



# Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter* October 2006

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

## GRACE, GROWTH AND GRATITUDE Hallowell News

When we welcome life's passages, birth and death, into our daily lives, when we are not so distant and removed from these powerful times of transition between worlds, we become more comfortable around them and then of course, more amazed and graced by our living. I believe it is this grace that accounts for the dedication and spirit the Hallowell singers bring to their volunteer work through hospice. Each time I send out a request for singers, either for a small group for a bedside sing or for a larger group for a community event, the Hallowell singers keep showing up. And they show up with their hearts open, ready to embrace life and death each time we are welcomed into the sacred space of dying. This is a low commitment group, I tell them when they first go through their singer/hospice orientation. Yet, during these past three and a half years, I have never had a problem finding singers.

And it seems we always have a lovely blend of voices as well as the perfect soulful energy needed for each different situation we find ourselves in. How does one express gratitude for something like this? And for a community that has welcomed us in ways we could not have imagined when we first tentatively began to offer our singing as another way to bring comfort to the bedsides of the dying.

Beyond the bedside singing, Hallowell continues to grow. We have become a model for other groups around the state of Vermont and will soon cross over the border into Canada. Over the past year, we have offered workshops in Middlebury, Burlington, Montpelier and at the annual statewide conference for Hospice and Palliative Care. In October, we'll give a workshop in St. Johnsbury to help launch two more groups of bedside singers, one in Peacham and one in Littleton. In November, all of these newly formed groups from around the state will meet in Burlington for a day of singing and stories, to share ideas and inspire each other in our work. Our new CD, *Angels Hovering Round*, is now available either through Experienced Goods or can be purchased through our own brand new web site <[www.hallowell-singers.org](http://www.hallowell-singers.org)>. We are pleased to offer another way to reach those who might find comfort in our songs and in the healing they bring. These are the seeds we planted, and continue to plant, taking root and growing, reaching all corners of our state and beyond as this idea of bedside singing finds its way into the world because the time is right and the world is ready.

As we continue to expand and redefine who we are and what our mission is to include teaching workshops, recording a CD, being part of a documentary, we always remind ourselves that at the very core and heart of our ministry is our singing, quietly and reverently, around a bed where a soul is slipping over. Where a family gathers prayerfully, tearfully, gratefully while we sing. Where as soon as our voices open and find each other in harmony over the bed, family members find a place for their grief to rest for just a little while. And hopefully we bring a moment of grace and song, comfort and peace to the soul who is leaving and to those who are staying a little longer.

~Kathy Leo



---

## FROM BETH...

Recently I found myself in a conversation with my brother, playing with the idea and questioning what defines 'a life well lived'. The following day on the way in to work I heard author Anna Quindlan, while being interviewed on the radio, say "On the last day of my life, I want to feel as good about my life as I did on the very best day of my life". I am sure each of us would respond to this in as many ways as there are individuals amongst us. When I reach the end of my days, will I feel I have lived life well? Does activity and contribution define quality? Does connection, relationships, work, creativity? What about play, stillness, quiet, or love?

I wonder how you, reading this, might add to the conversation. If today was your last, would you feel satisfied with your choices, with the life you have lived? Would you have any regrets, things left unsaid or undone? Would you breathe your last breath with a knowing you have lived your life well?

On this note, our agency does what we can in small ways to add to the choices for our community. Here is what we have been up to lately:

~Bettina recently provided a presentation about our organization and Hospice to the First United Methodist Church.

~As part of the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital Wellness program, we facilitated an evening dedicated to the topic: *When a loved one is bedridden; How to be a Caring Companion*.

~The fifth in a series of our free monthly *Caregiver Workshops* will be on October 12, at the Gathering Place from 4:00–5:45pm. The topic for this workshop is Learning to Negotiate the Health Care System. Call us for information and to register.

