

“I always say that Hospicare is for me more than for Ron!”

—CINDY HOWELL



Ten months ago, Ron Howell was given two weeks to live. He'd been in the hospital for seven weeks and the doctors didn't think there was anything else they could do for him. They were

sending him home to die. “You had no blood pressure,” Ron's wife Cindy reminds him.

They signed up for hospice care, and their Hospicare nurse Marci visited them on Ron's first day home.

Ron also had regular visits from a Hospicare home health aide who would help him shower three times per week. Now, all these many months later, Ron is strong enough to shower on his own and he looks good. “He has nice color to his face,” Cindy mentions. And his breathing has improved enough that sometimes, he tells me, he takes his oxygen tube out and feels fine. He watches sports on television and welcomes many visitors—his sons, his sister who lives down the road, grandchildren, and friends.

Ron and Cindy are Tompkins County old-timers. Both children of IC graduates, they are IC alumni themselves.

“They told us music students when we got to Ithaca College: ‘Don't talk to phys ed guys. Don't even look at them,” Cindy recalls with a laugh.

Ron, a phys ed major, became a high school football, wrestling, and track coach. He worked for the John C. Lowry Construction company, and Cindy was a music teacher.

Although she retired from the classroom in 2004, she has directed two school plays nearly every year since and is now at work on *Home Alone* at Lansing High.

The Howells are a great example of in-home help that can stabilize and improve health, lengthen life, and support family caregivers.

“I'm so grateful to Hospicare,” Ron says again with a small smile.

“I used to think hospice was a last-ditch thing, but now I know better.”

—Emily S. Hopkins

A Transformational and Unexpected Bequest

In July, Hospicare received a letter announcing a significant bequest to Hospicare.

When she read the letter, Hospicare's Director of Administration and Finance Kirsten Miller, burst into tears.

“Her gift came as a complete surprise at a time when Hospicare really needed the financial boost. I thought, 'This changes everything,'" Kirsten recalls.

The donor was Dilmeran Akgoze, someone well known to several people in the office that day.

"She was my middle school Home Ec teacher," said Stephanie Fitterer, Hospicare's HR Director.

"I knew Dilmeran from church," said Emily Hopkins, Hospicare's Director of Development and Community Relations. "She was a wonderful woman."

Dilmeran Akgoze, 79, a unique figure in Ithaca, was known and loved by many. She emigrated from Turkey to America in 1959 and went on to earn degrees from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and from Cornell University's Fiber Science Department in the College of Human Ecology. She was a brilliant cook and a stalwart feminist who did not like women to be referred to as "ladies."

She had a habit of giving things away—kitchen utensils, trinkets, plant cuttings, fabric, clothing, and meals she had cooked.

One of her best friends was Dr. Ann Costello, co-founder of the Women Swimmin' for Hospicare event, who this year swam in Dilmeran's memory.

As she does every year, Ann sent a letter to hundreds of people asking for their support.

"I write to you this year with a heavy heart and tears in my eyes. I lost a special friend who died in comfort at the end of her life with the help of Hospicare ... My mother introduced me to Dilmeran in 1977, the year John and I got married. Dilmeran designed and sewed my wedding dress. When we moved back to Ithaca in 1982, she became my patient, then quickly my friend, and soon after that part of my mishpocha – my family. She spent the holidays with us. We went to plays together.

She loved us and we loved her. "

—Emily S. Hopkins



Dilmeran Akgoze's gift will, in part, help Hospicare launch a palliative care program for patients who are not hospice eligible but would still benefit from expert home-based care.

“How fitting,” said Hospicare's Executive Director Joe Sammons, “that such a long-time member of the community, someone who benefited from Hospicare's care in her final weeks, should leave this amazing legacy. Her gift will touch hundreds if not thousands of lives.”

At a memorial service for Dilmeran held at Stewart Park in Ithaca, a delicious buffet of homemade Middle Eastern food was laid out, and friends and relatives from as far away as London gathered to remember her and her long, accomplished, and often tragic life. Her brilliant daughter died in her early 20s, something Dilmeran “never got over,” as one speaker put it, and Dilmeran's fiancé died suddenly just weeks before their wedding day.

But Dilmeran's predominant qualities, according to those gathered, were her warmth, passion for food and family, her vivacity, beauty, style, love of children, and her energy.

A New Gift Policy with an Eye on Future Care

Annually, donations to Hospicare & Palliative Care Services make up 20% of the agency's \$6 million budget. Hospicare relies heavily on gifts. Frequently, Hospicare will spend every penny of donations received in a given year to cover costs of Residence upkeep, the extensive free bereavement program, fair nurse pay, and to cover reduced fees for patients who cannot afford the room and board costs associated with living in the Hospicare Residence.

This August, Hospicare's Board of Directors voted to approve a new Gift Policy, which includes a prudent reserve policy: Ten percent of every unrestricted gift to Hospicare will be put aside in a rainy-day fund at the Hospicare Foundation, which manages the agency's savings and investments.



“Setting aside a small portion of what is raised through contributions takes discipline and will require a tighter operating budget, but we think

the long-term benefits of having a rainy-day fund are worth it. The bottom line is that Hospicare's many supporters want to know that their gifts are helping ensure a long future for this important organization."

—ALISON SMITH, CHAIR OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF THE HOSPICARE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“We want to do all we can to ensure that high quality comfort care, family support, and bereavement services are always available to the people of our region,” explained Jerry Dietz, member of the board's Development Committee, which drafted the new policy.

