



JAN-
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2018

NEWSLETTER

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From the **DIRECTOR'S DESK**



Physician Extenders

By Executive Director, Shelley Tracy, RN, MHA, FACHE

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On February 9, 2018, the Senate voted on a Medicare-related policy package that included The Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act (H.R. 1284) sponsored by Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Senator Tom Carper (D-DE), Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), and Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA). The new legislation will allow physician assistants to serve as the attending physician to hospice patients and perform other functions that are otherwise consistent with their scope of practice.

The hospice community at large is experiencing a shortage of hospice attending physicians. NHPCO President and CEO Edo Banach stated, "Hospice providers in communities across the country, especially those in rural and under-served areas, have a difficult time finding enough primary care physicians to serve their patients."

At end of life it is the goal of any hospice company to provide the best care team possible for the individual patient's needs; sometimes that involves RN's, LPN's, Nursing Assistants, or Physicians, but in most cases it involves a team of all of the above. Especially in rural areas, being able to expand the deliv-

ery of care to include Nurse Practitioners and now Physician Assistants is key to making sure a comprehensive team can be at the bedside.

At Serenity HospiceCare we pride ourselves in offering end-of-life care in so many rural areas in southern Missouri. We cover the following counties: St. Francois, Washington, parts of Jefferson, Ste. Genevieve, Reynolds, Iron, Madison, Bollinger, and Perry. With the help of an expert interdisciplinary team and 24/7/365 coverage, we are always available to meet the patient's needs wherever they are.

Our interdisciplinary medical team includes our Medical Director, Dr. John Bird, and our Nurse Practitioner, Mary Dahmm. The two of these providers work hand in hand to make sure every patient is being provided the best individualized treatment plan, medications, and comfort measures possible. These providers are available to our nursing staff at the bedside 24/7/365 to make sure a patient never has to wait for pain relief or medication changes, etc. We believe the use of physician extenders, like the most recent policy change to include physician assistants and our amazing Nurse Practitioner, Mary, is continually improving the way we can deliver care.

(continued on page 2)

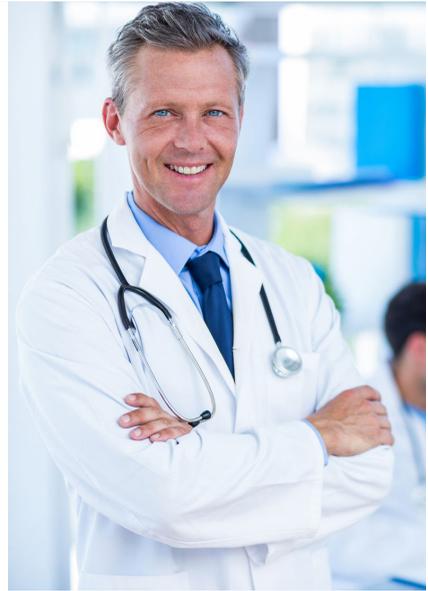
**NATIONAL
VOLUNTEER
APPRECIATION
WEEK
APRIL 15-21
2018**

Physician Extenders, continued from page 1

Our Nurse Practitioner can evaluate patients for hospice criteria, prescribe medications, communicate with the nurses and the doctors related to a treatment plan, provide face-to-face assessments and re-assessments for certification, provide emergency consultations in the home, and much more to make sure our hospice patients can see and feel comfort during this time in their lives.

If our team can be of any service to you or your loved ones, please call us at 1-800-876-0162 any time of day or night! You don't have to do it alone...

Shelley Layton is the Executive Director of Serenity HospiceCare. Her leadership and passion for end-of-life care are truly invaluable to our organization.



IN 2017 OUR
SERENITY
VOLUNTEERS
GAVE OVER
2,000 HOURS
& 15,000 MILES
TO CARE FOR
OUR PATIENTS
AND OTHER
SENIORS IN THE
COMMUNITIES
WE SERVE.

