



# HOPE & HEALING

Annual Report  
2025

**COHA**  
CENTRAL OKANAGAN  
HOSPICE ASSOCIATION



OUR VISION

COHA is creating a community where no one has to die or grieve alone.

OUR MISSION

Offering compassionate care, comfort, support and learning to those who are dying or grieving alone within our community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MESSAGE FROM DONNA & NATASHA



BOARD PRESIDENT  
**Donna Koch**



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
**Natasha Girard**

It was a year packed with engagement with a focused and collaborative process to strengthen COHA’s governance and strategic direction. With the support of an external consultant, the Board began the development of a new three-year strategic plan that will guide the organization through 2025 to 2028. At the core of this planning process is a commitment to embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into every facet of our work – ensuring that programs, services, and organizational culture reflect and serve the diverse communities of the Central Okanagan with dignity, respect, and cultural safety. Through this work the Board also identified a governance review to align its structure and processes with the evolving needs of COHA.

COHA experienced a 25% growth demand for our grief and bereavement programs – reflecting not only the increasing need in our community, but the trust people place in us during life’s most difficult times. In response, we worked closely with our partners to ensure that individuals and families are connected to the right support, at the right time, from the right service provider.

To further enhance the depth and quality of services, we launched a Dignity Therapy pilot project in November 2024 that continued into this new fiscal year. This important initiative offered individuals an opportunity to record the meaningful aspects of their lives and leave something behind that can benefit their loved ones in the future. Evaluation of this pilot is underway, helping us understand how this service may be expanded in the future.

In parallel, we saw a growth of 12.4% in our volunteer base, a testament to the power of community compassion. Volunteers give generously of their time, presence, and hearts and COHA couldn’t do the magnitude of work without them.

In a new and exciting initiative, our Taylor Swift Raffle helped raise both vital funds and widespread awareness. This creative campaign reached new audiences and allowed more people to learn about the work COHA does—one heartfelt story at a time. Swinging with the Stars our signature event raised a record-breaking \$565,000. Our celebrity dancers lit up the dance floor, dazzling a sold-out crowd.

As we move forward, COHA remains grounded in its mission and encouraged by collective support of our community. Thank you to our volunteers, donors, community advocates, partners, Board of Directors and staff who help shape our work to strengthen our vision in creating a community where no one has to die or grieve alone.

*Donna & Natasha*





# THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERS



## A Journey of Compassion



Since 2017, I've felt a quiet calling to become a COHA volunteer—one that began during the most difficult and sacred times of my life. I cared for my mother through dementia and walked with my sister through her final days with ovarian cancer. Those experiences, though heartbreaking, revealed the deep beauty that exists in life's final moments. There is a closeness, a sacredness, in being fully present as someone prepares to leave this world.

Not everyone is comfortable with that—but I am. And because I can, I believe I should.

Through my volunteer companionship at COHA, I've learned how powerful it is simply to be there. We laugh, talk about anything and everything, and most importantly, create a space where no words are off limits. Often, the people I sit with feel they can't speak openly with loved ones, for fear of causing pain. With me, they can say what's truly on their minds—and that freedom is a gift.

These relationships are brief, but their impact is lasting. I once returned from holiday to a warm "I missed you!"—a reminder of how quickly deep connections can form. Volunteering with COHA has changed me. It is emotional, yes, but also filled with joy, understanding, and purpose.

*Marilyn Green, Dedicated COHA Volunteer*

## Music, Memory, and Meaning



The first time I sang at Kelowna Hospice House was in the spring of 2018. A neighbour had asked if I might sing for her friend's 60th birthday—he was admitted to Kelowna Hospice House, and she thought some music might lift his spirits. I brought my guitar and sang in his room. As it happened, a COHA staff member walked by, heard the music, and asked if I would consider volunteering to play for others. I said yes—and I've been coming back ever since.

I believe music speaks where words sometimes fall short. I hope that the songs I share offer comfort, spark memories, or simply help someone feel less alone. I choose music with uplifting or familiar messages—sometimes even playful songs for children visiting their loved ones.

One moment I'll never forget was being asked to sing for a woman's mother. I chose Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*. Midway through the song, her mother passed peacefully. The family sat quietly, holding space for her final moment. Her daughter later told me the music helped her mom let go.

Each visit is different. Sometimes it's a "thank you" in passing; sometimes, it's staff members who pause and reflect. What I've learned is that Kelowna Hospice House isn't just for patients—it's a place of care for families, friends, and the team who supports them.

Seven years later, I'm still grateful for that first invitation—and for the chance to offer something gentle and meaningful through music, one visit at a time as a COHA volunteer.

*Marie Clarke, Dedicated COHA Volunteer*

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

137 Clients & Families Supported

## ADULT GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

749 Adults Supported      1,929 Counselling Sessions      10 Grief Groups

## CHILDREN & YOUTH GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

198 Children & Youth Supported      329 Counselling & Art Therapy Sessions      4 Grief Groups      2 Horse Camps

## WELLNESS PROGRAM

712 Reiki Sessions      3 Yoga/Meditation Groups

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

172 Active Volunteers      30 New Volunteers      8,968 Volunteer Hours

“It's so nice to be with people that have experienced something similar to what I have been through.”

