

Rotary/Flames House Alberta's First Hospice for Children

Imagine the anguish of knowing that your child is going to die before you do. Now imagine facing that grief while providing round-the-clock medical care for your son or daughter for the weeks or months or years until that terrible day comes. That is the sad reality faced by hundreds of families in our community right now.

Caring for chronically ill children who suffer from progressive life-limiting illness in the home can be exhausting for parents, both physically and emotionally. It is one of the most significant stressors that a family may ever have to face. A hospice care environment is specifically designed to support children and families throughout a child's terminal illness. This support enables families to gain strength so they can better cope with their child's disease progression and the intense demand of long-term caregiving. A hospice also helps families manage both the grief associated with a child's worsening condition and their own spiritual journey throughout.

This free-standing pediatric hospice will be located right next door to the new Alberta Children's Hospital. It will have eleven children's bedrooms, therapeutic activity areas and a library. Rotary/Flames House will offer:

- Respite Care - 24 hour care of children on a temporary basis, to allow their families time for rest and renewal;
- Transition Care - services for children in the program who can leave the hospital but whose home or community are not yet ready to provide the necessary services, i.e. wheelchair access, nursing or physical therapy;
- Symptom Management - active care aimed at managing the adverse physical and emotional symptoms of the child's illness and/or side effects of treatments;
- End of Life Care - comprehensive services for both child and family during the last hours or days of a child's life.

Thanks ECL!

A \$500,000 pledge from ECL Choppers for Charity, committed over the next three years, will fully fund a sensory room at the hospice. This room will provide distraction therapy for children with complex mental and physical disorders through exposure to a soothing and stimulating environment. In addition, this room will be used for symptom management, pain relief, relaxation and family time. Children will be provided with stimulation and relaxation through the use of smell, touch, sound, color, and light. Each corner of the room will be a discovery for children.

Some examples of sensory experiences that may be available for the children include:

- Floating in a leaf chair,
- Watching bubbles stream and rise in a water bubble tube,
- Diving into a ball pool,
- Dreaming to music, or
- Gazing into a fibre optics light spray.

Rotary/Flames House will provide care from a team of specialized caregivers, including doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and child life specialists in a warm, friendly, home-like environment. It is estimated that around 400 families in southern Alberta will benefit from the services provided at Rotary/Flames House annually.