**BEING A HOSPICE VOLUNTEER IS NOT ABOUT
KNOWING ALL THE RIGHT WORDS TO SAY.
IT IS ABOUT PRACTICING THE ART OF PRESENCE.**



Life Lessons

By Sherry Howard

The following lyrics are taken from the band Switchfoot's song, *Live It Well*,

"I wanna sing with all my heart a lifelong song. Even if some notes come out right and some come out wrong."

The song echoes my own beliefs about life. Even if I make some mistakes along the way, I want to live my best life and pass on to others all that I have learned.

When I think about what makes a good life, I recall stories from my friends and family, how they've taught and guided me along the way. Without their guidance and connection, my journey may not have led me to this moment, to a place where I feel like I'm a better person because of the stories that have been shared with me.

As hospice workers, our lives touch many, and most patients become attached to us during their last days. But, what most don't realize is that those patients also touch our lives. They teach and help us become better images of ourselves. Without their life stories intertwining with ours, the work we do has no meaning. But because we have a face and a story behind each name, we have purpose.

Below are some stories about how hospice patients have impacted the workers at Serenity HospiceCare.

"My patients have taught me that everything goes by quickly. We should enjoy life and family as much as possible. Don't take it for granted," states Brionna Counts, C.N.A. "One patient in particular allowed me to realize how close I was to my grandparents and how I should've allowed myself more time with them."

Amanda Duncan, C.N.A has learned, "To live life to the fullest, enjoy every moment, and take time to spend with loved ones."

"Don't pass over the little moments. Sometimes they hold the best memories," explains Jackie Mehner, RN. "Don't hold a grudge." Jackie also tells of two patients who have impacted her dearly. "One patient helped bring me closer to the Lord. Another reminded me of my dad and by spending time with him, I felt like I was spending more time with my own dad. Patients have shown me how big the world is and also how small it can be."

"I have learned that if you have kind words to say, say them today. If you have a gift to give, give it today. If you have time to spend, spend it today because tomorrow is not promised. I have learned that investing in my relationships with my parents and children now will prepare us for future losses with far less regret." Volunteer Coordinator Jenna Firehammer also tells of a patient who impacted her own life. "One patient taught me about using my gifts to bring comfort to others. I sat with her on her nursing home bed as her body was in pain and fighting an anxiety attack. I am not a nurse and I felt so helpless as we waited for her medication. All I could offer was prayer, a soft reassuring voice, and a gentle hand rubbing her back as I held her close. Her anxiety faded and she said to me, 'I feel so much better when you are here.' In that moment I realized that I didn't have much to offer, but what I had was enough. That moment changed me as a person and I will never forget her."

"There's a particular patient that reminds me of my grandma," Tricia Storie, C.N.A. tells. "The first day I met her I could not believe how much she reminded me of her from the way she says things to the way she kisses my cheek and hugs me."

"Working with hospice patients has given me two things," Danielle Schulz, LPN explains. "One, you don't really have a bad

day and two, you don't ever have the right to be mean to any of God's children."

Our ability to create an emotional connection with our patient's is what makes our work such a blessing. They teach us as much as we help them. Working for Serenity HospiceCare is a job that provides an abundance of priceless rewards. Every patient has a story and every story is important. Every patient's life is a song that leaves a melody in our heart and through their gifts of knowledge and memory, their legacy lives on.

Sherry is our Medical Records Manager and excels at organization and efficiency. She does her job with excellence, playing a critical roll in patient admissions and enabling our entire staff to have patient information at our fingertips.



March

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORKER APPRECIATION MONTH



**DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK, GAYLA SISK, MSW, LCSW, ROBIN NAGEL, MSW,
MARY KAY OBENAUER, BSW, NATALIE MUCCI, MSW, DENNIS ROGERS, LCSW.**

Social workers specialize in easing heavy burdens.

