



Brattleboro Area Hospice Newsletter

December 2008

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
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POEM FOR THE SOLSTICE



You must not permit the distraction of sorrow
to blind your heart to gratitude,
Nor lose your way in the maze of grief
with barriers of despair at every turn,
Nor listen to the question, "Why?",
the insidious serpent who attends your thoughts.

You must allow that slim, golden thread of hope
to lead you from tangled darkness into light.
Bathe yourself in that light of hope.
That will open your heart once more
to a celebration of being, of greeting, of praise.

Margaret Dale Barrant

RACHEL COHEN-ROTTENBERG: A WOMAN OF SELFLESS SERVICE

An Experienced Goods Thrift Shop Profile

By Dana Renault, Experienced Goods Volunteer Coordinator

I remember distinctly the first time I interacted with Rachel (Ra-He'l'). It was in May, several months before I began working here, and only days before my wedding. I was in town pulling together the last items needed for the big celebration. While I cannot recall which specific item I was seeking here at Experienced Goods, I clearly recall Rachel's response when I asked her, with overtones of intensity and undertones of panic, "Do you have any (vitaly important Item X)?" She listened, and thought, and helped me to search high and low, and while whatever-it-was-I-supposedly-needed did not turn up, she dedicated herself completely to the service of fulfilling my request and desire until I was willing to let it go. I felt gratified, even satisfied, and left the shop content. The wedding proceeded with its own sparkling perfection, and Item X is long forgotten.

This quality makes a profound impression on me—the quality of embodying selfless service, and this is what Rachel brings to Experienced Goods.

When Rachel moved to Brattleboro with her husband Bob and 15-year-old daughter Ashlynn this past March, she looked for a place to offer her time and energy. Rachel likes to be helpful, and knows, through mothering foremost, that small efforts can make a big difference. In April Rachel began volunteering at the shop three afternoons a week, and has been a dedicated shop hand ever since. "I love thrift stores, particularly this one. It's welcoming, has nice atmosphere, and everyone is so friendly... And this work definitely keeps me on my feet!"

Rachel's presence is subtle, light. She comes and goes without fanfare, and in her work she is quiet and quick – she buzzes about like a small bee in a colorful headscarf, long skirt, and sneakers. She is efficient, effective, and present – as present with a rack of neckties as with a customer in need.

Last winter, on their small family farm in western Massachusetts where she had home-schooled

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Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg, continued

Ashlynn for eight years, Rachel felt isolated, so the family picked up and moved to downtown Brattleboro. It is yet a new stage of life here, and it seems to suit them, as they have just closed on a house a five minute walk from town. Ashlynn will be sixteen in December and attends BUHS. Rachel is

soaking up these last few years with her daughter living at home. While she enjoyed the rural, home-schooling years, seeing her daughter becoming an independent young person, growing into her own skin, she says, "This stage is the best... but each stage is the best! I love being a mom."

Remembering Mr. B

My friend Helen called recently to share with me that her father had died in October. He died of ALS which had come on uncharacteristically hard and fast a few years ago when he was in his late 70's. One day he was up and about and the next he was unable to rise from a nap on the couch. He was able to stay at home with round the clock care from his wife and paid caregivers until near the end when the disease process became too much to contain.

Helen shared with me that in the last weeks of her father's life, the people on his case who were with hospice had been very helpful. She told about one doctor who sat patiently near her dad and asked him if he was fearful of dying. This doctor was then able to gently convey to Helen's mother that the time had come to let her dear husband go. It took a few days for the news to settle in her heart and her mind, but eventually she was able to tell her children that he was not going to rally and that they should gather and be together for his last days.

Helen relayed what a blessing it had been to have the wisdom of the hospice staff to alert her and her family to all that would likely happen when life support was removed and death approached and occurred.

As I listened to Helen, I was reminded of the importance of doing just that. I had quickly started down a road of self-berating regret that I had not been more in touch since summer to know of the changes going on for the family, but then I realized that at this moment, weeks after her dad's death, what Helen needed was a chance to talk to someone who would listen. I could do that.

As I have thought about Helen's father, I remember an active and intelligent man. Though hearing of his death was sad, I was comforted to know of the dignity with which his life ended. Last night Helen's dad was in my dream. He embraced me heartily. It was good to see him.

