



Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter* November 2008

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



COMMUNITY ALTAR for *Day of the Dead*

To Honor Our Loved Ones
at
Experienced Goods Thrift Store
77 Flat Street

Sponsored by Brattleboro Area Hospice

The Altar opens on
November 7th at 5:30 pm

Hallowell will sing at 6:00 pm
The Altar will be open during store hours
through Tuesday November 12th

We encourage you to bring an item for the altar to honor your loved ones. Note: please bring xeroxed pictures and/or objects of no great concern as items can not be returned. Call the Brattleboro Area Hospice for more information: 257-0775.

El Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

by Kathy Cano-Murillo

Excerpted from her book *Making Shadow Boxes & Shrines* in the Hospice Lending Library

In Mexico the concept of dying is not something to be feared. Instead it is respected and acknowledged as part of the wondrous cycle of life. Like all human beings, these Mexican families and friends are saddened when their loved ones pass on, but they use El Dia de los Muertos as a way to rejoice

over their loved one's journey on Earth and the beginning of a new one in the afterlife.

When making a Day of the Dead altar, the idea is to combine traditional elements with commonplace objects as well as items specifically enjoyed by the

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Don't forget to join us at the **College Gospel Festival Live at the Latchis**, on **November 1, 7:30 pm**, a benefit of Brattleboro Area Hospice. A wonderful evening of uplifting gospel music from Harvard, Yale and Amherst Colleges, with the BUHS Madrigals as well.

spirit being celebrated. Examples of common ingredients include flowers, candles, candy, letters, Christmas lights, religious relics, pictures...and little personable details that distinguish the altar.

Despite the title of the holiday, the occasion actually lasts three days rather than just one. The first day is dedicated to infants and youngsters who have died. Beginning noon on October 31, the living children set out paths of fragrant marigolds to invite the smaller souls into their homes. There, a beautiful altar with a hot meal, sentimental trinkets and toys awaits them. Twenty-four hours later, at noon the angelitos (little angels) return to the afterlife and preparations are made for the adult

spirits to arrive and stay for the following twenty-four hours, until noon on November 2. Within that time frame, a jubilant community procession that includes skeleton stilt walkers, strolling musicians, art displays and food booths are presented. In addition, families in villages create their own ornate altars in their living rooms or at specific gravesites. Chicano artist Zarco Guerrero has been celebrating since he was a child. "Death is a universal phenomenon," he says. "No other culture celebrates death as extravagantly or as elaborately as Mexico. It is a positive way to mourn the dead while honoring our past."



REMEMBERING ED

Ed Softky November 17, 1963 – October 9, 2008

I remember seeing Ed at the Strolling of the Heifers parade in June. One of the bands was playing upbeat, old-time music and there was Ed, dancing up the sidewalk just in their wake, oblivious to anything but enjoying the moment.

You may have seen Ed around. Tall and graceful, often wearing a purple fleece, he walked a lot since he lived right in town. You would have loved his face – amazingly expressive and thoughtful. You would have loved his voice – quiet and deliberate when speaking, deep and sonorous when singing. He loved music. You would have loved his manner – a welcoming presence and an extraordinary ability to listen without judgment. He was kind and gentle and caring. He was very

smart and delightfully diverse in his skills and interests – cook, Tibetan translator and self-proclaimed computer geek. He said on his application to become a hospice volunteer that his only physical limitation was mortality.

Upon learning of Ed's death, I felt the sadness, confusion and disbelief that come when someone dies in such an untimely and, in Ed's case, violent way. I thought about how opposite the whole situation was to the way he lived. It is complicated, and he strived for clarity and simplicity. It is showy, and he was so understated. It is angry and he was so peaceful.

I did not know Ed as well as many of you did, yet each of us is mourning because of how he touched us in the time we did spend with him. I know that we will miss that face and that voice, and I know that his incredible spirit will be remembered in each of us.

Bettina



Please join us on Saturday, November 8th, at 2pm, at the Hospice Memorial Garden, where staff and volunteers will gather to plant bulbs in Ed's memory.

ON THE DEATH OF THE BELOVED

by John O'Donohue

Though we need to weep your loss,
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,
Where no storm or might or pain can
reach you.

Your love was like the dawn
Brightening over our lives
Awakening beneath the dark
A further adventure of colour.

The sound of your voice
Found for us
A new music
That brightened everything.

Whatever you enfolded in your gaze
Quickened in the joy of its being;
You placed smiles like flowers
On the altar of the heart.
Your mind always sparkled
With wonder at things.

Though your days here were brief,
Your spirit was live, awake, complete.

We look towards each other no longer
From the old distance of our names;
Now you dwell inside the rhythm of breath,
As close to us as we are to ourselves.

Though we cannot see you with outward eyes,
We know our soul's gaze is upon your face,
Smiling back at us from within everything
To which we bring our best refinement.

