Compassion, Comfort and Care
When it’s Needed Most

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About 15 years ago my mother and father sat down with me and outlined their end-of-life plans and wishes. In their early 70's at the time, they were both healthy and active, traveling frequently and enjoying maintaining the little house they bought after retirement, so the conversation took me by surprise. I remember saying that we didn’t need to talk about that yet, that they were years from having to worry about that. My no-nonsense, “greatest generation” parents said, quite matter of fact, that everyone dies and they wanted to make sure decisions were handled in the way they wanted. They completed health care proxies, living wills and DNRs. They planned their memorial services, compiled lists of people to contact and recorded who would get which of their belongings. Although it was difficult at the time, I’m so glad we had that conversation. I know absolutely what my mother’s wishes are for her care in the event of illness and for her death, as we did when my father died several years ago. I have come to truly appreciate what my parents did because I know each decision was carefully thought out, not a decision made in a time of crisis.

Why am I sharing this personal story? I want to urge everyone to think now about their end-of-life care and to discuss their wishes with family members. According to a 2013 national survey by The Conversation Project, while 90 percent of people in the U.S. say talking to their loved ones about end-of-life care is important, only 27 percent have actually done so.

Part of this conversation includes feelings and wishes regarding treatment and quality of life, and when a referral to Hospice is appropriate. Most Americans report the desire to die at home but more than 2/3 die in hospitals or nursing homes. In addition to allowing patients the comfort of living their remaining days at home, studies have shown that early Hospice care can extend a patient’s life expectancy and reduce anxiety for patients and their family members.

Our Hospice has many resources available to help families start the conversation and develop end-of-life plans. Please call the office and speak with Nancy Vosbrink about print resources or visit our website for links to trusted websites. In addition, our Medical Director, Dr. Gary Berk, and Nurse Practitioner Missy Heylen, are available to meet one on one with patients and families to discuss end-of-life plans; appointments can be made by calling the Hospice office and asking for Diane Pickering.

Remember, it’s never too early to make your wishes known!
Since the beginning of the We Honor Veterans program in 2011, creating opportunities for meaningful recognition of military service has remained a high priority. Our dedicated veteran volunteers arrive at the patient’s home or bedside, many times in full military uniform, to present the veteran patient with a certificate, a special lapel pin, and, most poignantly, render a hand salute. The pinning ceremonies have offered countless opportunities to honor our patients who have sacrificed so much for us. For those willing and able, it offers an opportunity to share memories of service with a fellow veteran and for some family members to hear stories they have not yet been told. Over the past several years we have had the privilege of sharing some of the interesting stories our staff and volunteers have learned while paying tribute to the service of these very special patients.

Our featured veteran, Mr. Burton Peabody, indeed has a unique story to tell. “At the age of 18, President Roosevelt sent me an invitation to join the Army—my presence was needed,” he said with a sense of humor. “Back then you didn’t hesitate,” he continued. His military career began with basic training at Camp Hood (Fort Hood), Texas, where he learned about armor, tanks and other military vehicles. After he completed training he arrived in New Guinea during World War II, where he learned soldiers on foot were needed. He joined a Calvary unit where he volunteered to man a .30 caliber machine gun. As a member of General Douglas MacArthur’s unit, they were among the first to arrive in Japan. While waiting in the harbor to learn their next move, just yards away was the USS Missouri. As a young soldier, willing to do anything his country asked of him, he looked on, instead, as the Instrument of Surrender was signed, ending World War II. “We had come so far. We were blessed to be there. Its something we will always remember because we went through the whole war and we got to see the moment it ended,” he said. Without question, Burton said this was, by far, his favorite part of his military service.

When he returned home, Burton went to work first at the aluminum plant he left when he joined the service, and then moved on to the paper industry. Together, with his wife of 67 years and their five children, they ran a family farm for nearly 30 years. Always a busy body, Burton also ran a small gravel business where he enjoyed getting out and meeting new people in the community. Among his greatest accomplishments is founding a hunting club on 1,200 acres of land in the town of Pitcairn. Over the years, family and other friends joined and built a nice camp where he enjoyed coffee every morning for many, many years.

“To Burton and all veteran patients we thank you for your brave service to our country.”
In August of 2016, Linda Caamaño joined the staff at Hospice as the new Volunteer Manager. She comes to the organization with a varied background and new ideas and perspectives for utilizing volunteers in the care provided to patients and families. After growing up in Vermont and attending an equestrian focused college, she worked as a barn manager for a horse farm, and then for Guiding Eyes for the Blind – a guide dog training school based in Yorktown Heights, NY – overseeing volunteer puppy raisers throughout the Northeast. She moved to Potsdam in 1998 and raised her two boys with her husband, Victor. She started a dog training business locally and eventually took a job at the Health Initiative, where she developed and ran chronic disease and diabetes self-management programs, as well as a pre-diabetes prevention program.

