteers received a personal birthday and Christmas card. Volunteers also received throughout the year various items of appreciation. We also gave small tokens of appreciation at Valentines, Easter, Volunteer Appreciation Week, Halloween and Christmas.

### Volunteer Palliative Support Services

**Total Volunteer Palliative Support Services Hours in 2020**      **1620**

Christine Morrison Hospice - 2nd floor and - ECU Volunteer Support Programs

In 2020 the Mission Hospice Society proudly provided Palliative Support Volunteers to the Christine Morrison Hospice. We provided volunteers for three hour shifts from 8:30am to 9pm, seven days a week, with the goal of providing support 365 days a year. The Mission Hospice Society Support Service continues to be our largest volunteer support program utilizing over 60 volunteers and donating over seven thousand volunteer hours yearly. Due to restrictions from Fraser Health total yearly volunteer hours reflected accordingly.

<b>Christine Morrison Hospice</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b><u>1,200</u></b>
• Palliative Support Volunteers	65 Volunteers	1080 hours
• Aesthetics & Patio Volunteers	Team of volunteers	120 hours

### Complementary Therapies

• Reiki, Healing Touch, Art Therapy	4 Volunteers	87 hours
• Pet Therapy	3 Volunteers	108 hours
• Music Therapy, Threshold Choir & Westminster Abbey Choir	Groups & Volunteers	100 hours
• Tea Cart Service	4 Volunteers	125 hours

## Community Palliative Volunteer Support

The Mission Hospice Society Palliative Support Volunteers provided much needed support to people in the community that were facing end-of-life or grief and loss. These volunteer services were provided in the clients homes, at the Mission Hospice Society House, on the 2nd floor of the Mission Hospital and The Cedars Assisted Living and TRIM, the Residence of Mission.

Volunteers provided compassionate one-to-one companionship and support to clients. Volunteers gave not only the gift of their time but additional supports such as Reiki, Music Therapy, Pet Therapy, Legacy Work, Coping Tools, and much more.

**Total Community Palliative Hours in 2020                      345**

- |                                       |               |           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Mission Hospital 2nd floor          | 4 Volunteers  | 50 hours  |
| • The Residence in Mission Volunteers | 8 Volunteer   | 135 hours |
| • Community Palliative Support        | 16 volunteers | 160 hours |

**Total Volunteer Bereavement Services Hours in 2020                      297**

**Child and Youth Bereavement Hours in 2020                      96**

## Hospice Office / Yard Team

**Total Volunteer Office/ Yard Support Hours in 2020                      600**

Our Mission Hospice Society office and yard volunteers assisted with many of the day to day tasks inside and outside our facility. Tasks such as writing and mailing out volunteers' cards, recording volunteer stats, calling volunteers, lawn and yard maintenance and general repairs were all efficiently taken care of.

## Board Members

**Volunteer Board Members Hours in 2020                      816**

In 2020, our Board of Directors attended monthly board meetings, supported our fund raising events and helped to assist with the guidance of the Mission Hospice Society.

## Community Fundraising / Events

**Total Volunteer Fundraising/Events hours in 2020: 655**

Listed below are the Mission Hospice Society's main Fundraising & Community Events in 2020

- |  |               |           |
|--|---------------|-----------|
| • Lights of Hope   | 15 Volunteers | 175 hours |
| • Tree Of Remembrance<br>(Hand crafted tree decorations) | 2 Volunteers  | 300 hours |
| • Senior Buddies   | 15 Volunteers | 180 hours |

Jacqueline Harris  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Mission Hospice Society

# BEREAVEMENT REPORT



Despite the challenges of the pandemic in 2020, the Mission Hospice Society continues to support our community in their time of grief from all kinds of losses. We made many changes to our programs to minimize risk for our clients. Our group sessions were particularly impacted on, moving from in person groups of various sizes supporting each other to either virtual platforms or collapsing all together.

With our offices closed, back in March, we took our work home and kept in contact with our clients as best we could either by phone, face time, outdoor tail gate sessions or zoom. Missing the personal face to face experience, some clients chose to stop connecting until we re-opened again in April. Clients put their grief on hold while they navigated through the pandemic, its restrictions and finding the new norm.