Let us not look for you only in memory,
Where we would grow lonely without you.
You would want us to find you in presence,
Beside us when beauty brightens,
When kindness glows
And music echoes eternal tones.

When orchids brighten the earth,
Darkest winter has turned to spring;
May this dark grief flower with hope
In every heart that loves you.

May you continue to inspire us:

To enter each day with a generous heart.
To serve the call of courage and love
Until we see your beautiful face again
In that land where there is no more separation,
Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,
And where we will never lose you again.

A CALL TO MEET VOLUNTEERS

*If you've not yet met Ryan, or haven't been assigned to a case recently,
join us to discuss volunteering at BAH*

I have been the Patient Care Coordinator for just over a year now and am aware there are still volunteers I have not yet had the chance to meet.

I am happy to announce we have hired another part-time Patient Care Coordinator, Muriel Wolf (who will introduce herself in the December newsletter) and as she begins her new position we would like to invite you to join us at two volunteer gatherings, either on November 12th, 12-1:30 pm or November 19th, 5:30-7:00pm, to meet us, explore our Hospice experiences together, learn from each other and enjoy hearty hors d'oeuvres and sumptuous sweat treats created by our Hospice friend and pastry chef par excellence Patricia Austin. These meetings will constitute a Volunteer in-service program.

While all are welcome we are most hopeful that the volunteers we have not yet met and those that may have wondered about not having been called in a long while join us and discuss your hopes and experiences as a BAH Volunteer.

We are capping the number of participants at ten and request that you call our Office Manager Jennifer Hall at 257-0775 to register. We will continue to hold these meetings until the goal of connecting with all active volunteers has been reached.

Thanks, and we look forward to meeting you in November at one of these gatherings,

Ryan

TOM HARRIS: CLEAR AND SIMPLE

An Experienced Goods Thrift Shop Profile

By Dana Renault, Volunteer Coordinator

Tom Harris has been working at Experienced Goods for five months – already a fixture and an integral part of our team. Since I arrived here a couple of months after Tom, I simply assumed he had been here “forever.” Each day he greets me with an open heart and a smile as he moves with comfortable, measured diligence through his work around the shop. He has a bright spirit and offers levity and humility to shop dynamics.

Tom is neither volunteer nor staff – he is “in training.” Tom comes to us via Vermont Associates (VA), an organization that places Vermonters into organizations where one can gain the skills to become, Tom explains, “a mature person, coming back into the work place.”

Tom feels he and Experienced Goods are a “right fit.” He enjoys his work here, and feels the arrangement is a win/win situation. “When you need help, you can get help. There’s no bickering or whispering behind backs. I like an atmosphere where people communicate well. Issues get taken care of here in an adult manner. It’s really nice.”

Tom grew up in Greenfield, MA, but lived at the tip of the Cape, in Provincetown, for the last ten years. “I had a rich life there – not in money – but in diversity, the arts, theater, and fabulous people.” Tom appreciated the “beach-front mentality” – the sense of community one feels mid-winter when tourists are gone and “people come together and get through it together.” Tom would visit the beach every day in all seasons. The ocean is a powerful force in his life, touching “the vein that goes through the whole body.”

With VA’s and Experienced Goods’ help, Tom’s “fire is lit.” He knows the answers to the big questions now: *What do you want to do? Where do you want to go?* This fall, Tom is beginning his LNA (Licensed Nursing Assistant) training, and will work toward his LPN degree after that. He has charted his future and is determined to move back to Provincetown in one to two years, where he will support himself as a nurse. *Only the best to you, Tom!*

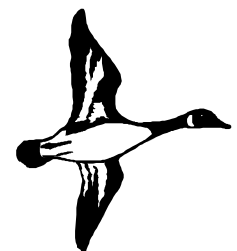
ONENESS

The moment I die,
I will try to come back to you
As quickly as possible.
I promise it will not take long.
Isn't it true
I am already with you,
As I die each moment?
I come back to you In every moment.
Just look,
Feel my presence.
If you want to cry,
Please cry.
And know
That I will cry with you.
The tears you shed
Will heal us both.
Your tears are mine.

The earth I tread this morning
Transcends history.
Spring and Winter are both present
in the moment.
The young leaf and the dead leaf are really one.
My feet touch deathlessness,
And my feet are yours.
Walk with me now.
Let us enter the dimension of oneness
And see the cherry tree blossom in Winter.
Why should we talk about death?
I don't need to die
To be back with you.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

How do geese know when to fly to the sun? Who tells them the seasons? How do we, humans, know when it is time to move on? As with the migrant birds, so surely with us, there is a voice within, if only we would listen to it, that tells us so certainly when to go forth into the unknown. ~Elizabeth Kubler Ross



ANTICIPATION

The Hospice Memorial Garden

We had more than 300 bulbs donated to the garden from the bulb fundraiser! Many thanks to all who contributed either in funds or by digging holes to bury them for next spring, and the following spring and so on. Do you know what a bulb is? According to Ortho Books, *All About Bulbs*, "a true bulb is a package of fleshy scales containing a small basal plate and a shoot." They say that if you slice through a tulip bulb you can see a complete miniature plant with tiny flowers, stem, leaves and roots. I'm curious to dissect one; I will just imagine it instead though. Plants are certainly therapeutic, whether we respond to the color, smell, or their pure, perfect essence. What privilege to work in the garden and to be surrounded by such a rainbow of petals and leaves!

