

# Hospicare

& Palliative Care Services

NEWSLETTER FALL/WINTER 2016



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## Editors

Melissa Travis Dunham  
Jackie Swift

## Designer

Linda Haylor Mikula

## Printing

Arnold Printing

## Hospicare & Palliative Care Services

### Ithaca office:

172 E. King Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850

### Cortland office:

11 Kennedy Parkway  
Cortland, New York 13045

Tel: 607/272-0212

Fax: 607/277-3785

Email: [info@hospicare.org](mailto:info@hospicare.org)

Website: [hospicare.org](http://hospicare.org)

### Office Hours

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Monday through Friday

The mission of Hospicare & Palliative Care Services is to bring medical expertise and compassionate, respectful care to people and their loved ones at any stage of a life-threatening illness and to provide information and education about advanced illness, dying and bereavement to the entire community.

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SHERYL D. SINKOW

## Message from the Director

### Community Volunteers Make the Difference

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, the leaders of the hospice movement envisioned hospice care as a community-wide resource that required a communal effort. In fact, they intentionally designed a blueprint for hospice care that would draw hands-on support from the local community. They believed that this would create

focused, intimate support and an array of helpful services for patients and families at the time of their greatest need.

Now, so many years later, we can see that there was real genius in that design. In particular, we see the true value of hospice's emphasis on volunteers from the community supplementing the professional care of the hospice team. This issue's article about volunteers (see pages 4-5) shows how they contribute to patient care, and highlights the many ways they provide patients and their families with relief from the burdens of illness.

When Medicare first began paying for hospice services, federal statute mandated that no less than 5 percent of all patient-care hours be provided by community volunteers. While many of our colleagues in the national hospice movement have to struggle to achieve that 5 percent requirement, at Hospicare we are particularly proud that our volunteers have traditionally provided 15 to 20 percent of the total patient-contact hours per year. This is a record that very few hospice programs can match. It speaks to the fact that our agency can provide a hospice experience for patients and families that is remarkable in its depth and richness.

After having completed the mandatory 20-hour training program, Hospicare's patient-care volunteers extend the benefits of hospice care well beyond what would be possible from our clinicians alone. Volunteers are ideally suited to offer an extra layer of support to patients and their families by engaging with patients in friendly, life-affirming ways and by allowing patients' loved ones to have an hour of respite, now and again, to run errands or practice self-care.

But volunteer involvement in our agency doesn't stop there. The work of patient-care volunteers is supplemented by extensive volunteer support that does not involve working directly with patients. Volunteers provide invaluable services in our office and Residence kitchen, among other things. They also contribute enthusiasm, energy and commitment to our fundraising events, especially our most important one: Women Swimmin'. As the article on page 3 shows, hundreds of volunteers (including the women who swim) put their hearts into this event. Their efforts, and the financial support of hundreds of donors, raised more than \$424,000, all of which will go to support patients and families.

We are proud that we can attract so many wonderful people to our cause, but it's perhaps an even greater honor to live in a community whose members are so willing to give so freely of their time and attention. It's no exaggeration to say that without volunteers Hospicare could not succeed, and it's absolutely certain that without the service of volunteers, our patients and their loved ones would never experience the full extent of support that only first-class hospice care can provide.

A blue ink signature of Dale Johnson.

Dale Johnson

On the cover: Women Swimmin' 2016 featured 320 women who swam across Cayuga Lake, 19 women who swam in pools of their choice, 170 boaters who accompanied the lake swimmers, and more than 150 volunteers on shore who helped make the event a rousing success. The swim raised more than \$424,000, which will be used solely to support patient and family care.

#### COVER PHOTO CREDITS

ROW 1 (L-R): MICHELLE TUREK; WOLFGANG SACHSE

ROW 2: NATHALIE RATEAU; MICHELLE TUREK; EDNA BROWN

ROW 3: MICHELLE TUREK; WOLFGANG SACHSE

ROW 4: MICHELLE TUREK; NATHALIE RATEAU

# A Beautiful Community Swim with Boundless Community Spirit

BY MELISSA TRAVIS DUNHAM

## Women Swimmin' 2016



CLAIR PENNELS



WOLFGANG SACHSE

August 13 was our 13th Annual Women Swimmin' for Hospicare event—and a lucky 13th it was! Although there were storms in the forecast (after a very dry Ithaca summer), the rain held off until late in the day. The water was warm and still as 320 women waded into Cayuga Lake from the east shore to swim across to the Ithaca Yacht Club.

