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Our newsletter is mailed twice a year to patients and family members, donors, community supporters, and other friends of Hospicare. If you have received multiple copies of this newsletter, please let us know so we can correct the mailing error. In addition, we welcome your thoughts or feedback about the contents. Contact us at communications@hospicare.org.
Find more articles and information on hospice and palliative care on our website at hospicare.org.
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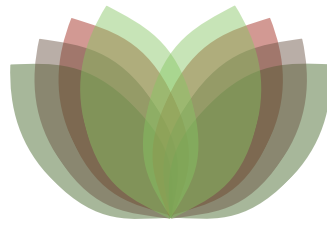
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Office Hours

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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.



For it's our grief that gives us our gratitude,
Shows us how to find hope, if we ever lose it.
So ensure that this ache wasn't endured in vain:
Do not ignore the pain. Give it purpose. Use it.

From "The Miracle of Morning" by Amanda Gorman

Message from Joe Sammons, Our Executive Director

Although my tenure as executive director of Hospicare began just a few short weeks ago, I already feel that I am home. My entire career has been committed to doing good work with good people. I'm incredibly honored to have the chance to do that with Hospicare now, and I am grateful for the opportunity to do my part to ensure that this amazing organization can survive and thrive in such remarkable times.

The theme of this newsletter is "New Beginnings," and the true meaning of these words is more powerful than simply starting a new job or turning the page on a new season. The cycle of beginnings and endings brings us alternating waves of joy and grief, for certain; but there is a lesson in our endurance, a lesson of kindness and patience, of acceptance and gratitude. It doesn't always feel that way, but with time, the right friends around us, and some quiet reflection, we can sit with [?] the wisdom and opportunity that new beginnings bring.



PHOTO BY CASEY MARTIN

Because of your support, Hospicare has been there in service and friendship to so many people (my family included). Thank you for all you do and all that you are. I'm deeply grateful to have this new beginning with you, and I look forward to connecting with you—in person, when the pandemic is over, and virtually for now.

Please feel free to reach out to me at any time at jsammons@hospicare.org.

"Twelve years ago, my mother received care at Hospicare's residence on South Hill, and the staff's dedication and compassion allowed for her peaceful passing. I am proud to be a monthly donor to Hospicare and that my gifts can provide a steady flow of support to maintain this community gem." —Thelma Ridley, Hospicare GEM

On the cover:

Many of us have passed time this year by beginning a new puzzle or by rediscovering the satisfaction of simple pleasures. At Hospicare we believe these pleasures provide joy and meaning to the end of life. Photo by Alison Usavage

Become a Hospicare GEM!

Hospicare GEMs are individuals who Give Every Month to support patients and families who are facing serious illness, the end of life, or profound grief. Becoming a Hospicare GEM is a win-win! You make a difference in our community all year long and have a simple way to incorporate your giving into your monthly budget. Become a GEM today by returning the enclosed envelope, or visit hospicare.org/donate. Questions? Contact Terry at ttaney@hospicare.org or 607-272-0212.

New Beginnings



Kirsten Miller, RN, Associate Director of Patient Services, and many of our frontline healthcare workers received their vaccinations over the winter.

“Hospicare continues to prioritize the health and safety of our staff, patients and families. Thanks to our local partners— including Cayuga Medical Center, Kendal, Visiting Nurse Services, and others—Hospicare frontline staff have the PPE they need, have been regularly tested for COVID and were given an opportunity to receive the vaccine this past winter. As we continue to take steps to regain a level of normalcy, these efforts make a true difference. The exceptional care we continue to provide to all who need us is an accomplishment we can all share pride in.” —Dr. Lucia Jander, Hospicare Medical Director

Light of My Life

Thanks to 30 volunteers from the Cortland region, the Hospice Foundation of Cortland County carried on the tradition of Light of My Life on the Homer Green, albeit slightly modified due to COVID. The annual holiday season event features the names of loved ones in a beautiful light installation. The response of donors was heartwarming and truly appreciated, with more than 480 individuals and businesses coming together to memorialize 1,500 loved ones. The donations collected from Light of My Life help support Hospicare in its work in Cortland County.

New Outreach Initiatives



A recent *New England Journal of Medicine* study found that more than 70 percent of Americans wish to die at home. For those who work in hospice settings, this statistic is not surprising, but unfortunately many people do not die this way. Community surveys have shown that, nationwide, the biggest barriers to accessing care are as simple as a lack of knowledge of hospice; confusion about when and who makes the first call; or a misunderstanding of the costs associated with end-of-life care. This is especially true for diverse populations as well as in rural areas.

