

40 STORIES IN 40 YEARS

Magda Lane



For Magda Lane, volunteering in the palliative care sector is an incredible privilege and in her own words, a calling from God.

Originally from Czechoslovakia, the 75-year-old has been volunteering in Melbourne's south east for 34 years, after a few close friends in her church group identified the need for palliative care services in the local community.

“In the early days, there were no hospitals in our community, so some people got together and created Emerald Hills Hospice Service in 1986 and I started volunteering in 1987. As well as volunteering with patients, we also created an opportunity shop (op shop) to help fund the hospice service.”

The Emerald Hills Hospice Service continued to expand in the early 90's after receiving funding from the government. This saw them move into Cranbourne and Pakenham, and eventually the service was renamed to Palliative Care South East, an organisation which serves the Local Government areas of Greater Dandenong, Cardinia, Casey and part of Kingston.

The importance of volunteers and the bond with clients

Even with all of this change, Magda remains a loyal volunteer in the Hills community and still has clients to this day, working whenever the client or their carer needs additional support. She also still helps to manage the op shop.

For Magda, the importance of volunteers within the sector could not be clearer.

“Volunteers allow people to stay in their own homes for a longer time. We are the people who are constantly on the ground to help, and can do everything from just sitting with the patient while the carer has a break or goes to an appointment, to driving patients to their hospital appointments.”

“It is incredible that the families, who are in such a difficult situation and constantly have doctors and nurses around them, accept volunteers with such grace and love.”

***“I consider it a privilege to be able to assist people in need.
I do it because I love serving the community.”***

“All of my clients across the years have stayed with me, but I had a client, years and years ago, whom I will always remember fondly. We both grew up in Czechoslovakia and shared a common language, so we really bonded.”

“Despite her prognosis, she was one of the longer-term clients I had. What was really remarkable was that her grandchildren, who were all in their teens, were so involved in her care. I was honoured to be invited to speak at her funeral too.”

Changes in the sector

One of the most positive changes that Magda has seen across her 30 years in the sector is the increased awareness and understanding of palliative care, however she would like to see more palliative care centres and services introduced in the next 40 years.

“30 years ago, it was rare to find people who knew about palliative care, whereas now it is much more common. This awareness has definitely come from the growth of Palliative Care South East as well as all the work that Palliative Care Victoria has done across the years.”

“However, with increased awareness comes a higher demand for palliative care services so we need more service providers to keep up with the growth. Our population is ageing so we will need palliative care more and more across the coming years.”

When asked if Magda would stop volunteering, she simply said no.

“As a dedicated Christian, I know that volunteering is my calling. My personal relationship with God is what motivates me most, so I will continue volunteering until I am no longer able to serve.”