To help the swimmers reach the deep water more easily, Women Swimmin' Safety Team Member Joe Miller designed and constructed an ingenious portable ramp that allowed them to walk over the rocky lake bottom and push off into waist-deep water. Two other valiant volunteers, Leslie Meyerhoff and Lorraine Hare, floated at the end of the ramp, in a giant inflatable ducky and flamingo (respectively), to cheer the swimmers on and help them meet up with their escort boaters. More than 170 boaters guided the women across the lake to the shore where hundreds of friends and family waited to meet them.

We often call Women Swimmin' a community swim, and truly it is. The swimmers and their escort boaters created a special community in the lake that morning, but the community extended much further, to the shore and across the county. More than 150 volunteers helped out on shore the day of the event and in the days and weeks leading up to the swim. Individuals and businesses in our community provided their space, talents, time and materials to make all

the many details of the swim come together.

For the second year, our swim also extended to swimming pools throughout our area and across the country with Women Swimmin' Laps for Hospicare. Nineteen swimmers opted to swim laps in the pool of their choice, with a certified lifeguard. Their combined goals totaled more than 200 miles. Several of our Laps swimmers were on-hand August 13 at Cass Park or the Yacht Club to support their lake swimmin' sisters.

Special thanks to Cornell Meteorology Lecturer Mark Wysocki for keeping our Safety Team informed of all the latest forecasts for the morning of the swim. We also extend a special thanks to the businesses who covered all event expenses, so that 100% of the money raised by swimmers and boaters will go toward patient and family services. Thanks to our host, Ithaca Yacht Club; Ithaca Bakery and Collegetown Bagels for donating a nourishing breakfast; presenting sponsor Maguire Family of Dealerships; our

media sponsors Cayuga Radio Group and *Tompkins Weekly*; our corporate sponsors: 15 STEPS; Asthma & Allergy Associates P.C.; BorgWarner; Cayuga Medical Center; Ciaschi, Dietershagen, Little, Mickelson, a division of Insero & Co.; CSP Management; Family Medicine Associates of Ithaca, LLP; Ithaca Cayuga Optical Services; Miller Mayer, LLP; Morgan Stanley; OB-GYN & Midwifery Associates of Ithaca; Satori Day Spa and Salon; The Computing Center; Tompkins Insurance Agencies, Inc. and Tompkins Trust Company; and Visiting Nurse Service. Thanks to Puddledockers also, for the seventh year in a row, for donating a fabulous kayak, plus accessories, for our raffle.

We thank all in our community who played a part in this event. Your support allows Hospicare & Palliative Care Services to keep our promise to provide end-of-life care and bereavement support to anyone in our community who needs our help.



NATHALIE RATEAU



# Hospicare Volunteers: Touching Lives, Sharing Joy

BY JACKIE SWIFT

“Life is a circle,” says Hospicare Volunteer Nelson Bills. “The older I get, the more I realize that. And the final stage is very important.”



Nelson began volunteering with Hospicare six years ago, after retiring from Cornell. He plays many volunteer roles for the agency including breakfast chef for patients in the Residence, grocery shopper for the Residence kitchen, Women Swimmin' volunteer, patient home-visit volunteer and vigil volunteer. “I always told myself when I retired I'd reach out to the community and do something that would have high impact and immediate contact with people,” he says, “and this is it. Hospicare gives me a chance to touch people's lives at a time when they really need help. It's been very rewarding.”

Hospicare Volunteer Kat Patton agrees. “As a volunteer you're meeting wonderful people who happen to be at the end of their lives. There's still a lot of joy and wonderful connections to be made,” she says. Kat, who is a licensed massage therapist, volunteers her time to give massages geared to patients' needs, usually in patients' own homes. “The biggest thing I drew from my training as a

massage therapist was to have reverence for each human being wherever they are in life and to meet them where they are with complete focus and presence,” she explains. “My volunteer work with Hospicare brings me back to that initial training.”

Nelson and Kat are two of about 120 community members who volunteer with Hospicare. Like all Hospicare volunteers, they share a deep desire to reach out and connect with those who are at the end of life—and ultimately to support patients and their families at a time when they are most vulnerable. “It has been said that volunteers are the heart of Hospicare,” says Wendy

joyful in the midst of something that seems extremely sad,” she says. “There's often humor, too. Patients who are aware that their time is limited will still crack a joke. That's something I really appreciate. It's taught me that your time might be limited but you're still alive, still here and present, until the very end.”