Helen, COHA Client  
Spousal Loss Support Group

“I felt happy to share and hear others. I like this group, and I made a lot of new friends.”

Katelynn (age 8), COHA Client  
Children's Grief Support

“Having a safe space to openly grieve has been comforting, and I realize I am not alone.”

Michael, COHA Client  
Bereaved Parent Group





# COLLABORATION = COMMUNITY IN ACTION



## COHA: A Trusted Partner

For more than 25 years, the Regional District of the Central Okanagan’s RCMP Victim Services has relied on the Central Okanagan Hospice Association (COHA) as a trusted partner in supporting individuals impacted by loss. When our clients experience grief following trauma or tragedy, COHA is where we turn—confident they will receive the compassionate, specialized care they need.

The support COHA provides plays an essential role in the overall recovery process. Their services are accessible, affordable, and deeply rooted in professionalism and empathy. For us, knowing that COHA is there brings reassurance—allowing us to refer individuals with peace of mind, knowing they will be guided through their grief with dignity.

COHA’s presence ensures a seamless continuum of care. Without them, our community would face a significant service gap, one that would deeply affect the emotional well-being of vulnerable children, youth, and adults. The value of this partnership cannot be overstated—it is built on trust, shared purpose, and a mutual commitment to community care.

As the need for grief and bereavement support in the Central Okanagan grows, so too does the importance of sustaining COHA’s work. We are proud to stand beside them in their mission to ensure no one has to face grief alone.

**Shari Ellis, BSW, RSW**  
Victim Services, Team Lead  
Regional District of Central Okanagan



## Missions Align

Our partnership with the Central Okanagan Hospice Association (COHA) is still in its early development, but it’s already clear how closely our missions align. Together, we are committed to walking alongside individuals and families as they navigate some of life’s most tender and transformative moments.

COHA’s team has been a vital partner in helping us connect dedicated volunteers with caregivers in need of respite. Their specialized support around end-of-life care—emotional, practical, and educational supports — is something truly unique in our region. These are conversations and resources that are often overlooked or delayed, yet they are so essential.

As I’ve come to learn more about the depth and breadth of COHA’s programming, I’ve seen how profoundly it strengthens the fabric of our community. While Lake Country Health offers a range of support services, COHA brings a distinct and compassionate lens that enhances the continuum of care in meaningful ways.

For many of the caregivers and older adults we serve, access to grief support, palliative care navigation, and advance care planning isn’t just helpful—it’s life-changing. Without COHA, too many would face these journeys feeling overwhelmed or alone. Their presence ensures no one has to walk this path unsupported.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with COHA to help together.

**Sarah Holman (she/her)**  
Caregiver Support Coordinator and Facilitator  
Lake Country Health



“

Aunt Nancy cherished the volunteer notes so much that I felt it was important to include them in Aunt Nancy’s urn. She would have personally thanked each volunteer for the invaluable and selfless work they do and their gift to COHA will continue to honour that. Thank you so very much.”

**Don Davies,**  
Trustee

# A LEGACY

When Nancy Davies made the heartfelt decision to include the Central Okanagan Hospice Association in her estate plans, it was a reflection of the deep values she and her late husband, Ken, shared — kindness, community, and a steadfast belief that no one should have to die alone. Their legacy gift is a beautiful testament to a life lived with compassion and purpose. Through this generous act, Nancy ensures that she and Ken’s enduring love and shared commitment continue to touch lives, offering comfort, dignity, and connection to future generations.

## Ken and Nancy’s Story

Ken and Nancy Davies were married in Ontario in 1964. In 2004 they moved to Peachland to retire and live closer to family. Ken was hospitalized in 2015. Nancy relied on COHA volunteers to sit with him overnight. COHA volunteers left comforting notes for Nancy, which she treasured and kept with her until her passing in February 2023. The notes brought her solace and warmth in a difficult time.



*COHA is deeply grateful for the Davies legacy gift that help our essential services continue now, and for future families.*

# A VIGIL OF COMPASSION



After years working as a psychiatric nurse in home care, I experienced hospice care in a deeply personal way when my husband passed away in 2010. The compassion shown during that time stayed with me. A year later, my mother passed at Kelowna’s Hospice House. It was there I first learned about the Central Okanagan Hospice Association

(COHA) and the depth of care the volunteers and staff offer to both those who are dying and those left behind.

I knew then that I wanted to give back. I took COHA’s volunteer training and began offering my time at reception, with patients, and eventually in one of the most meaningful roles I’ve ever held — sitting vigil.

Sitting vigil became a profound experience for me, especially after the recent losses of my husband and mother. It may sound odd, but it felt almost selfish—because I received so much in return. To be present with someone in their final hours, and to witness the love and gratitude of their families, was a gift.