Hospicare has several new outreach initiatives to address these issues:

- This winter, Hospicare’s Board of Directors formed an Equity and Anti-Racism Working Group to recommend how the agency can better meet the needs of patients and families who have been historically marginalized and underserved.
- Hospicare has partnered with the Cancer Resource Center to connect with faith leaders in both counties to learn more about the needs of their congregants and share information with them about our services.
- Thanks to the generous support of the Hospice Foundation of Cortland County, we have initiated an expanded marketing campaign to connect with underserved residents of this predominantly rural county.
- This spring, the Community Relations Sub Committee will hold several focus groups to identify common barriers to receiving services in underserved communities.

Palliative Care Updates



Meet Sarah Brown! Sarah has performed the role of Hospice Primary Nurse for nearly three years at Hospicare and has begun her new role as our

PATH Advisor for the Palliative Care Program. Sarah is an incredibly compassionate nurse.

“I grew up in a family of huggers. When we are happy, we hug; when we are sad, we hug. There are many times when, with the patients and families I have cared for, words aren’t enough. In these times I provide touch, from the gentle touch on a hand to a warm hug of reassurance. I am learning to speak with my eyes, as this is all that families and patients now see most of the time. I am thankful I can offer my expertise as well as compassion, empathy, and love. I am thankful for my family, who taught me the ability to truly open my heart and soul to others, so I can provide a “holistic” kind of care to my patients and families. I truly believe we all will get through these times together, no matter the means.” —Sarah Brown, RN

Faces of Cortland **Team Member Profile: John Hughes, RN**

BY BARRY MILLER



Job Title: Primary RN/Case Manager

Residence: Cortland

Family: Wife Liz, two children (a son who lives locally and a daughter in Norway) and three grandchildren, with one on the way.

New Beginnings on the

Horizon: “A current goal is to find a place with more land and barns and get back to having horses again.”

John Hughes knows a thing or two about new beginnings. “I’m kind of all about that,” says John. “I have always thought of life as an adventure and that the only limit is our own courage and imagination.”

Take, for instance, John’s 40-plus years of professional work, in which he has been a commercial truck driver, a blacksmith, an opera singer (“Please don’t ever ask me to sing—it’s long gone!” says John), a marketing/development manager for large hospital systems, a nursing home administrator, a manager for 55 skilled-nursing and assisted-living facilities, an owner/operator of a national firm providing clinical and operational consulting services to over 300 health care organizations in 30 states, and an owner/operator of a senior

services campus—among other pursuits. “It sounds like I had a lot of trouble keeping a job, doesn’t it?” he jokes.

Speaking of new beginnings, what advice might John give a prospective Hospicare healthcare worker?

“It depends on what kind of work environment they may be looking for,” John says. “For someone who values autonomy and who is fulfilled by building a true relationship with patients and families over a long term, hospice is great. The reward is helping patients and their families through the final journey. Of course, we have accountability, but each day we are pretty much able to design our day, meaning where we go, who we see, and so forth.”

Regarding the unique aspects of hos-

pice patient care, John reflects, “Our patients are as ‘real’ as they come. I have had more real heart-to-heart conversations with patients in the hospice setting than anywhere else. So, if a nurse is looking for this type of setting, Hospicare is a great opportunity.”

Outside of work, John is a board member of Cortland’s Family Health Network, a group of five federally qualified health centers in Cortland and Cayuga counties. John also enjoys gardening and farming their half-acre plot with his wife, Liz, a Cortland native. But perhaps his biggest passion is raising and farming with Belgian draft horses, which he did while living in Ohio. “Let’s call that a retirement goal,” says John.

Due to COVID-19 Hospicare has suspended all in-person events and support groups and is now holding them online via Zoom until further notice. Please visit hospicare.org/events for a complete up-to-date listing of all our events.

Book Discussion: *It’s OK That You’re Not OK* by Megan Devine—Wednesday, April 14, 5:30–7:00pm. Purchase your book at Buffalo Street Books and receive a 10% discount. Register by April 9 via phone at 607-272-0212, or email bereavement@hospicare.org.

Discover Your Strength Through Circus—Saturday, April 17, 10:00–11:00pm. This workshop by Circus Culture in Ithaca is offered for grieving children ages 7–12. Register by April 14 via phone at 607-272-0212, or email bereavement@hospicare.org.

Finding Forgiveness: Healing after the Loss of a Parent—Thursday, May 13 & 20, 7:00–8:30pm. This two-part workshop is to help adult children heal through forgiveness after the loss of a parent. Registration by May 10 via phone at 607-272-0212, or email bereavement@hospicare.org.

Illuminations Community Memorial—Thursday, June 10, 7:00–8:00pm. For information contact Terry at 607-272-0212 or events@hospicare.org.

Women Swimmin’ for Hospicare—Saturday, August 14. As of print, we are planning a hybrid event that will allow us to follow local health guidelines. People of all ages and all genders, are welcome to participate by doing any activity in support of Hospicare. Visit womenswimmin.org for updates.