



Brattleboro Area Hospice

Newsletter September 2008

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
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FROM BETTINA, HOSPICE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

There are times when we go to the movies, and then there are the times we look around for cameras because we feel that we are in one. I had such an experience lately, and if Ethan and Joel Cohen had stepped out from behind one of the distant trees on the scene, I don't think I would have been surprised.

Imagine this. It is a hot, dry day in a flat dusty cemetery. I am one of perhaps thirty five people milling around waiting to commit ashes to the ground, the ashes of a woman I did not know but whose grandson I know and want to support. There are four chairs set up for the five adult children of the deceased, an early indication that perhaps there is some confusion about who makes up this family. We draw closer to the grave site when the minister, a man with a dark suit, a ruddy complexion, and a Texas drawl summons us, and we bow our heads as he speaks a prayer. After the prayer, he begins to preach. We are told that we are sinners; we are told that the deceased was a sinner but a sinner who was saved by Jesus. I am glad for my friend's grandmother that she had had a devout faith; something which brought her comfort through her life, and I am not surprised to hear myself and those around me described as sinners, though the timing seems ironic given that I for one am sacrificing listening to my favorite radio show to be in the hot July sun paying my respects to someone I hadn't known.

After half an hour, I am getting steamed both literally and figuratively. I have learned nothing about this woman and her life, although I know the minister's father died in November. Though he cannot get it straight that the deceased had five children, not four, I know that he has two daughters to whom he has made promises that he has not always kept. Sweat is rolling down my face, my arms, my legs, and I only hope that everyone is tracking their own perspiration paths and not taking notice

of mine. I begin to watch the tiny red ants crawling through the dry earth below my feet. I look up to see a woman on the hillside above us, a shady hillside I notice with envy, who is tending a gravesite. I wonder if she is looking at us and remembering the burial of her loved one and if she might be telling him or her about the small crowd gathered in the sweltering heat below.

As the minister begins to describe the time when the dead will be brought from their graves and pulled into heaven and how those who are saved by Jesus will be the next in line to make that journey, I try to imagine all of these graves opening and all of the people buried in them for days or decades swirling up into the air. It is dizzying, or maybe I am getting heat stroke. The service continues for another ten minutes or so, and when it is over I say a prayer of thanks. As I make my way to the car, I note a number of feelings. I am sad that we did not learn about the woman who had died; who she was and what gave her joy. I am amazed at how polite I was to stay put when my desire had been to walk. I am angry that this man preached his beliefs as correct and right, and that while I am accepting of his faith for him, he would not do the same for me.

We all have beliefs and philosophies that inform us and guide our actions. They are political, religious, ethical, academic. Obviously, what I am getting at here is that as volunteers we need to be vigilant about not imposing them on those we serve. We do not deny or forget our principles; rather we open our hearts and our minds to accepting that someone is on a different path.

This life and this work are full of challenges. In the cool of my air-conditioned office on a hot summer day, it is easy to suggest that we try to embrace those challenges with joy. I will refrain from preaching and simply say thanks as always for the work you do.

VOLUNTEER IN-SERVICE

Voluntary Terminal Dehydration:

One Man's Story of his Father's Journey into Death

Thursday September 25, 2008, 7:00-8:30 PM

Hospice Office

On Thursday evening September 25, Adrian Segar will join us at BAH to share the story of his father's decision to end his life through the process known as terminal dehydration. Having lived a number of years with Parkinson's disease, Adrian's father, Joshua Segar, felt that the quality of his life was compromised to an unacceptable level and thus decided to take steps to end it on his own terms by stopping both eating and drinking. Adrian will talk about his father's decision and how it affected their family, as well as about the dying process as his father experienced it.

While Hospice neither endorses nor opposes terminal hydration, and as volunteers we would not bring it up to the families we serve, it is a choice that a client might make, and knowing what to expect can be helpful.