One moment that has stayed with me was sitting with a young woman’s moth-

er so she could rest, after days of keeping constant vigil by her bedside. A year later, she approached me at COHA’s *The Butterfly Effect* event, remembered me immediately, and introduced me to her entire family with heartfelt thanks. That moment reminded me how deeply these quiet acts of care and kindness matter.

Volunteering with COHA has connected me to countless families and given me a way to speak openly about death, dying, and grief—conversations that are too often avoided. I’m grateful for the chance to share COHA’s mission and encourage others to seek support or join us as volunteers. Because in those final moments, and long after, compassionate presence makes all the difference.

**Joy Wallace**  
*Dedicated COHA Volunteer*



# COHA IN ACTION



Community teams from RBC and Immaculata High School decorate Kelowna Hospice House



Maria (left), recipient of the 2024 Volunteer Compassion Award



Holiday fun at December 2024's Volunteer Appreciation



Music at Kelowna Hospice House



Halloween hijinks at Kelowna Hospice House



Fun at the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament



2024 New Volunteer Graduates



Volunteer Appreciation during National Volunteer Appreciation Week (April 2024)



"Harvesting Thanks" Donor Appreciation (October 2024)



Raymond James team members assisting in the gardens at Kelowna Hospice House



Family Arts Night at the COHA August Centre



Horse Whisperer Grief Camp (October 2024)



RBC's generous \$20,000 donation to COHA



Two Days on the Lake Children's Grief Group (Jul/Aug 2024)



Art project during a Children's Grief Group



Expressive Arts Day in the Park (Summer 2024)



Homes for the Holidays (November 2024)



National Philanthropy Day: A day of recognition



# THANK YOU



A dazzling evening at *Swinging with the Stars* (February 2025); Team Think Pink!

ENTER TO WIN TICKETS TO  
**TAYLOR SWIFT  
THE ERAS TOUR**

- ★ 2 VIP Tickets in Luxury Box  
Food and Drink Included
- ★ 2 Night Stay in Private 94' Luxury Superyacht

**Buy Raffle Tickets 1 FOR \$100**  
ONLY 1000 TICKETS AVAILABLE  
GAMING LICENSE #155509

Proceeds to **COHA** CENTRAL OKANAGAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Taylor Swift Experience Raffle (November 2024)

## Thank You Granting Donors

Thank you to our granting donors for their gracious support in helping people access our grief and bereavement services, and for the support of our equity, diversity, and inclusion strategic planning during the year:

- RBC Foundation
  - PURKIDS Foundation
  - Telus Friendly Future Foundation
- Hamber Foundation
  - City of Kelowna
  - Central Okanagan Foundation



Messages of remembrance for the *In Loving Memory* campaign



Memory Wall at *The Butterfly Effect* (July 2024)

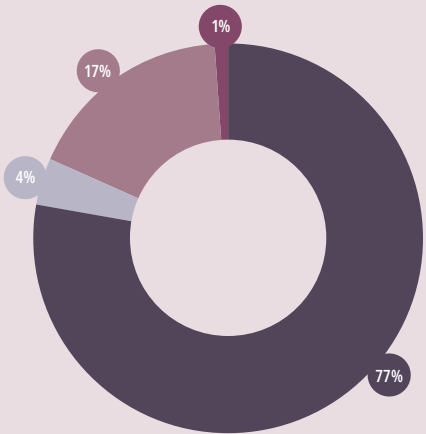


*Homes for the Holidays* (November 2024)

# FINANCIAL REPORT

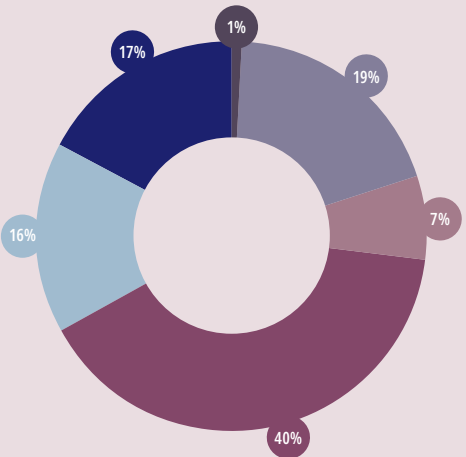
## Source of Funds

|             |                        |                |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| ●           | Donation & Fundraising | \$1,179,837.03 |
| ●           | Endowments & Legacy    | \$65,462.21    |
| ●           | Grants                 | \$259,426.27   |
| ●           | Other                  | \$19,086.29    |
| Grand Total |                        | \$1,523,811.80 |



## Use of Funds

|             |                     |                |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|
| ●           | Amortization        | \$20,463.49    |
| ●           | General             | \$287,734.64   |
| ●           | Occupancy           | \$100,156.55   |
| ●           | Programs & Services | \$617,567.69   |
| ●           | Salaries & Benefits | \$244,587.77   |
| ●           | Fundraising         | \$269,454.35   |
| Grand Total |                     | \$1,539,964.49 |



“

We will do all we can  
not only to help you  
die peacefully, but also  
to live until you die.”

**Dame Cicely Saunders**

Founder of St Christopher's Hospice

AUGUST CENTRE **COHA** 

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