Serenity has an amazing team of Social Workers who have devoted their careers to supporting patients and families who are facing a terminal diagnosis. They counsel patients, helping them work through difficult emotions and address concerns. They help patients set life goals and make the most of the time they have left. They connect patients and families with the resources they need for end-of-life care and they assist them in making final arrangements. Our Social workers also provide on-going bereavement care for the loved one's left behind by our patients to make sure they are coping and grieving appropriately. They lovingly walk with patients and families before, during, and after death and help to ease their heavy burdens.

End of life care and the many issues that come along with it can be overwhelming, but our social workers are there to give support and direction every step of the way.

Serenity's MARKETING MINUTE

Serenity has started off the year participating in three area health fairs and reaching out to many local families to discuss hospice care and the many services offered by Serenity.



FARMINGTON FAMILY LIFESTYLE EXPO



LEGACY FEST



STE. GENEVIEVE WOMEN'S HEALTH FAIR



Comfort Care
when it matters most



Lori Rouse, Comfort Care Coordinator



Brenda Vinson, LPN

Most people already know about the great hospice services provided by Serenity, but we also have an incredible, free palliative care program called Comfort Care, for those who are not yet ready for hospice.

Palliative is a derivative of the word palliate which means to ease without curing the underlying disease. Most people become confused when it comes to palliative care and often have trouble distinguishing it from hospice care. While the two are closely related, there are notable differences.

Hospice care focuses on making a patient comfortable during the end of life and hospice patients have typically been given a prognosis of less than six months left to live. These patients typically have chronic illnesses and have chosen to no longer seek curative care for those illnesses.

Palliative care is offered to patients with chronic illnesses but varies from hospice care because these patients are usually not at the end-of-life stage. Palliative patients tend to continue their medical regimen while on Comfort Care service and seek to ease their symptoms.

At Serenity HospiceCare, our palliative program is called Comfort Care. Comfort care is a viable resource to patients and their families and is available at no cost to the patient. The main goal of this program is to help patients maintain their ability to live at home while managing their disease.

Under the supervision of a Nurse Practitioner, our Licensed Practical Nurses serve as a valuable resource to the Comfort Care program. They help with medication reconciliation, keep patients informed about community resources, help with disease progression and symptom management, encourage healthy lifestyle choices, listen to health care concerns, and serve as a bridge between the patient and their primary care physician.

Comfort Care patients feel a sense of understanding and independence as they are better equipped to continue living in an environment that they are comfortable with. Should a patient's disease progress to the end-of-life stage, our nurses will help the patient make a smooth transition to the hospice company of their choosing.

This program is coordinated by Lori Rouse who enrolls patients into the program and works hand-in-hand with LPN, Brenda Vinson, as well as on-call LPNs, Danielle Schultz and Crystal Crocker to provide our Comfort Care patients with in-home visits and connect them to the resources they need. This team of ladies brings compassion and support to so many individuals in our community facing chronic health conditions and ensures that they are not alone.

Currently, Comfort Care is available at no cost to patients inside our nine county service area. The counties we serve are: Bollinger, Iron, Jefferson, Madison, Perry, Reynolds, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, and Washington. Because we do not bill for Comfort Care, patients can receive these visits without interfering with other in-home services that they may be receiving.

If you or a loved one could benefit from Comfort Care visits, once a month or more, please call Serenity HospiceCare at 573-431-0162 and ask for Lori in the Comfort Care Department.



Crystal Crocker, LPN



Danielle Schultz, LPN



HOSPICE DAY AT THE CAPITAL 2018



Every year dozens of hospice representatives wear red and gather at Missouri's Capital City of Jefferson City for *Hospice Day at the Capital* to meet with lobbyists to discuss issues that are important to the field of hospice care. Afterwards, the Missouri Hospice and Palliative Care Association holds the Annual Heart of Hospice Awards Banquet, where hospice workers and volunteers are recognized for their contributions to the organizations they serve.



