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NEWSLETTER

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From the

DIRECTOR'S DESK



FREE Hospice Services are Underutilized

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

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According to research by ABC News, too few Americans entering the end of life are utilizing hospice care, despite the fact that Medicare covers the expense.

"Hospice care is underutilized -- only a third of Americans die under the care of hospice, and hospice care is free." ~ Dr. Gail Gazelle, assistant clinical professor at Harvard Medical School.

According to Gazelle, many of these patients avoid hospice, because they (and often their doctors too) believe end-of-life care means they have "failed" in the face of disease. "They often view it as, 'OK, someone is telling me to crawl into my bed and die,'" she said. But in reality, many hospice patients lead full, mobile and high-quality lives for months.

There's also the misconception that hospice is expensive. Too often, terminal patients don't realize that Medicare and private insurance often cover the full cost of hospice care. Even if they don't cover the entire cost, at Serenity HospiceCare you will NEVER see a bill for hospice care. Anything that Medicare or private insurance does not cover, we cover by providing charity care.

We never allow our patients to receive a bill for hospice services at end of life. We believe this is part of our mission statement: All services are self-directed, individualized and available to everyone regardless of their ability to pay.

Do not let financial fears hold you or your loved one back from taking advantage of the pain management and emotional support that comes with hospice. Hospice is not just for terminal cancer patients either. Over 40% of hospice admission in the U.S. are non-cancer related and include end-stage heart disease, dementia, lung disease or stroke.

Hospice is about living. It is about living as well as you can in the midst of illness and disease. It is about keeping your dignity, your quality of life, and as little physical and emotional suffering as possible; enjoying your family and your favorite things for as long as you can.

Hospice care focuses not only on the patient, but also on those affected by his or her illness. A patient's family and/or caregivers are just as important. Serenity HospiceCare provides emotional support to the family/caregivers throughout hospice care, of course, but we also provide bereavement counseling to the family/

(continued on page 2)



AGAINST THE GRAIN

A Counter-culture Look at Death & Dying

By Brandon Leach

In our American culture today, there seems to be a troubling trend. Discount retailer, Target, openly markets the idea of “Expect More. Pay Less”. We want as much as we can get for the smallest cost to us, but do we stop to consider the quality of what we are getting? Gone are the days of the refrigerator that lasts 25 years, your washer/dryer wedding gift you replace on your 20th anniversary, and the television set that just needs a little tap on top after 15 years. As a culture, we seem to have turned an eye away from the value in a great quality product. We sacrifice quality in so many areas of our life in order to secure a greater quantity of “stuff”. Is it possible that this mindset could be affecting our views in other areas of our lives, namely death and dying? You might wonder how the desire for greater quantity of “stuff”, while disregarding the quality of said “stuff”, has anything to do with our mortality? I implore you to consider some thoughts that I have formulated after 10 years of working with the terminally ill, that might possibly help us LIVE better.

The latest global statistics regarding human mortality is still holding at 100%. Sometimes human life is taken much too soon and in tragic and unforeseen circumstances, but for most of us, the reality is, we will face a life-limiting illness. So how does our culture influence our views on death and dying? My earlier hypothesis coupled with the vast capabilities of modern medicine, I believe, has caused some misconceptions and myths in our views about how to live at the end of life. That is right; I do not believe it is about dying but actually about living. Our culture and modern medicine moves us into a place that, more often than not, will encourage quantity over quality. The discussion becomes about longevity irrespective of what the quality of life might be. The conversation becomes “how do I survive” not “how

I thrive”. I want to acknowledge at this point that I am not bringing a charge against medicine, questioning its role in our lives, or challenging the right of a person to choose a treatment for their illness. I am charging that we begin opening the discussion to a wider scope of thought. We must ensure that every person is able to choose how he or she wants to live when faced with a serious life-limiting or terminal illness. There is no “right” answer to each situation, but we must acknowledge it is not a choice of living or dying, yet a discussion about surviving and thriving.