For Nelson, connecting with patients and family members is the highlight of his volunteer experience. When he serves breakfast at the Nina K. Miller Hospicare Residence on Saturday mornings, he looks forward to being able to fulfill each patient's breakfast request. “Whatever they want, that's what I

“Your time might be limited but you're still alive, still here and present, until the very end.”

Yettru, Hospicare's manager of volunteer services. “The work they do is very significant. They are important members of the team,



giving the gift of their time and presence through companionship visits and by providing respite for family members, among other things.”

Kat highly values that human connection and the lessons patients have taught her. “There's almost always room for something

cook,” he says with satisfaction. “Pancakes, omelets, anything. It's a fun meal because it's hard to really mess up breakfast.”

But home visits are what Nelson particularly loves. That's when he gets to hang out and chat with patients and their family members for an hour at a time. “We talk about all kinds of things,” he says, “and then it can blossom into other activities, depending on what the patient is interested in. Sometimes we look at photos or reminisce about the old days. Or sometimes it's a respite visit, where I stay with the patient while the caregiver gets to dash out to the store or run an errand. Those home visits, in particular, validate my original vision when I first decided to become a volunteer with Hospicare: I am able to touch people's lives and become involved when they need help the most.”

In the course of their volunteer work, Kat and Nelson have both been present at the





SHERYL SINKOW

CLAIR PENNELS



SHERYL SINKOW



GRANGER MACY



bedside of patients who were in their final hours. “There have been times during the last hours of the vigil when I’ve been able to offer some gentle physical contact,” says Kat. “It’s really no more than just light touching, a little hand massage or foot massage. There are unspoken signs even when the person seems unconscious, like a big sigh that answers the question, ‘Is this offering supportive? Am I doing this person good?’”

As a participant in Hospicare’s official vigil program, Nelson has sat with patients in skilled nursing facilities who have no family or friends who can be with them. “Volunteers hand off the patient to each other,” he says. “We sit alone by the bedside, just being present. It’s a very touching experience.”

Nelson’s years doing outreach as an educator gave him experience talking with people about their problems and offering solutions, and he carries that over to his work with Hospicare as well. “My life experiences involved reaching out,” he says. “So now when people ask me what I’m doing in retirement, I tell them about my volunteer work at Hospicare. They often say, ‘I could never do

that; I’m glad you’re doing it.’ It’s my chance to educate them a bit on what’s involved and share some of the rewards I’ve had. I explain that hospice is a very holistic team approach to the issues that come up for patients and families at the end of life.”

Volunteering with Hospicare can also lead to meaningful and sometimes profound personal insight for volunteers. It gives them the chance to explore their own sense of mortality. “Volunteers have the opportunity to get together with others to talk about death and dying,” Wendy says. “They can ask the hard questions they have on their minds. They might not get all the answers they’re looking for, but they have a safe space to explore death with others. They see that they’re not the only ones with these sorts of questions.”

Kat has found she’s less afraid of death, she says. “Through my volunteer experience, I learned about myself and about the process of death and dying. Volunteering has decreased the fear factor for me. I still don’t always like to think about my own demise, but the more I know about it, the less frightening it becomes.”

**Opposite page: Nelson Bills stocks the refrigerator in the Residence kitchen after his weekly shopping trip to Wegmans. Kat Patton, LMT, gives gentle massages to patients.**

**Above: top row, from left: Dianne Valesente, Justine Moseley and Maureen Shallish prepare bereavement packets for mailing. Jeannie Barnaba addresses notes to bereaved family members of Hospicare patients. In recognition of her longstanding commitment to our mission, we recently awarded Jeannie the 2016 Hospicare Volunteer Honor. Pet visitor Holly-the-Dachshund visits with patient Betty Ware.**

**Bottom row, from left: Meal volunteer Jud Kilgore serves dinner to patient June Bell. SooYoung VanDeMark helps out at the Illuminations 2015 event. Phil Dankert helps maintain the Hospicare grounds.**

If you’d like to learn more about volunteering at Hospicare, please visit [Hospicare.org/volunteers](http://Hospicare.org/volunteers).



