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“Maybe we can see better in the fall”

Party Report: the 40th 20th Women Swimmin': wind, new fundraising record, unofficial swims

Save the dates: upcoming public events

This year's Women Swimmin' t-shirt artist, Q. Cassetti, says that the event, “personifies all of the wonderfulness that Ithaca embodies—from the event to the community that surrounds and supports it to benefit a truly lovely place and service, Hospicare. Why wouldn't we all want to be involved?”



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Letter from Executive Director Joe Sammons

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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, palliative care, advance care planning, and grief support at hospicare.org.

To receive the Hospicare e-newsletter, subscribe online at hospicare.org

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PHOTO BY EMILY HOPKINS



“October is the fallen leaf, but it is also a wider horizon more clearly seen. It is the distant hills once more in sight, and the enduring constellations above them once again.”

—Hal Bourland

Dear friends,

Ever since I was a young boy, autumn held a special power for me. It was a time of beauty and wonder, a time where it was okay to be melancholy and still let my heart lift with a sense of renewal. I spent a lot of my time as a young man

living in cities, but when we moved to the Finger Lakes in 2008 I remember that feeling sweeping over me again, surrounded by such color and skies and the sweet smell of apples in the air.

And maybe we can see better in the fall, not just because we can get a better view of the lakes and hills and skies of this beautiful region, but because we know that the time of passing—of falling leaves and gardens settling down for winter—is also a time when we can see more clearly the “wider horizon” of our lives, the “enduring constellations” created by the love in our lives.

Here at Hospicare, it does feel as if we are heading through a change of seasons, as well. Even as we maintain vigilance and protective measures against the resurgence of COVID, there is a sense that we have passed through a time of trial and test like no other. And while there continue to be profiteers in the health care market who distort the true mission of hospice, we know that our own “North Star” shines as brightly today as it did on the day we first opened our doors 40 years ago: high quality, compassionate end-of-life and bereavement services delivered by an incredible team.

It is a powerful mission, and a clear, bright vision that guides us forward, but we could never do it without the remarkable support of our community. We celebrate our 40th this year, looking back with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude for what we have done together. But we also use this time to recommit to fulfilling this mission for many years to come, for many beautiful autumn days that remind us of the cycle of life and death and the endurance of love and service.

Thank you so much for all you do—it is an honor to be a part of this family!

Warmly,

Joe Sammons
Executive Director

Upcoming Events

Our community memorials, grief support groups, and educational programs are free and available to all residents of Cortland and Tompkins counties. Visit hospicare.org/events to view our community events. Email events@hospicare.org for more information.

Seasons of Solace

Thursday, November 9, 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca. Join us for a community memorial of remembrance during the holiday season. RSVP at events@hospicare.org.

Peace-of-Mind Binder

Tuesday, November 21, 5:30–6:30 p.m. at the Cancer Resource Center. Organize and keep all your important documents, financial records, and personal wishes in one place. The workshop provides an overview of important documents to

include and ideas about how to organize them. Email kjones@hospicare.org to register.

Light of My Life

Friday, December 1, 6:30–8:30 p.m. at Village Green in Homer, New York. Light of My Life is an annual fundraising event sponsored by the Hospice Foundation of Cortland County. To submit honoree names and for more information, visit the <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/hospice-foundation-of-cortland-county-inc/light-of-my-life>.

On the Cover

Women Swimmin' co-founders, Joan Brumberg and Ann Costello were gifted beautiful, embroidered sashes to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the event and to thank them for the incredible impact they've had on our community.

PHOTO BY: WOLFGANG SACHSE

20th Annual Women Swimmin' for Hospicare

On Saturday, August 12th hundreds of swimmers, paddlers, and volunteers gathered for our 20th Annual Women Swimmin' but mother nature had other plans. The swim was cancelled due to erratic high winds, but we were still able to gather at Ithaca Yacht Club for breakfast and a moving speech by Women Swimmin' co-founders, Joan Brumberg and Ann Costello.

"Twenty years ago, Joan Brumberg and Ann Costello birthed the idea of a swim across Cayuga Lake as a fundraiser for Hospicare. Now, 20 swims later, thousands of swimmers, support paddlers, volunteers, and thousands of donors have raised millions of dollars to support Hospicare. We are incredibly proud of all that the Women Swimmin' community has accomplished!"

—Betsy East and Linda Mikula, Co-chairs of the Women Swimmin' Planning Committee

Record-breaking Fundraising Ensures High-quality Compassionate Care for All

Together, swimmers, boaters, and their supporters raised a record amount of money for Hospicare's services in Cortland and Tompkins counties: **\$640,147**.

587 people registered as participants, and there were **33 fundraising teams** and **7,165 individual gifts** in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$15,000. The \$640,147 represents approximately 15% of Hospicare's annual budget to provide high-quality compassionate care to over 1,000 patients and thousands of friends and family members every year. Amazing!

High Winds Bring Creative Alternatives!

Over the next several days, many swimmers went the distance by jumping into the lake or pools on their own, determined to swim 1.2 miles or even just take a dip in a backyard pool, despite the cancellation. Hats off to our creative and resilient community of swimmers, fundraisers, volunteers, and paddlers for going the distance, regardless of the weather!



Kimmy Jones, RN and Hospicare outreach coordinator, jumped into her backyard pool in honor of the loved ones and patients she has lost. Kimmy said "The mission and philosophy of hospice is important and sacred."