These decisions are subjective and as different and unique for each person as their fingerprint. In my experience, I have seen those that choose to try every possible treatment and medicine at the expense of physical, emotional and spiritual distress, and ultimately missing the chance of a quality end of life. I have also seen those who choose to accept a shorter time here on earth in order to achieve a more quality life. They live in full acceptance of their mortality and desire to live the fullest life possible for however long they are given.

No one can ultimately judge the “rightness” of these decisions, but I am encouraging us to open the conversation including both sides of the same coin.



FREE Hospice Services are Underutilized (continued)

ers for up to a year after the death of a loved one. To know that their families are being attended to after their loss can bring peace to patients.

Hospice care focuses on more than just the clinical aspect too! Although we have nurses and nursing aides and medical providers available to you 24/7/365 for your clinical needs, at Serenity Hospice-Care we recognize the need for social services and spiritual care as well in the acceptance and holistic approach to the patient's peace.

Unfortunately, almost a third of hospice patients enter service only in the last week of their life -- even though Medicare covers six months of this type of care. At Serenity HospiceCare we believe patients can get more out of hospice when they choose to accept these free services sooner. We can provide pain management and increase quality of life for months. And we can do all of this at no cost to the patient or the family!

Even when these free hospice services are not appropriate for a patient, we also have free palliative services. The difference with palliative care is that it is meant for chronically ill patients whose disease(s) are affecting their quality of life. They may not be suffering from a terminal illness, but they are still suffering from chronic diseases that are decreasing their way of living.

We can help! And we can help for FREE!

Give us a call today and let's see which FREE program is best for you. You no longer have to wait to get the help you need. You no longer have to be in pain and unable to do some of the things you love the most. You no longer have to do it alone.

We are only a phone call away:

573-431-0162.



Avoiding Caregiver Burnout

By Jenna Firehammer

I have often said that we are never more fulfilled than when we find ourselves devoted to the selfless care of others. Being a caregiver is a privilege; we are entrusted with the very life and well-being of another living soul. However, being a caregiver is also weary work. It can leave us desperately depleted if we do not take the measures necessary to ensure that the well of our own resources does not run dry, as we pour out our love and compassion on others.

1. Care for Yourself

We've heard it dozens of times while flying, or watching movies about flying; "Secure your oxygen mask first, and then assist those traveling with you." Perhaps that seems selfish, as though we care more for our own safety and wellbeing than that of our children or other loved ones, but that is certainly not the case. Instead, this direction is given to ensure that we will be able to care for those in our charge. By preserving our own lives, we safeguard our ability to care for those around us. It is no different in a season of life when we called upon to care for a loved one who is in need.

There is a tendency for devoted caregivers to put our loved one first, at all times, while we give no thought to our own health, our emotional needs or our need for rest. It makes us feel self-sacrificing and heroic, but in reality it is not wise. If we don't take proper care of ourselves, we are not ensuring that we will be able to continue providing excellent care in the long run. We are not preserving our health, nor our patience, and above all, we are not preventing burnout. In order to give our best to our dear ones, we must get proper rest, be mindful of our diet and exercise, and even set aside a little time and money for pampering ourselves once in a while.

2. Seek the Support of Family and Friends

A good caregiver always needs a strong support system. We need someone to encourage us in our efforts when we are weary, someone to listen while we vent about the demands of care-giving, and ultimately, we need someone who can step up and give us a much-needed break from our duties from time to time. This is easier said than done when we are the primary caregiver. We don't want to feel that we are complain-

ing, or that we resent our loved one, nor do we want to feel as though we are trying to push the burden of their care off on anyone else. Sometimes these concerns make us unwilling to reach out for the support we need. Other times, we may be willing to ask for help, but we find it hard to get anyone to listen, or to trust someone else enough to provide the same standard of care that we give our loved one, while we have a respite. A good rule of thumb is to reach out to family first, in hopes that they will feel a responsibility to be there for us and our loved one. Next, reach out to friends. Friends are not obligated to us like family; they are in our lives because they choose to be, and sometimes a friend will step up even when family will not. Lastly, if we still find ourselves lacking support, we must reach out to our community. Churches and non-profit groups often have volunteers, support groups and even free resources available. The support we need is out there, we just have to be committed to finding it.

