

Green For Life makes \$1 million gift to Hospice



By Brock Weir

Green for Life has donated \$1 million towards the completion of the Margaret Bahen Hospice, a 10-bed residential hospice in Newmarket serving the residents of York Region and South Simcoe.

The donation from the waste company (GFL), which has a branch based in Aurora, is billed as a gift that will have a 'tremendous impact' on the community.

'GFL is proud to be a supporter of the 'love lives here' Campaign to build the Margaret Bahen Hospice for York Region,' said Patrick Dovigi, President & CEO of GFL Environmental Inc., in a statement. 'We are all touched by the struggle of families coping with end-of-life care and understand the significant difference that the Hospice can make to those families. We are committed to working with community partners that have a positive impact on the communities we serve.'

The 10-bed residential hospice on Newmarket's Queen Street has served as a home base for over 60 patients and their families since it first opened its doors in November. It is designed to provide a home-like environment with round-the-clock medical and emotional care to support patients at the end of their life while, at the same time, taking much of the burden off loved ones.

'This project truly has been a labour of love for Southlake over the past several years,' said President & CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, Susan Mullin. 'As a campaign that was one hundred per cent community-funded, this facility would simply not have been possible without the tremendous passion, dedication and outstanding generosity of everyone involved.'

Speaking to The Auroran following the donation announcement, Ms. Mullin said the Foundation connected with GFL through Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen and conversations began this past September. The donation was set later that fall but the work has just been finalized.

'The donation was to the hospice overall, and that is one of the things we appreciated about the gift: they allowed us the flexibility to use it on the Hospice campaign as we needed it,' she said. 'At the end of the day, it was about the construction primarily and we continue to support as the hospice gets up and running operations over the first three years so we can help them get kicked off in a good stead. We were talking about construction and the ability to deliver the hospice building itself so patients and families have a space where they can enjoy the final moments of their lives together.'

'One could say it's sad, but it is not. 60 families have had the opportunity to really have a really special, well cared for end of life for their loved ones and in an environment that supports that holistic living until the end. That is really what the residential hospice is about. It is about saying to people you get to be the brother, the wife, the daughter, not the caregiver. You come to the hospital and you be the loved one's loved one and that's what you focus on through those final weeks or days.'

The Southlake Foundation will continue seeking donors for the hospice, but with Better Living operating the Hospice itself, Ms. Mullin says they will go a bit quieter on that front and also focus on the Southlake community as a whole.

'From a Foundation perspective, we continue to have really high priority needs about replacing equipment at the hospital and many people really aren't aware that the government doesn't fund the replacement of equipment,' she said. 'We put in a new MRI machine, and that was thanks to donor dollars over the last number of years. We are looking at replacing beds. The government doesn't pay for that.'

'We rely on the community to help us in that way and we also had recent good news that we will be expanding the number of

mental health beds at the hospital and we're excited about that, but there is a requirement then for what the government calls local share and we will be coming back to the community to help us support the expansion of the mental health beds, which are really critical for us. We have patients with psychiatric challenges who are currently having a hard time getting a bed, so they stay in our emergency department much longer than they should, and we know we have to expand our services ? 12 new beds in mental health will be one of our priorities.?