The Swimmers of Anarchy, comprised of Gail Middleton (foreground), Diane Matayas, Julie Tang, and Lorie Honor (waving) was founded by Diane and are a group that swims in the ocean, off of Staten Island. They made it a mission to get into Cayuga Lake while they were all still in town.



No one can say that we didn't have any fun! We love the creativity and joyfulness of CrossFit Vertical (pictured here in their gym). When the swim was canceled, Laura Hayduchok, Jess Brauzer, and Flannery Hysjulien, did a sweaty and heart pounding workout!



Paddles up! The morning of swim day, dedicated paddlers, Linnie Wiselquist and Yvette de Boer stood by, awaiting the Safety Committee's decision. Yvette has found memories of swimming the lake with her (then) 80-year-old mother in 2014. Special thanks to our paddlers for their commitment to paddlin' for compassion!



PHOTO BY ROBYN WISHNA

Stop by The Tompkins Center for History and Culture (110 North Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY) to view our special exhibit on our 20th Women Swimmin' for Hospicare! It will be on display through the end of the year.

We thank our corporate sponsors for underwriting the cost of the event! Because of their support, all money raised goes directly to patient services.

Event Luminaries (\$10,000)

Cayuga Health
Guthrie Medical Center

Angelfish (\$5,000)

Lansing Harbor
Maguire
Satori Salon

Seahorses (\$2,500)

1 Step Consulting
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To view our full list of supporters, visit womenswimmin.org.

Grateful Patient Steven Schaeffer Leaves Major Gift to Hospicare

Even before he became ill himself, Steven “Stash” Schaeffer learned firsthand how deeply supportive hospice services can be to a family. His own father, Walter Martin Schaeffer of Utica, was 95 when he started receiving hospice services, and Steven was grateful for the help and advice his father’s hospice nurses gave to him and his sister.

“He felt it was an honor to be able to help care so well for his father and to make sure his dad was comfortable,” remembers his wife, Marcy Schaeffer.

That exposure to hospice led Steven to support Marcy’s and other swimmers’ fundraising efforts for Women Swimmin’ over the next decade.

Then, in 2021, Steven learned that he had ALS, a fatal neurodegenerative disease. He sought Hospicare’s support to help him live the rest of his life on his own terms.

“Hospicare in Ithaca made it work for us,” Marcy says. “It was tough. Neither the nurse nor the social worker had worked with a patient who wanted to travel as much. We have a granddaughter in Boston we visited almost every month. But they figured it out and enabled us to be also covered by another hospice, in Massachusetts.”

Marcy, his wife of 42 years, also remembers, “As soon as we went under Hospicare, all the medical supplies were either supplied by our Hospicare nurse or delivered to our door. That was huge.”

Toward the very end, when he could no longer travel, Steven appreciated that his



PHOTO BY DAVE BURBANK

Hospicare nurse and social worker listened to his preferences and spent time with him the way he wanted them to. “The nurses were super,” Marcy says. “Visits were short and to-the-point. That was good because he didn’t want to be bothered.” But Marcy remembers that he loved the Hospicare social worker Anna’s earlier visits. “She would play games with him, like Peggety. She was hysterical. It was a game from his childhood. She ended up beating him, which I never had.”

He died peacefully at home on December 16, 2022.

Steven Schaeffer, co-founder and longtime owner of the largest hardwood company in the Northeast, lived a full, happy, and busy life characterized by close friendships, great business success, and hobbies he was passionate about, like managing one of the largest collections of Boy Scout badges,

“It was a game from his childhood. She ended up beating him, which I never had.”

—Marcy Schaeffer

collecting stamps and postcards, competing in basketball tournaments into his 60’s, and traveling the world with his wife and daughters.

In his will, he made plans to leave gifts to several nonprofits, including Hospicare.

“The Schaeffers’ incredible thoughtfulness and generosity in making this significant gift will be felt in our community for a long time,” says Joe Sammons, Hospicare’s Executive Director. “The gift will support our free grief counseling and other free bereavement services. It will help us continue to run our residence, where over 100 patients a year live and receive round the clock care and company in a homelike atmosphere. By making this bequest, he ensured that many other people in our region will enjoy the same level of flexible, supportive end-of-life care that he did.”

Have you ever considered including Hospicare in your estate plans?

Hospicare relies on support from the community. By including Hospicare in your will, you can extend your legacy of caring far into the future. For more information, contact Emily Hopkins, director of development & community relations, at 607-272-0212 or ehopkins@hospicare.org

Honoring 40 Years of Care by Hospicare

Over 150 guests attended the 40 Years of Hospi-Caring Celebration at Beacon Hill on Thursday, September 20, where Betsy East, Women Swimmin’ co-chair and former president of the board, presented a crystal statue of appreciation to Jack and Judy Stewart recognizing their 20 years of volunteer service for the agency. A special thank you to the Threshold Choir and The Yardvarks for providing uplifting music!

Jack hugs Betsy at the 40th dinner.



Photo by Casey Martin

Photo by Edna Brown



“Proximity to death and having the honor of being with patients and families during that time makes us really aware of what’s

amazing about life. It heightens gratitude for life. The Hospicare family is powered by that gratitude and that’s why I’m grateful beyond measure to be part of the Hospicare family.”

—Rebecca Schillenback,
Spiritual Care Coordinator