3. Seek Spiritual Renewal

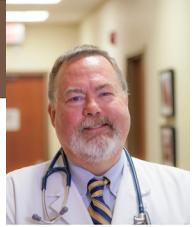
As humans we are made up of body, mind and spirit. Just as critical as having nourishment, hydration and rest to sustain our physical body, we must also care for our mind and our spirit. Care-giving is a continuous drain on us emotionally, just as it is physically, and if we do not seek the renewal of our hearts and minds, we will soon find ourselves operating at a deficit and experiencing things like resentment, depression, outbursts of anger and even mental and emotional breakdown. It is like driving a car that is running low on oil. We may be able to put quite a few miles on the vehicle before things get critical, but when the last drop of oil is spent, our engine will overheat and begin to self-destruct. As caregivers, when our emotional stores are depleted, we can only run on empty for so long before we start sus-



The Doctor's Corner

Monstrous Medical Myths of Mortality

By Dr. Jonathon M. Bird, MD
Medical Director, Serenity HospiceCare



There seems to be several misconceptions out there regarding “Hospice” and what hospice workers do and don’t do, and what expectations patients and families have. It’s one thing to have misunderstandings around the community, but I’ll have to point the finger at myself and my colleagues in the medical profession as well.

1. “If I go on hospice I will die immediately.”

Common sense should tell us that this is not true. In our work, we are all about bringing comfort and ease to the patient and families, so they can focus on living, memories, relationships, and making peace with their Creator for as long as they have left on earth. None of us can tell when we or anyone else will die. And ironically, we have seen cases where the love and caring and compassion that we bring with hospice allowed the patient to thrive and be out of pain and actually live longer because of that caring!

2. “If I live long enough the hospice service will kick me out.”

I’ve actually had a patient tell me this, that because he had “made it” to 6 months after entering hospice, that the hospice

service (not ours) pulled out. The fact is, when a patient, hopefully in conjunction with his or her family and caretakers, decides to go on hospice, the notion is that his or her life expectancy may be 6 months or less, though we cannot predict this with any certainty. However, whether we have a person on hospice for 2 weeks or 2 years, as long as he or she continues to show evidence that life expectancy is still 6 months or less, then we continue that comfort care.

3. “Once I go on hospice I’m locked in to that track toward my death.”

Again, not true. Many persons, once on hospice, will decide to revoke our services and seek additional treatments or other options. Absolutely not a problem. We are all about what the patient wants and not about any of our own opinions about his or her medical situation. In fact, many of our patients will sign back on with us later anyway, and that’s fine, it’s their choice.

4. “I can’t get better if I go on hospice.”

I have to say that there are indeed times whereby a person will come on hospice and improve or stabilize to the point that their life expectancy is no longer at six

months or less but rather longer. How wonderful! That means they have even more time before passing on to enjoy what this life brings! In those cases we do have to work toward discharge back to the standard medical system, but never without consulting with the patient and family, and always with an option to appeal and possibly remain on our services for another period of time.

5. “If I go on hospice, I’ll lose my doctor and all my medicines.”

We encourage continuity of the patient-physician relationship. If a person comes on to our services, one of the first questions we ask is, “Who is your primary care physician?” If that physician wants to continue to be involved then that’s great with us. And if, for whatever reason, that is not the decision, or if the patient has no primary doctor, then we will be happy to fill that role as we bring comfort care. Medications generally are continued as appropriate, and the ones which are canceled are mutually agreed upon.