Donors who wish to give directly to the rainy-day fund at the Hospicare Foundation can do so, as well. Email Director of Development Emily Hopkins for assistance at ehopkins@hospicare.org.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE: A New Gift Policy | 21st Women Swimmin' Breaks Records
Transformational Bequest | Reflections on Hospice Work

Alice Muhlbach, proprietor of Spirit & Kitch designed the 2024 Women Swimmin' art. Alice is a visual thinker, a graphic designer, illustrator, cartoonist and painter, all melded together with imagination. She noted: The idea of finding my family in the clouds makes me feel better, and they are watching over.



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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

Dear Friends.

Here’s the part that numbers can’t capture: the young people who gather at the dock to cheer their mom, holding signs and jumping into her arms when she finishes.

The smiles on the faces of the swimmers — exhausted but exhilarated at the same time. The way everyone cheers

everyone — Women Swimmin’ isn’t a race — and the way people just spontaneously start talking about loved ones who passed in peace and love because Hospicare was there. That is the “why,” after all, why we do this work and why people in the community go to such lengths to support this work. Because dying and grief do not need to be suffered alone — because when a community comes together in the service of love, then beautiful, life-affirming joy fills the world, like sun on a summer’s day.

Joe Sammons
Executive Director



David Banfield, a Hospicare founder who played a big role in the construction of the patient residence on King Road and for whom Hospicare’s conference room is named, has given twenty-one years of devoted service as a key Women Swimmin’ volunteer. Over the years, he negotiated the use of Bolton Point, obtaining access to the road, and through his connections with local landowners obtained access to the shore. He arranged for insurance coverage and helped build and repair the dock by which swimmers enter the water. This year, David Banfield generously donated \$10,000 to the Founders’ Match, which helped raise over \$175,000 in four hours!

Upcoming Event

Self-Massage & Muscle Tension Relief

Instructor: Meredith Carpenter

Date: Tuesday, December 10

Time: 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Location: Hospicare & Palliative Care Services, 172 E. King Road, Ithaca

We will explore ways to care for and nourish our bodies to support the process of grieving. We will teach self-care methods to help relieve muscle tension and encourage relaxation, and you will leave with tools to continue these at home. We will talk about self-massage as well as ways to use our community resources for massage and wellness. Class size is limited, and registration is required by December 9th. There is no cost. Register on the events page of our website, or for more information contact the Bereavement staff via email at bereavement@hospicare.org or phone (607) 272-0212.

The 21st Annual Women Swimmin’ Breaks Fundraising Records and Unites a Caring Community

With additional donations trickling in through October, this year’s Women Swimmin’ for Hospicare event raised over \$667,000 for patient care, family support, bereavement counseling, programming, and reduced room and board fees for those unable to pay the full cost of living in the Hospicare residence. That’s a record, surpassing last year’s total of \$647,000.

All Hail the Starfish!

Starfish are swimmers who have raised \$30,000 or more for Hospicare’s mission over the years of their participation in the swim (starred are the brand-new Starfish):

Suzanne Aigen	Mariette Geldenhuys	Susan Robinson
Susan Austern	Denny Grout	Amy Seldin-Murphy*
Kerry Barnes*	Roz Guterman	Beverly Schmidt
Joan Brumberg	Lucia Jander	Shelley Semmler
Constance Colbert*	Sheryl Kimes	Ruth Siegel
Ann Costello	Gundy Lee	Nancy Spero
Susan Cowdery	Sally McConnell-Ginet	Christina Stark
Lauren Putnam Davenport	Janet McCue	Gail Tremblay*
Betsy East	Marjory Martin	Andrea Volckmar
Kathy Eliason	Michelle Nardi*	Alicia Wittink
Clare Fewtrell	Jane Powers	Jennifer Wilkins
Sharon Fornaciari	Wolfgang Sachse	Susan Zehnder
Amy Fuhr*	Caroline Rasmussen*	

Giving and Participation Stats

314 brave and daring women swimmers swam across the lake.

32 Go the Distance fundraisers lent their talents to the cause and raised \$112,547.

143 tireless paddlers and boaters helped the swimmers cross safely, kept them company, cheered them on, and made the event possible.

200+ generous volunteers made the event run like clockwork.

9 devoted members of the Women Swimmin’ Planning Committee met frequently from February through August, did hundreds of hours of work, and put on what the Ithaca Times’s readers voted as “the Best Fundraising Event” of 2024.

“What a day it was for Hospicare. Truly an amazing community event.” —DR. SUSAN COWDERY

2024 Top 10 Fundraisers

1. Susan Cowdery	\$31,907
2. Ann Costello	\$22,891
3. Joan Brumburg	\$20,865
4. Lucia Jander	\$18,249
5. Kathy Eliason	\$17,003
6. Wolfgang Sachse	\$16,150
7. Kate McKee	\$12,803
8. Betsy Easy	\$11,515
9. Constance Colbert	\$11,443
10. Jane Powers	\$10,001



PHOTO BY JOE WILENSKY

Thank you to our corporate sponsors for underwriting the cost of the event! Corporate sponsors pay for the event (t-shirts, hats, food, tent rentals, towels, printing, etc.).

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On the Cover

Swimmers — in no particular order, Liz Klohman, Nicole Klohman, Stephanie Mulinos, Christina Stark, Jane Powers, Alison Smith, Rebecca King, Farrell Helbling, Laurie Johnston, Barbara Logan — minutes before beginning their 1.2 mile swim across Cayuga Lake to raise funds for Hospicare this summer.



L & R PHOTOS BY JOE WILENSKY



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