~September 19<sup>th</sup>, Cheryl Wilfong began a new class at our office, for 6 consecutive Tuesdays from 1:00pm–2:30pm called *The 5 Daily Reflections*. She recommends Larry Rosenberg's book *Living in the*

*Light of Death*, but it is not required reading. If you are interested in attending, please call our office and we will provide you with more information.

~In the last three months, we have served 23 families, providing 47 volunteers. Bettina and I both have begun new volunteer training sessions, one in Brattleboro and one in Wilmington, with a total of 22 new volunteers attending. We are very excited about the response and look forward to working with all of our new volunteers.

As most of you know from our last newsletter, Wren Gore will be leaving our agency this month, on September 29<sup>th</sup>. We know this has been a difficult decision for her and her leaving will be a great loss for all of us. Wren has been a strong presence in our agency, a wonderful and valuable resource, a professional with integrity and gifts I have come to deeply admire. She has welcomed me warmly and allowed my transition to the agency to be as smooth and positive as she could. We will miss her greatly.

I sit writing this after a lovely walk in the woods. At some point as I was enjoying the gorgeous Vermont day, taking in the smells and the quiet, I started to hear a very persistent pecking. Recognizing the sound from my childhood, I stopped to look up, and watched as a woodpecker worked hard, high above the branches, tapping out messages like a telegraph. I became aware, as I so often do, of the incredible shades of green in all the branches above me, as the light poured in from the sun. Closing my eyes, I listened to the rhythm of the woodpecker's drumming, feeling enormous gratitude. Gratitude for the moment, for the earth I stood on, the nature around me, the creatures that walk among me and fly above, my fortune at being able to see and hear this; at all the beauty surrounding me. This always brings me back to my gratitude for each of you, and the knowing we are all in this together.

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Gladys Clemens  
BAH Volunteer since 1996

I was doing Elder Care, and I heard about a training for volunteers through the Health Fair. I didn't take it to necessarily become a volunteer; I was just interested and curious. Then one of the trained Hospice Volunteers came to speak to us and he was so enthusiastic, he inspired me to actually volunteer with Hospice. Why not take advantage of what I learned? ...

I had never been with anyone that died; I didn't

know how it would be. I knew the only way I would know, was to do it. I found out I could do it!..

What I've learned over the years is how well people use the time they have to prepare, to get ready. One woman I worked with literally waited until her granddaughter arrived from Italy. Then she died so peacefully shortly afterwards.

*continued on next page*

---

It's made me think about what I would want, how I wish to die, and the importance of taking care of unfinished business. It's changed my outlook on death; now I see it as simply an extension of life.

Being a volunteer, I feel part of something more important than my day to day activities. I never thought much about this before, and now I want to know as much about it as I can...

A friend asked me to come and sing for him when he was dying. He kept telling people "She sang for me!" like it was the greatest gift. He was so sick himself yet he had along list of people he prayed for everyday. It was so worth while and meant so much

to him; it became something that meant a lot to me. Now I often play music for others at the bedside, and see how helpful and healing music is.

...To be part of assisting a family, allowing them to give their loved one permission to go, easing someone's emotional pain or supporting a loved one by being present for them and with them ; it's a once in a lifetime experience...

BAH is such a strong organization, everyone is so gracious if I am not ready for a case or need to say no, there is no pressure. It's a valuable use of my time and I feel proud to be part of it. What are we here for if not to help others?

## COMINGS AND GOINGS AT EXPERIENCED GOODS

**Coming:** When many went on summer vacation, Diane Hill came to Experienced Goods to volunteer. She came to cashier, but then she also organized. She organized the kids section, she organized shoes, she organized clothes and books and housewares. It is not that surprising that she is such a great organizer, she was a kindergarten through fourth grade teacher for some thirty five years (twenty of them at the Green Street School) and I imagine that would take some organization! She also fancies gardening and golf and getting outside in general. This may be why, after the Christmas trees are gone and the ice freezes over, she will head south to Sebring, Florida. There she volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. The organization in her community not only builds houses, but also has a thrift shop that sells housewares. She organizes there and, on the side, can also play a little golf and get her hands in the dirt in February!

