



# Hospice Matters

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF YUMA

*Comfort & Compassion When It's Needed Most*

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

## Hospice Care and A Mother's 'Good Death'

This article was printed May 30, 2009 in the San Diego Union Tribune. It was shared with us, and we would like to share it with you.

**My** mother died this month at age 95. This column is a tribute to her example of living - and also a public-policy tribute to the manner of her death, in hospice care.

When Genevieve Kondracke was diagnosed in April with probable ovarian cancer, she decided against a biopsy, risky major surgery and a long hospital stay. She died peacefully, at home, visited often beforehand by her family, and in no pain.

This is my second experience with hospice, and it confirms all I appreciated about the humane care that my wife, Milly, received as she died five years ago from multisystem atrophy, a severe form

of Parkinson's disease. About 40 percent of Americans who die each year do so under hospice care, whose purpose is to keep a terminal patient comfortable, not to fight death.

As Congress considers health care reform, it should find ways to encourage hospice use - "good death" - and save not only a lot of pain and fruitless (if heroic) effort, but a lot of money too.

My mother wasn't an expert on health policy. She wasn't very political (she did run for a school board post once), but she had some strong views. She was a feminist long before anyone discovered "The Feminine Mystique."

She worked her way through the University of Illinois in the depth of the Depression. She was also a member of the women's swimming team.

In those days, 40 years before Title IX guaranteed equality of funding for women's sports, men's teams traveled to other schools for meets. Women swam in their own pools and telegraphed their times to each other. My mother hated that inequality. She was economic Republican but social Democrat - pro-choice, pro-women's advancement. She was a loyal churchgoer, but she could stand the religious right.

For 68 years, she cared for my brother, Mike, who suffered brain damage from a high fever in infancy and is somewhat mentally disabled. Early on, she tried to get help and training for him, but few resources were available. Then he lived with her, alone after my father died in 1976. She kept him out of trouble, helped him get odd jobs and trained him to be a good guy.

*Continued on page 2*

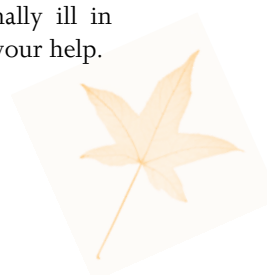
## Thrift Shop Volunteers Needed

**Every** year Hospice of Yuma provides hundreds of thousands of dollars in charitable care for our patients. Our Thrift Shop is one way to raise the revenue needed to provide the best care possible for all of our patients. All of the net proceeds generated by the Thrift Shop

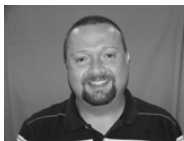
are used specifically for this purpose.

The Hospice of Yuma Thrift Shop has volunteer opportunities open year round. If you enjoy being around people, want to make new friends and help us raise money to care for the terminally ill in our community, we welcome your help.

To volunteer, you must be at least 18 years old and able to commit at least four hours per week. For more information please contact us at the Hospice of Yuma Thrift Store at 782-9593.



## A Note From the Executive Director



John Williams  
Executive Director

It is an unfortunate fact that our patients and their families face great difficulty whenever we are called in to help. Despite the sadness and fear they face, our work does so much to enhance their comfort, dignity and grace that it is highly rewarding. It says a lot that there isn't one member of our staff who is not humbled when he or she thinks of the work we do everyday. So I can't help thinking of the many blessings we have because of your support of our mission to provide the best possible end-of-life care. Your support takes many forms, all of which are instrumental in our success. Volunteers who work with our patients and families make an extraordinary commitment, going through many hours of training and then being available to families who are under

great stress. Other volunteers, who help with the Hospice of Yuma events or assist in our office, make it possible for us to apply our resources more effectively for our patients. Donors who support our work with contributions enable us to live up to our commitment to always provide the best possible care even when the costs exceed what Medicare and insurance reimburses us for. Donor support also allows us to provide care for patients who cannot afford our care. The support of area businesses and individuals strengthens our community and helps ensure that more people understand the availability and benefits of hospice care when they need it.

