

Summer, 2010

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Hospice Highlights

From the Executive Director,

I am speaking for all of us that work at DeKalb County Hospice either paid or as a volunteer when I say “Thank You” for your continued love and support. Our official year ended April 30 so I thought I would share with you some of the things we were able to accomplish together during this past year. Our fund raising activities, donations, memorials and other non patient related revenue are vital for many of these activities:

- We provided Hospice care to 275 patients and their families; infant to individuals in their 9th decade.
- Admitted 21 new clients into the Transitions program and cared for 45 clients.
- Over 360 volunteers provided over 5000 hours to support program efforts including patient care, 11th hour volunteer support, fundraising, Baking Up Nice Surprises (BUNS), Memorial Teddy Bears, Supply Delivery Support, Flower donation and delivery, office support, newsletter mailings, Health Fairs and many other activities.
- Created, collated and mailed over 20,000 general newsletters, 27,430 bereavement newsletters and 2200 volunteer newsletters.
- Received over \$242,585 in donations through fundraising activities, memorials, donations, grants etc. Received two grants from the Senior Tax Levy funds to support Transitions clients residing in private homes and the Powerful Tools for Caregivers series.
- Helen Maurer, DCH LCSW supervised a graduate student during the school year from Aurora University working on her Masters in Social Work.
- Recruited community musicians to play for patients and their families as well as weekly at the Cancer Center. They have received very positive comments from patients receiving treatment.
- Worked with KCH Marketing to give a new look to DCH web site and update it weekly to keep events current and added new features including Facebook.
- Received a \$2125 grant from the DeKalb County Community Foundation to produce a music CD, *In Each Moment* , which includes several original songs created and performed by Jen Conley with inspirational stories told to her by several hospice patients and families. The CD was launched at a music fundraiser where Jen and several others performed the music found on the CD. Several community musicians donated their time as well on this project.
- New Bereavement support groups, including a children’s group, were launched successfully in the Sandwich area. The children’s group in the DeKalb area served 14 children. Both children’s groups will be offered again in the fall.
- Eleven grief support groups were offered, one social, 8 educational and 2 coping with the holiday’s classes.

(Continued on Page 9)

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I'M GLAD YOU ASKED

By Pam Kitterman, RN, CHPN - Patient Care Coordinator

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT HOSPICE CARE

Hospice care is about helping patients live each day of their lives to the fullest extent possible, and providing support to both patients and families. When making a decision about hospice care, it helps to have a good understanding of what hospice is, and what it isn't. The following are some of the most common misconceptions about hospice, along with the true facts about this very special kind of care.

MYTH: Hospice means that the patient will soon die.

Fact: Receiving hospice care does NOT mean giving up hope or that death is imminent. The earlier an individual receives hospice care, the more opportunity there is to stabilize the patient's medical condition and address other needs. Some patients actually improve and may be discharged from hospice care.

MYTH: Patients have to give up their own doctor.

Fact: Patients may keep their own physician, who will work closely with DeKalb County Hospice to plan and carry out care.

MYTH: Hospice is only for cancer patients.

Fact: A large number of hospice patients have end stage cardiac disease, chronic lung disease, dementia, or other conditions.

MYTH: Patients can only receive hospice care for a limited amount of time.

Fact: The Medicare benefit, and most private insurance, pays for hospice care as long as the patient continues to meet the criteria necessary. Patients may also come on and off hospice care, and re-enroll in hospice as needed.

MYTH: Hospice provides 24 hour care.

Fact: The hospice team (which includes nurses, social workers, home health aides, chaplains, volunteers, bereavement support staff, and music therapy) visits patients intermittently, and are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week for support and care. DeKalb County Hospice can help patients and families arrange for 24-hour care if necessary. We help teach, guide, and support the caregivers giving end of life care....whether that be in a private home; assisted living facility; or a nursing home.

MYTH: Hospice is just for the patient.

Fact: Hospice focuses on comfort, dignity, and emotional support. The quality of life for the patient, but also family members and others who are caregivers, is the highest priority.

