

**Ashgate Hospice Press Release**

**30th November 2021**

**How Ashgate Hospice gave bereaved husband strength to carry on**

A loving husband whose wife of 45 years died earlier this year has spoken of how Ashgate Hospice has helped him cope with the grief he’s experienced following her death.

Last year, Diane Matthews, from Killamarsh, was cared for at Ashgate Hospice’s Inpatient Unit after being diagnosed with Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), a rare degenerative neurological condition like Motor Neurone Disease.

As part of Grief Awareness Week, which takes place between 2nd and 8th December, Graham is urging other people grieving the loss of a loved one to speak up about the way they’re feeling.

The 67-year-old attended Ashgate’s Recently Bereaved Group – a six-week program for people who have lost their partners – and enjoyed having the opportunity to open up to others who had been through a similar experience to him.

Graham has even made friends with some of the other attendees, and they’ve met up on several occasions to continue talking about how they’re individually navigating grief.

He said: “I miss and think about Diane every day. Life will never be the same without her and dealing with the grief this year has been a big challenge for our whole family.

“Some days are good, others are bad – sometimes you can’t explain why you feel like you do. Days like birthdays, as we approach Christmas time or even hearing a piece of music – the grief and sadness can just hit you.

“I attended Ashgate Hospice’s bereavement group for six weeks and I really didn’t know what to expect but I found it to be very helpful.

“Everybody was there for the same reason – all of our partners had died in different circumstances, but I thought it was reassuring to hear other people’s experiences and what their situation was.

“Ashgate Hospice has been so supportive after Diane died; I still receive a call from a member of the team every few weeks to check how I’m doing. It’s great knowing that the care continues for families even after their loved ones have died.”

Ashgate’s Recently Bereaved Group is co-ordinated by Bereavement Group Lead Facilitator, Trina Parker, and is open to partners whose loved ones have died at the hospice.

The two-hour sessions take place every Monday and occur quarterly throughout each year.

Trina added: “For someone who has lost a partner, to be in a room with other people in a similar situation where they can express their emotions and share their experiences is extremely helpful.

“If you have lost a partner, it takes time to heal from such a monumental, life-changing loss, but the group really helps people to navigate the beginning of the journey with positivity and hope.

“Our participants are encouraged to share their stories and express their feelings. We talk about their loved ones, look at coping strategies, discuss models of grief and how to look after ourselves both physically and emotionally.

“The empathy and understanding they give to one another is amazing, new friendships are often made and it is wonderful to see them make plans for the future.”

The hospice also provides support for anyone bereaved by life-limiting illness – regardless of whether their loved one has received support at Ashgate.

People can self-refer to the charity’s Supportive Care Team through main reception, by calling 01246 568801 or by emailing supportivecarereferrals@ashgatehospice.org.uk. There are a host of resources available including drop-in groups, bereavement groups, access to support workers, counsellors and more.

  **ENDS**

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**Notes for editors:**

1. Ashgate Hospice, based in Chesterfield, provides specialist palliative and end of life care including a wide range of community-based care and support services for people with a life-limiting illness and their families across North Derbyshire and the High Peak and Dales. [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk](http://www.ashgatehospicecare.org.uk/)