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Message from Our Director of Patient Services



Creativity and problem solving are hallmarks of our work at Hospicare. Our patients' wishes are as unique as each one of them. From managing complex symptoms to connecting a family to a counselor, our staff is frequently called on to be fluid and adaptable in meeting the physical, emotional, spiritual, and personal goals of all those we serve.

Sometimes, this work is as simple as providing an iPad so that loved ones who live far away can say their goodbyes. Other times, it means working with community partners to coordinate transportation for a patient to a wedding or family reunion picnic.

With visitor restrictions in place and our in-person volunteer program on hold, COVID-19 has added unique challenges to our work. What has not changed is our commitment to do everything we can to care for patients and families who put their trust in us as they navigate serious illnesses or the end of life.

Caring for Norma Helsper, the Hospicare patient featured on the cover of this issue, is a prime example of how we have adapted to our changing world. Our staff assisted friends in finding ways to support their cherished Norma, including arranging for three musicians to play and sing her favorite songs from the lawn below her deck. In times of uncertainty and crisis, it's these creative gestures that make all the difference.

Hospicare's ability to adapt isn't limited to our direct patient care—it extends to every aspect of the work we do. In a few pages, you'll read about the incredible success of our annual Women Swimmin' for Hospicare event, which the pandemic forced us to change in nearly every way.

These are trying times for our agency, our community and our nation. Our ability to support one another in finding ways around the obstacles ultimately brings us together and ensures the best possible care for all.

Together, we are Hospicare.

Leah Gugino

Leah Gugino

Hospicare is currently searching for an Executive Director to lead our dynamic staff and volunteers in providing palliative care, hospice care, and grief support to all in our community. Contact info@hospicare.org or 607-272-0212 for more information.



On the cover: Norma Helsper (pictured here with Alica, a Hospicare aide) made the best of her end of life during the pandemic, and we were honored that she chose to make the Hospicare residence her home. Her loved ones found creative ways to connect with Norma, dropping off flowers, sending notes, baking her favorite desserts, playing music outside her window, and placing colorful flamingos in the garden below. Photo by Jennifer Gabriel.

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.

The Many Creative Ways that People Help Hospicare



Healing Waters for Our Patients

Debbie Parsons, recent president of the NYS chapter of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, stopped by the Hospicare residence with fellow member Linda Koski to see the new accessible tub, paid for by Debbie's incredible fundraising campaign that raised over \$14,000! (The photo on the right features Debbie [left] and Linda during their recent visit.)

Debbie's effort will significantly improve the quality of life for patients in our residence, and in celebration of her philanthropic accomplishment, she plans to get a small tattoo of the leaves from the Hospicare logo. Thank you, Debbie and friends!



Masks Made with Love

Our top priority remains the health and safety of our patients, families, volunteers, staff, and visitors. In just a few short weeks, the majority of Hospicare staff transitioned to working from home, and our clinical staff began seeing patients virtually. With national shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), we called upon the ingenuity of our community to help.

Hospicare is incredibly grateful to our Hospicare volunteers and several local sewing groups that came together to make hundreds of colorful fabric masks—some of which were made from vintage Women Swimmin' t-shirts (as modeled above by participant Caroline Hecht)—to boost our inventory of protective gear.

"Our dedicated volunteers, who aren't able to volunteer in their usual capacities at this time, answered the call to sew masks," said Wendy Yettru, Manager of Volunteer Services. "Over 250 masks were sewn with love and care so that our Hospicare staff could use them for their own personal use as well as take them to their families. Our staff was touched by this act of kindness and thrilled to have these masks! Hospicare volunteers ROCK!"

Renovating the Residence Bit by Bit

With office staff working remotely and volunteers not coming in to make patient meals, the residence has felt rather quiet these past few months. We are thankful that Tina Wilbur, a residence aide who is pictured here, has been a steady and friendly face at our residence throughout the pandemic. Tina patiently checks in on all guests and staff while following CDC screening protocol. She is dedicated to making sure that our patients and their families have the best possible experience. Tina is thrilled to see room 2 getting a much needed renewal!