Carter's Clubhouse Camp

Hospice Program

April Lober

Patient Care Aide and Hospice Worker

Karen Thompson

Direct Care Volunteer

Dr. Charles Carleton, MD

Winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award
in the Field of Hospice



MISSOURI HOSPICE
& Palliative Care
Association



Serenity's Upcoming Events

Carter's Clubhouse Children's Grief Support

Monday May 7

Volunteer Meetings

Local - May 16

Ste. Gen - May 21

CARTER'S CLUBHOUSE

We took the 25 kids to Battlefield Laser tag on February 5th. They had a blast during this meeting. We will be having the 2nd annual Carter's Clubhouse Grief Camp the first weekend of August....more to come on this exciting news!



Gayla Sisk, MSW, LCSW
Director of Social Work



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Pam Kiser

Volunteer Since March of 2017

*"Pam is very professional,
representing Serenity well at
all times, and we are proud to
have her wear our dove."*

Pam, a retired Speech Pathologist, has only been with us for a year, but in that time she has invested so much in the lives of our patients. She not only visits patients in their homes and nursing facilities, but she provides respite care for families in outlying areas multiple times each week. The hours and miles she devotes to our volunteer program have been a wonderful gift to Serenity and to her patients.

Pam is very professional, representing Serenity well at all times, and we are proud to have her wear our dove on her badge! She is always respectful of her patients' desires and preferences and she is careful to include family members in her visits. Her documentation of her time with her patients is thorough and her observations are very helpful in providing the best care possible to those we serve.

When asked why she was interested in becoming a hospice volunteer, Pam

expressed her firm conviction that every person deserves compassion, respect and support. She said that her own loved ones received kind and compassionate care at the end-of-life and she is paying that forward by providing that same care to our Serenity HospiceCare patients.

Pam has a beautiful smile, a soothing voice and a great personality. She is easy to talk to and provides excellent support to patients and family members alike. She listens, helps others feel heard and offers sound wisdom and guidance to those who seek it.

Pam is a dependable hospice volunteer, who has taken on a large patient load and has often been willing to step in and meet the needs of families too far away for others to travel. Her joyful spirit and her gift of compassion for those in the final season of life is inspiring. Pam is a strength to our volunteer team and an asset to the Serenity HospiceCare agency!



Social Worker

Robyn Nagel, MSW

Robyn Nagel has been with Serenity HospiceCare for 10 years. She has been a huge asset during this time. Her compassionate heart makes her a perfect fit for this type of work. Robyn wouldn't call what she does "work," but rather, more of a calling. Her integrity shines each and every day. She always does the right thing by her patients no matter who is watching. They are her first concern and it doesn't matter what it takes to fulfill her commitments to them. To Robyn the people she serves are not just patients, but become family and friends. Each one holds a special place in Robyn's heart, even after they are gone...this is one of the many reasons she is so amazing at being a hospice social worker. Family members have stated over and over that Robyn was one of their hospice angels, and they could not have made it through without her. Co-workers have said they feel comforted themselves when her presence is with them in stressful situations. They know they can always count on her when needed, and sometimes she knows their needs even before they do. Thank you Robyn for all you do!

-Director of Social Work, Gayla Sisk, MSW, LCSW

"Robyn is so passionate about the patients and families we serve. I have seen her give of her own time and money when a patient was going without. She has the biggest heart I know and a fun personality to go along with it. She is a gifted Social Worker and a true advocate for those in need! She is a treasure to the Serenity HospiceCare family!"

-Jenna Firehammer, Volunteer Manager



"If only we had found Serenity sooner!"

Early admission to hospice care means finding the best quality of life possible so you can make the most of the time you have left.





Offering Support to a Grieving Friend

By Jenna Firehammer, Volunteer Manager



We so often hear, "I want to be there for my friend in his/her time of loss, but I just don't know what to say." Fears like this cause many of us to shy away from comforting those facing loss when they need us most. Here are some practical guidelines to help us feel more at ease about caring for those who grieve without being intrusive.

