

FAMILY *to Family*

Tending TO THE SPIRIT

INSIDE:

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Family Hospice
Part of UPMC

Dear Friends,



As I am writing you today, it's unseasonably warm and sunny, the kind of day that holds the promise of spring, and with it, better days. I hope you can share in my optimism, despite the persistence of the pandemic. Additionally, I hope that the stories within this issue of "Family to Family" reflect the optimism specific to hospice; that is, taking a difficult situation like end of life and making it better for someone.

Often this calls for an expertise beyond the limits of our patient's clinical reality. As you'll read, this is where our exceptional spiritual care staff have so much to lend to the support of individuals and families. They can create the space and time for doubt, for reverence, and for the kind of reflection that can promote healing, even when there is no cure. This is hospice optimism at work. We hope to expand our capacity in this regard to reflect the diverse spirituality of those we serve. If this sparks your interest, learn more below.

Creating space and time for reflection is equally important for our entire multidisciplinary team, and we have several programs in place currently in support of this goal,

including one funded by benefactors via the Family Hospice Foundation. You can read more on page four.

The optimism of hospice is truly evident throughout "Gifts at Work" on pages two and three, our summary of how your financial support improves quality of life for individuals and families. Running the gamut from education and training for staff and volunteers to urgent, tangible needs like an air conditioner for a patient with pulmonary disease to cooking classes for bereaved family members adjusting to a new normal, it's a testament to how your generosity meets the scope of the need.

And what could be more optimistic than talk of golf, even with snow still on the ground outside my window? Our 35th Annual Charity Golf Outing approaches on the other side of the thaw. We hope you'll join us for this year's Hawaiian luau-themed event. Registration is open; visit UPMC.com/FamilyHospiceDonate to participate. See you there!

Gratefully,
Jennifer Vennare
Vice President of Operations

NEW VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT SPIRITUAL CARE

Volunteer and spiritual care staff are working together to create new opportunities for volunteers to serve patients and families on their end-of-life journeys. After completing their education, training and orientation, volunteers will be able to provide spiritual support that supplements and complements the care being given by other team members.

These volunteers will work closely with spiritual care staff. Although participation in a specific faith tradition is not required to volunteer in this capacity, Family Hospice is expanding the volunteer pool to reflect the diversity of faiths among its patients and caregivers.

Training is in the development phase, and active volunteer recruitment is underway.



If you are interested in learning more about this emerging and meaningful volunteer opportunity, contact **Pam Debo-Tomczak** at **412-651-4560** or **Nick Petti** at **412-572-8806**.

Jean Mortimore with daughter, Lori Lynn Mortimore Gamble



Tending TO THE SPIRIT

The multidisciplinary model of hospice care means that a team of expert caregivers collaborates to support individuals and families at end of life physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Members of the team communicate regularly to see that these needs are being met according to the individual's values and goals.

Discerning one's values and goals in the final stage of life can raise profound questions which are often spiritual in nature. This is when the hospice team turns to the spiritual care specialist, whose training and experience help create the space to explore, heal, and sometimes simply sit with questions for which answers may be elusive.

Marlaena Cochran, M.Div., (pictured, front cover) spiritual care specialist, feels that "holding space" in this way for individuals and for families is the true measure of her contribution. She credits her team members for paving the way to make this possible. "My role can be difficult to explain to individuals and families who are consumed with very tangible concerns, understandably. Additionally, many assume it is only connected to religion or a particular faith tradition, but it's not," explains Marlaena. "My team members recognize when questions of a spiritual nature arise, and they advocate on my behalf in the interest of supporting the patient and family."

Marlaena continues, "I'm here to affirm individuals wherever they may be in their spiritual journey. All of us have something that influences how we live and move which gives us meaning and purpose. I meet people where they are and walk with them."

The grief that may ensue before death is often at the root of spiritual questions. Giving permission to express difficult feelings like doubt, anger, and uncertainty in a safe space can alleviate the complication of guilt. "It's okay to ask 'why?' It's okay to be angry that your loved one is suffering. It's okay to say, 'this is not fair.' Both patients and families can say these things out loud and still shield their loved ones, which is important to them," says Marlaena.

