


HEART-TO-HEART

Issue #3

Fall 2010

HEART OF HOSPICE 

Jodi Goatcher and Cathy Carter: Volunteers Are Our Heart

Heart of Hospice has served almost 400 patients, and their families. That number is expanding exponentially, as word gets around about the outstanding job we are doing helping people complete their life journeys with dignity – often in their own homes. Naturally, as we gain more and more new patients, our volunteers are being stretched thinner and thinner, and

WE NEED YOU!!!

There is so much you can do for us! The primary function of our volunteers is to visit our patients on a friend-to-friend basis. Our hospice patients still need and deserve to be connected in a real way to their community, and volunteers can help a great deal. Just “being there” can mean so much. You can talk to them about their hobbies, listen to their life stories, share your story, or be an extra set of eyes and ears for our staff. You could run errands or take them on short



Frank visiting his horse.

Volunteers made this possible.

trips, or you could give the primary caregiver (often an exhausted spouse) a break to go shopping or get a haircut. If you like to read out loud, you could share one of your favorite books. They may listen, or they may sleep, but they will love you for being there.

Sometimes a family or patient will be more candid with a volunteer than with our staff. They know you are with them because you want to be there. This creates a special relationship of friendship and trust.

Many people ask, “Isn’t this work depressing?” Most of our volunteers believe it is both a privilege and an honor to spend this special time with our patients. Please read the views of our volunteers who are currently visiting patients. They are indispensable and they know it. They are giving of themselves at a crucial time in the journey of life. They feel good about themselves and the vital work they are doing.

But what if you are really not ready to visit with a person nearing the end of his or her life?

WE STILL NEED YOU!

One retired female journalist interviews people and writes most of the articles in our newsletters. A retired



Executive Dir.

Jodi Goatcher



Foundation Exec. Dir.

Cathy Carter

gentleman delivers supplies for us. He also builds and repairs our office equipment. Several volunteers are what we call “office volunteers”. They answer phones, file, stuff envelopes, make packets, etc. These volunteers are very valuable because they do the work that would otherwise be done by our regular staff. This frees staff to do what they do best: provide compassionate care to our patients.

Volunteer Possibilities:

- Direct patient care
- Office help
- Massage therapist (The Dalles)
- Reiki/Healing practitioners
- Flower delivery on Fridays
- Special events
- Therapy dogs
- Musicians

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YoHOs delivering Valentine's gifts

Other Volunteer Opportunities:

YoHOHs: Youth Heart of Hospice. These caring, compassionate teens from Hood River Valley High School have done wonderful work. They've delivered Easter baskets, custom Valentine cards, Christmas presents, and other special treats to our patients. They've held birthday parties. They've decorated care facilities and weeded yards. But most importantly, they've uplifted the spirits of many of our patients and senior citizens by their presence, by their youthful energy, and their positive nature. And by the fact that they care.



Odell Garden Club: Almost every Friday since May, 2008, Safeway and Rosauer's in Hood River have donated the flowers they can no longer sell. Several women from the Odell Garden Club arrive at our office and lovingly sort through these flowers and create beautiful new arrangements that our staff delivers to our patients and the care facilities. Organized by their leader, Norma Curtis, they have created well over 2000 arrangements. Over two dozen different women, and one man, have helped. As one of our patients at OR Veterans Home said, "You tell those ladies that these flowers give this old man a lot of pleasure, not just to me, but to everyone who walks into my room."

Butterfly Release: In May, for the last two years, Heart of Hospice has sponsored a free community Butterfly Release Ceremony. The goal of this Release is to help people with their grief and to honor those who have passed. We all experience loss and grief. Even though death of a loved one is often the most painful, it is not the only loss we suffer. The Butterfly Release is a way to start or publicly acknowledge your grief; and to start the healing process. We couldn't do this Release without our YoHOHs and volunteers.

One of Our First Volunteers: Bob Olson



The doctor replied, "Get into Hospice work. They particularly need men"

When Bob Olson retired and moved to Hood River, he asked his doctor what he could do to really be of service to the community. He wasn't looking for a club, or lots of meetings, but just some service he could do personally that would really make a difference to people. Without hesitation, his doctor replied, "Get into Hospice work. They particularly need men."

That was ten years ago, and Bob has been in Hospice work ever since, becoming a volunteer at Heart of Hospice as soon as it opened.

He remembers one client in particular who couldn't feed himself near the end of his dying process, so Bob would help him to eat. The man was very religious, so Bob would pray aloud with him before meals—something he would

not normally do. Gradually he became more comfortable with it and, in fact, he administered this man's very last meal. Noticing a lot of restlessness and anxiety, Bob put on Vivaldi's Four Seasons and noticed that the man calmed down quite a bit. He died later that day. "I learned then that music is a great tool," said Bob.

He added that one reason he has chosen Hospice work is that it makes him feel so good—about himself, and about the human condition. When people ask him if he finds his work depressing, he answers, "No way!"

"Most of the people I have met are wonderful," he said. "Oh, you get a crabby one once in a while, but for the most part they are exceptionally kind, pleasant, and grateful for the time I spend with

them. They have such interesting stories! It's fascinating to hear their experiences."

Bob visits clients once or twice a week, and has confined his visiting area to Hood River County. Usually he goes to private homes, but he has seen people in most of the area care facilities as well.

Bob loves to work in the garden, read, and interact with his dogs and cats. In addition to his hospice work, he does volunteer work at Riverside Church, the FISH food program, and Faith in Action. He lives in Hood River, is married, and has two daughters, both of whom work for non-profit organizations. His wife is an active volunteer in town as well. You might call the Olsons a "helping" family.