An article by Richard Davis about Joshua Segar's death appeared in the May 23, 2008 edition of the Brattleboro Reformer. If you have not read it and would like to, there are copies available at the office. There will also be copies available at the inservice.

Please RSVP to the office at 257-0775 if you are planning to attend this informational evening.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE CAREGIVER: A FREE HALF-DAY CONFERENCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

September 20, 2008, 9AM-1 PM

FREE, including lunch

The Brattleboro Retreat Education Conference Center

Do you or someone you know provide on-going care for an ill or aging family member? On Saturday September 20, The Brattleboro Caregivers Collaborative will host a free half-day conference for family caregivers from 9-1. Held in the Education Conference Center at The Brattleboro Retreat the event is designed to both support and educate caregivers. The keynote speaker, Linda Wilkinson, is The Coordinator of Patient and Family Care at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. Her talk entitled "How Can I Manage" will address ways in which we can more efficiently navigate through the world of healthcare when we are advocating for a loved one. Additionally, there will be presentations about using medical equipment safely in the home and also about Advance Directives. Local agencies will have booths set up in order to provide literature and information about their services.

Local massage therapists will be donating their time in order to provide attendees with a short chair massage or instruction for giving a simple hand massage to a loved one. Brattleboro Area

Hospice's Hallowell Singers will provide a few minutes of song to relax and inspire. A free lunch will be provided on site and adult day services will be available at The Gathering Place free of charge. Reservations for adult care must be made by September 18 through The Gathering Place at 802-254-6551.

The event is being sponsored through the generous support of The Council On Aging for Southeastern Vermont, Brattleboro Area Hospice, VNA of VT and NH, United Way of Windham County, Keene Medical Products, Phoenix Medical Products, The Richards Group, The Gathering Place, Retreat Healthcare and Prospect Park Press. Other collaborators include Brattleboro Pastoral Counseling Center and the Alzheimer's Association Vermont Chapter.

To register for this free event, please contact Jenny Gelfan at The Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont, toll free at 866-673-8376, locally at 802-885-2655 or by e-mail at <jgelfan@coasevt.org>.

IN-SERVICE CHANGES

There are times in our lives when we simply have to admit the truth: the dress we love on the hanger looks really bad on, the car truly is making that weird sound, we can't carry a tune. It doesn't mean we won't sing, we just may opt to do so alone in the car or the shower.

On the Hospice front, it is time to admit that the monthly volunteer meetings are not working in the way we had hoped they would and that a change is needed. So, here's the plan. We will continue to offer in-services that we hope will be of interest and use to you, and we will schedule them at different times of the day in order to accommodate varying schedules. Additionally, Ryan will be working to coordinate more team meetings as a way for you to meet other volunteers and to both get and offer support to each other.

As always, please let us know what would be of interest to you. And very importantly, thanks to those of you who did attend the monthly meetings whether once or more often. There were some good discussions.

Best to you all and keep singing.
Bettina and Ryan

HOSPICE

It's funny. We know it's inevitable. We know
it's there behind our shoulder. But it's all air.

Easy to not really believe in it. To think it's
coming our way some other day. Not today.

But being here I close my eyes. And I see
Dad's uncut hair and beard. His gray

Demeanor. See death. Smell it. Feel myself
starting to surrender to its presence. And

Helping Dad, I'm feeling it. Cleaning for it.
Shopping & paying bills with its dollars.

This death of ours. This strange old man
who is my father. Who is me. Hello, death.

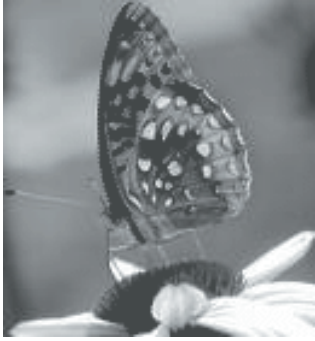
~Art Goodtimes

THANKS TO VOLUNTEER, PARKER HUBER

Silence is Gift. It can bestow insight, wisdom, healing, refreshment and a host of other benefits. It can open us to a communication with ourselves, others, and what is beyond.

