



Brattleboro Area Hospice Newsletter

July 2009

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
802-257-0775 • E-mail: brattleborohospice@myfairpoint.net

If You Knew

What if you knew you'd be the last
to touch someone?
If you were taking tickets, for example,
at the theater, tearing them,
giving back the ragged stubs,
you might take care to touch that palm,
brush your fingertips
along the life line's crease.

When a man pulls his wheeled suitcase
too slowly through the airport, when
the car in front of me doesn't signal,
when the clerk at the pharmacy
won't say Thank you, I don't remember
they're going to die.

A friend told me she'd been with her aunt.
They'd just had lunch and the waiter,
a young gay man with plum black eyes,
joked as he served the coffee, kissed
her aunt's powdered cheek when they left.
Then they walked a half a block and her aunt
dropped dead on the sidewalk.

How close does the dragon's spume
have to come? How wide does the crack
in heaven have to split?
What would people look like
if we could see them as they are,
soaked in honey, stung and swollen,
reckless, pinned against time?

~ Ellen Bass

Volunteer Profile: Hilly Van Loon, *Bien Dans Sa Peau*

By Dana, Shop Volunteer Coordinator

Hilly Van Loon has volunteered at Experienced Goods for nearly ten years. Perhaps this is why she seems so at home behind the register on alternate Friday mornings. Or perhaps the shop reminds Hilly of her five-year-old granddaughter Lilly and their ritual visits to the children's section in search of doll clothes and games. Or perhaps it is that Hilly is *bien dans sa peau*, or "good in her skin," and it shows. Hilly is simply authentic, and what a relief to find this quality in another. When the line is long and I stand behind the counter to help her bag, I feel inspired to knock it down a notch and "just be myself."

Hilly came to Experienced Goods in 2000, shortly after retiring from twenty-five years at Marlboro College, the last ten as Alumni Director. Hilly fosters a "long-term and warm relationship" with the college, beginning in 1958 as one of only 56 students. "It was like a big family," Hilly remembers. "It was a

turning point where I learned to grow up and be on my own." Hilly met her husband there, and after moving to Cambridge, to Connecticut and then to upstate New York, birthing three children along the way, they all moved back to Vermont, in part to reconnect with the college. By the time her children were in school, Hilly had begun working in the alumni office.

Retiring meant leaving both the camaraderie of relationships built over decades and the welcome challenges of her work. "It was hard!" Hilly inquired at Experienced Goods to become a volunteer. She started with organizing the quarter shelf – every day, "because I wanted to be around people," Hilly smiles.

It appears that nine years later, Hilly has achieved balance and renewed vigor in this stage of life. Extra time afforded her two years to care for Lilly three days a week. Hilly has also become a freelance

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Hilly van Loon, continued

copy editor. While this is solitary work, she is satisfied to have learned a new skill, to work in detail, and to learn from the manuscripts that come her way.

Hilly has newfound passion in gardening, flower gardens and vegetable gardens that could feed her and her husband year round, through storage and preserving. Hilly has sung with the Brattleboro Concert Choir since 1973, and plays the piano. She is also a writer, has been part of a writing group for fifteen years and is currently working on a memoir.

Why did she choose Experienced Goods to focus her quiet commitment all these years? "I love old stuff – old kitchen things, bowls, jars. I was a dealer – I had a booth at the Black Mountain Antique Center. And I love seeing how happy people are when they find stuff – like Eve with all her stories." She also has great respect for the hospice organization, and used hospice services for her mother.

Thank you, Hilly for your grounded, good-natured, committed presence!

Annual Appeal Matching Grant

From Greg, Development Director

The annual appeal is in full swing. Letters were sent out in June following the mailing of the annual report. If you've already sent in a donation, thank you. If you haven't yet responded, there is still time to increase the value of your hospice contribution.

We have a generous matching grant of \$5,000 for new and increased donations to the annual appeal. This means that if you didn't give in 2008 your entire gift for this year will be matched. If you give more this year than you did in 2008, every additional dollar you give will be matched. It's a great way to increase the value of your donation to hospice.

Thank you to the donors, staff and board members who created this matching grant. And, thank you for all you do for hospice.

My Experience with a Vigil Client

It was a busy week, it seemed. I was being nudged by several people to become involved in their special charity or program. Somehow I received a call from Ryan regarding a vigil client. I was a bit hesitant. On the other hand, this kind of work was very dear to my heart. An early morning shift seemed to be the best choice.

The nursing home hallways were rather quiet. As I made my way to the floor I introduced myself to the staff. The room itself felt very peaceful. There were notes from the daughter thanking those who would be with her mother this day. She also left a phone number where she could be reached. Also she stated it was ok to tell her mother that she would be by

later in the day.

There was a striking resemblance to my mother in the late stages of her life after having a stroke. This was awesome. Later that day I received a phone call telling me our client had died peacefully with her daughter at her side. What a gift I had been given that morning.

Our client loved music. There was a handwritten note by her basket of tapes: "In the event that I know that I am dying, I want you to play songs from the composers I have listed here. Don't play the same ones over and over, or have music playing all the time."