Hospicare supporter Sylvia (Sue) Dickinson has a strong connection to Hospicare residence room 2: it's the room where both her husband and her father died. Earlier this year, Sue and her sister, Mary Dietershagen, joined forces to make a gift to remodel the room, which includes replacing the decades-old flooring that had become scratched and scuffed, purchasing new window coverings, and replacing dated furniture.



A grant from a donor fund at Community Foundation of Tompkins County is also assisting with residence upgrades, including the purchase of Smart TVs and music devices for every room. Hospicare will continue to seek funding to continue renovations in the five remaining patient rooms, prioritizing both comfort and beauty for all in our care.

Women Swimmin'

We Went the Distance for Hospicare!

Every August for the past 17 years, swimmers, boaters, volunteers, Hospicare staff, and supporters have celebrated life by gathering on the shores of Cayuga Lake in support of compassionate care in our community. This year's event called for extraordinary creativity and a shared commitment toward including everyone and engendering a feeling of community.

The stakes were higher than ever this year—with so many people having lost employment and insurance, and a growing need in our community for palliative care, hospice care, and grief support. Every dollar matters to our organization, which relies on this event to cover 10% of its total costs each year and provide services to all, regardless of insurance status.

All ages, all genders, all activities, all TOGETHER!



Splash, the Hospicare Mermaid, Visits Our Service Areas

Our creativity extended to every aspect of our Going the Distance event. What started as a joke between coworkers morphed into Splash—a playful mermaid character who didn't let the pandemic get her down. Whether she was working out at home with bottles of laundry detergent or delivering rolls of toilet paper to supporters' homes, Splash was determined to spread joy wherever she went and increase awareness of our event.

Splash went the distance this summer when she visited every town in our service area, which extends 994 square miles throughout Cortland and Tompkins counties. Whether you're in a community with 11,000 people, like Lansing, or a town with 1,000 people, like Cincinnatus, Hospicare provides care and support to all.

Meet Our Donors



Just before dawn on August 8, longtime supporter Carol Reed heard that Hospicare was closing in on a milestone fundraising total. Her admiration for her former colleague, Sue Cowdery, inspired her to make a last-minute gift. Women Swimmin' founders Anne Costello (left) and Joan Brumberg (center) accepted the generous check from Carol, which allowed Hospicare to announce a fundraising total of \$400,000 at our closing ceremony!

In total, more than 3,000 individuals supported the event with a contribution. Our gratitude and appreciation to each and every donor for supporting our participants and ensuring hospice, palliative care, and grief support is available to everyone who needs it.

We had an impressive 302 participants (58 who were first year participants), ranging in age from 15 to 100, and from NY state all the way to Singapore! To make a general donation or support someone you know, visit womenswimmin.org

Meet Our Participants!

We are incredibly thankful to everyone who went the distance for Hospicare in so many meaningful and creative ways. Whether it was knittin', donatin', bikin', walkin', meditatn', cheerleadin', or swimmin', your efforts were greatly appreciated by all of us at Hospicare.

“It is no longer a choice.
It is part of living.”

—Susan Cowdery



Dr. Susan (Sue) Cowdery has participated in Women Swimmin' in the past. This year, she went the distance by getting in the water throughout the summer. In her letter to her supporters, Sue wrote:

“Hospicare goes the distance for all of us. They provide compassionate end-of-life care. Money raised ensures that everyone, no matter their ability to pay, gets care.

Hospicare provides palliative care for people with serious illnesses. They provide bereavement counseling and services that would never be covered by insurance. Hospicare staff and volunteers allow us to go the distance of our lives with dignity and love.”

Congrats to Sue for becoming this year's top fundraiser!



“Each year, it invariably made my eyes moist as I saw the women, some remembering a lost loved one, swimming and selflessly raising funds for our amazing Hospicare facility. In memory of Gretchen, my wife who died at the Hospicare facility, I completed ten round trips to Hospicare this year.”