Thus began volunteer Parker Huber's invitation for what has been, over a four year period, Quiet Sitting. Arriving by bicycle in all kinds of weather just past noon each Tuesday, Parker has been steadfast in holding the time and the space for this half hour sit. Joined sometimes by staff and volunteers, and sometimes sitting alone Parker's weekly presence has reminded us of the importance of quiet mindfulness. As you step away from this piece of your volunteering, we thank you, Parker, for serving and supporting us in this gentle way.

GREAT SPANGLED TRITILLARIES AND RED-TAILED BUMBLE BEES...



In August, the veronica was host to numerous six-legged beauties. It was a hopping, flying place to bee. Have you ever seen a Digger Wasp with an orange abdomen? Or, an American Pelecinid with a needle like, glossy, segmented abdomen? How about the metallic steel-blue Cricket Hunter, crawling on the light blue veronica spire—it is stunning. I am so moved to work in a garden that exists because of those who have gone before us. It is so full of life. As Hallowell sings, “there are angels hovering round.”

I never feel alone at the garden. I appreciate the help of the two-leggeds that watered and weeded in July. Gloria Condosta gave a drink to some of the flowers before the monsoons of August. Thanks to Steve Squires, Ruth Lane and Lee Ha, the green hue of the entrance path is back to its original grey.

Many thanks to Ann and Doug Switzer for a Subaru chuck full of perennials, which they also helped replant in our garden. Christ Pratt and Mary Rivers were there once again digging holes. We now

have iris and day lilies welcoming visitors along the path.

Our supplies are growing thanks to responses to the wish list. Betsy Swift has graciously offered some garden tools from her garage. The Garden Committee, (Joan Benneyan, Lee Ha, Ann Switzer, Mary Rivers, Lerna and I) are doing research on various needs such as garden sheds and pallets for compost. One of the main decisions we’ll have at our next meeting on Monday, September 22, 4-5 pm at the Hospice Office is about publicity and how to utilize the garden for more special events, i.e. 9/11 Memorial, poetry reading with elders from nursing homes, and more. Please join us if you can.

Remember that Hospice will be doing a fall bulb sale again with the chance to donate some bulbs to the garden. If you have time to join us at the fall work sessions, please buzz by on Tuesday, September 9, 12-2pm and Tuesday, October 7, 12-2pm. Unless it is downpouring, I’ll be there. We have the tools—we just need the people. I’ll be easy on you...the first time!

Many thanks again for gifts of plants, tools, time and most of all, believing in the sacredness of this vital garden space.

Peace,
Frances

HOSPICE MEMORIAL GARDEN WISHLIST

Kneeling pads	trowels	chimes	organic fertilizer
Compost bins	5 gallon buckets	pruners	edger
Leaf rakes	hedge trimmer	push broom	6-8 foot ladder
Birdbath			

And a storage shed for all our supplies

THE LAST FREEDOM

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.

~ Viktor Frankl

BEREAVEMENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Thursdays, September 25-November 6 (Make-up date November 13)

9am-noon

If you've been thinking about taking the fall Bereavement Volunteer Training, spaces are available! The new deadline for submitting an application is Monday, September 8th. The original plan was to hold the training in Townshend to enlarge our

pool of volunteers in the West River Valley. However, if the majority of applicants come from other areas we will consider shifting the training location to our Brattleboro office. Please call Melissa at 257-0775 x108 with questions and application requests.

PEACE

Anxiety is often our first reaction to conflict, problems, or even our own fears. In those moments, detaching and getting peaceful may seem disloyal or apathetic. We think: if I really care, I'll worry; if this is really important to me, I must stay upset. We convince ourselves that outcomes will be positively affected by the amount of time we spend worrying.