Office Volunteer Extraordinaire: Louise McCullough

Louise McCulloch is a busy realtor, but she still finds time to put in some hours every month in our Heart of Hospice office.

“I love working here!” said Louise enthusiastically. “I don’t feel qualified or emotionally prepared to actually sit at the bedside of a dying person, but I want to be part of this team. It’s a very important organization, and the staff does so much for so many people.”

She started helping Heart of Hospice over three years ago. In fact, she folded our first fliers and mailings when we were just getting started.

“Death touches everyone -- our friends, our family, and the community,” she said. “When

I am working in the office I see all the little individual efforts going on constantly that mean so much to a person or family facing end of life issues.”

Louise says she doesn’t think she does enough to write an article about, but she really does. “I do the brainless stuff,” she said laughingly. “Things like copying, answering the phone, filing, or putting mailings together.” What she must also know is that every task she completes means there is more time for specially trained staff to tend to patients and their loved ones.

Louise has worked for Don Nunamaker Realtors for

four years. She sees a connection in her love of homes and the fact that hospice care often takes place in patients’ homes. She lives in Hood River, has been married to Joe for 25 years this November and has two fabulous girls, Molly and Maggie. When she’s not in an office or property somewhere, you can find her in her garden.

Louise has also hosted several of our Foundation’s My Dinner Parties.

She’s reliable, willing, and very capable. We know we can count on her to grab the ball in a pinch, and she always does. What more could we ask?



“... I want to be part of this team”

Frequently Asked Questions

I don’t know what to say. Do you provide training?

Yes, we provide excellent training. We want you to be fully prepared when you visit your patient. Our training is done in the comfort of your own home, on DVDs and a study book. No day-long classes to sit through. We sit down with you and review the material. We don’t let you visit a patient until both of us are confident you’re ready. And we’re always available if you have questions.

Am I out there alone or will I get support?

You are never alone. In addition to the volunteer coordinator, we have nurses, hospice aides, social workers, and chaplains. We also have a complete office staff. Any of these people are available if you have questions. Nurses are available 24/7 if you need them. Although not mandatory, you are welcome and encouraged to attend our meetings. It’s a great way to meet our staff and see what else we do.

How many hours do I have to volunteer?

We ask for just one hour a week. Many of our volunteers choose to do more, but one hour of good, quality time with a patient can make all the difference in the world to him or her. Many of our volunteers develop very close relationships and friendships with their patients and want to spend more time. That’s your choice.

How are my patients chosen?

We try to match by common interests or lifestyles. We’re usually pretty good at this. But if, for any reason, you’re not comfortable, just let us know. We can find you another patient. This has to be a win-win situation.

What happens if I have to leave town, or go on vacation, etc.?

Life happens. Our patients tend to be very understanding. Our staff get sick, take the weekend off, and go on vacations. The patients become your friends. Just let them know and send them a postcard.

What do I do with my patient?

The same activities you do with your other friends. Talk, listen, play games, read to them, write a letter, complain about the weather. They may be terminal but they’re still alive and want what the rest of us want: a friend.

Very Special Thanks..

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To all our volunteers: Wendy Best, Lee Christie, Norma Curtis and the Odell Garden Club, Makalea Darmer, Peter Frothingham, Carrie Fuentes, Kathryn Hedges, Jeremy Huffman, Kelsey Kahle, Louise McCullough, Gerri McLaughlin, Christy Nance, Tracy Olmstead, Bob Olson, Theresa Perry, Jan Polychronis, Heather Shuck, Geraldine Van Dyke, Hilary Welp, and our YoHOHs ...We couldn't do it without you!!

We're on the web:
www.HeartOfHospice.org

Want to help?

Contact Clyde Sanda

541.296.2289 or 541.386.1942

Our Newest Volunteer: Kelsey Kahle



Jack and his volunteer Kelsey

Kelsey Kahle began volunteering for Heart of Hospice a few months ago. She has visited with two patients already, and has found the job to be very rewarding.

"I like the idea of hospice," she said. "I was invited by a friend to one of the dinner party fundraisers, and I started talking to people. Then I called Clyde Sanda, and we agreed that I should get some training and start as soon as possible."

"The training went very smoothly,"

she said. "I got to take the DVDs home, plus a workbook to accompany them. Then, after I had gone through all the material and had a session with Clyde to answer any questions I might have had, I was all ready to go. The whole process took maybe three weeks, and I learned an incredible amount. I could do the training on my own time and at my own convenience, so it was never a burden. There were no formal classes.

Kelsey has been pursuing her higher education up until the last year or so, and now she is a qualified veterinarian practicing in The Dalles.

"I had always thought that I would begin to do some volunteering after I was finished with school," she said. "I guess my goal in volunteering was to bring joy to as many people as possible, and this job certainly fits that criteria."

Several close family members passed away during Kelsey's formative years, including her beloved

grandfather. She sat with him for the two weeks leading up to his death, and was present when he died. She considered that to have been a very special privilege. So she has perhaps had more exposure to the idea of death than many people in her age group.

And yet, people who are dying love to see young people just starting out like Kelsey. It helps them to complete the circle of life in their minds, and gives them a sense of continuity even in the face of death.

Kelsey lives in The Dalles with her cat, two dogs and a gecko. She comes from the Midwest, so she is enchanted with the mountains and rivers in the Gorge. Hiking and kayaking are two of her favorite sports.

Part of Kelsey's email address reads "sunshine 24/7" which should provide an idea of how she views the world and everyone in it. We love her..and so do her patients.