**Going:** Most anyone who has frequented the shop knows Aurora. Lovely smiling face, long beautiful hair creatively kept, busying about the housewares department, loving linens and sweet teacups—that would be Aurora. She has been here for nearly two years while pursuing her passion for dance and the arts in the background but, alas, it is time to move that pot to the front burner. Aurora will be starting LUMINZSTUDIO, an extension of LuminzCircus, an interdisciplinary community performance event. LUMINZSTUDIO will be a multimedia arts school which will teach dance, puppetry, sculpture and painting and will stress collaboration between medias. She will also be developing work for her professional troop to tour, first in New England, and then in Europe. We wish her all the best, and hope she visits often with fantastic tales of her new adventures.

### **VOLUNTEER IN-SERVICE**

**Art for Healing Workshop**

**October 18th 6:30-8pm, location TBA**

**Open to all Hospice and Bereavement Volunteers**

Leave your self-judgment at the door, and join us to re-discover your sense of play and self-care. Using different art materials we will explore our feelings about loss and grief in a non-verbal way, as well as ways we nurture ourselves. **NO ART EXPERIENCE NEEDED.** Call 257-0775 x106 for more information.

---

## CHANGES IN THE GARDEN

Some of you may have noticed a lot of change going on at our Hospice Memorial Garden. That's because, after 9 years of having our garden grow willy-nilly, we thought it time to have more of a plan. The new garden plan, generously designed by Edwin de Brujin of Holland's Blooms, calls for a drainage system, soil amendment, stone walls and paths, and a patio area making the garden wheelchair-accessible.

Our hard-working garden volunteers have begun digging up perennials and putting them in pots so that we can get off to an early start in the spring. We

will need places for these potted perennials to winter over. **Would you be willing to adopt a few plants and provide them with a safe spot in your garden until the new Hospice Garden is ready to receive them next spring?** If so, call Melissa.

Another way you can help out with the garden is by signing up for **the next Garden Workday—Saturday, October 14—9:30 AM to noon.** We will be digging up the remaining plants on that day so we can use a lot of help! Please let Jennifer or Melissa know that you're coming.

## CARING FOR ELDERS

By Donald Koepke, Director, Center for Spirituality and Aging

Caring for elders is like being let into a big secret, the biggest secret of all: the meaning of life. Caring for elders, becoming an intimate part of their life, understanding and misunderstanding, experiencing frustration and joy brings us into connection with a part of life and a part of ourselves that we have yet to experience.

Have you ever wanted to live your life with the benefit of experience that could assist you in avoiding some of life's pitfalls and bring both meaning and a way out when we fall into the pit anyway? Well, those for whom we care have experienced life, they have weathered storms and have been stuck in the mud. They have survived and are still growing. That life shapes each of us

differently is an amazing lesson. To learn how the texture and character of one's life is shaped as we age by our interactions and reactions to life informs the caregiving (and care receiving) experience. The spirit of a person is as unique as a fingerprint or face. And a great gift to all who understand the role of the spirit and the ethics of aging.)

When tragedy strikes (like airliners being deliberately flown into buildings) and we can't see any meaning or purpose, there are people around us who have experienced many sufferings and thus have much to share.

Why do we care for our elders with keen attention to who they are? Because it helps us understand ourselves.

## LEARNING TO NEGOTIATE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Thursday, October 12, 4:00-5:45pm

The Gathering Place, 30 Terrace Street, Brattleboro

Sponsored by the Southeastern Vermont Council on Aging and Brattleboro Area Hospice

A panel of healthcare professionals will offer tips for navigating the maze of resources available to caregivers of people with chronic illness. Open to ALL interested community members who would like to know more about caregiving. Please call 257-0775 for information and to register.