# Board Member Profile: Granger Macy

BY MELISSA TRAVIS DUNHAM



GRANGER MACY

Residence: A home on Ithaca's South Hill, and a "winter home" in Scottsdale, AZ

Family: Partner Marjorie; son Michael; granddaughter Lucy; and stepson Jeremy, who recently married

Current occupation: Retired from Ithaca College as Associate Professor of Management

Pastimes: Photography, wood-working, DIY home improvement, reading (especially philosophy, history and sociology), and attending concerts and other music events, especially at Ithaca College

Motto: *Amor Fati* (Love Fate): Whatever happens, deal with it and work with it. Be very aggressive to love it, to embrace what happens.

Years as a Volunteer with Hospicare: More than 10 years

Years on Hospicare Board: 6 years

Granger Macy does not shy away from talking about death. It was his desire to be more exposed to death that led him to become a Hospicare volunteer many years ago, and his commitment to the essence of the agency's mission has kept him involved for more years than he can remember. "This place is important," he says with a gentle smile. "I wish there was something like this—that I was aware of—when my mom died. We didn't have that kind of support, and it would have been very nice."

Granger is currently the president of the Hospicare Board of Directors, but his earliest volunteer job with the agency was making breakfast in the Residence. "You get attached to certain patients, especially those who are here for months," he says. "What has really stood out to me is how nice everyone here is. The staff are always smiling and wanting to be helpful. They really care about their work."

Over the years, Granger has helped Hospicare in many ways. In addition to cooking and sharing his business administrative insights, he's also shared his talents as a photographer. Many photos from agency events were taken by Granger, including some in this newsletter. His nature photos also grace the walls of the Residence, in the natural wood frames he made.

Granger retired from Ithaca College (IC) where he taught business administration for twelve years. During his final three years at IC he taught a course titled "How to Live a Good Life," based on the writings of various Greek philosophers. "This course really defines my personality. Anyone who talks with me for any length of time hears me talk about the need to be aware of your own death," he says. "That went over really well in class. All the philosophies basically say, 'Brace yourself for the worst and see that your life will not fall apart in the worst case; then you can handle everything else that comes along. Everything else pales in comparison to death.'"

Granger takes his own teachings on death to heart. He and his partner, Marjorie, have made

"Hospicare is in my will. That's how important I think this organization is."

various preparations themselves. "We've written our wills and filled out our 'Five Wishes,'" he says, referring to a document for communicating advance directives for the end of life developed by the nonprofit Aging With Dignity. "Hospicare is in my will. That's how important I think this organization is."

Granger has been a member of the Hospicare Board of Directors for six years. He enjoys the challenges of being involved with Hospicare's long-term plans, he says. "I'm very pleased that we expanded our service area to include Cortland County. It was needed, and everyone worked together to make it happen. While there were concerns, everyone approached the situation with a positive attitude."

As a former breakfast volunteer, Granger knows how important the kitchen is and happily donated to support the renovations to that space. "I'd love to see other parts of the Residence updated, too," he says. "It's been more than twenty years since it was built. Regulations have changed since then. The needs of our community are changing."

Although his time on the Board will end next year, Granger intends to remain involved with long-term planning and fundraising for Hospicare. "We offer a lot of services to the community," he says. "There are some important things we do here, like community bereavement support and the Residence, that other hospices don't do." He is aware those services come at a cost, though. "I don't think people realize how much money it takes to do all that we do," he says.

Granger is clearly proud of his connections with Hospicare and how the agency's mission aligns with his philosophy around death. "It's a great group to be involved with," he says. "Hospicare is a healthcare agency that accepts how life flows and doesn't try to fight it."

# Mary Ellen's Corner Offers Comfort and a Warm Cup of Coffee

**“May this space serve the Hospicare community as a reflection of her commitment to bringing family, friends and caregivers together in mutual support and love.”**

When we renovated the Residence kitchen earlier this year, we spent a lot of time thinking about the needs of staff, patients and family members when it comes to food preparation and access. We concluded that, along with the kitchen makeover, we needed to create a special hospitality area for our patients' families, where they would feel comfortable making food for themselves, and where snacks and drinks would always be available to them.

We asked Andy Foster and Mindy VanderVen, of Foster Custom Kitchens, to design the space. Various community members and organizations also gave time and goods to its creation, and we're grateful to Andy for arranging their contributions. Named “Mary Ellen's Corner,” after Mary

Ellen Carollo, who was a patient in the Residence, the finished nook is everything we hoped. It features a small sink, a refrigerator and a microwave. Snacks, and coffee and tea are provided by Hospicare.