Please give the hospice office a call if anyone has questions regarding the above myths and facts. (815-756-3000)

WELCOME *New CNA's*

Sadly, we have lost our treasured CNA, Kathy Moore to retirement. She is now gardening, traveling and spending time with her grandchildren. We are excited to have replaced her with two wonderful new staff members Kendra Burger and Nicole Sivertsen. Both are dedicated to the hospice cause and we are very fortunate to have them.

Chaplain's Corner

When devastating events happen to us a question that frequently pops up is, "Why me?" Behind this question there usually lies a desire to understand the circumstances or factors that caused this devastating event to happen. In so doing we hope to find meaning or make sense of what is occurring.

Sometimes we can find satisfactory answers. We may come to understand how certain factors, such as health and relational behaviors, attitudes, diet, stress, etc. likely played a key role in our circumstance. Other times we may end up clueless.

In the Gospels we find the Lord Jesus giving clear examples of cause and effect where certain individuals are struggling with disease. We also find Him referring to the role of the will in certain situations. Let us take the example of the man at the pool called Bethesda in Jerusalem who had an infirmity for 38 years. The Lord Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" There are yet other situations where the search for a cause and effect failed to yield a definite answer, or where our desire "to be made well" doesn't seem to cause anything to change. We find this in the Gospel recording of the disciples asking whether it was a particular man's sin or that of his parents that caused his blindness. It was, we are told, "Neither this man nor his parents".

When we can discover some answers, these can lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors that aid personal psychological and spiritual growth. If we can see our life in the context of a loving Creator, rather than blaming ourselves, we can grow from our mistakes. And likewise, if we fail to find satisfactory answers, we can discover peace in surrendering realizing that all life is ultimately held and sustained by God's love and mercy and there are some questions we simply cannot find satisfactory answers to. So whether we find answers or not, the focus that can sustain us in devastating experiences is coming to embrace the realization that behind everything is a Divine love that seeks not to judge, punish, or condemn us but to embrace, uphold and sustain us in our difficulty. It is to this that we must surrender. In so doing the need for answers seems to subside and mental unrest ceases, being replaced by the peace that surpasses all understanding, the peace of self-acceptance and acceptance of how life is at the moment for us.

Chaplain Kay Loch



The Power of Music

If you have a loved one suffering from memory loss, use the power of music! Consider trying one of the following:

- Music listening: listen together to recordings. Research has demonstrated that songs which were popular when the individual was between the ages of 15-25 have the most likelihood of eliciting a response.
- Sing together. You do not need to be accomplished to do so. Singing is a natural human response. It is about the moment and the experience, not the performance!
- Music and Touch: Play music while holding hands, tap the beat lightly on their hand, apply lotion or massage their hands gently.
- Music appreciation: As they are able discuss topics related to the music, artists, time periods, dances they may have gone to, concerts, etc.
- Music and visual imagery: Pair music with corresponding pictures of nature, art, historical events or travel destinations (such as Irish music paired with photos of Irish landscapes for someone who may have traveled to Ireland).

Also – a few guidelines for utilizing reminiscence with individuals with memory loss:

- Go slowly. Allow the person time to respond.
- Be aware that the process of reminiscing is more important than the theme or the content.
- Avoid detail-oriented questions that demand a factual response. Not "When was that?" but "What was that like?"



A Musical Note From Jen Conley, MTBC, LPC

Music Therapy: Focus On Music & Memory Loss

The woman before me is in DeKalb County Hospice with a diagnosis of “end stage dementia.” She is non-verbal and completely dependent. I know from her son that she loves hymns. I play a variety of them from her faith tradition, sitting in close proximity, singing gently with the harp. When I get to the final phrase of *Amazing Grace* I hear her voice join me on “...was blind but now I see.” She sings along, with a clear voice, in tempo and making eye contact. For that moment, I’ve got her. She’s back.

