

New residential hospice opens in Kitchener



Innisfree house

Annie Sakkab, The Record

Sheila Ainsworth (left), chair of the board of directors of Lisaard and Innisfree House, and Connie Dwyer, executive director of Lisaard and Innisfree House at the new facilities that will be open to the public in the coming week in Kitchener.

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By [Johanna Weidner](#)

KITCHENER — Innisfree House will soon open its doors as Waterloo Region's newest residential hospice.

The Kitchener hospice is a bright, comfortable and peaceful place for end-of-life patients and their families. But the best aspect is not one particular room or feature, said executive director Connie Dwyer.

"My favourite part is that we're going to be able to care for more people. It's very hard to turn people away because we don't have the room," Dwyer said.

Innisfree House's 10 beds are much needed in the region. It's an expansion of six-bed [Lisaard House](#) in Cambridge, which has turned away more than double the number of people they've cared for since opening in 2000 because they don't have available beds.

It's hoped Innisfree will have its first residents by late next week.

"There's lots of people waiting," said Dwyer, who looks after both hospices.

Care at both Innisfree and Lisaard is free. Lisaard is dedicated to cancer patients, while Innisfree is for any palliative diagnosis.

Both will rely on donations for more than half of their operating budgets because the government only provides partial funding for bedside care.

They're close to the fundraising goal for building Innisfree house, now at \$4.2 million of the \$4.4 million needed.

About four years ago, the idea for Innisfree was hatched, a year ago a shovel went into the ground on Homer Watson Boulevard near Conestoga College, and construction really got underway in the fall.

"I'm so excited," said Sheila Ainsworth, chair of the board of directors. "It's been a long time coming. It's been a lot of work."

Final touches were still being looked after on Thursday morning before the opening celebration planned for that night.

The hospice's front doors open into a light-filled great room with table and chairs, couches, fireplace, kitchen and balcony that's designed for families to gather and relax.

"It's nice because lots of families can sit at these tables," Ainsworth said.

Each bedroom is equipped with a hospital bed, reclining chair, sofa bed, refrigerator, desk, television and bathroom. Each bed had a quilt, each chair an afghan.

"A room that not only does it feel like home, but it also feels like a place where family can gather," Ainsworth said.

The large patio doors in each room open and the bed can be wheeled out onto the patio, or into one of the two sunrooms with floor to ceiling windows on all walls.

"It's kind of a bright and happy space," said Janet Willard, development co-ordinator.

Between the wings is a courtyard with bubbling fountain, gardens and benches.

"It's just very peaceful," Ainsworth said.

Across from there is a cosy family room. Outside each room's patio doors will be a bird feeder, a favourite feature at Lisaard House.

"The most important thing to us is it be as much like a home as it can be," Dwyer said.

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