Linda has had an interest in and passion for the work that Hospice does since first being introduced to the hospice concept when her mother volunteered for their local Hospice in Vermont in the 1980s. She then had first hand experience with Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley when her mother-in-law was cared for several years ago. The position of Volunteer Manager allows Linda the ability to combine her interest in end-of-life issues with her experience and knowledge of managing volunteers. She is excited about developing new programs, and strengthening existing ones, to encourage more awareness and understanding of the hospice mission, and growing and expanding the volunteer program. In her off time, Linda enjoys riding her horse, spending time with family, and being outdoors.

When Linda arrived, her sidekick, Bristol, was always close by. Although she is adorable and quickly stole the hearts of all who met her, she has a much greater purpose. She is a Guiding Eyes for the Blind puppy being raised by Linda. Guiding Eyes for the Blind is one of the foremost guide dog schools in the country, and has been breeding, raising, and training guide dogs for the blind since 1954. Linda has been raising puppies for Guiding Eyes since 1990, and worked for the organization as a puppy evaluator and volunteer manager for 8 years. Bristol is puppy #13 for Linda and her family. Volunteer raisers take a 9 week old puppy into their home, and lay the foundation work that is critical to developing a successful guide dog. Socialization and manners are two of the biggest tasks for puppies to learn while in their raising homes, so coming to an office environment is ideal for teaching a young dog some of the skills they will need as a working service dog. Bristol returned to Guiding Eyes on January 20th to begin her formal harness training and will hopefully become a fully trained guide dog by late summer. Linda’s next puppy joined us in February, so there will continue to be canine company around the hospice office!

Help us save trees!

If you would like to receive our newsletters via email please let us know by calling the Development and Community Relations office at 315-265-3105 or by emailing samj@hospiceslv.org
A Unique Approach to Physical Therapy for Hospice Patients

“Enhancing quality of life for those affected by advanced illness”—its built right into Hospice’s mission. What most people think of when they hear this is visits provided by caring compassionate staff, extra attention to personal care and services that allow patients to maintain their dignity. Maybe they think of a listening ear and advocacy provided by a social worker or the chaplain helping to guide patients in their spirituality—whatever that may mean to them. While this care absolutely contributes to an increased quality of life for patients, the hospice benefit includes so much more. Additional services available to patients include occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy...why? In most instances these therapies mean rehabilitation—restoring what once was. For hospice patients, it means maintaining independence and slowing some of the aches and pains that come with the aging process or a chronic illness. For caregivers, it means learning how to safely transfer their loved one.

“Sometimes physical therapy is to fulfill a wish; sometimes we make a memory; sometimes we make a plan of action; sometimes we prepare for what might not come back; sometimes we prepare families and friends for graduation from Hospice—back to the world of safe self-care; sometimes the same songs we sang with the patients for voice control and depth of respiration are sung as part of the memorial and tribute we planned while they told us how they wanted it done,” explained Hospice Physical Therapist Kerry Newell.

“I incorporate music into many of my visits with patients,” he continued. “Folks of a certain age remember the old time house parties. There was no television and transportation could often be limited, but if there were friends and some good music on the radio, then a good time was had by all. They remember these times fondly and I think it helps get them excited about some of the exercises they may otherwise not be excited to do. “May I have this Dance” is often my choice of song for introducing the art and science of transferring a patient between sitting, standing and moving safely toward a favorite chair or back to the bed.”

In the case of Hospice patient Verlin Alguire, taking advantage of physical therapy has helped keep his strength, improved his breathing and has meant more dancing for him and his dance partner of five years, Peggy. “Once I learned he was safe to walk from point A to point B, I asked what it was he really wanted to do. Verlin and Peggy talked about how they met and the many dances they attended at the senior center, so I did an a cappella audition at my first visit and brought my guitar the next week so we could incorporate dancing into Verlin’s physical therapy,” said Kerry. “He’s working at it the right way. He takes a little bit at a time, and a little bit more all within his abilities. Verlin’s son, Danny, helped by shortening his oxygen tube so he is getting a better quality of air while he walks through the house, does breathing exercises and, of course, dances.”

“The patients are great teachers. They tell you exactly what it is they need and you get a chance to provide a service that is quality and is exactly what they want. Our goal is to make life just a little bit better.”

As for Verlin, he is working toward his goal of getting back out to his garage where his tools are meticulously arranged. This involves going down and back up several stairs, but thanks to the practice he’s had dancing and the other physical therapy exercises, this goal is well within reach!

Verlin Alguire and his dance partner, Peggy Houle, stop to pose for a quick picture during one of their dances.
What do you think of when you hear the word “quilt”? Your thoughts may rush immediately to a favorite hand-crafted piece of artwork, given to you by a family member who spent literally hundreds of hours on it. Perhaps it makes you think of the warm and cozy feelings you get from being cuddled up under that special quilt. Wherever your thoughts go, they are sure to bring a smile to your face as you recall all the special qualities of your favorite quilt and where it came from.