Jean Mortimore, who lost her daughter, Lori Lynn Mortimore Gamble, in October 2021, attests that spiritual care was a very important means of support for her and for her daughter. "Lori had been sick for two years and fought with every ounce of her

being. When the time came, in a broad sense, I knew what hospice was, but in reality, I felt ill-prepared," recalls Jean.

"Marlaena's involvement was so helpful. Her completely comforting attitude and her wisdom made such a difference. We had some dilemmas to work through, and her honest approach provided the professional expertise and knowledge to do so," says Jean. "Marlaena gave Lori the freedom of acceptance, providing comfort and guidance, respectfully. It's a delicate balance, and Marlaena has such fluidity."

When Jean reflects on the whole experience, she wants families to know that when someone offers hospice, "you should just say 'yes.' Every person we had the opportunity to know was helpful, knowledgeable, and kind," Jean says. "It was a blessing to have these people in our lives. I want to know where the 'angel school' is, because every person walking through my door was a loving angel."

Gifts at Work

Support for the Family Hospice Foundation impacts daily life for 2,100 friends and neighbors in western Pennsylvania annually who are navigating end of life with the benefit of the expertise and compassion of our multidisciplinary team.

We are pleased to share a summary of how that support is applied to enhance care.



Ron Wehner participates in a cooking class for bereaved family members

Clinical Training

If the past two years have taught us anything it's that we need to find new ways of doing things. This year, with the help of a generous grant from the McElhattan Foundation, our nursing staff will receive advanced education through simulated technology.

Simulation education combines innovation and technology to support optimal patient experience. Nursing staff will be exposed to virtual patients with advanced physiology and to patient rooms with medical equipment which displays real-time medical signs for facilitator-led remote simulations. The scenarios are based on current standards and best practices and include a "situation background assessment recommendation" report, learning objectives, and debriefing questions.

Staff will receive real time feedback, making them better equipped to communicate with patients and ensuring their end-of-life needs are fulfilled. The learning modules present situations that require a response from the staff member and their response steers the outcome and reveals any areas of improvement.

Says Elena Nosal, director, clinical operations, "It's our responsibility and our mission to ensure that patients receive the best possible treatment and that they and their loved ones have the information to make clear decisions regarding care. We are grateful for the McElhattan Foundation in giving us the tools that will further our education and better our service."

Awarded Mission Grants 2022

The Family Hospice Foundation meets the needs of patients and their families through grants and specialty funds, such as the Carol Sayers Vockel Fund for Community and Volunteer Education, Imagine Harmony, and Angels On Call. More broadly, the General Donations Fund provides flexibility in a variety of services and programs which complement the needs being met by the external grants and specialty funds.

Angels On Call Fund

Funding is for resources for patients with financial limitations and is provided as requests are submitted.

In 2021, the Angels On Call Fund fulfilled the following requests in the amount of \$1,800:

- **Sundries for a patient** who, due to unsafe conditions at home, could not bring personal belongings to a stay at the inpatient hospice unit, including pajamas, a watch, and the patient's favorite chocolate bars.
- **Hotel accommodations** for out-of-town immediate family to be near their loved one.
- **Privacy room divider** used by a bedbound patient for toileting in a shared space at home.
- **Humidifier** for patient who lives at home alone and has difficulty breathing.
- **An A/C unit** for a patient with pulmonary disease.
- **Uber and gas gift cards** for family members to visit.
- **Grocery store gift card** for a spouse who was forced to give up employment to care for a loved one.

General Donations

A total of \$98,605 will fund the following in 2022:

- **Bereavement stationery.** Comforting notes for community memorial services in spring and fall, and grief support groups. More than 4,000 people will benefit from this grant.
- **Cooking-for-one class.** Hands-on instruction for healthy meal preparation as well as coping strategies and life skills for recently bereaved. The class size is 10.
- **Support gifts.** Following the completion of the 13-month support cycle, 125 bereaved individuals will receive a gift to commemorate their loved ones and the care received from Family Hospice.

Carol Sayers Vockel Fund

The annual volunteer appreciation lunch and learn event is an educational opportunity for volunteers who provide direct care and bereavement support for patients and families. The event teaches best practices and strategies for supporting families. All volunteers who cover our Pittsburgh service area are invited to attend.

In 2021, this event addressed end-of-life faith traditions. Volunteers participated in a panel discussion with representatives from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths.

