



Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter* September 2009

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
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No One Is Saved By Silence: *The healing power of telling our stories*

By Margaret J. Wheatley, from spiritualityhealth.com

In Western culture, it is common to keep our pain to ourselves. The greater the suffering, the more we withdraw. We've been taught to bear trauma privately, to get on with life. And we who have not suffered trauma often silence the suffering ones. We don't want to hear their stories because we won't know what to say. When others voice their pain, grief, loss, and despair, we believe we must fix it or make it go away, that it's not enough just to listen.

...Telling our story and being listened to is one of the simplest ways to heal. A young South African woman taught a profound lesson about listening. She was sitting in a circle of women from many nations, as each told a story from her life. When her turn came, she quietly told a story of true horror -- of how she had found her grandparents slaughtered in their village. Many of the women were Westerners, and they instinctively wanted to fix, to make it better, anything to remove the pain from such a young

life. The young woman felt their compassion, but also felt them closing in. She put her hands up, as if to push back their desire to help, saying, "I don't need you to fix me. I just need you to listen to me."

That's all we need to do: listen. Not judge, not recommend, not fix. Just witness, keeping our hearts open. We can expect that triggering events ...will stir deep emotions. We can be present and offer ourselves as quiet companions, available to listen. We can share our vulnerability to prime others to share theirs. If someone begins to tell his or her story, we can refrain from commenting, advising, or interrupting. We can exercise the discipline of good listening, and the faith that that is sufficient for healing, by just sitting there with our hearts open, absorbing the story into our being. At the end of the story, we can express gratitude that it was shared. And we can offer to listen to another story when it needs to be told.

Nocturne, a play with hospice & grief themes

Performed at the Hooker Dunham Theater September 3-5 and 10-12, 8pm

The Friday, September 11th performance will benefit Brattleboro Area Hospice

In September of 2009, at the Hooker Dunham Theater in Brattleboro, VT, Green River Productions will present a new interpretation of Adam Rapp's play *Nocturne*. Starring Mark Bateman, an accomplished stage and screen actor, directed by Eric Morgan Cutler and produced by Shawna Parker, our work adds a multimedia component to the impressively stark, deeply moving structure of the piece. Video and music elements, as well as engineered sound, will add layers of richness to an already emotionally compelling storyline. Our production

approach also includes outreach and collaboration with community institutions and individuals who work in the areas of hospice, grief counseling, and post-traumatic stress disorder—issues at the heart of *Nocturne*. The show runs Thursday, Friday & Saturday, September 3-5 and 10-12 at 8pm. Proceeds from the Friday, September 11th show will benefit Brattleboro Area Hospice.

Reservations: 802-254-9276

Information: shawna.greenriver@gmail.com

From Shirley Kasanoff, our new Office Manager

I am sure that most of you know that Jennifer has left. I have been given the opportunity to try to fill her "Big Shoes". I grew up in East Dover and come from a long line of 'Vermonters'. My husband Paul and I live in Wilmington with our Chocolate Lab, Cocoa. I have met some of you or talked with you in the past few weeks and am very grateful for the warm welcome I have received from both staff and volunteers. I look forward to working with every one of you and hope to meet you all in person in the months to come.

From Sarah Rice, our new Shop Volunteer Coordinator

In the past seven years that I've lived in and out of the Brattleboro area, I have always come to visit and shop at Experienced Goods. I've been an avid thrift store shopper since I was young as I always loved hand-me-downs. There's nothing like a piece of clothing or item that has already been loved. When I learned that Experienced Goods helped to fund the Brattleboro Area Hospice, it made the wonderful treasures I've found here even more meaningful and

enjoyable. Now I am coming to Experienced Goods as the new Shop Volunteer Coordinator. I am excited at the opportunity to be a bigger part of our community and assist in the process that helps to allow an organization like Hospice to thrive. I look forward to meeting those of you who have been helping out at Experienced Goods Thrift Shop as volunteers and welcome those of you who are interested in becoming new volunteers.

An Invitation to Remember

I would venture to say that all of us who have taken the training at BAH, whether last spring or many years ago, remember just how special the sharing and learning that space and time in our lives held. We looked deeply at topics inside ourselves and heard from others how they were touched or affected. We saw that though we are ultimately alone in our experiences, we also share a common bond with others, and within that bond found meaning and depth.