Bettina

From Ryan

Hello All-

Muriel Wolf and I have begun our collaborative effort as Hospice Care Coordinators and it feels very positive. On the 12th of November Muriel and I met with five volunteers at an inaugural Volunteer Gathering and engaged in a lively conversation. We are enthusiastic and optimistic that this structure for strengthening our connections to volunteers will be invaluable in our efforts to make good matches of clients and volunteers. A very important goal in this is to meet volunteers we have not yet met, and also to have discussions regarding how we can best support volunteers and partner most effectively in this privileged work. I want to emphasize these gatherings are about building and deepening our relationships through sharing our

experiences. We do not see them as primarily educational, rather process oriented. At our meeting on the 12th we discussed no less than thirteen various aspects of our work we consider significant. Please come join us in December (see the calendar) to continue and to expand this discussion. We ask that you call Jennifer at the office to register as we are capping attendance at ten volunteers, and please do tell a volunteer colleague about these gatherings as not everyone has time to read this newsletter. Thanks very much and we look forward to seeing everyone; especially people we have yet to meet.

With Appreciation,
Ryan

From Muriel

With pleasure and excitement I joined the Hospice staff in October, as a new part-time Patient Care Coordinator, after volunteering here for fifteen years. Some of you may know my name from the Writing Support Group I facilitated here for bereaved clients, from 2002 until this past summer. Prior to 2002 I was primarily a patient care volunteer, and had some extraordinary experiences accompanying people young and old on their journey toward death. In 2001 I took a year off to accompany my mother on her journey, living with her in her apartment in New York and having my first experience with a for-profit hospice. I returned here with a newfound appreciation for our community approach and amazing pool of devoted volunteers.

Working alongside Ryan Murphy, I'll be spending much of my time during my first weeks

and months here getting to know our Patient Care Volunteers, first through our data bank, and then over the telephone and in person. Ryan and I are taking the occasion of my arrival as an opportunity to meet as many of you as we can. The better we know you, the more successfully we can match you up with our clients, whose needs are widely varied, and assure that this tender, rewarding, and sometimes challenging relationship works smoothly and is fulfilling for all concerned. (This seems the perfect place to remind Volunteers of our in-service meeting-and-greeting gatherings, mentioned in last month's and this newsletter. Please see the Calendar section for dates and times.) I look forward to all aspects of my work here, in a position I have secretly coveted for a long time!

Muriel Wolf, Extension 101

A Christmas Treat

Have you seen the fabulous collection of nativities at the home of Shirley Squires in Guilford? It has grown to over 1000 nativity sets that come from all over the world and are made of a variety of materials. To accommodate Shirley's ever expanding collection, her son, Tim Squires of Guilford, built her a brand new display room. It's a wonderland of lights and nativities. Shirley's nativities will be on display from December 5, 2008 to January 31, 2009. Please call 254-2696 to make an appointment to visit. If you have never been to Shirley's, make this a must-do on your Christmas list. If you have been there, you know what a treat is in store for you when you come to visit! Even if you have been there before, there is always something new to see. Shirley has been collecting for 15 years and has opened her home to the public for 8 years.

Congratulations to New Volunteers

This fall 9 new volunteers completed the 33 hour training Patient Care Training and most will be joining BAH as active volunteers. We are pleased to welcome them. They are: MaryAnn Abney of Brattleboro, Rick Beach of Walpole, Rosa Blaushild of Brattleboro, Christina Ceglia of Putney, James Fein of South Newfane, Ann Fielder of Brattleboro, Amir Flesher of Brattleboro, Rich Hiler of Guilford, and Susan Jacobowitz of Brattleboro. Congratulations to all!

“My Mother, 20 years, and peace”

Volunteers at the Hospice Memorial Garden

Joan Benneyan has been involved with the Hospice garden for over 10 years. A year ago she was invited to be the first garden board liaison. Throughout the year we have been digging, planting, shoveling and e-mailing a lot. Joan has been consistently cheerful, enthusiastic and dedicated to the Hospice garden. There are so many places to volunteer in town. I asked Joan and the others why they chose to work in the Memorial Garden. Here's what they said;

Joan said that, “ The time I spend working at the Hospice Garden always gives my spirit a good lift. As I weed or plant in the fresh air in the lovely garden space, I seem to slowly regain perspective on the happenings in my own life. I always leave calmer and in a more positive frame of mind. Gardening at Hospice provides me with a special quiet time to remember my mother and loved ones and friends who have died. I have enjoyed working along side other gardeners, sharing a special bond with folks who like to dig in the earth, and enjoy creating a beautiful space for all to enjoy. ”

Indeed Joan has helped create a “beautiful space.” She planted the maple tree in memory of her mother. It gives us the much appreciated shade we need from the summer sun and a place for shade loving plants.

Chris Pratt also remembers his mother, “ my mother died in a Hospice in the Burlington area and they were wonderful.” Chris too has been wonderful, digging many holes in hard sod. He also donated the water barrel and hose.