The focus of hospice care is on quality of life, ease of burden and pain, prolonging of independence and autonomy, respect and dignity, and, when allowed and when possible; being the hands and feet of Christ.





1ST ANNUAL CARTER'S CLUBHOUSE CAMP

OUR 1ST ANNUAL CARTER'S CLUBHOUSE GRIEF CAMP WAS A HUGE SUCCESS. WE HAD A GREAT TURN OUT WITH 24 KIDS IN ATTENDANCE. NOT ONLY DID THE CAMPERS HAVE TONS OF FUN BUT THEY CAME AWAY WITH SOME COPING SKILLS TO HELP THEM DEAL WITH THE LOSS OF THEIR LOVED ONES. THEY MADE LIFE-LONG FRIENDS WITH OTHER KIDS WHO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS LIKE TO LOSE SOMEONE SIGNIFICANT. THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS POSSIBLE!



GAYLA SISK



AMY PARKER



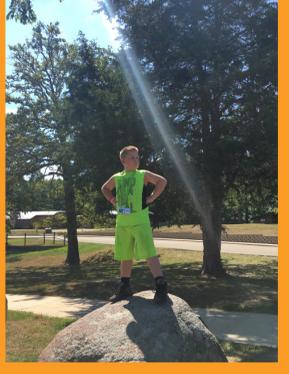
ADVENTURE



LOVIN' the OUTDOORS







CAMPING Fun

Serenity's MARKETING MINUTE



Serenity Rocks! By Ursula Warren, I.O.M.

Spreading sunshine and joy is just one of the things the Serenity HospiceCare staff does in the areas they serve. Normally in the course of their business, Serenity's nurses, social workers, CNA's and chaplain take care of patients with life-limiting illnesses. They take care of their medical needs, minister to their spiritual needs and help them achieve the quality of life they want with the time they have left.

But right now, Serenity's staff is spreading sunshine and joy in another way! Why? Because Serenity rocks! Serenity HospiceCare's staff and volunteers gathered to paint kindness rocks this week. Each person brought their own flavor and style to the rock painting, but all of them were painted with great love and great joy.

The kindness rocks can be found all over the Parkland area in St. Francois and several surrounding counties. When you find one and post it to Serenity HospiceCare's Facebook page, you will be entered for a chance to win a "Sunshine Basket". The winner of the Sunshine Basket will be drawn on Friday, September 15, and will be notified via Facebook. For a chance to win, you must find a Serenity kindness rock (with a Serenity HospiceCare logo on the back), and post a photo with the rock on Serenity HospiceCare's Facebook page. We have hidden 45 rocks at various hospitals, nursing facilities and medical buildings, as well as Chambers of Commerce. Nearly a dozen have already been found. We hope you will join in the fun.

"We sincerely hope that our hand-painted rocks will bring a little smile to those who find them," said Serenity's HospiceCare's Executive Director, Shelley Tracy. "We had a great time with this project, and we hope that the love we put in them will translate to those who pick them up and enjoy them."



#SerenityRocks

Serenity's Upcoming Events

Carter's Clubhouse
Children's Grief Support
Monday Sept. 4th

•
Volunteer Meetings
Local - Sept. 20
Ste. Gen - Sept. 25

•
Healing Hearts
Bereavement Support Group
Monday, Sept. 25 at 11:30am



Rosie Galvan

Volunteer Since March of 2013

*"Rosie is always organized
and dependable and is an
excellent communicator."*

JOIN US FOR AN
Evening of Family Fun
RIGHT HERE AT SERENITY HOSPICECARE
October 31st from 3-5pm

Enjoy fun and games, refreshments and
trick-or-treating from office to office!

THIS YEAR'S THEME IS **Disney Heroes vs. Villains**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Rosie has been a Serenity Volunteer for over 4 years and we are always amazed at her level of commitment as a volunteer and how much she has to offer our hospice agency. She is organized and dependable and is an excellent communicator. We are always proud to see her wearing our dove.