Respectfully shared with you all,
Gladys Clemens, Hospice volunteer

Death and Dying for Beginners

Do you know someone who has expressed interest in taking the volunteer training but has not because they do not have the time to volunteer? This summer, Bettina will offer a four week class for those wishing to explore issues connected to death and dying. The curriculum will include material used in the training. The class will provide opportunities for participants to explore their own attitudes and feelings

about death and dying, as well as to learn about ways to support a friend or neighbor during a time of loss.

The class will meet on Wednesday mornings July 8, 15, 22 and 29 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm at BAH, 191 Canal Street. Class size is limited to 10 and registration is required. For questions or to register please call Bettina at Brattleboro Area Hospice, 257 -0775 x 102.

From Elizabeth, Bereavement Care Coordinator

A pleasing balance of sun and clouds made June 7 a fine-weather day for our 12th Annual Memorial Planting Service at the Hospice Garden at Living Memorial Park. About seventy people gathered for planting, singing, and remembrance of loved ones who have died. The beautiful music that wove the service together was provided by Lerna who angelically accompanied the planting on hammered dulcimer and by the heart-melting Hallowell singers.

In the weeks preceding the service, Penfield Chester and gardening volunteers Ann and Doug Switzer, Cheryl Wilfong, Kathy Leo, Lerna, Greg McAllister, and Alice McKusick tended the garden creating a lovely setting for our service. Natalie Donovan contacted nurseries for plant donations that several volunteers transported to the garden; others baked and brought a variety of tasty refreshments and drinks. Marilyn Buhlmann again assisted at the Second Saturdays' program in May with creating Prayer-Remembrance flags that now wave colorfully over the garden patio.

Many volunteers contributed time and talents on the day of the service: Ann Switzer, Cheryl Wilfong, Carolyn Kasper, Penfield Chester and Kathy Leo set up beforehand or assisted during the service as did Greg Moschetti and Connie Baxter. Lynn Martin, Mike Welch, Mary Quinn and Jane Buckingham arranged the refreshment tables before the service and served up the cookies, fruit and drinks afterwards. We are so grateful for all the volunteers who participated: without you the garden and garden service would not exist!

The garden in all its blooming splendor is available for visits, enjoyment, reflection, picnics, and sharing with clients, friends and family throughout the growing season.

And if you'd like to weed, mulch or water, Penfield can be found working in the garden most Mondays; check the Calendar on the back page for "official" garden workdays, or stop by when the timing is right for you.



2009 Memorial Garden Service

Looking for Former Volunteers and Staff From Bettina, Hospice Volunteer and Education Coordinator

This year Brattleboro Area Hospice will celebrate thirty years of service to the community. Yes, we began in 1979 when Jimmy Carter was president, Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister of the U.K. and Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize. First class postage was fifteen cents, *Saturday Night Fever* was the album of the year and *The Deer Hunter* won the academy award for best picture.

Since its beginning, BAH has undergone numerous changes including the location and size of the office and the shop, the establishment and growth of the Memorial Garden, and the development of trainings and programs. As I sit here and look through thirty years of volunteer names, I am struck by how many of those volunteers are still active today. However, there are also many people once connected to BAH with whom we have lost touch.

On September 1, BAH will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary with a dessert party at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. The evening will be a time to celebrate and to reminisce, and in order to accomplish both those goals we are trying to gather as many people as we can who have worked or volunteered at BAH over that time. So, if you know of someone who you think should be there, please encourage them to contact us by phone or by e-mail so that we can include them in this event. They can also go to Experienced Goods and leave their information at the designated area there. We do believe that more will lead to merrier, so mark your calendar and pass the word.

Brattleboro Area Hospice

Board of Directors

Karen Abel
Connie Baxter
Judy Carpenter
Penfield Chester
Co-President
Victoria Collins
Secretary
Tim Gerdes
Treasurer
Greg McAllister
Kris McDermet
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Greg Moschetti
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Hospice Office

Bettina Berg
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Education Coordinator*
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Ryan Murphy
Hospice Care Coordinator
Susan Parris
Executive Director
Elizabeth Evans Pittman
Bereavement Care Coordinator
Muriel Wolf
Hospice Care Coordinator

Experienced Goods Thrift Shop

Gemma Champoli
Store Manager
Dana Renault
*Shop Volunteer
Coordinator*
Hannah Curtin
Ellen Graham
Eric Morgan
Assistant Store Managers
Christopher John
Imelda Reilly
Karen Zamojski
Store Assistants

Calendar

July 3. Volunteer Report Forms due.

July 6 & 20, Mondays, 2-4 pm. Hospice Memorial Garden Workday. Bring drinking water and hand tools.

July 8, 15, 22, & 29, Wednesdays, 5:30-7:30 pm. Healing through Writing Group. Facilitated by Letitia Trent. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

July 8, 12-1:30 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

July 8 & 22, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

July 9 & 23, 2nd & 4th Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

July 20, 5:30-7:30 pm. Board of Directors meeting, Hospice Office.

July 22, 5:30-7:00 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

July 24, 27, & 28. Creative Ways to Deal with Grief. 3-Day Photography-Book making Workshop for Teens. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider.

Save the date: Tuesday, September 1st. Thirtieth Anniversary party at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center.

All of our services are free because of you!

We rely on donations from the community to keep our services free of charge. Help support our work by sending a donation to: Brattleboro Area Hospice, 191 Canal Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301. Thank you!

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