—Wolfgang Sachse

Wolfgang Sachse, a past volunteer and spectator, is no stranger to Women Swimmin', and he jumped at the chance to participate this year. Wolfgang's Bike-2-Hospicare endeavor inspired him to cycle a total of 214.5 miles with a total elevation gain

of 18,146 feet. Even more impressive? Wolfgang made Women Swimmin' history by being the first male named as top first-year fundraiser; his hard work to inspire donations also landed him on our top ten fundraiser list!

Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors!

Thanks to the generosity of our corporate sponsors who covered event costs, every penny raised this year—EVERY PENNY—will go to support patients and families throughout Cortland and Tompkins counties.

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Plus! Our thanks to all the local businesses that donated prizes and gift certificates for our participants.

Supporting Hospicare Families Before and After Death

Team Member Profile: Laura Ward , LMFT, CT

BY BARRY MILLER



Laura, a long time participant in Women Swimmin', enjoys spending time by Cayuga Lake with her family. From left to right: Adelyn, Amy, Laura, Kai, and Bay.

Job Title: Manager of Psychosocial Services

Years on Staff: 5+

Family: Wife Amy, triplet daughters Adelyn, Bay, and Kai (13)

Community Involvement: Coordinator of Youth Services at First Baptist Church of Ithaca

Current Mantra: "We can do hard things." (Glennon Doyle, Untamed)

For Manager of Psychosocial Services Laura Ward, the journey to bereavement counseling began at an early age. "Growing up, I would always read two sections of the Sunday paper: the comics and the obituaries," says Laura. "I was intrigued by the lives people led, what they accomplished, and how they were remembered by those who loved them." This interest in people and relationships led Laura on her quest to become a marriage and family therapist.

Laura began at Hospicare in 2014 as a part-time bereavement counselor and assumed her new position as Manager of Psychosocial Services last March. Before that, Laura worked as a crisis clinician and counselor at various non-profit counseling agencies, including Family & Children's Services of Ithaca. Taking a few years off after the birth of her triplet daughters in 2007, she later returned to work as a counselor, taught psychology courses at TC3, and supported families through separation/divorce as a child specialist, coach, and mediator.

The transition to grief counseling seemed natural. "Two of the most difficult experiences we face in our life are the end of a relationship and the death of a loved one, and they both result in grief," says Laura. "Walking with people through their grieving journey is an incredible honor. I frequently find myself in awe of the resilience of the human spirit, and the way in which grief, although extremely painful, is also transformative."

Understandably, the pandemic has compelled Bereavement Services to find new and creative ways to conduct individual counseling, support groups, and memorial services in an online setting. But Laura and her team have risen to the challenge. "Once you get past the technological difficulties, telehealth can be just as effective as in-person counseling," says Laura. "People are still able to find meaningful connection in the support groups, especially those who have less in-person support from loved ones as a direct result of the pandemic." Also, as Laura explains, "Hospicare continues to find new and unique ways to connect with and support the community by offering information on death and dying through a Facebook Live series, webinars, and other online events."

In her spare time, Laura enjoys hiking, skiing, running, and having new adventures with her family. "By far, my relationships with those I love are what I value most in this world," says Laura.

Viewpoint: Tools for Navigating Grief and the Holidays during COVID

BY LAURA WARD

At this point it's clear, the pandemic will change many of the ways in which we celebrate the upcoming holiday season. We usually associate the holidays with being "joyful" or "merry," gathering with family and friends, giving gifts, and engaging in festivities and traditions. This year we will need to consider how our celebrations will need to change in order to keep ourselves and our friends, family, and community safe.

We will naturally feel some grief as we reassess what parts of the holiday we can still create and what aspects we will need to modify significantly or discard all together. Grief can manifest in many ways, and it's important to acknowledge its impact on our physical and emotional health as the holidays progress.