There is a great deal of research that supports the profound effect music can have on individuals suffering from memory loss. Research has long shown that listening to music can directly impact blood pressure, pulse and the electrical activity of muscles. Neuroscientists are now finding that music can actually help strengthen the connections among nerve cells in the brain. Concetta Tomaino is the Executive Director of the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, Beth Abraham Family of Health Services. She states, “Music serves as a gateway into the brain that actually stimulates its function. Listening can improve scores on memory tests, including learning new information.” She also comments that auditory processing seems to be the last skill to go in those with memory loss. Long after individuals no longer recognize a face or a photo, they respond to music. “The mind can’t break down the visual,” she states. “Music is more enriched neurologically.”

It’s exciting to go into a nursing home and watch the transformation with the introduction of music. Toes begin to tap, heads nod, smiles awaken. People who previously appeared withdrawn become more focused, show interest and a new awareness of their surroundings. One of the most exciting things is that it seems like once they become engaged, other memories and associations come trickling out. Individuals hear a specific song and may mention the name of a loved one, or recall a memory, or reach for a hand. People (often unknowingly) associate songs with a person or place in time. Hearing these rekindles that – and sometimes it’s not just the memory – but a glimpse of the personality that regains footing for a time.

Another DeKalb County Hospice patient I had the privilege of working with was completely transformed by music. She had profound memory loss – could share simple, brief verbal exchanges – though they were completely confused. When we sang she became calm and would clasp her hands to her heart, singing along. She often would comment on the music, and the comments themselves would be relevant, i.e. “I sang that in church.” Or, “We could dance to that music.” I’ll never forget the day she stopped me in the middle of a song, took both of my hands and looking me in the eye said, “This is good spirit for us.” Yes indeed, I thought. This is very good spirit for us.

Quality Assessment/Performance Improvement

Providing the very best care to our patients and their families is always important. Following the death of one of our patients we send the family an evaluation form to complete. This is just one way in which we learn what we can do to improve the care we provide to our patients and families. Approximately 65% of the evaluations are returned which is very good statistically. Last year’s results are:

- Family rated care as excellent/very good = 97.50%
- Family felt the pain was managed well = 98.75%

Our goal for this next year is 100% and thus far this fiscal year we have accomplished this goal. We don’t always achieve success but we strive, always, to learn and improve.

Gifts

This poem is in response to an interaction with a 69 year old hospice patient with cancer, who subsequently suffered a stroke. Her language is garbled, often in single words. I greeted her and she favored me with a wonderful smile. I told her that her smile was absolutely radiant and leaned forward, gently touching my forehead to hers. As clear as a bell she said, "The world in a smile." I was deeply moved and asked if I could share her line, at which point the radiant smile brightened further. This poem is dedicated to Bonnie Lindgren.

Enter in
 A time of change
 Ripe with fear
 And unknown places
 Tangible emotion
 Explicit or not
 Dancing in faces
 Words, touch
 To be a vicar
 Of care and hope
 Witnessing loss
 Fostering faith
 Holding their story
 Celebrating life
 Relishing moments
 The world in a smile
 Richness of presence
 The eternal unveiled
 In eyes and hands
 In spirit and breath
 A call to remember
 To open, release
 Embracing time
 Finding peace
 Enter in
 A time of change
 The lyric of hope
 In surprising places
 The gift to give
 The gift to receive
 I carry you gently
 I honor you deeply

Jen Conley

In Each Moment

DeKalb County Hospice has completed its feature length CD titled, "In Each Moment." The disc includes 10 original songs by hospice patients and family members written in conjunction with Jen Conley, and 4 instrumental tracks by NIU and community musicians. The project was supported by a grant from the DeKalb County Community Foundation.

On April 24, DeKalb County Hospice had a CD release event at Blumen Gardens featuring various tracks from "In Each Moment," performed live. A highlight from the evening included a patient in attendance who was one of the contributors/songwriters on the CD, as well as a family member who joined in performing the song her family wrote together. The evening also featured a second set by the wonderful and lively Irish Band, "Mike King & Friends."

On July 9, Borders, who is carrying the disc nationally also hosted a CD promotion event which again featured live performances of the songs and a variety of other music. Both current and former hospice families joined us in the audience, as well as community members and hospice supporters.