On the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month you are invited to come and sit for a period of silence with fellow staff and volunteer members, and then to listen to a short reading and share from your heart or to listen as others do. For a short while at BAH we offer to ourselves the gift of time in our busy lives to remember. This month we will meet in the upstairs meeting room on Sept. 8th and Sept. 22nd from 5:10 to 6:00 pm.

Alzheimer's Association *Memory Walk*

The 2009 Alzheimer's Association Brattleboro Memory Walk will be on September 19, 2009 beginning and ending at the Brattleboro Retreat. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and the walk begins at 9:00 a.m. and will go through downtown (approximately 1.25 miles) with a shorter, flat paved route on the campus of the Retreat. A light breakfast, entertainment and make a quilt square for our own Brattleboro Alzheimer's Awareness Quilt will be provided.

If you would like to volunteer to help with this event, walk and/or fundraise please contact Maggie Lewis at Maggie.Lewis@alz.org, or call 802-376-3816. If you would like more information about this event or to donate, go to www.alz.org. Checks may be made out to Vermont Alzheimer's Association and mailed to Maggie Lewis, Memory Walk, P.O. Box 2502, Brattleboro, VT 05303. All donations are tax deductible.

Seen Recently at Peebles' Cosmetics Counter

A framed photo of a happy couple dressed for the prom. (The young woman had had her make-up done at the counter and the photo was to advertise the service.) The background for the picture? The patio of the Hospice Memorial Garden!! So those of you have had a hand in tending the garden can feel proud that this place of beauty is now seen as the perfect setting for a prom portrait. Although we don't publicly encourage this kind of use of the garden, it's nice to know that it is a witness to various milestones in life's journey.

From Melissa, Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator

I want to take some space here to sing the praises of our Bereavement Volunteers who support grieving individuals in our community.

In 2009, by the end of July, 14 volunteers had worked with 15 bereavement clients. Collectively, these volunteers put in 173 hours. So far in August, as this newsletter goes to press, 4 more volunteer / client matches have been made. Most bereavement clients are seen weekly for companionship and emotional support, although sometimes a client and volunteer meet only a few times to take care of practical matters such as sorting through personal belongings or paperwork related to the death of the loved one.

Then there are the 7 Bereavement Volunteers who participated in an in-service training in May to develop their skills in offering bereavement support over the phone. Four of those volunteers have contacted 13 clients in calls lasting anywhere from a few minutes to 1½ hours.

So those are the statistics. But we know that statistics don't tell the whole story. They don't begin to account for the attention and strength that go into staying with a person through difficult emotions. To describe the quality of what they bring to their work, I offer this poem in honor of our Bereavement Volunteers.

Wanted:

A Grief Helper

Needed:

A strong, deep person, wise enough
to allow me to grieve in the depth of
who I am, and strong enough to hear my pain
without turning away.

One who is:

not too close because then
you couldn't help me to see;

not too objective because then
you may not care;

not too aloof because then
you couldn't hug me;
not too caring because
I'd be tempted to let you
live my life for me.

I need someone who can
point out the rocks in my way
without making me a child by
carrying me over them.

I need someone who can
stand in thunder and watch the
lightning and believe, no matter
how heavy the torrent,
that a rainbow will follow.

~Anonymous
Oklahoma City, 1995

Brattleboro Area Hospice

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

Calendar

Throughout September: Share your story on video: we're collecting stories about your experiences with BAH on video—see the insert for dates and times.

September 3. Volunteer Report Forms due.

September 8, Tuesday, 9am-noon. Hospice Memorial Garden Workday. Bring drinking water and hand tools.

September 8th & 22, Tuesdays, 5:10-6pm. Silent Sitting & Reading/Discussion, Hospice office. More information in this newsletter.

September 9 & 23, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

September 10 & 24, 2nd & 4th Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

September 11, Friday, 8pm. *Nocturne*, a play performed at the Hooker Dunham Theater, benefit night for Brattleboro Area Hospice. More information in this newsletter.

September 14, Monday, 6-9:00 pm. Writing workshop with Elizabeth Pittman. See insert for more information. RSVP required by September 10.

September 21, Monday, 2-4:00 pm. Hospice Memorial Garden Workday. Bring drinking water and hand tools.

September 21, 5:30-7:30 pm. Board of Directors meeting, at the Hospice Office.

September 22 & 29, Tuesdays, 5:30-7:00 pm. Beginning of new eight-week General Support Group for adults coping with a death loss or losses.

Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

September 28, Monday, 6-9:00 pm. Collage Cards workshop with Beth Newman. See insert for more information. RSVP required by September 18.

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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