We provided ongoing grief support to those who had lost friends and/or family members along with all other types of loss. This included grief from divorce, social loss, spiritual loss and of course all grief connected to death. Of note the grief in 2020, regarding overdoses increased considerably.

## One to One support

<b>New clients in 2020</b>	<b>93</b>
Including referrals	
<b>Total follow ups</b>	<b>389 VISITS</b>
Including in-house and phone	
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>466 HOURS</b>

## ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT

**93** new clients continued with one-to-one support with either myself or trained volunteer facilitators. These were and continue to be trying times for our clients and it was always an honor to listen and support them in a completely confidential environment. This service was free and open to all community members. Each meeting usually lasted 1.5 hours. This length of time allowed for clients to debrief, fill out forms, tell their emotional stories and feel a sense of relief before leaving the office. Approximately **466** hours were allocated to 1 on 1 support with **389** visits. (This included a higher than usual cancellations due to illness and other covid restrictions.

## GROUP SUPPORT

Grief Support groups are developed to address the bereavement needs of the community. Not only do clients learn from the facilitators but also from each other. Most groups are ongoing and open. In total **745** participants have benefited from groups in 2020

#### Volunteers facilitating Bereavement Groups

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Tea and Company                | 3 |
| • Compassionate Friends          | 1 |
| • Grief and Bereavement Training | 3 |
| • Afterlife Conversations        | 1 |

#### **Tea and Company Widows Support Group:**

This was an open on-going weekly support group for women who had recently lost a spouse. Although some members came for a few months, or a year and moved on, others dealt with ongoing challenges of widowhood and benefited from this ongoing support group. Currently we have 8 members attending via Zoom and 5 are receiving phone calls every week.

#### **Pathways:**

This group was a ten week long grief support for any adult who had lost a loved one. Unlike Tea and Company, this group is closed. Hence once the group started no other members enter until the next session. Meetings were held once a week and at times an educational component was added to the class. Recently, the group had changed to an open format, which welcomed new members.

#### **Compassionate Friends:**

Jennifer and Mike Lagos continued to host the Compassionate Friends grief group via Zoom. This was a third party organization hosting their support groups at Mission Hospice Society. This group is specifically geared for parents/grandparents whom had lost children of all ages. This is an open group, once a month. They also host a Christmas memorial for their members.

#### **After Life Conversations:**

The Mission Hospice had been hosting this unique group, for individuals, monthly for over seven years. This is an open group where people come together and talk about near-death experiences and the possibility of communications with their loved one after their passing. This is a very open-minded group and does not follow any particular religion or spirituality but welcomes all beliefs. It is a safe place where people whom have lost a loved one can share their experiences without judgement or advice. There are twelve to forty-five people attending on any given evening. The public library hosted these meetings in 2020 due to the large numbers. Because of covid this group has been cancelled until further notice. We look forward to starting again soon.

## Events and Other Activities

Again due to covid all events have either been changed or cancelled.

The Afterlife Conversation group present Kaayla Vedder. The topic was the ability and power to heal ourselves even in our time of grief.

Upon the request of our evening grief group, Mission Hospice has introduced a Medium, Melissa White, to our clients. Melissa has brought a unique gift in helping clients with their grief.

Hosted our annual one day vision board event. Boston pizza supplied a free lunch.

Started a new volunteer training of 11. Due to covid and the sensitive nature of this training, we had to cancel it mid-way. Looking forward to completing it in 2021.

Participated in the Walk and Talk sessions with Jacq.

Attended a weeklong conference via zoom regarding grief, near death experiences, bed side experiences of the dying and afterlife experiences.

Looking ahead to 2021, we will continue to serve all grief within our community either by 1 – 1 in person support, Zoom, phone and hopefully more tailgate gatherings as the weather gets better. Of course training new volunteers for grief facilitating groups would be welcomed. Creating specific grief groups relating to overdoses would also benefit our community. And last but not least I foresee the introduction of Covid grief/mental health playing a large role in the near future.

*Nathalie Millar,*

*Coordinator of Bereavement Services*

*Mission Hospice Society*

# CHILD & YOUTH BEREAVEMENT REPORT



It goes without saying that 2020 was a year like no other for the Child and Youth Bereavement Services at Mission Hospice Society. COVID-19 was a challenge for most of us, including the grieving children and youth in the community. Anxiety and depression, coupled with grief and loss, saw the need for support increase exponentially.