Another long time volunteer showed up at almost every work session saying, “I'm not much of a gardener.” Ann Switzer has been involved with Hospice for 20 years ! She's been a patient care volunteer and is now on the board and garden committee. She said, “ ... my response to your request has been interesting to contemplate. I am not much of a gardener as you know, so why am I helping in the garden? I guess just because. I have been a volunteer for over 20 years, working mostly with clients, but when the opportunity came along to serve on the

Board, I thought it would be a good thing. Helping out in the garden in a limited way is also just another way for me to be involved.”

How lovely to think of volunteering as an “opportunity.” Ann is a happy, willing presence that tends to the details of snipping spent flowers, watering and bringing contagious smiling energy to her work.

Lee Ha, a new, ambitious helper this year collected wooden pallets and helped make the compost bins. She also spotted a stack of 5 gal. buckets and picked them up for us. She's been a steady hands-on person who calmly shares her time with Hospice. “Peace,” she said, “ I find a personal kind of peace volunteering in the Hospice Garden. Every plant has been planted with love and tenderness by someone's caring hands. I feel genuinely privileged to work in the garden, to weed, plant and dig my hands into the soil surrounding these special plants. As the garden grows throughout the spring and summer, reminding me that life continues and the memories of our loved ones continue to live in our hearts. The garden brings me all this and more, feelings I don't find at any other volunteer work I've done.”

There are many other kind gardeners who have helped out who chose not to go public. To those I know, and those I haven't met, on behalf of Hospice I thank everyone for their participation whether it has been for one hour or for many years.

As 2008 closes, may you be blessed with many peaceful opportunities in 2009.

Cheers,
Frances

ONENESS

The moment I die,
I will try to come back to you
As quickly as possible.
I promise it will not take long.
Isn't it true
I am already with you,
As I die each moment?
I come back to you in every moment.
Just look,
Feel my presence.
If you want to cry,
Please cry.
And know
That I will cry with you.
The tears you shed
Will heal us both.
Your tears are mine.
The earth I tread this morning
Transcends history.
Spring and Winter are both present
in the moment.
The young leaf and the dead leaf are really one.
My feet touch deathlessness,
And my feet are yours.
Walk with me now.
Let us enter the dimension of oneness
And see the cherry tree blossom in Winter.
Why should we talk about death?
I don't need to die
To be back with you.
~ Thich Nhat Hanh



"Have you ever noticed a tree standing naked against the sky,
How beautiful it is?
All its branches are outlined, and in its nakedness
There is a poem, there is a song.
Every leaf is gone and it is waiting for the spring.
When the spring comes, it again fills the tree with
The music of many leaves,
Which in due season fall and are blown away.
And this is the way of life."
~ Krishnamurti

Brattleboro Area Hospice

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Ellen Graham
Eric Morgan
Assistant Store Managers
Christopher John
Imelda Reilly
Karen Zamojski
Store Assistants

Calendar

December 1, 6:00-8:00 pm. Reiki Circle for practice and questions, for hospice volunteers. Downstairs kitchen, Hospice Office. Contact Rebecca Rueter 254-6232 for questions or more information.

December 3 & 17, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa (x108) to register.

December 4 & 18, 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa (x108) to register.

December 5. Volunteer Report Forms due.

December 8, Monday, 5:30-7:00 pm. Coping with the Holidays Support Meeting. Cheryl Richards facilitator. Open to any adult who has experienced a death loss.

December 10, 12-1:30 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

December 13, Saturday, 10 am-12 noon. Second Saturdays. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman.

December 15, Monday, 5:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting, Hospice Office.

December 17, 5:30-7:00 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

December 25 & January 1, Hospice Office closed.

December 25-January 1, Experienced Goods Thrift Shop closed; reopens Friday, January 2, 2009.

Community Services of Remembrance

December 5, Friday, 7 pm. Mass in Remembrance of a Child, celebrated by the Rev. Rich O'Donnell.. St. Michael's R.C. Church in Brattleboro. For anyone who has lost a child through death, adoption, miscarriage, or abortion. For details, call Shirley Squires at 254-2696, Arlene K. at 254 8550 or Betty F. at 387-4214.

December 9, Tuesday, 7 pm. Atamaniuk Funeral Home's 12th annual Memorial Service. At the VFW Hall on Black Mountain Rd. Call Michael Atamaniuk at 254-8183 to make reservations.

December 13, Saturday, 11 am. Hanson-Walbridge Funeral Home Ecumenical Memorial Service at the Sacred Heart Saint Francis de Sales Church on Main St. in Bennington. Call 442-4329 for information.

December 14, Sunday, 7 pm. Worldwide Candle Lighting, Hospice Memorial Garden at Living Memorial Park. Sponsored by Compassionate Friends, a national organization supporting bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. Call Ami Maglin at 257-4818 or Melissa at 257-0775 x 108.

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