In a broader arena the CD has begun to generate some interest. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) contacted DeKalb County Hospice and is going to include an article about the project in their *NewsBriefs*, a weekly e-publication provided nationally to all members of the NHPCO.

The CD is being given free of charge to hospice patients, families and those in bereavement. It is available for purchase (\$20) at DeKalb County Hospice, Green Leaf Gift Shop at Kishwaukee Community Hospital, Valley West Community Hospital Gift Shop, and at www.Borders.com and at Borders stores nationally. Funds generated by the sale of the CD will support DeKalb County Hospice's music therapy program.

If you are interested in having our newsletters emailed to you please email Mary Hoerchler at "mhoerchler@kishhospital.org" with your name and email address.

Something to Ponder . .

When our office was remodeled to accommodate our new EMT office mates, a new poster emerged in a prominent area. It caught my attention, and I read it carefully. Here is what it said (*my comments are in italics*):

Bill of Last Rights

By the Hospice Association of America

The Right to BE IN CONTROL

Grant me the right to make as many decisions as possible regarding my care. Please do not take choices from me. Let me make my own decisions. *At a time when many things are out of our patients' control, this is so very important.*

The Right to HAVE A SENSE OF PURPOSE

I have lost my job. I can no longer fulfill my role in my family. Please help me find some sense of purpose in my last days. *Sometimes it is just a matter of rethinking purpose. Purpose may have a new form.*

The Right to REMINISCE

There has been pleasure in my life, moments of pride, moments of love. Please give me some time to recollect those moments. And please listen to my recollections. *Listening to those recollections is a privilege for me. Sometimes the recollections are painful and there can be resolution.*

The Right to BE COMFORTABLE

The pain involved in dying is multifaceted. Although not all my pain can be taken away, please relieve whatever portion you can. *I observe everyone on the hospice team to be sensitive to physical, emotional, and spiritual pain and striving to provide comfort.*

The Right to TOUCH AND BE TOUCHED

Sometimes I need distance. Yet sometimes I have a strong need to be close. When I want to reach out, please come to me and hold me as I hold you. *If someone has not indicated they want touch, I ask. . . . he / she is in control.*

The Right to LAUGH

People often ~ far too often ~ come to me wearing masks of seriousness. Although dying, I still need to laugh. Please laugh with me and help others to laugh as well. *I have learned that many people use humor to cope with tough situations. I admire that.*

The Right to BE ANGRY AND SAD

It is difficult to leave behind all my attachments and all that I love. Please allow me the opportunity to be angry and sad. . . . *and whatever other emotions are being felt.*

The Right to HAVE A RESPECTED SPIRITUALITY

Whether I am questioning or affirming, doubting or praising, I sometimes need your ear, a non-judging ear. Please let my spirit travel its own journey, without judging its direction. *I am honored to be a fellow traveler on that journey.*

The Right to HEAR THE TRUTH

If you withhold the truth from me, you will treat me as if I am no longer living. I am still living, and I need to know the truth about my life. Please help me find that truth. *Hospice staff answers questions in a truthful and sensitive manner.*

The Right to BE IN DENIAL

If I hear the truth and choose not to accept it, that is my right. *I have learned that denial can protect someone from information that they are not emotionally ready to accept.*

What do you think of these rights? Would you have other insights to share? Let me know!

Sincerely,
Helen Maurer, LCSW
DeKalb County Hospice Social Worker

Caregiver Classes Offered – Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Are you a caregiver? A caregiver is someone who helps a relative or friend with the things that he or she cannot do due to the disabling effects of a chronic medical condition or age.

Most people are caregivers at some point in their lives. It is often quite challenging trying to balance life as a caregiver; it can be stressful – physically, emotionally and financially.

DeKalb County Hospice is sponsoring a six week class, entitled Powerful Tools for Caregivers. Classes will be held Tuesdays, September 21 through October 26, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm at the DeKalb County Hospice office, DeKalb. Caregivers will learn how to reduce stress, improve self-confidence, better communicate feelings, and locate helpful resources. Attendees also learn how to increase their ability to make tough decisions and balance their lives.