The garden volunteers know very well about plant therapy. We had a wonderful work day in October with two new helpers, Roxanne Reddy and Fiona Cook. The steady crew was there and the 8 of us did 19 hours of work in two hours. Considering that I am hired for 20 hours a month, this clearly was a big help. We also met a second time to plant those power packs of anticipation! Hopefully now heads will turn and cars will slow down as drivers pass by the garden next spring.

Did you see that large area of Black Eyed Susan's this summer? I've read that Native Americans used them for many remedies. Tea was made from the roots for colds and root juice was squeezed out for earaches. Another 'medicinal' plant was the small sunflower in the back tier of the garden. According to *Nature A Day At A Time*, by Cathie Katz, "in Russia, Turkey, and Persia, sunflowers were planted to reduce malaria, the sunflowers eliminated wet areas where malaria-causing mosquitoes thrived." Hospice truly has a healing garden.

If you've heard Lerna play her dulcimer you know how healing the sounds of those strings are. She and Ann Stokes had the first official garden outing for wheel chair bound elders from Thompson House nursing home in October. Four residents came and Ann read them a story of love and life. Folks shared their thoughts and smiled with delight while sitting in the breeze, hearing the dulcimer, the wind chimes and a friendly voice. The path and patio worked well for the wheelchairs. Please consider bringing someone you know who lives with wheels to enjoy the garden. If you need help, give me a call 254-8663, and I'll meet you there.

Many people have worked very hard to get the garden where it is today. Most people don't know who the founding mother of the garden is. She's seen it go through muddy, swampy and now dry stages. She has known the power of a garden and she's kept the vision alive. We have Elizabeth Pittman, the Bereavement Care Coordinator to thank now and for many years to come, for planting the first seed and watering it so many seasons.

It's been an alluring first season in the new garden. Thank you Elizabeth, volunteers, donors, believers.... sunshine, rain and yes, sssnnnoooooowwww!

As we await the emergence of the bulbs, remember what Wendell Berry said, "The seed is in the ground. Now may we rest in hope while darkness does its work."

Cheers, Frances



Brattleboro Area Hospice

Calendar

Board of Directors

Connie Baxter
Joan Benneyan
Judy Carpenter
Penfield Chester
Co-President
Victoria Collins
Sarah Edwards
Tim Gerdes
Treasurer
Greg McAllister
Kris McDermet
Co-President
Greg Moschetti
Ann Switzer
Secretary
Mike Welch

Hospice Office

Bettina Berg
*Hospice Volunteer &
Education Coordinator*
Jennifer Hall
Office Manager
Melissa Hays
*Bereavement Volunteer
Coordinator*
Ryan Murphy
Patient Care Coordinator
Susan Parris
Executive Director
Elizabeth Evans Pittman
Bereavement Care Coordinator

Experienced Goods

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

November 3. Volunteer Report Forms due.

November 6 & 20, 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa (x108) or Elizabeth (x104) to register.

November 7, 5:30 pm. Dia de los Muertos Community Altar at Experienced Goods Thrift Shop, during Gallery Walk. Hallowell sings at the altar at 6:00 pm.

November 8, Saturday, 10 am-12 noon. Second Saturdays. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman. (See SEASONS for more information.)

November 8, 2:00 pm. Hospice staff and volunteer gathering at the Hospice Memorial Garden, to plant bulbs in Ed Softky's memory.

November 10, Second Monday, 5:30-7:00 pm. Coping with the Holidays Support Meeting. Cheryl Richards facilitator. Open to any who have experienced a death loss.

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

November 12 & 26, 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.

November 17, Monday, 5:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting, Hospice Office.

November 19, 5:30-7:00 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

MASS FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND FAMILIES

You are invited to attend a special Mass for the loss of a child that will be taking place on *Friday December 5, at 7 pm* at St. Michael's R.C. Church, Walnut St. Brattleboro.

Anyone who has lost a child through death, adoption, miscarriage, or abortion understands the emptiness felt at this time of year. No matter when your child died or how long ago it happened, the pain of loss remains forever. Please join us as we remember our children at this special Mass celebrated by the Rev. Rich O'Donnell. We invite you to share your thoughts and prayers. with us as well as any pictures, memorabilia, or letters that we will place on the altar before Mass.

Refreshments will follow at the parish hall at the rectory. For details, please contact Shirley S. at 254-2696, Arlene K. at 254-8550 or Betty F. at 387-4214.

Brattleboro Area Hospice
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Brattleboro, VT 05301
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