The pandemic forced us to change some of the ways that we provided support to our clients (see “Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Youth Services” below) and yet, despite the lockdowns and restrictions that took place throughout the year, we were still able to serve a very large number of clients in 2020.

We held a total of 3 grief support groups at the beginning of the year before the lockdown – 1 Circle of Friends group here at MHS for grieving children between the ages of 6-12; and 2 separate Circle of Friends Youth Grief Groups for grieving youths aged 12-15 and Hatzic and Heritage Middle School. When groups were no longer an option for the rest of the year, we were able to offer virtual art therapy sessions for at-risk children and youth via Facetime and Zoom.

One of the highlights for our grieving children, our annual Camp Zajac retreat, was unfortunately cancelled because of COVID-19. As restrictions eased a little over the summer, we were able to put together a one day Horse Whisperer Grief Camp in its place for 12 children ages 6-12. The camp was a great success and a welcomed activity for the children who attended.

Our client list for one to one support is higher than it has ever been. During lockdown, we continued to provide support virtually through Facetime, Skype and Zoom calls. Before schools were closed and once they were re-opened again in September, we offered ‘socially distanced’ in person support here at MHS as well as on-site at 11 elementary, middle and high schools throughout the Mission Community.

## ***Clients in 2020:***

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • Circle of Friends MHS (6-12 yrs):                | 12 |
| • Circle of Friends Heritage (12-15yrs):           | 6  |
| • Circle of Friends Hatzic (12-15yrs):             | 5  |
| • Camp Zajac (6-12yrs) (CANCELLED DUE TO COVID19)  | 0  |
| • One Day Horse Whisperer Grief Camp               | 12 |
| • One to One at MHS and Mission Schools (6-19yrs): | 89 |

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILD & YOUTH CLIENTS IN 2020: 124**



\*Our Circle of Friends grief groups normally run 3 times a year with maximum 12 students per group at MHS and maximum 6 students per group at Heritage and Hatzic. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were only allowed to run 1 group each at the beginning of 2020.

\*We had 25 children registered for Camp Zajac but this was also cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## ***ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT***

Throughout 2020 we offered 1-1 support for children and youth requiring support after a loss. This service is offered here at MHS as well as at the various schools in the Mission District. Virtual support via FaceTime, Skype and Zoom is now also offered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Referrals come from families and clients who have used our services as well as through marketing materials placed online and in the newspaper. We have also developed very good relationships with the school counsellors and principals throughout the community and they have been very happy to pass our name along to parents and students needing grief support.

Sessions for children and youth typically range from thirty minutes to one hour – depending on age of the child and/or youth - with the number of sessions varying between six to twelve. Our goal with all clients is to establish a trusting relationship to give children and youth an opportunity to express their feelings and learn effective ways to grieve through conversation and expressive arts activities.

- Number of visits in 2020 (one to one): 378
- Number of visits in 2020 (virtual – facetime, zoom): 48

**TOTAL NUMBER OF 1-1 VISITS IN 2020 : 426**

- Hours allocated to 1-1 visits in 2020: 320

## ***GROUP SUPPORT***

Our Circle of Friends programs – here at MHS as well as at Middle and Elementary schools - offers a chance for children and youth to talk and grieve with other peers who have experienced the loss of a family member or friend through death. Groups are designed to show children and youth that they are not alone in their loss and to give them a safe place to express emotions without fear of being judged or looked at as 'different'. Groups typically start with an icebreaker activity to promote bonding followed by an open 'grief topic' discussion. Each session also has a creative art activity which shows children and youth different ways to express difficult emotions. All groups end with a 'memorial' to allow children and youth an opportunity to share memories, pictures and stories of their loved ones.