Our best problem-solving resource is peace. Solutions arise easily and naturally out of a peaceful

state. Often fear and anxiety block solutions. Anxiety gives power to the problems around us, not the solution. It does not help to harbor turmoil. It does not help.

Peace is available if we choose it. In spite of chaos and unsolved problems, all is well. Things will work out. We can surround ourselves with resources of the Universe: water, earth, a sunset, a walk, a prayer, a friend. We can relax and feel peace.

Alzheimer's

Chairs move by themselves, and books.
Grandchildren visit, stand
new and nameless, their faces' puzzles
missing pieces. She's like a fish

in deep ocean, its body made of light.
She floats through rooms, through
my eyes, an old woman bereft
of chronicle, the parable of her life.

And though she's almost a child
there's still blood between us:
I passed through her to arrive.
So I protect her from knives,

stairs, from the street that calls
as rivers do, a summons to walk away,
to follow. And dress her,
demonstrate how buttons work,

when she sometimes looks up
and says my name, the sound arriving
like the trill of a bird so rare
it's rumored no longer to exist.

~ Bob Hicok ~

On Saturday, September 27th 9:30 am there will be a Memory Walk at BUHS to end Alzheimer's sponsored by the Vermont Alzheimer's Association. More information available at www.alz.org/memorywalk

Brattleboro Area Hospice**Calendar****Board of Directors**

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 Penfield Chester
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 Hannah Curtin
Assistant Store Manager
 Ellen Graham
Assistant Store Manager
 Eric Morgan
Assistant Store Manager
 Dana Renault
Shop Volunteer Coordinator
 Christopher John
 Imelda Reilly
 Karen Zamojski
Store Assistants

September, Thursdays, times and start date TBA. Grief Support Meeting. Cheryl Richards facilitator. Open to any who have experienced a death loss. If interested, call Elizabeth (x104).

September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Tuesdays, 12:15-12:45 pm. Quiet sitting at Hospice Office. Information: 257-0775.

September 5. Volunteer Report Forms due.

September 9, Tuesday, 12:00-2:00 pm. Memorial Garden Workday—come help us maintain our garden.

September 10 & 24, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa (x108) or Elizabeth (x104) to register.

September 11 & 25, 2nd & 4th Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa (x108) or Elizabeth (x104) to register. Note: This month only, there will also be a meeting on the first Monday, Sept. 4.

September 12, 19, 26 & Oct. 3 & 10, Fridays, noon-1:30 pm. A five-week Healing Through Writing Mini-Series. Facilitated by Cheryl Wilfong. Call Melissa (x108) or Elizabeth (x104) to register.

September 13, Saturday, 10 am-12 noon. Second Saturdays: Expressive arts and simple rituals. Facilitated by Marilyn Buhlmann and Elizabeth Pittman.

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

September 16–November 18, 6:00pm-9:00 pm. Patient Care Training.

September 20, 2008, Saturday, 9:00 am-1:00 pm. Being An Effective Caregiver: A Free Half-Day Conference For Family Caregivers. The Brattleboro Retreat Education Conference Center. Free, includes lunch.

September 22, Monday, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. Memorial Garden Committee meeting at the Hospice Office.

September 25, Thursday, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm. Volunteer Inservice: Voluntary Terminal Dehydration: One Man's Story of his Father's Journey into Death. BAH Office. Please RSVP to the office at 257-0775.

September 25 - November 6, 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Bereavement Volunteer Training. Hospice Office.

COMING UP...

October 7, Tuesday, 12:00-2:00 pm. Memorial Garden Workday Come help us maintain our garden.

October 17 & 18, 9-5pm, Caring for Your Own Dead workshop, contact Bettina for more info; website info: www.crossings.net.

November 1, 7:30 pm, College Gospel Festival Live at the Latchis, a benefit of Brattleboro Area Hospice. A wonderful evening of uplifting gospel music from Harvard, Yale and Amherst, with some local groups as well. More info coming the October newsletter.

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