



## COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY STORIES

<p>1 A local woman burst into tears as she collected her coffee at her local café. The café owner took her to one side and held her hands whilst she cried and until she felt better. Both smiled and went on with their day.</p>	<p>2 A man who spent 40 years caring for giraffes as the local zoo needed to say goodbye to his friends. In the final days of his life, his bed was wheeled into the giraffes night enclosure and they spent hours saying goodbye. He died amongst his friends.</p>	<p>3 Having no one to drive him to Auckland for regular treatment, a man's fellow volunteer took him and his wife (who didn't drive in towns) monthly for a year.</p>	<p>4 A man caring for his wife in the last weeks of her life found his neighbours organising rubbish bin collection and grass cutting without asking, leaving him a tiny window of respite for himself.</p>	<p>5 He turned up with a trailer load of dry firewood, not because he had been asked, but winter was coming and the couple were looking after their granddaughter who was dying. He stacked the wood, tidied up and came in for a beer - a much needed visitor.</p>
<p>6 When I got to the checkout the operator put packets of luxury chocolate biscuits amongst my order. He said that a fellow shopper had watched me over the weeks and saw I didn't buy myself treats, so had left these for me. I went home to my sick wife smiling and feeling I could cope for a little longer.</p>	<p>7 Through my eyes; I don't stop from 6am, often I don't get breakfast till lunchtime, even getting time in the garden to put the washing on the line is a luxury for me. Then my neighbour turned up, who Jim knows well, they sat and chatted and I had breakfast before 10.</p>	<p>8 I love to go fishing, since my MND has gone to my legs, well my wheelchair makes that hard. A woman who helped me write my story, her husband has a boat and he offered to take me out with his mate, my electric chair was too big, so the local hospice lent the skipper one for the day; I landed a fish, what a brilliant day.</p>	<p>9 In the supermarket car park, putting away the shopping in a rush, found the tyre was flat, his phone rang with the news his son's condition had changed suddenly, 'come back immediately'. Another shopper was noting this, offered to take him home and then come back and deal with the car.</p>	<p>10 Woman at end of life was living in a house with broken windows etc. Local gang got together and had the windows fixed, did up the garden and disappeared back into their community.</p>
<p>11 'He loves his garden'. A group of friends came for a garden working bee, afterwards they sat there with the afternoon tea they had brought and he who loves his garden.</p>	<p>12 She lived on her own, after diagnosis the days were long, on her own. Her daughter living in the States arranged for someone she knows to call her Mum every couple of days – she looked forward to these calls and felt connected with some-one who cared.</p>	<p>13 I love singing, I don't have enough energy to go out anymore. Some of my singing group come round at the weekend and we sing, I have some energy after that.</p>	<p>14 Instead of starting university the mates of an 18 year old who wanted to see the world B4 he died, pooled their funds and spent the best year ever together. Rich memories during his last days.</p>	<p>15 I miss my bike trips, the local boys came round with a sidecar, my nurse topped up my pain relief and I went for the ride of my life. Kept the goggles they offered me too!</p>

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<p>16 He was the Sunday school teacher. Later on when he became sick and then had his licence taken away, members of the church collected him from home, made a bed up from furniture and a mattress in the church and put it by the community garden so that he could be involved and also rest.</p>	<p>17 Dad's friends rallied around during those last few months. They made sure dad was part of everything.. the joy on his face when he returned from a drive in his beloved vintage car, the soft voice of a neighbour reading his favourite novel aloud.. they were special times and mum could relax her vigil for a while.</p>	<p>18 Mum loved her garden and the local gardening group she belonged to came around every fortnight to keep things looking perfect .. when she felt like it Mum was out there issuing orders, at other times she would keep a watchful eye out the window. It gave her so much peace and pleasure to see her plants been lovingly cared for.</p>	<p>19 I don't think I could have kept on being (husband's) carer if it wasn't for the love, compassion and support of my friends. They didn't fade off the scene, but were always there in person or on the phone. I could laugh, cry, rant, be angry or sad, and they were just there .. it made all the difference.</p>	<p>20 My sister didn't want to be hidden away when she became sick. She wanted to be at home in the midst of the family, so we moved her bed into the lounge, where she was at the hub of it all, with friends and family coming and going, and the dog settled at her feet. It all seemed so normal.</p>
<p>21 In the three years leading to her death Beth and her children received exceptional support from her local community. Some people cooked meals, volunteers picked up the children from school, helped with their homework, and cleaned her house. One group turned up regularly to keep her company</p>	<p>22 Everything she wanted and needed was put in place and the support was generated naturally from within the community. While many of the supporters adored her and were close friends, others didn't know her at all.</p>	<p>23 During the last few weeks of his life my Dad struggled to digest food and had no appetite .. he literally lived on jellied eels and king prawns!! My boss was aware of this and one day he came from a meeting with a tray of jellied eels. This meant such a lot to me and of course my Dad was delighted.</p>	<p>24 Compassion shown by a neighbour. Black bereavement, red anger, confusion and then lighter colours, a change of mood as neighbours stood by and were there when needed, with practical help. A strong bond was extended to other family members – compassion is not contained after it has been received but is passed on</p>	<p>25 There are many times my two closest friends give me their ears to listen to me babble on and be my sounding board, to enable me to voice my frustrations, which then turned into laughter and in turn sometimes give me the answer or solution, or maybe just an idea, or maybe just silence.</p>

so her mother – her main carer – could have a break.			(description of a drawing of 'what compassion means to me')	
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<p>26 I was starting to feel so isolated when caring for Jim, and was so sad when I had to stop going to the local quilters group. I mentioned this to a friend, and the next thing I know, the fortnightly gathering is at my house. I didn't have to lift a finger, and Jim was always part of the fun .. sitting covered with his favourite quilt (of course), while laughter, creativity and bad jokes floated around .. I felt normal and part of life again.</p>	<p>17 Dad adored the quilt his far away daughter made for him; as he spent more time sitting in his chair, his quilt became his special support. He would always tell his visitors about his girl as he stroked the material. It became frayed from so much love and a friend with magic sewing skills came round on quilt washing day to make repairs. Back on Dad's lap, another layer of love had been added.</p>	<p>28 After my voice was taken away I felt lost, alone, very low. I couldn't see a time when I could be me again. A dear friend took me to an Art Journaling class and I learnt to talk through art. At first it was angry and dark, but gradually my pictures changed and actually I became quite proud of what I did. I had written a few children's stories years ago and began illustrating them. Leaving something for the grandchildren to come.</p>	<p>29 My wife won't drive where there's heavy traffic, she doesn't like motorways either. I couldn't face the hospital bus, it was just too much ... and then someone I didn't know well offered to drive us both to Auckland and bring my wife back when I had to stay. It meant so much to have her there, so much; this went on for weeks whilst I had treatment. My wife really felt refreshed by time spent with this supporter.</p>	<p>30 My husband used to breed miniature horses and train them for circuses. As his dementia worsened I couldn't look after them and him and had to sell them. He seemed to shrink each day away from us, only coming back when he saw photos of them. One day out of the blue a trailer arrived at home and out came 2 of the horses he had trained with their owner. He was so thrilled. They came often for visits and were with him when he died. So special.</p>
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