The program is funded in the amount of \$2,500 for 2022.

Imagine Harmony Fund

Funding for final meaningful, life experiences is provided as requests are submitted.

In 2021, the Imagine Harmony Fund fulfilled the following requests in the amount of \$3,100:

- **Thanksgiving meals** for patients and their families. Forty-five patients were served complete turkey dinners. This alleviated stress for families who were able to enjoy what may have been a last holiday together.
- **An early holiday for a patient** at the inpatient hospice unit in Lawrenceville who would not see another Christmas. The patient and family were able to celebrate in a fully decorated room, complete with stockings for younger members of the family.
- **A wedding anniversary dinner** for a long-married couple. An authentic Mediterranean meal was provided to honor the couple's heritage.
- **Car model** presented to a car enthusiast who was able to work on it with his son.
- **Burial services** for an impoverished family.

Clinical and Complementary Care

- **Caregiver toolkits.** Customized bedding, pill crushers, handbooks, and planners are provided to patients being cared for at home. The grant serves 650 patients.
- **Treatments not covered under Medicare Benefit.** Between 35 and 40 patients may receive dialysis, IV cardiac medications, radiation, and blood transfusions which allows for a brief period of transition to hospice care.
- **Comfort music.** Live musical performances for individuals and families receiving care to alleviate pain and reduce stress.
- **Veteran recognition.** Veterans are acknowledged and thanked through a pinning ceremony that includes the presentation of an American flag blanket and certificate. This benefits more than 250 patients.

Lawrenceville Inpatient Hospice Unit

- **Children's resources.** Age-appropriate materials about grief and loss will be available in the family lounge for children.
- **Family overnight bags.** Four hundred totes with toiletries and sundries will be distributed to family members who need to admit a loved one quickly and find themselves unprepared for overnight stays.
- **Recliners.** A medical-grade reclining chair will be placed in each patient room. These complement the existing futons and add additional seating and sleeping options. Hundreds of visitors will benefit from this grant.

For information on giving opportunities, please contact Christine Jamison, director, development at **412-572-8812** or **jamisonc2@upmc.edu**.

Self-Care FUELS PATIENT CARE

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Family Hospice staff have risen to the unimaginable challenge of safely caring for an especially vulnerable population and easing considerable fears. More than ever before, their perseverance proves that caring for individuals at end of life, for their families, and for one another in that work, is a labor of love. As we enter year three of this new normal, turning that love inward and practicing self-care is essential, and Family Hospice as an organization is prioritizing staff enrichment programs in support of this practice.

Family Hospice has established a virtual self-care community for staff which provides easily accessible webinars and resources such as podcasts, guided meditation, and materials related to grief journaling and mindfulness. As Elena Nosal, director, clinical operations, expressed, "None of us anticipated the scale of the pandemic, no more than we could imagine its duration. We hope our intentional focus on the well-being of our staff has a long-term benefit for them."

More than 80 staff participated in the first self-care webinar which proved a dynamic exchange of ideas and simple strategies like exercise, rest, and time with family and friends. Facilitator Cindy Rhodes Grindel, program manager, LifeSolutions EAP, encouraged all participants to find time during the workday to partake in self-care in larger measure. "Spending even just a few minutes to center yourself can make a big difference," she exhorted.

Self-awareness is a key part of recognizing how and when self-care is required. Cindy continued, "You would never say no to helping someone, so don't say no to caring for yourself. No one can pour from an empty glass."

Stacey Martin, MHP, reflected on this guidance. "I have been a nurse for 20 years and never thought about taking care of myself. Hearing what others did to relax and restore balance inspired me. I'm excited for the next webinar."

In addition to this new virtual resource, Family Hospice will host "Compassionate Care Day" for staff this spring. Funded by a grant from the Family Hospice Foundation, this is dedicated time for staff to process accumulated loss and work towards healing and wellness. The staff will have access to immersive walks through nature and learning related to healthy eating habits as well as aromatherapy, massage, and reiki therapies.

Feeling a purposeful and healthy connection to one's work, known as compassion satisfaction, translates to a strong multidisciplinary team committed to a high standard of patient care. This bears itself out in Stacey's experience, who remarks that her colleagues are "always there to support each other." She considers this part of "the honor and the privilege of being with patients as they transition from this life."



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