On October 17, 2009, we will host our annual Ocean to Ocean Gala fundraising dinner and silent auction at the Historic Yuma Territorial Prison. The monies raised through the gala will go to support our charitable care program which has significantly grown in size from last year. As economic times

have been tough we have cared for many terminally ill patients who have no insurance coverage and who have no financial means of paying for hospice care. Becoming a sponsor of the Ocean to Ocean Gala is an excellent way for area businesses and individuals to highlight their commitment to the community that supports them and to make a lasting difference in the quality of life for terminally ill patients in our area.

The spirit of generosity and giving within our community is heartwarming and humbling. Not a day goes by that I do not notice something we have done for a patient or a family that would not be possible without your help. It is truly a blessing to be a part of such a community.

For more information on sponsoring our Ocean to Ocean Gala, or for tickets, please contact our Director of Fund Development, Ashlie Davis at 343-2222.

## 'Good Death'

*Continued from front*

My mother had great genes, was a good golfer and stayed active deep into old age. But after several mini-strokes, my brother and I persuaded her two years ago to move from her house in Illinois to a retirement home near him in Ohio.

My mother was determined to avoid needles, anesthesia, surgeons, intensive care units, tracheotomy, ventilators, resuscitation - all the heroic measures hospitals take to keep a patient alive. Instead, Odyssey, the hospice service provided visiting nurse, pain medicine when she needed it, a social worker and spiritual counseling.

Congress should pay attention: A 2007 Duke University study showed that hospice use could reduce Medicare costs by as much as \$7,000 per patient in the last year of life, or \$2,300 on average. Thirty percent of Medicare's current \$500 billion annual cost pays for the care of the 5 percent of beneficiaries who die each year, and about a third of that is spent in the last month of life, or \$50 billion.

A study published this year by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute showed that when terminal cancer patients just had a conversation with their doctors about end-of-life options, costs of care went down by 35 percent, compared with

those who didn't. Moreover, the study said, "higher costs were associated with a worse quality of death," as reported by caregivers.

The hospice movement has grown dramatically since its importation from Britain in the 1970s, especially after Medicare decided to pay for hospice care in 1983. Forty percent of terminal cancer patients now use hospice care, but the percentage is much lower for other chronic diseases.

Government should find ways to spread the custom so that eventually everyone, like my mother, chooses to close out a good life with a good death.

## Investing In Hospice

We wish to thank **Ron Martin and Family** for their recent grant in the amount of \$8,750.00. This grant was set up years ago by Mr. Martin through the Arizona Community Foundation. Thank you, Ron Martin and Family for showing your commitment to the community through your contribution to Hospice of Yuma.

We also wish to thank **Mr. and Mrs. John Osterman** for their recent contribution of \$250.00 through a grant from the Arizona Community Foundation.

A very, very special thank you to Hospice of Yuma nurse **Ann Farley**, for once again putting on her annual Silpada Fundraiser to benefit Hospice of Yuma. This year, the funds raised will go into the Wig and Prosthesis program, enabling us to purchase more prostheses. Ann, we truly appreciate all

the hard work you do, both inside and outside Hospice of Yuma.

Thank you to **Tawnee Miller of Serendipity Photography** for donating her time and talent, taking photos of staff and patients. Tawnee has visited many families, providing beautiful photos of loved ones in end-of-life.

We wish to thank Hospice of Yuma volunteer **Carol Dodd** for sewing very lovely scarves for the Wig Program. As we reported in the last newsletter, we had been running low on scarves, and Carol was more than willing to meet the challenge of sewing more scarves.

Thank you to **Betteryuma.org** for your recent contribution of \$1,000.00. Also received from **St. John Neumann Parish** was a \$1,000.00 contribution. Thank you Betteryuma.org and St. John Neumann Parish for your support of our organization.