For many, even under the best of circumstances, the holidays can bring substantial expectations, additional stress, and disappointment. This season may be heavy with uncertainty, bittersweet memories, and worry about what to do. In addition, for those who have also experienced the death of a loved one, the holidays are likely to be especially fraught with difficult emotions associated with grief.

Here are some ideas for how you might cope with the holidays this year amidst any grief you may be feeling. Stay open to discovering ways that you can make this season meaningful by creating new traditions and finding ways to honor the memory of loved ones who have died.

- **Give yourself permission to feel.** The sadness, loneliness, fear, anger, fatigue, confusion, withdrawal, etc. that you are feeling is natural and normal. Giving yourself permission may not be easy, but it is essential to your well-being.

“Amid all the pressure and stress of daily living, there is so much to DO, and in doing one can become exhausted, anxious, or even frantic. Take time to slow down and just BE. Be in touch with the beauty and love that surrounds us; be open to grace; and be accepting of peace. In being quiet for those few moments, we become more productive in our doing.”

-Joe Haines, Spiritual Care Coordinator

- **Acknowledge and embrace limitations.** Explore what aspects of the holidays are more challenging based on the current circumstances. Consider where you may need to scale back or change. Involve your children in discussions about what they would like to do, including traditions they want to keep and ideas they have for changing things.
- **Be informed before attending events.** Find out who will be there, how long it will last, if any special preparations are needed, and what safety protocols will be in place. As a family, make sure everyone is on board with the existing precautions, and give permission for family members to express a desire to leave the event if they feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed.
- **Plan ahead.** The anxiety and anticipation leading up to the season could be more intense than the actual holidays, so knowing what the plan is and what to expect can help lessen those worries, especially for children. Your plans do not have to be detailed, but they should help give some specific direction. Decide ahead of time what you can and cannot (or want/don't want to) do, and let your friends and family know.
- **Find ways to acknowledge and remember the person who died.** There are many ways to honor a person's memory during the holidays, either by carrying on traditions or creating new ones. What feels comforting is just as unique as grief, so it can be helpful to discuss which rituals each family member would like to include this year.
- **Be flexible.** Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong way to handle a holiday. Some people want to keep traditions alive, while others prefer to do something completely out of the ordinary. A willingness to talk about holiday plans is the best way to start the negotiation process with one another. This is the first step in finding ways to honor everyone's grief during this season.
- **Take care of yourself.** Start by taking care of your physical self: Eat nutritiously, exercise, get plenty of rest, and moderate alcohol intake. Next, consider ways to nurture your emotional needs: pray, meditate, do something for someone else, express yourself through creating, write out your feelings in a poem, letter, or journal. These are just some ideas; consider other ways of coping that you have used to get through difficult times in the past.



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.

Advance Care Planning Tip

“Death is a part of life, and planning for it can make all the difference to the emotional health of those you leave behind.”

—Dr. Lucia Jander

Try to think about advance care planning as a gift. By making your wishes known, you are giving your loved ones a road map for possibly a very difficult time in their lives; your gift makes their decisions easier. Our goal is always to make sure your wishes are expressed and respected. We welcome calls at 607-272-0212 with any questions regarding advance care planning.

Due to COVID-19, Hospicare has suspended all in-person events and support groups and is now holding them online until further notice.

Winter Solace Community Memorial: Sunday, December 6 via Zoom. Join us at 7pm for fellowship and conversation and stay for a memorial service. Or come at 7:30pm for the program of remembrance. Memorial is free and open to all. To RSVP or for questions, call 607-272-0212 or email events@hospicare.org.

Coping with the Holidays: Wednesday December 9, 5:30-7pm via Zoom. Includes presentation and support group. To register or for questions, call 607-272-0212 or email lward@hospicare.org.

Online Grieving Together: Ongoing General Support Group - 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30-7pm held via Zoom. This group is for anyone 18 years of age or older grieving a loss, regardless of when the death occurred. Open to both Cortland and Tompkins county residents. Details will be conveyed to all participants after registration. To register or for questions, call 607-272-0212 or email lward@hospicare.org.