Be specific. Do not leave the offer for support open-ended. Even if our offer is sincere, it is not effective to say, "Call me if you need anything." Most grieving friends are not going to call and ask for anything. Instead say, "I'd like to make a meal for your family next week. Would Wednesday at 5 be ok?" or "I'd like to take care of your yard this month. Are Saturday mornings a good time?"

Be sensitive. Sometimes the bereaved are inundated with supporters and meals during the passing of a loved one and for a couple weeks after, but when the crowd dies down, the need for a friend may be greater than ever. It is sometimes best to say, "I know you are very busy with arrangements right now, but would it be alright if I called you next month to set up a time for us to have coffee?"

Be there. Above all, don't be intimidated by the loss or the fear of being awkward. Even if you don't know what to say, your presence says, "I may not know what you are going through, but I care about you and you are not alone."

Comforting those who grieve does not require psychological insight or eloquent speech. It only requires a heart of compassion and a willingness to provide companionship to a friend in need.

Jenna is our Volunteer Manager and devotes her time to recruiting, training and supporting our volunteers as they offer companionship and care to our patients and their families

There is a great new counseling center in the Parkland Area!



**COUNSELOR,
GAYLA SISK, BSW, MSW, LCSW**

Professional Supporting for clients facing:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Stress | Major/Career Choices |
| Anxiety | Self-Esteem |
| Depression | Body Image |
| Relationships | Grades and School Pressures |
| Alcohol/Drugs | Grief and Loss |
| Family Concerns | Major Life Changes |
| Sexual Assault | |



5372 Flat River Road • Park Hills Mo • 63601

Call 573.430.9796 for a confidential appointment!



For Valentine's Day our volunteers created handmade cards for each of our hospice patients. Butterfield's Florist donated 2 dozen beautiful, long-stemmed red roses for the ladies on our service and our volunteers made up treat bags full of candy for all the fellows. Our team spread smiles across all nine of the counties we serve as they made their Valentine deliveries!



OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO



FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATION!

Inspirational perspective

By Jenna Firehammer

I heard it said recently that “it is through the lens of suffering that we see the true beauty of who God is,” and I know this to be true. Sure, I love to give God praise when my life is full of joy and victory and I feel the warm sunshine on my face. Yet, it has been in the very coldest and darkest times of my life when I have drawn the closest to the Lord. It has been during the seasons of my greatest suffering that I have felt His divine embrace upholding me and carrying me through until morning.

It has been in the most desperate times, when I had nothing, that I have found God to be my provider. In my loneliest hours I have found Him to be the faithful friend that sticks closer than a brother. In seasons of despair I have found Him to be my hope. In danger I have found Him to be my refuge of safety. In weariness I have found

Him to be my resting place. In my deepest grief I have found Him to be the lifter of my head. In anxiety I have found in Him the peace that passes all understanding, and when my heart was broken beyond repair, it was His healing hands that made me whole again.

The Lord understands suffering. He, who was betrayed, beaten, spit upon and crucified by those He was dying to save, feels our pain. He, who has walked the weary road of rejection, heartbreak and loss is moved with compassion when He sees us straining under the weight of those same heavy burdens. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4 that He is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. Like a loving father whose own heart aches when his children are hurting, so does our Heavenly Father long to soothe our pain.



Suffering is miserable to endure, but in the midst of pain we find in Him the sweetest comfort. There is nothing more beautiful than being held in the arms of the Savior, where every care of this life seems to melt away in the warmth of His presence and the depth of His love.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings...”

(Philippians 3:10)



Join the Healing Hearts monthly grief-support gathering, free and open to the public.

4th Monday of every month
11:30 a.m. at Serenity HospiceCare

Led by Gayla Sisk, MSW, LCSW of Serenity HospiceCare & Serenity's Bereavement Coordinator, Amy Parker

RSVP: 573-431-0162

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WE HONOR VETERANS



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PROVIDED BY SERENITY HOSPICECARE



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