Thank you to the following community groups for their contributions: **Yuma Women's Club**: \$200.00 and **Fraternal Order of Eagles**: \$311.00. Your continued support of our organization is truly appreciated!

We have also received funds from the **State Employees Charitable Campaign** in the amount of \$1,347.29 and **Combined Federal Campaign** in the amount of \$2,148.16. These programs allow state and federal employees to make payroll deducted contributions to their charities of choice. Thank you to those employees who choose to give to Hospice of Yuma!

*"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."*

*— Winston Churchill*

## Gold Canyon Candle Fundraiser for the Wig & Prosthesis Program

Beginning September 1 through September 30, we will be hosting a Gold Canyon Candle Fundraiser with monies raised to go directly toward the Wig & Prosthesis Program. We are now in need of prostheses for this program, and have the ability to purchase them at cost through a distributor. If you would like to get a head start on your Christmas list and purchase some very well renowned Gold Canyon Candles, all the while supporting a good cause, please stop by the Hospice of Yuma office. If you would

like to help us further by selling candles, please call Ashlie Davis at 343-2222, and she will be happy to give you a catalog.

Breast prosthesis are very expensive; wholesale cost is \$60 to \$180 for one prosthesis (not a pair) and cost from a catalog can reach \$300 each.

Any money we can raise for this program is very much appreciated and helps us reach our goal of helping as many women as we can feel better about themselves while they're going through one of the toughest times in their lives.



## Saying "Goodbye"



Father Paul Gambling

I recently had cause to think again how to say "goodbye" to someone that we love, especially since material things could not be an issue in this case; she is traveling by air to another country and weight restrictions mean that we could not "load her down" with a lot of "stuff." Usually, tokens of affection and presents would be the way we would say, "We miss you and we love you," but this is not an option now.

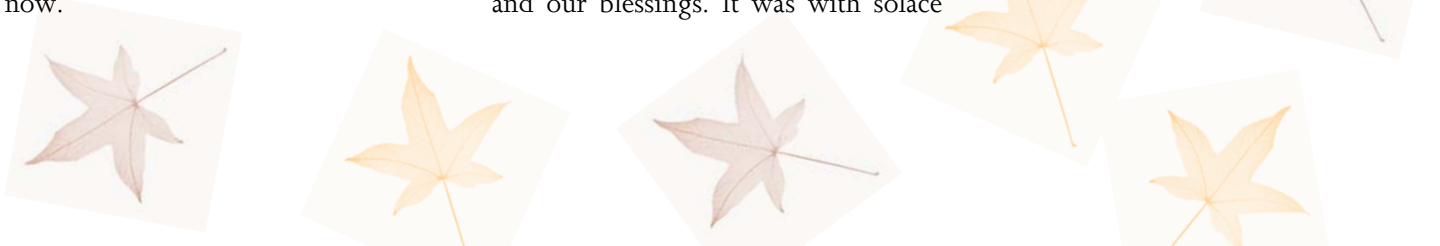
The word "goodbye" represents so much, in and of itself. The contracted form that we are familiar with came into use in the Seventeenth Century as a contraction of "God be with you" or possibly "God bye [redeem] you." Whichever form it was, the sense of the parting is the same - "God hold you close as you go." Our Spanish speaking friends have a very similar form for leave taking, "viacondios" literally "go with God." Both of these expressions are the form of a blessing.

When our loved ones are leaving and cannot take anything physical with them, they can still carry our love and our blessings. It was with solace

that, as we hugged in the parking lot, I said "goodbye," I pronounced a blessing and said "I love you." It may have seemed to be small, but it was everything that it needed to be.

Saying "goodbye" to someone we love is one of the most difficult things that we as human beings have to do, but at least we know that they are resuming their journey carrying our love and a blessing.