## TRANSPORTATION VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Brattleboro Area Hospice is expanding its Bereavement Services to children and teens, and with the addition of activities for this population we anticipate an increased need for volunteers to help out with transportation. We also occasionally have elderly bereaved clients who need rides to and from our office to attend bereavement support groups. If you would be willing to provide transportation, please call Melissa or Jennifer.

---

## ONE ART

By Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster;  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

--Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

### A FOND THANK-YOU AND FAREWELL

Lois Keiser is moving to Santa Cruz where she will live near her children and enjoy the California climate! Lois has worn many BAH volunteer hats—with hospice patients, bereavement clients, and in the garden. We'll miss you, Lois.

## Brattleboro Area Hospice

### Board of Directors

Penfield Chester  
Sarah Edwards  
Jane Krochmalny  
Nancy Lord  
*Vice-President*  
Andrew MacFarland  
*President*  
Greg McAllister  
Kris McDermet  
Tracy Sloan  
*Treasurer*  
Ann Switzer  
*Secretary*

### Hospice Office

Bettina Berg  
*Hospice Volunteer and  
Education Coordinator*  
Beth Newman  
*Hospice Care Coordinator*  
Jennifer Hall  
*Office Manager*  
Melissa Hays  
*Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator*  
Susan Parris  
*Executive Director*  
Elizabeth Evans Pittman  
*Bereavement Care Coordinator*

### Experienced Goods

Gemma Champoli  
*Store Manager*  
Libby Garofalo  
*Assistant Store Manager*  
Betsy Hall  
*Store Volunteer & Special  
Projects Coordinator*  
Shop Assistants:  
Emily Crowley  
Rachel-Storm Heasley  
Heather Lane  
Niles Laughner  
Imelda Reilly  
April Sommerville

## CALENDAR

*September 26–November 13, Mondays 5:30-7:00pm. Open to newcomers*  
*October 2 & 9. Parent/Sibling Loss Support Group, if there is sufficient interest. Elizabeth Pittman and Flynn Johnson will facilitate.*  
*October 1, Sunday. Coffee Break Fundraiser, Vermont Welcome Center, I-91.*  
*October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 12:15-12:45 pm. Silent sitting in Hospice Library.*  
*Information: 257-0775.*  
*October 4, 11, 18, and 25, Wednesdays, 3:30-5:00 pm. Children's Expressive Arts, Loss Support Group. For 5-8 children, ages 8-10. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider.*  
*October 5, 12, 19, 26, Thursdays, 5:00-6:30 pm. Loss Writing Support Group facilitated by Muriel Winter Wolf, for those who have previously been in a bereavement support group.*  
*October 5. Volunteer Report Forms due.*  
*October 5, 12, 19, and 26. Bereaved Parents Support Group. A new 4-week group facilitated by Linda and Graham Gordon, if there is sufficient interest.*  
*October 6, Friday, 5:30 pm. Gallery Walk Celebration, Experienced Goods Thrift Shop.*  
*October 9, Monday. Office closed for Columbus Day*  
*October 11 & 25, Wednesday, 4-5:30 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group Facilitated by Cheryl Richards.*  
*October 12, Thursday, 4:00-5:45pm. Learning to Negotiate the Healthcare System. More information in this newsletter. Call 257-0775 for information and to register.*  
*October 12, Thursday, 4:00-5:45pm. Volunteer Inservice: Art for Healing. More information in this newsletter. Call 257-0775 x106 for more information.*  
*October 16, Monday, 5:30-7:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting.*

**Save the date/More info in the November newsletter:**  
*Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>: Dia de los Muertos Altar at Experienced Goods Thrift Shop. Hallowell to sing at 6:30 pm.*  
*Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup>: Marta Gomez in concert at The Church, all proceeds to benefit BAH.*

**Brattleboro Area Hospice**  
**191 Canal Street**  
**Brattleboro, VT 05301**  
**Return Service Requested**

U.S. Postage Paid  
Non-Profit Org.  
BRATTLEBORO, VT 05301  
PERMIT NO. 109