The 90 minute sessions over the lunch hour are designed to be especially helpful for caregivers with limited time. There is no cost for class participation. Each participant receives a copy of [The Caregiver Helpbook](#).

For more information or to register, contact Helen Maurer, L.C.S.W. or Val Heintz at DeKalb County Hospice, 815-756-3000. Class size is limited, advance registration needed.

Direct Care Volunteer Training

Volunteers who work with patients and families serve on a regularly scheduled basis and provide the following:

- Support services - companionship, friendly visiting, active listening, bedside sitting, letter writing.
- Sharing hobbies and special interests ~ reading, gardening, listening to music, sports, travel, crafts, etc.
- Assisting with errands - grocery shopping, picking up prescriptions and supplies, banking.
- Transport patient/family - appointments, shopping, social outings.
- Homemaking tasks - light housekeeping, dishes, laundry, meal preparation.

Thomas Attig says, “Presence is one of the most precious things we can give one another.” One of the most important things a volunteer can do is just “be there” for patients to reassure them they are not alone, to hold a hand, to offer a smile, or to just listen. It is not easy work, but the personal rewards are enormous. The strength and courage of patients provide a constant source of inspiration, and volunteers usually feel they gain more than they have been able to give. The inner knowledge and satisfaction a volunteer receives from knowing they’ve made a real difference in the life of a patient or family is what makes being a hospice volunteer special. To be invited into the last months, weeks, and days of a person’s life is an honor and a privilege.

If you are interested in becoming a Direct Care Volunteer or would like to learn more information about what it means to work with people in the late stages of their lives, consider joining us for our next volunteer orientation/training. Our next class begins October 6, 2010 and meets each Wednesday afternoon from 1-4 through November 17. All meetings will take place at the hospice office in DeKalb.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the training or to register for the 7 week session, please call Val Heintz at 815-756-3000 or email her at vheintz@kishhospital.org.



Congratulations to DCH Medical Director, Dr. M. Thornton, for receiving the *Outstanding Service to Patients* award presented at the Kishwaukee Health System physician’s recognition event held in April.

The Doer, The Listener, and The Respite Giver: Which are you?

Submitted by: Sue Rankin, Bereavement Program Coordinator

I often receive calls from concerned family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers who know someone who has just experienced the death of a loved one. The callers are many times seeking ways that they can support the griever. They want to learn what they can do to help their friend get through this tough time. Most times, as the caller shares what he/she is already offering the griever, the caller is already helping.

There is a time during a grief group where we talk about the importance of identifying those support people in the griever's network of family, friends, faith community, professionals, co-workers, acquaintances, and fellow grievers. We term it the "Healing Community." These are folks who are offering the griever support in ways that are healing and healthy. We then look at that list of people and begin to further identify those who are doers, listeners, and respite givers. When the bereaved are struggling on a particular day and feel muddled in thought, it can be helpful to have a list of supportive people to draw from.

The Doers: These are folks who love to do things, funny enough! These are individuals who have offered to help with a specific task; who have always been ready to jump in and help in the past; or who have a specific talent that the bereaved are in need of. The Doer is all about action and doesn't mind taking charge of a task when called upon.

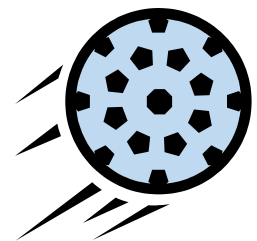
The Listeners: These are people who are more comfortable just sitting quietly and allowing the bereaved to share the grief experience with them. They don't attempt to fix the loss. These are folks who may not know what to say but do know that listening is just as important.

The Respite Givers: These are individuals who are not especially comfortable with the whole loss and grief realm, but they are good for giving the bereaved a grief break. They may be the one to invite the griever to a movie; or to spend the day shopping in the city; or offer some other kind of respite activity. A person cannot and should not grieve 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is neither healthy nor healing. Respite Givers are good at providing the temporary escape from the loss.