Pax, Paul



## Ways to Help Those Journeying Through Grief



Gay Anderson  
Bereavement Services

- 1) Connect to where the grieving person is - what they are feeling/saying. Walk with them holding their hand on this journey rather than pulling them faster than they are ready to go or holding them back.
- 2) Support bereaved persons in their grief - loneliness is incredible. Being with them is more important than saying or doing anything.
- 3) Allow the pain and hurt to be felt and expressed - don't try to smile it away, explain it away or pray it away. Healing can only come as the pain is felt, expressed and lived through. We do an injustice if we try to take the pain away.
- 4) Help bereaved understand that their feelings are normal and part of loss.
- 5) Allow their story to be told over and over. Ask questions about the person who died - about his/her life, illness and death; look at photos and mementos.
- 6) Go on the journey with bereaved with no map - the map has been destroyed. Journey along side of them rather than pushing or pulling them.
- 7) When someone we love dies, part of ourselves dies as well. People we love reflect ourselves back to us and with their death, the mirror is broken. Our mirror is broken - our image is now different. Part of grieving is rebuilding our self-image.
- 8) Each loss is a loss of self and, a loss of part of our meaning and reason for living - grieving is the process of finding new meanings, new reasons for living. You can help this process through listening, encouraging, supporting, being there, allowing pain, the tears, and the rebuilding.

## Busy Bees!!



Dorothy Toney  
Thrift Shop Manager



Bzzzzzzzzzz! Do you hear that? It's the new BUZZ around the Thrift Shop. We have a new calendar of daily sales promotions. Something different will be on sale everyday! Here are the highlights:

- Seniors (60 or better): 15% off Tuesdays
- Active duty and retired military: 15% off Fridays
- 50% off entire store Saturday
- Full Moon Sale: 10% off purple

- tagged clothing and accessories
- Special Birthday Discount on your birthday
- Variety of 50% off sales on other days of the month

Items with a purple tag are excluded from the sales with the exception of the Full Moon Sale, which is specifically for the purple-tagged clothing and accessories. Remember that sale only happens once a month!

Each month, the sales calendar will

be posted on our website at [www.hospiceofyuma.com](http://www.hospiceofyuma.com). Just click on the Thrift Shop button to view and print the current calendar. Don't wait too long to check it out. You don't want this opportunity to BUZZ you by!



*“Extraordinary things are accomplished by a healing heart.”*

*– Kirsti A. Dyer, MD, MS*

## The Lost Art of Writing Condolence Letters

We have all faced the awkwardness of losing a friend or hearing that someone we knew passed away and wondered what we should do. “What can I say? How can I help support the surviving family members and let them know that I share in their grief and that I am thinking of them?”

A sympathy or condolence note can be a great source of comfort to someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one. It's a sincere way of letting that person know that they are in your thoughts as they go through the difficult process of grief and mourning.

Finding the right words to say isn't always a simple task, but it's one that is worth your time and energy. Anyone can pick up a mass-produced condolence card from their local card shop or drug store. That's a nice gesture, but writing words of sympathy from your heart that

are specific to the grieving person will be more treasured. These personal and heartfelt words of condolence serve as a tribute to the deceased and words of comfort to the bereaved.

A letter of sympathy, or condolence, should be written and sent promptly. A good guideline is within the first two weeks following the loss. Hand write the letter on stationery rather than typing and printing from a computer. If you want to use a store bought card, write a personal note on stationery and tuck it inside the card.

Write the letter in your own voice, meaning the way you would normally speak to the person. There is no reason to get too fancy and try to come up with a poem or verse unless that is how you normally speak or unless you're a writer by profession.

Years ago I read an article that gave

the following seven components you may want to include in your letter:

1. Acknowledge the loss and refer to the deceased by name.
2. Express your sympathy.
3. Note any special qualities of the deceased that come to mind.
4. Include your favorite memory of the deceased.
5. Remind the bereaved of their personal strengths or special qualities.
6. Offer help, but make sure it is a specific offer. Instead of 'Let me know if I can help with anything at all,' try something like, 'I know that Phil took you to church every Sunday. Let me take over duty for a while.'
7. End the letter with a thoughtful word, a hope, a wish, or expression of sympathy.

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