Rosie makes herself available for office support whenever she is needed and is our Volunteer Manager's right hand when something needs to be organized. She frequently helps with filing medical records, shredding documents containing protected health information and assembling packets for new patients and prospective volunteers. She also assists with updating and simplifying the storage of program documents and prepares gifts for nursing home patients and senior centers.

Rosie helps call BINGO on the first Wednesday each month for Serenity at the Park Hills Senior Center. The crowd is always delighted

to see her as she mingles and listens and shares her heart of compassion for people in all circumstances and walks of life. Rosie has also made herself available as a substitute for other volunteers who cannot make a patient visit and offers occasional PRN support to patient families if they need to run errands, pick up relatives at the airport or go to doctor's appointments.

Rosie also helps with every community health fair and expo that Serenity attends in her area. At these events she educates others on the benefits of hospice care as well as helping to recruit others to join the volunteer program. Additionally, Rosie has traveled with a team from Serenity to represent our agency in Jefferson City for Hospice Day at the Capitol. Rosie attends all volunteer meetings and actively participates in conversations about hospice care.

Rosie is a truly beautiful woman, inside and out, and we are so blessed to have her on our volunteer team!

Avoiding Caregiver Burnout (continued from pg 3)

taining mental, emotional and spiritual damage. We humans were designed to have our hearts and minds renewed continually by deep spiritual connections and those connections are vital to longevity as a caregiver. Many find these connections in prayer, meditation, studying the Bible or other books of philosophy and poetry. Some find release in music or hobbies like gardening, woodworking or cooking. Others find spiritual renewal by connecting with nature; being outdoors, exercising or spending time with animals. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have a loving and supportive spouse, or other close friend or family member, can find deep renewal connecting with that individual, and in turn, being filled up emotionally. Whatever makes us feel fresh and new and strong; that is what we must seek out! That is what we must make time for in our busy lives in order to be at our best.

4. Consider Facility Placement or an In-Home Caregiver

Many caregivers are afraid to admit that they can't do it on their own anymore, but the bravest and wisest among us will be ready to make the decision when the time comes. When it aligns with the wishes of our loved one, and the proper resources are available to pay for a top-rated nursing home, facility placement can be a life-changing opportunity for everyone

involved. Imagine our loved one receiving around-the-clock care by a professional staff that is tending to their every need. Imagine us getting to visit as frequently as we want, when we are fresh and rested and full of joy to share with our loved one, instead of worn down, burned out and completely drained as we attempt to care for them alone. If facility placement is not an option, perhaps savings or insurance would pay for home health, a bath aide or a chore worker. Sometimes just a few visits a week from a hired care-giver, companion or home-health nurse can bring a tremendous amount of relief to the demands we face with a loved one's care. We must seek the resources available to us; not only for our sake, but for the quality of life of the dear one we have devoted ourselves to caring for.