So what kind of helper of the bereaved are you?

Thirteenth Annual Midge and Miles Underwood Memorial (MUM) Golf Tournament

The 13th annual Midge and Miles Underwood Memorial Golf Outing will be held again this year on Friday, August 13, 2010 at the Sycamore Park District golf course. This annual event is a major fundraiser for DeKalb County Hospice. The Underwood family has donated over \$220,000 from the outing over the past 12 years!!! The MUM Committee is comprised of the Underwood family and friends along with some of the staff from hospice.



If anyone is interested in volunteering for this event, giving the committee some ideas for raffle and auction prizes or donating monies or gifts for the raffle and auction, please call Pam Kitterman at the hospice office, 815-756-3000. Without this wonderful effort by the Underwood family this community event would not be the success that it has become.

St. Walter 5A Class



During this past school year, each class at St. Walter School in Roselle raised money for a special program. One of the 5th grade classes adopted DeKalb County Hospice (DCH volunteer, JoAnn Piotrowski worked there).

After a year of collecting pennies, nickels, dimes and various other amounts of change, the class presented a check in May for \$500 to DeKalb County Hospice! Not only did they raise the money, they decorated some bags for our BUNS deliveries, and also spent some time learning about what we do. They were very interested in hearing about all the many services offered by DCH. Thank you to St. Walter 5A class for your support of DeKalb County Hospice!

Volunteers and DeKalb County Hospice

The hospice concept and movement in this country has grown out of the commitment and vision of thousands of volunteers. From the beginning, and still today, volunteers are at the heart of hospice throughout the United States. This is certainly true at DeKalb County Hospice. It was a group of volunteer community members who brought the idea of hospice to DeKalb County. Through much planning, DeKalb County Hospice was incorporated in 1981. Since that time, thousands of people have served this community as hospice volunteers. Volunteers continue to be an indispensable part of DeKalb County Hospice.

Traditionally, volunteers have been and continue to be the backbone of the hospice movement. Even the federal government recognizes the importance of volunteers in the delivery of hospice care by requiring that Medicare-approved hospices utilize volunteers from their community. Volunteers serve as members of the hospice team by sharing skills and interests in a manner that provides comfort and enriches the quality of life for those served.

Volunteer opportunities include providing help with special projects, deliveries, mailings, reception, clerical support, working with special fund raising events or providing direct support to patients and families. Some volunteers choose to share their professional expertise by serving in advisory capacities, as a member of the hospice board of directors or on other committees.

No matter what volunteer role an individual plays, it is important to the mission of DeKalb County Hospice and enriches and supports the individuals we serve. It is impossible to imagine DCH without volunteers. In fact, we could not do this work without our volunteers.

Continued from page 1

From the Executive Director,

- Two Memorial Teddy Bear Workshops were held where 19 individuals created 32 bears with the help from 25-30 volunteers.
- 16 Bereavement Care Packages were created and distributed to children who experienced the death of a loved one. Each box is age appropriate with a mix of grief education and grief validation materials as well as kid friendly fun items.
- Sponsored the annual Hospice Foundation of America *Living With Grief*, webinar educational program in which DCH, KHS and several outside organizations were invited to attend. DCH plans to do this yearly.
- Helped to organize the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Service for bereaved parents and family members. 40 people attended this year.
- Presented classes on End of Life care to CNA class at Kishwaukee College, Mooseheart and Indian Valley Vocational Center as well as nursing students at NIU and Kishwaukee College. Nursing students shadowed DCH RNs for the day.
- Spoke on Hospice and End-of-Life care to over 10 community groups including a yearly presentation to Sycamore Middle School students.
- Initiated a new series, *Conversations With The Living* to be offered quarterly in DeKalb and alternate with VWCH.

Again, thank you for making all of this possible. We are anticipating reaching out to more patients and families in this next year. Please call us if you have an organization or business that would like to learn more about end-of-life care and DeKalb County Hospice.

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