

## **A Life Celebration**

### ***What is a Life Celebration?***

It is the recognition of a person who is well loved by family & friends, & of a life well lived. It is an opportunity for people to come together at a time of great sadness & often of imminent loss &, in a party atmosphere, salute their friend or loved one & to say “thanks for being in my life; knowing you have had an impact on the way I am.” It also gives the person whose life is being celebrated an opportunity to express love & thanks to their family & friends in return.

A Life Celebration should be a joyous & happy occasion, where long lost family & friends can come together in honour of the person whose life is being celebrated. It should be an occasion that will be remembered in the future with great warmth & an event from which strength can be drawn, during what is likely to be a difficult & sad time.

### ***A Life Celebration can be very therapeutic...***

Often family & friends feel very helpless when they are confronted with the knowledge that someone they love will soon be leaving them for good. People have the feeling that they should be “doing something” to help, but very often there is nothing that can be done other than to let nature run its course. Planning a Life Celebration can be very therapeutic for all concerned because it gives them the ‘something’ to do. They get the opportunity to show their love for the guest of honour, in a very tangible way. It is a chance to say “hey, you are so loved, all these people want to come along & tell you how much you mean to them and not through tears, but through laughter”

The planning of a Life Celebration can be done with as much, or as little, of the honoured persons input as he or she would like. Often they too have a feeling of helplessness, which is why it is often advised that terminally ill people plan their own funerals. It can mean even more if they help plan their own Life Celebration because, after all, it is their life being celebrated & they can be present to enjoy it!

### ***How do you make a Life Celebration personal?***

Make as many aspects of the celebration a reflection of the honoured persons’ personality; their loves, their idiosyncrasies & even their pet hates, but be mindful of the guest of honour’s character, don’t embarrass or make them uncomfortable.

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## **Venue:**

Choose a venue or location that has special meaning for the person. If they have always loved boats & the sea, then somewhere with a view of a marina would be very fitting or if they are a very keen gardener, then a venue in the botanical gardens or the like would be ideal.

## **Food & Drinks:**

An obvious choice would be to serve the persons favourite food, whether it is seafood, pizzas, Mexican, or burgers. The same applies to the choice of drinks; if they are a wine lover, then bottles from their favourite vineyard would be appropriate or if they have been known to be rather fond of a particular cocktail, then gallons of the stuff should be served – remember it is a party!

## **Theme:**

Why not bring in a theme for the celebration? It can be as simple or elaborate as you like (there is no wrong or right here). It could be that the person has always had a love for the '60's, so the décor could reflect this (you can even have guests come in fancy dress!) or it could simply be that the persons favourite colour is blue & so the colour blue is brought into as much of the décor as you like.

## **Music & entertainment:**

Again, whatever the guest of honour likes is what would be the most appropriate to play.

## **Celebrant & speeches:**

Part of holding a Life Celebration is for people to publicly acknowledge & thank the guest of honour for being the person they are. Often family members can find it hard to stand up and give a living eulogy, so having a celebrant at the Life Celebration is a great way for the family to pay tribute to their loved one, without the real possibility of becoming overly emotional. It is good that the celebrant is brought in right from the start of the planning, so that they will have a greater understanding of the honoured person & how he or she fits into everyone's lives. Put together a photo presentation of the person's life, their highs & lows, their triumphs & their achievements.

## **Photographer:**

It is a great idea to have a professional photographer at the Life Celebration. Photos taken at the party can be enjoyed by family & friends long after the persons passing. For some friends these photos may, in all likelihood, be the last taken with their friend & they will be treasured forever.

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## **Remembrance Book:**

Have a remembrance book available & when inviting family & friends, ask them to bring a special photo, story or poem with them to be included in it. Captions can be added to photo's to further personalize the memoir. The remembrance book can be enjoyed by the loved one before they pass & will serve as a reminder to the family after the passing, as to the impact that they had on others lives.

## **Arrival or departure:**

Arrange a special way in which the honoured person will either arrive or leave the party. Again this is a great way that a dream or passion of the loved one can be realized: for example, they may never have ridden in a limo or Rolls Royce or perhaps they have always wanted to ride in a helicopter.

## **A special surprise:**

This can be an element of the party which the loved one has no knowledge of; for example, the family could arrange for their sports hero to make a special appearance or if they have a love of bagpipes, to have a pipe band arrive & play their favourite tunes. Other examples could include videoed messages from friends & family that are unable to make the celebration or for family or friends to perform a song or a piece of music.

For the guest of honour, the family & friends, a Life Celebration can be just the "break from reality" that everyone needs. The underlying sadness of why everyone has come together can be put aside for a while & it can be replaced with some welcome fun & laughter and it will go a long way in getting the healing process off to a good start.

If you need any help, advice or recommendations when planning a Life Celebration, please do not hesitate to contact The Celebration Studio. Co-owners Barbara & Nicky, know first hand what it is like to lose a loved one to cancer & have experienced the joy that can come out of a Life Celebration, "it is our hope that others get to celebrate their loved ones lives... it is a very therapeutic part of the healing process."