



Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter*

March 2011

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

NO BIG ANSWER

If logic tells us that life is a meaningless accident, says Ecclesiastes at the end of his journey, don't give up on life. Give up on logic. Listen to that voice inside you which prompted you to ask the question in the first place. If logic tells you that in the long run, nothing makes a difference because we all die and disappear, then don't live in the long run. Instead of brooding over the fact that nothing lasts, accept that as one of the truths of life, and learn to find meaning and purpose in the transitory, in the joys that fade. Learn to savor the moment, even if it does not last forever. Moments of our lives can be eternal without being everlasting. Can you stop and close your eyes and remember something that happened for only a moment or two many years ago? It may have been the view of spectacular landscape, or a conversation that made you feel loved and appreciated. In a sense it did not last very long at all, but in another sense it has lasted all those years and is still going on.

When we stop searching for the Great Answer, the Immortal Deed which will give our lives ongoing meaning, and instead concentrate on filling our individual days with moments that gratify us, then we will find the only possible answer to the question, 'What is life about?'

It is not about writing great books, amassing great wealth, achieving great power.

It is about loving and being loved. It is about enjoying your food and sitting in the sun rather than rushing through lunch and hurrying back to the office. It is about savoring the beauty of the moments that don't last, the sunsets, the leaves turning color, the rare moments of true human connection. It is about savoring them rather than missing out on them because we are too busy and they will not hold still until we get around to them.



The author of Ecclesiastes spent most of his life looking for the Grand Solution, the Big Answer to the Big Question, only to learn after wasting many years that trying to find one Big Answer to the problem of living is like trying to eat one Big Meal so that you will never have to worry about being hungry again. When we come to that stage when we are less able to accomplish and more able to enjoy, we will have attained the wisdom that Ecclesiastes finally found.

~ Harold Kushner ~

Brattleboro Area Hospice is a non-profit, community supported, United Way agency.



Dear BAH Community,

With very mixed feelings I am leaving after only 9 months. The sad news is leaving the BAH team - a deeply caring group of people, indeed among the "best of the best" with whom I've worked through the years. Too, I have been touched by the care and commitment of the bereavement volunteers for folks in need of a caring presence. The good news is that Muriel Wolf, one of the current Hospice Care Coordinators, will move into the position of Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator. I am so very pleased -- Muriel brings years of hospice experience to this role. I will move on to Hospice of Franklin County in Greenfield, MA where I'll join the team as a spiritual counselor. It's my local hospice, and I've been involved with them in many ways through the years.

I am ever so grateful to have been on board here at BAH. Thank you.

Blessings to all,
Winnie

A Note from Muriel

As some of you already know, at the end of February I entered a new position at Hospice. My new 'title' is Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator, and in this position I am overseeing the Bereavement Volunteers and their assignments, as did my predecessors Melissa and Winnie. I will miss many aspects of my former position, most of all the large corps of dedicated volunteers I've so enjoyed working with and getting to know. However I must also say that in working with bereavement clients, I am entering into the core of my heart's work. In 1995, I took the first Bereavement Training that was offered, happily settling myself under the wing of Elizabeth Pittman, with whom I had taken the Hospice Care Training two years earlier. With Elizabeth as my wise mentor, I began to see bereavement clients almost immediately, and in 2002, following the death of my mother, I decided to focus all my volunteering efforts on bereavement clients, and inaugurated a writing support group that continued for the next seven years. All of the work I am fortunate enough to do for Hospice, whether as a volunteer or on staff, is the privilege of a lifetime. I am especially fortunate in this new opportunity to work closely with Elizabeth; to

engage with people whose loss is profound, and find those places inside myself that can be of service to them; and to encourage you to become a Bereavement Volunteer, if you feel, as I do, the immense gratification and gift in doing this work. I want to thank all of those volunteers, clients, and family members I've worked with these past two-plus years, for the gift of our shared experience.

I am also pleased to let you know that Cheryl Richards, whom many of you know, is now the new Hospice Care Coordinator alongside Ryan. Interestingly, she held Ryan's position ten years ago, and has done consulting and counseling work for Hospice in the intervening years. I can't imagine a more caring or knowledgeable person to take this role, and for those of you who don't yet know her, there is a treat in store for you. Many of you will be hearing from her directly as she settles in.