The talent and ingenuity shown by creative quilters never ceases to amaze. Regardless of the pattern or colors used, the quilts reflect the passion and love of their creators. Once the needles start to move, much of the time spent working on the quilt is also spent thinking about the person who will receive it. It brings quilters a lot of joy knowing their hard work will help bring a smile and some pleasure to the recipient.

More than sandwiches of fabric, more than bedding or a piece of artwork,quilts have the magical ability to bring people together. Quilts often provide physical and emotional warmth, and offer security and comfort in times of trouble or stress. They also serve as memorials and can be an important way to make peace with a loved one’s death. Quilts not only lend comfort to their recipient but to the quilter creating them as well.

Quilters, as a group, generally have really big hearts and love making quilts to donate. This year, Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley was fortunate to be the recipient of many such donated quilts. The S&B Quilters of Ogdensburg (pictured above) worked tirelessly throughout 2016 creating 15 beautiful, hand-made lap quilts. These quilts, which are diverse in color and patterns, will be distributed to Hospice patients throughout St. Lawrence County. Each quilt is unique in color and theme and all 15 are stunning. The themes cover a wide variety of interests and topics and Hospice staff are excited to match each one of these works of art to an appropriate patient.

“We are so thankful for this donation,” said Executive Director, Ruth Fishbeck. “These quilts are so special and will be fondly appreciated by our patients and families. We are grateful to this wonderful group of dedicated ladies and their creative support.”

In addition to the 15 quilts Hospice received from the S&B Quilters in December, the group has graciously taken in a large quantity of fabric previously donated to the organization, and plans to create more beautiful quilts for Hospice patients.

Whether you are an experienced quilter or have only dreamed of learning how to stitch pieces of fabric into works of art, you are invited to help create more of these beautiful gifts to help enrich the lives of Hospice patients; gifts their families can treasure forever.
Dueling Pianos Show
By: Cutting Edge Dueling Pianos

Save the Date:
Friday June 2nd, 2017
Cheel Commons Room,
Clarkson University
Doors open at 6:30PM
Show begins at 7:30PM

$30 per person
Heavy Hor d’oeuvres
Cash bar
Raffle Prizes

Tickets available for purchase by calling (315) 265-3105

Hospice is pleased to present a brand new special event to support the many programs offered to the community. On Friday, June 2nd, Hospice will welcome Cutting Edge Dueling Pianos for a wonderful night of entertainment. Dueling pianos features two baby grand pianos facing one another. The performers put on an all request show featuring anything the audience wants to hear. Whether its 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, 90’s or current, rap, country, or rock and roll. Anything you can imagine, they can perform. A dueling piano show is extremely interactive and highly entertaining. The audience is thoroughly involved and participates throughout the entire event. The crowd is sure to be laughing, clapping, singing, dancing, and loving every minute the performers are on stage. Be prepared with your list of special requests to make your mark on this great show! Tickets are available for purchase beginning April 1st by calling Hospice at 315-265-3105. Seating is limited so be sure to reserve your spot soon!

Being Mortal Frontline Presentation and Discussion Groups

In 2016, Hospice & Palliative Care of St. Lawrence Valley was selected to offer a viewing of Dr. Atul Gawande’s Frontline documentary, “Being Mortal,” with a discussion following the presentation. The discussions provide an opportunity for participants to share observations about the documentary and to encourage end-of-life discussions with their physicians and family. The first presentation in September at the First Presbyterian Church in Canton attracted more than 60 participants. Additionally, Gouverneur Hospital and St. John’s Episcopal Church in Massena hosted showings. The next showing is scheduled for April 24, 2017, at the First Presbyterian Church in Potsdam at 7pm. To date, more than 100 residents in St. Lawrence County have attended the presentations. Viewing and discussion groups are free of charge, thanks to support provided by The Hospice Foundation of America, through a grant from the John and Wauna Harman Foundation. The grant has been extended three times since the initial offering in February 2016.

* Please note: patient stories in this newsletter and other media are shared strictly with the permission of the patient and family members featured. All HIPAA rules and regulations are followed as required. We thank those who are willing to share their Hospice experience so others may know what the services provided mean to so many community members.
Hospice Memorial Garden Reservation Form

I would like to memorialize/honor my loved one, ________________________, in the Garden with a gift to Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley.

$ ______________________ for the following Garden feature(s) (select from list below):

- 4” x 8” Memorial Paver, $125
- 12” x 12” Memorial Paver, $500
- Memorial Grove Tree, $1,500
- 24” x 24” Corporate Paver, $2,000
- To Name the Hospice Memorial Garden in its Entirety, $50,000

When ordering a paver, please print desired engraving below:

4” x 8” Pavers: 3 lines, up to 14 characters per line (inc. spaces).
12” x 12” Paver: 6 lines, up to 15 characters per line (inc. spaces)

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone: __________________________
Address: __________________________________________
4” x 8” Memorial Paver, $125  12” x 12” Memorial Paver $500
Memorial Grove Tree, $1,500  24” x 24” Corporate Paver, $2,000

Please cut out and return form to: Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley, 6805 US Hwy 11, Potsdam, NY 13676