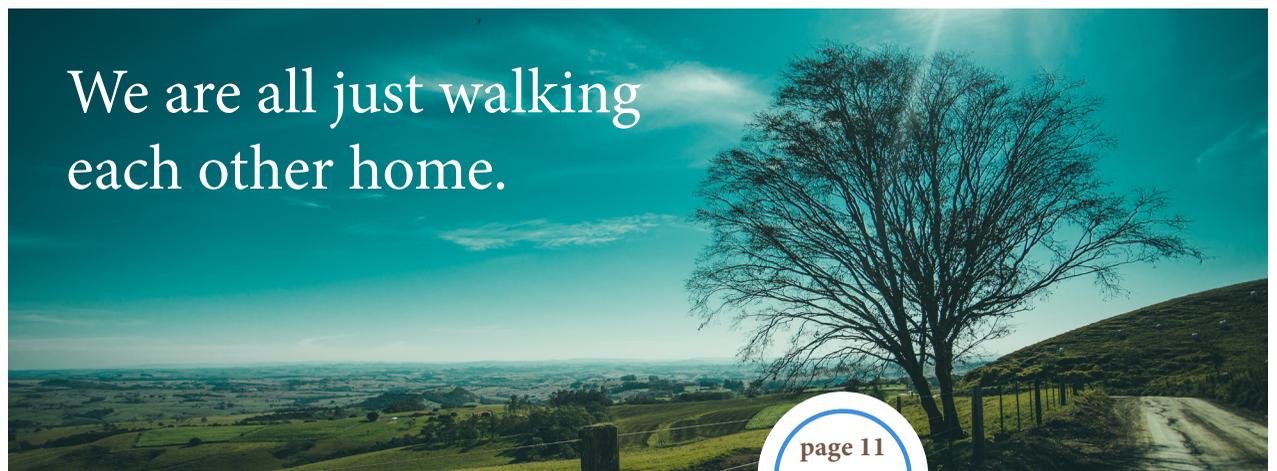
5. Choose Hospice Early

We never want to think of the day that our loved one receives a terminal diagnosis, but if and when that day comes, we must understand what hospice is and how it can make the most of the final season of life. Many people think that hospice is merely a team coming in to assist in the dying process in the final days of life, but this is not the case. Hospice care is about keeping our dear ones comfortable so that they can enjoy the days, weeks and months that they have left. Hospice allows

us to have the conversations necessary to help our loved ones face death without fear, carry out their wishes regarding death, and above all, making as many of their dreams come true as possible before they pass on from this life. Hospice is not about dying. It is about bringing comfort, uniting families and granting the desires of a loved one's heart. The earlier a patient is placed on hospice, the more time our team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and volunteers have to make those things happen for the ones we love. To learn more about the Hospice Philosophy and the services offered by Serenity HospiceCare, please visit us on line at www.serenityhc.org.

Caregivers are amazing people, full of compassion, and devoted to making sure our loved ones receive everything they need, no matter the cost, but care-giving is demanding work. We, as caregivers, must avoid burnout at all costs. We must care for ourselves, reach out for the support we need, and ensure that we are at our best for our dear ones.

May God bless and strengthen each of us as we give of ourselves for the good of others and make the difficult decisions we all must face in the end.



We are all just walking
each other home.

Inspirational perspective

By Jenna Firehammer

Every single day we give of ourselves to others: to our families, our co-workers and clients, to friends and loved ones and even strangers. It is easy to grow weary and feel depleted when we give so much, and yet Jesus calls us to pour ourselves out for others. He Himself was the ultimate example of selfless living; spending His days serving others and ministering to their needs and then giving His very life on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

So how can we answer the call to be poured out for others without emptying ourselves in the process? The key is to have a personal relationship with Jesus. We are like pitchers of water, pouring ourselves out to others, but He is a fountain of water which never runs dry. When we draw close to Him daily, He pours into us His love and blessings and His strength and provision. When we are connected to Him in private

devotion, we are never depleted; no matter how much we give of ourselves. When He is the source of our strength, we are always full. God never intended for His people to be so run down from serving others that we can barely function, but instead, He purposed that we would take time to rest in His presence and be renewed, day by day, and give to others from the overflow of His goodness and mercy toward us.

If you are weary in well-doing, perhaps you need to reconnect with the true source of your strength. Take some quiet time to be alone with the Lord for daily devotion. Time spent in prayer and Bible study is deeply restorative. Try a Christian radio station like Joy FM and let the lyrics encourage your heart. Find a place of worship where you can enjoy the presence of God, the preaching of His Word and fellowship with other believers.



Whatever you do, do not be discouraged! God promises in His Word that His grace is sufficient for us and His strength is made perfect in our weakness. When we feel as though we have come to the end of our own strength, that is when God can truly show Himself strong in our lives.

(Isaiah 41:10) “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”



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, Army Parker

RSVP: 573-431-0162

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