My best to all of you. May the oncoming spring bring light and lightness your way.

Muriel

**MARCH IN-SERVICE:
WORKSHOP WITH ARTIST AND VOLUNTEER HELEN HAWES**
Saturday, March 19, 1:00–4:00 PM
Helen Hawes’s studio – 183 Bear Hill, West Dummerston

Helen states that, as unlikely as it sounds, dying is a creative process. She goes on to say, “When the artist leaves this playground [the studio] or the dying leaves this world, the only thing he takes with him is the ripple effect of the trails he has made in the unseen reality, the web of aliveness.”

On Saturday afternoon, March 19, Helen is offering a very special three hour workshop in which participants will have the opportunity to work with her and other BAH volunteers and staff to explore the corresponding processes between creativity and dying.

Art experience is not necessary. What is constructive is a willingness to consider that in both death and creativity there is no right or wrong, that conscious intent and unconscious intent are of equal value, and that both creativity and dying are about process and not product. All materials will be provided. Helen would welcome anyone who could help with set up and/or clean up.

To RSVP for this workshop and for directions, please call or e-mail Bettina at 257-0775 x 102 or bettinahospice@myfairpoint.net.

JOURNEY TO THE SACRED MOUNTAINS

Hospice volunteer Flynn Johnson has written a remarkable book titled *Journey to the Sacred Mountains*. It tells the Sioux story of Jumping Mouse’s quest for the Sacred Mountains, his search for the sacred center of life including the identity of who one really is. We travel with Jumping Mouse on this transformative journey through encounters with Frog, Old Mouse, Buffalo, Wolf, Eagle and others, each showing Jumping Mouse and us the way forward and onward. In and through this story the wisdom of Native American spirituality, Buddhism, and depth psychology blend and come together in imaginative, insightful, and pointed ways.

I found this book truly amazing, one that speaks to me in a host of ways as a person and as a Hospice volunteer. Solid in content and beautifully written, it’s a book that I will be re-reading and thinking about for some time.

A group is being formed to read and discuss the book in 3-4 gatherings in March and April. Contact Bill at 257-0233 or elysian2@sover.net if you’re interested in participating or want to know more about the group. Meeting times will be decided by participants.

Journey to the Sacred Mountains is available in paperback at local bookstores for \$15.95. The publisher is Findhorn Press.

~ Bill Schmidt, Hospice Care Volunteer

A Note

Life is the only way
to get covered in leaves,
catch your breath on the sand,
rise on wings;

to be a dog,
or stroke its warm fur;

to tell pain
from everything it's not;

to squeeze inside events,
dawdle in views,
to seek the least of all possible mistakes.

An extraordinary chance
to remember for a moment
a conversation held
with the lamp switched off;

and if only once
to stumble upon a stone,
end up soaked in one downpour or another,

mislay your keys in the grass;
and to follow a spark on the wind
with your eyes;
and to keep on not knowing
something important.

~ Wislawa Szymborska ~

ATTENTION SHOP VOLUNTEERS!

Experienced Goods would like to invite you to contribute to Experienced Cooks, a cookbook of compiled recipes from the Experienced Goods Family.

Have a favorite recipe? Know a great addition to a special diet (i.e. glucose free or vegetarian)? Want to share one (or two) with the Experienced Goods Team? Do you have a great story about that recipe or about food in general? Share that too! We're planning on getting a cookbook together to share our favorite recipes with each other, bring your contribution on down to the Flat Street shop to Sarah by March 15th if you'd like to participate!

(Save the Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2011 5:30–6:30pm for Experienced Goods' Shop Volunteer Appreciation Party at the Flat Street Shop!)

LIVING WITH GRIEF®: SPIRITUALITY AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

Wednesday, April 13, 1:30- 5:00 PM

Marlboro College Graduate Center, 28 Vernon St. (Rte 142 South), Brattleboro

HFA's 2011 Teleconference Spirituality and End-of-Life Care, will underline differences between spirituality and religion, while also addressing spirituality during illness, death and grief. Additionally it will consider spiritual assessment and empowerment, as well as life review.