- Number of children & youth participating in support groups in 2020: 23
- Number of children & youth attending Horse Whisperer Grief Camp: 25

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS RECEIVING GROUP SUPPORT IN 2020 : 48**

### *Volunteers working in Child and Youth Bereavement Groups:*

- Circle of Friends 3
- Horse Whisperer Grief Camp 3

Total volunteer hours in 2020: 96

### **IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES**

As was the case for most businesses and organizations, the worldwide COVID-19 had a great impact on the programs and services offered to children and youth at Mission Hospice Society. The lockdown from March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 as well as further restrictions and safety protocols implemented by Dr. Bonnie Henry and the B.C. government resulted in the following changes to our programs:

1. ***Cancellation of all Children and Youth Grief Support Groups from March 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the year.***

In a 'normal year', Mission Hospice Society runs our Circle of Friends Children's Grief Group 3 times throughout the year. We also run the Youth Grief Groups at Heritage and Hatzic Middle Schools 2 times throughout the school year. We were fortunate to be able to run each group once before the lockdown, however, after March 14<sup>th</sup>, groups have been placed on hold until restrictions are eased.

**Our solution: A Virtual Art Therapy Program for Children and Youth.** Our Circle of Friends Grief groups are based on expressive art and play therapy activities to help with grief and loss. Examples of these activities include painting, journaling, and making stress balls and memory lanterns. To continue these projects during lockdown, we put together 'Activity Kits' consisting of paints, brushes, canvas, journals and other art supplies and dropped them off at the houses of some of our clients. We then completed projects together over the computer via Zoom.

2. ***Cancellation of 1-1 In Person Support at Mission Hospice Society from March 14<sup>th</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup>.*** Our office was closed during the lockdown which affected both our group sessions and our one to one client support. In person one to one support re-opened at MHS on May 25<sup>th</sup> (with strict COVID-19 safety protocols in place)

**Our solution: Virtual Support via FaceTime, Skype and Zoom.** We reached out to all of our clients, past and present, to offer continued one to one support using phones and computers.

3. ***Cancellation of 1-1 In Person Support at Mission Schools from March 14<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>.*** Schools were closed for the school year as of March 14<sup>th</sup>, thus impacting the daily one to one support we were providing to students at Mission elementary, middle and high schools. Our one to one support re-opened at the beginning of the new school in September (with COVID-19 safety protocols in place)

**Our solution: Virtual Support via FaceTime, Skype and Zoom as well as Socially Distanced Therapy Walks.** Our virtual support was used extensively by our Middle and High School students, many of whom were experiencing not only grief but high levels of anxiety and depression. Our grade 12 high school students, who had already been grieving the loss of a friend and classmate in September 2019,

now had to deal with the cancellation of graduation ceremonies and celebrations. We continued to support these students through FaceTime, Skype and Zoom.

4. **Cancellation of our annual Camp Zajac weekend retreat.** We had 25 children registered for this year's camp which was cancelled due to COVID-19.

**Our solution: A One Day Horse Whisperer Grief Camp Held in Abbotsford.** When restrictions eased a little over the summer, we quickly put together a special one day Horse Camp for the children who had signed up for Camp Zajac. The camp was held in July in Abbotsford with activities for the kids that included: grooming, walking and riding horses, spending time with sheep and pigs and a special memorial art activity. The day was a great success and we are hoping to be able to offer this camp to both children as well as youth (ages 13-19) in 2021.

The normal support systems for support clients suffering from pain and loss was challenged at times with the pandemic. Wearing masks, staying a minimum of six feet apart and the unavailability of group sessions (a powerful grieving tool for children to show they are not alone) meant having to change some of the proven and effective ways that we have provided support in the past. In addition, we saw an increase of anxiety and depression with our children and teen clients. I feel that Mission Hospice Society adapted extremely well to these changes, while continuing to offer and provide essential support to our community.

### ***Group Programs in 2020***

#### **Circle of Friends – Mission Hospice Society - Ages 6-12**

This group is for children between the ages of 6 – 12, for those who have experienced a death of a loved one. This program offer a safe and caring environment for children to express their emotions and share their experiences through arts & activities with other bereaved children. This support group is once a week for 8 weeks from 3:30 to 5:00pm. It was facilitated by Ian Kunitski with help throughout the year from volunteers Katie McIvor, Emily Poole, and BayLee Lacovone.

#### **Circle of Friends – Ecole Heritage Park Middle School - Ages 12-15**

This group is for youth between the ages of 12-15 who attend Heritage Park Middle School, and have experienced the loss of a family member or friend through death, or who currently have a family member or friend who is dying. This program offers a safe environment to express difficult emotions through conversation, art, journaling and group activities. This group runs once a week for 8 weeks from 1:30-3pm, at Heritage Park School. This group is facilitated by Ian Kunitski.