“It lets our patients' family members be more independent while still being present in their loved ones' lives,” says Debra Petersen, RN, Hospicare residence manager. “This is a time that is especially difficult for them. We want to offer them comfort and care for their needs as well as the patient's. If we can provide a snack, or a place to get a cup of tea or heat up a meal, then we have done something to ease their burden.”

Mary Ellen's Corner was funded by Mary Ellen's family, who expressed gratitude for the care she received while a patient in the



**Mary Ellen's husband, Frank Carollo, and sister Sue Schuldeis at the dedication of Mary Ellen's Corner**

Residence. Mary Ellen's own belief in family and the value of community is reflected in the nook's dedication plaque, which reads in part: “May this space serve the Hospicare community as a reflection of her commitment to bringing family, friends and caregivers together in mutual support and love.”

## New Winter Solace Event Open to All



The end of the year can be a difficult time if you are grieving. The darkness and cold can be oppressive, while memories of loved ones who are gone can be especially poignant during the holiday season.

To help our community members who are grieving the loss of a loved one at this time of year, Hospicare is holding a Winter Solace memorial event and fundraiser. In place of the more formal Light the Landscape event we have held in the past, our new Winter Solace memorial does not have a fixed schedule. We welcome you to drop in

at any time during the event. This change is in response to our community's request for a less structured program.

Winter Solace will include important elements from past Light the Landscape events, including festive lights on the Hospicare grounds and memorial boards displaying the names of those who are being remembered.

Winter Solace will take place Sunday, December 4, 3:00–5:00 p.m., in the Great Room of the Nina K. Miller Hospicare Center in Ithaca. There will be refreshments throughout the event, and a few remarks from Hospicare staff beginning at 4:00. All in our community who are grieving are welcome, regardless of whether your loved one died on Hospicare's services. Come for the full two hours, or stop in for a few moments of remembrance during the busy holiday season.

To make a donation to Winter Solace in memory or in honor of a loved one, visit [hospicare.org/wintersolace](http://hospicare.org/wintersolace) and click “donate” or call 607-272-0212.

## Welcome to Our New Volunteers

The following volunteers completed training in 2016.

In April 2016: Alexis Abramo, Daryl Anderson, Toni Andres, Julie Clougherty, Sue Crowley, Jackie Frank, Tisa Hill, Lauren McCabe, Cathy Morse, Donna Sardone, Dana Shoemaker and Dani Thon.

In September 2016: Mary Ahl, Carol Clarke, Nicole Huschner, Leigh Keeley, Laura Kirsner, Tammy Lovell, Kay Marshall, Chieko Pipa, Nereida Ramirez, David Regenspan, Karen Smith, Sophie Son, Carol Stewart, Angela Tarrer and Carrie Wilder.

Also completing the fall training was Spiritual Care Intern Rebecca Schillenback. She is a student in the Masters of Divinity program at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School.

## Did You Know?

Did you know volunteers are a key component of hospice care, providing companionship, respite for family members and other support?

Our newsletter is mailed twice a year to patients and family members, donors, community supporters and other friends of Hospicare. If you'd like to share thoughts about our newsletter, email [communications@hospicare.org](mailto:communications@hospicare.org). This newsletter is also available online at [hospicare.org/newsletters](http://hospicare.org/newsletters)



CLAIR PENNELLS

## Wish List

Your support helps bring physical, emotional and spiritual comfort to our patients and their families. If you'd like to contribute to our work in a tangible way, please consider donating items from our wish list.

A complete list of items can be found on our website: [hospicare.org/our-wish-list](http://hospicare.org/our-wish-list)

- **Metal security boxes:** Some of our patients need a secure, lockable box to safely keep medications out of the reach of curious children or family members with dementia. A steel security box (measuring around 12" x 9" x 4") with a removable key can securely store medications where caregivers can get to them when needed.
- **Soft facial tissues (unscented, without lotion):** As you can imagine, we go through



a lot of facial tissues at Hospicare. Being able to offer this simple product to a grieving patient or family member is a small comfort that goes a long way.

- **Sunflower seed and suet cakes:** All year round, we feed the wild birds that gather at the feeders outside patients' windows. Sunflower seed (black oil only, please) and suet cakes are especially needed in the cold winter months.

It's about how you LIVE!



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