Doors open at 1:00 and light refreshments will be served. The program starts promptly at 1:30 and, at 4:00 a panel of local professionals will comment and take questions.

This program is free and open to the public. The Graduate Center is located on the second floor of the Technology Center next to the Brattleboro Art Museum. As seating is limited, call Brattleboro Area Hospice at 257-0775 to register for this event.

Co-sponsored by
Brattleboro Area Hospice and Marlboro College Graduate Center

A CURE FOR CABIN FEVER

By Ellen Graham

As we enter March, the days grow longer and lighter and we are occasionally favored by the odd balmy day. However, as seasoned New Englanders, we all know we have a long slog toward true spring. The nights are cold, the wind is blowing and you may be feeling the effects of the dreaded cabin fever. This is a great time to take a vacation, mental or otherwise. For those unable to escape to the lands of beaches and blender drinks, I prescribe activity.

We are fortunate to live in an area that offers plenty of diversion, no matter the season. If your days keep you busy, consider making a date with the arts in the evening or on the weekend. If you are interested in live music, theater, film, puppetry or circus performance, it's all available! If you are looking for a little more, classes of all kind are available. Revisit an old interest or explore a new one. Another option to defeat the winter doldrums is get right out in it! Physical activity can



*2010 service of Remembrance, Hospice Memorial Garden,
Photo by Elizabeth Ungerleider*

improve your mood and help you appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds us, no matter the season. I recommend the Retreat trail system, a great resource in the Brattleboro area. Accessible from solar hill and downtown, this network of trails is the ideal place for snowshoeing, cross country skiing and winter hiking.

One of my favorite late winter activities is, of course, daydreaming about spring. Seed catalogs are on the way, and the thought of digging in the earth, planting new seeds and, yes, even weeding fill me with joy. Brattleboro

Area Hospice offers a unique opportunity for green thumbed volunteers in the form of the Hospice Garden. I spoke with Elizabeth Pittman, Bereavement Care Coordinator, about the volunteer opportunities available in the garden. She shared with me the wide range of options available for those who are interested in lending a hand with this great project. Garden volunteers are not required to make a set time commitment, making this a great "gateway" opportunity. If you know someone who is interested in helping the organization, but unable to commit the time required of a hospice, bereavement or shop volunteer, this could be a fulfilling way to get involved! For those who enjoy working in a group or who would be more comfortable with a bit of direction, there will be set dates and times for both one time and ongoing maintenance projects. For more experienced gardeners, who might enjoy working alone or with a friend, the option is available to "adopt" an area of the garden to care for. Whether you prefer to work alone in meditative silence or chatting with a companion, your experience can be tailored to your needs. Please contact Elizabeth at (802) 257 0775 ex 104, for more information.

Some lucky folks, of course, are blissfully untroubled by cold, wet and cloudy being the realities of life as we know it. Befriend them, and learn their secrets. To the rest of us mortals, I say, keep on trucking. Spring will come again, I'm sure of it!

Brattleboro Area Hospice

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Calendar

March 2 & 16, Wednesdays, 5:30–7 pm. Suicide Loss Support Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month facilitated by Andrea Edwards. This group is co-sponsored by The Samaritans, Inc. Visit their website at www.samaritansnh.org. Call Elizabeth at 257-0775 x 104 to register.

March 4. Volunteer Report Forms due.

March 4–25, Fridays, 9–10:30 am. Mourning Pages: A 4-Week Writing Group for Adults facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman. Call Elizabeth at 257-0775 x 104 to register.

March 9 & 23, Wednesdays, 5:00–6:30 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Elizabeth at 257-0775 x 104 to register.

March 14 & 28, Mondays, 6:30–8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group meets the second and fourth Mondays of each month facilitated by Lynn Martin. Call Elizabeth at 257-0775 x 104 to register.

March 19, Saturday, 1pm–4pm. Volunteer In-service. More info in this newsletter.

March 21, Monday, 5:30pm. Board of Directors meeting.

April 13, Wednesday, 1:30–5pm. Living with Grief: Spirituality and End-of-life care. More info in this newsletter.

April 13, Wednesday, 5:30–6:30pm. Experienced Goods' Shop Volunteer Appreciation Party at the Flat Street Shop, more info in the April newsletter.

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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