#### **Circle of Friends – Hatzic Middle School - Ages 12-15**

Similar to Heritage Middle School, this group is for youth between the ages of 12-15 who attend Hatzic Middle School, and have experienced the loss of a family member or friend through death, or who currently have a family member or friend who is dying. This program offers a safe environment to express difficult emotions through conversation, art, journaling and group activities. This group runs once a week for 8 weeks from 10:17am-11:36am, at Hatzic Middle School. This group is facilitated by Ian Kunitski.

## Camp Zajac – Ages 6-12

This is our annual 3 day/2 night retreat offered to bereaved children who have taken part in one or more of our programs and services. This camp is offered free of charge, and offers children a chance to connect with other children who have experienced a loss, have fun and support each other. Grief can be an isolating experience in childhood, and having a camp such as this provides an opportunity for children to gain a sense of belonging, which positively impacts their self-esteem, and gives them a place to make friendships, ask questions, be supported, and learn from each other.

**NOTE: DUE TO COVID-19, THIS CAMP WAS UNFORTUNATELY CANCELLED THIS YEAR**

## Horse Whisperer Grief Camp - Ages 6-12

Due to COVID-19, we were unable to host a weekend at Zajac Ranch this year. When we moved into Stage 3 in British Columbia, we started to brainstorm ideas to host some kind of day event for children who have been through Mission Hospice Society's children's bereavement programs and services, while still being able to maintain our strict COVID-19 safety protocols. We met with Carla Webb, owner of Empowered by Horses farm in Abbotsford and came up with a 'horse whisperer grief camp'.

The camp was held on Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 9am – 4pm. We had 12 children (this was the maximum amount allowed) between the ages of 6-13. The camp was facilitated by the Child and Youth Bereavement Coordinator at Mission Hospice Society, 3 volunteers from Mission Hospice Society along with 4 staff members from Empowered by Horses, who led the group in all horse related activities.

This day camp was a tremendous success. The activities were well received by all participants, most of whom had never before been on or near a horse. Horses are often used in therapy work and I believe the day's events were not only enjoyed by all but also very helpful in the children's grief work. Many caregivers had expressed concerns to me earlier that their child/children had been struggling with depression and anxiety due to being quarantined and isolated from friends and family and I believe this camp helped with that, as well. .

## EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Regular/ongoing meetings and contact with school counsellors and principals
- Regular/ongoing planning sessions for groups with MHS volunteers
- Attend monthly Children and Youth Committee meetings, when possible
- Meeting with Brianne and Nicole of Family Place Navigators, a new initiative in Mission to better connect children with required services.
- In January, we went to West Heights and Albert McMahon elementary schools for the morning to provide support to teachers and students following the death of one of the teachers
- Canadian Alliance for Grieving Children and Youth – in April, I was invited to be part of a leadership team for this newly formed organization. The goal of this organization is to form a national network of agencies that can support each other and network to the benefit of improved grief and loss support for children, as well as support and education offered to caregivers, educators and professionals. We are

meeting via Zoom on a biweekly basis with approximately 40 grief and loss support workers across the country.

- Assist with virtual Ride for Hospice fundraiser
- Assist with virtual Hike for Hospice fundraiser
- Assist with virtual Gala for Hospice fundraiser
- Meeting with Nancy Arcand, Executive Director of Mission Arts Council, at Mission Clayworks to discuss possibility of bringing grief clients to her studio to do a memorial clay project.
- Bi-weekly Youth Specific Zoom meeting with counsellors and social workers in Mission district to discuss specific 'at-risk' students in Mission and how to support them
- Job shadowing with Angel Elias, Executive Director

Though the year looked very different in terms of our usual programs and activities, I am very proud to say that Mission Hospice Society's Child and Youth Bereavement Services did not stop offering support throughout our community for even a single day. Our presence in the community continues to broaden and the need for our programs and services grows every day. It is a privilege and a pleasure to work alongside the Mission school counsellors and staff in ensuring that all measures of support needed are given to the children and youth of Mission.

We are still a little ways to go before normalcy returns but in the meantime, I look forward to continuing my work alongside the staff at Mission Hospice Society in providing support to the children and youth in the Mission Community.

Ian Kunitski  
Child and Youth Bereavement Coordinator