

Brattleboro Area Hospice

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
802-257-0775 • www.brattleborohospice.com

Newsletter February 2009

Heartprints

Whatever our hands touch -
We leave fingerprints!
On walls, on furniture,
On doorknobs, dishes, books,
As we touch we leave our identity.

Oh please wherever I go today,
Help me leave heartprints!
Heartprints of compassion
Of understanding and love.
Heartprints of kindness
and genuine concern.

May my heart touch a lonely neighbor
Or a runaway daughter,
Or an anxious mother,
Or, perhaps, a dear friend!

I shall go out today
To leave heartprints,
And if someone should say
“I felt your touch,”
May that one sense your love
Touching through me.

~anonymous~

ACCEPTANCE: Being with what is happening in our lives with love and compassion.

Silent Sitting at Brattleboro Area Hospice

Learning to be at peace with what is happening in our lives, moment by moment, with gentleness and compassion, is a gift that we can give to ourselves. With sitting silently and attending to this very moment, we can learn to allow some space in our minds without judgments of good or bad, right or wrong, or shoulds or shouldn'ts. This can be of immeasurable value especially when we are going through transitions in our lives, be they small or large.

We meet at Brattleboro Area Hospice on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 5:10 to 6:00 p.m. for silent sitting, a short reading, and discussion. We come together to connect and support one another, and to deepen our understanding and appreciation. All are welcome to join us regardless of experience. We all have something to learn and to give. The theme for February is: ACCEPTANCE: being with what is happening in our lives with love and compassion.



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



An Update on our Monthly Volunteer Gatherings

Ryan and I held our fourth Volunteer Gathering on January 14th, and like the others, it was informative and productive for all of us. Although we initially wrote about these meetings as “meet and greet” opportunities for Ryan and me, they are turning out to be far more substantial. We discuss numerous topics including vigil clients, working with people with Alzheimer’s, and seeing clients in nursing homes. We also address volunteers’ challenges in specific cases, offer guidance and supervision where it is beneficial, review the types of support that are available to you as volunteers, and describe the kinds of situations and circumstances in which we would want you to contact us for feedback or guidance.

Based on the valuable content of these meetings, and on the positive feedback we’ve gotten from volunteers who have attended, we’ve decided to ask all volunteers to attend one of these meetings, even those of you who are temporarily inactive but plan on becoming active in the future. For those of you who haven’t yet attended, please note that our future meetings will take place on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, until all volunteers have had an opportunity to attend. Second Wednesdays meet from noon to 1:30, fourth Wednesdays meet from 5:30 to 7 PM, and at all of them refreshments and treats are served. Attendance is limited to ten in order for us to address individual questions and concerns. The following dates are available now for sign-up by calling Jennifer, our Office Manager, at extension 105, to reserve your place: February 11th and 25th, March 11th and 25th.

Spring dates will be published in a future newsletter. We look forward to seeing you!
Muriel Wolf, Hospice Care Coordinator

Helping Grieving Children and Teens, an experiential training

If you missed this portion of the recent bereavement training, or if you are interested in volunteering with bereaved young people either individually or in groups, join Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman, Thursday, February 19, 1 – 4:30 pm for Helping Grieving Children and Teens, an experiential training. Call Jennifer to register or Elizabeth Pittman for details.



The Journey of My Life

It was beautiful as long as it lasted,
the journey of my life.
I have no regrets whatsoever
save the pain I'll leave behind.
Those dear hearts who love and care ...
and the strings pulling at the heart and soul ...
The strong arms that held me up
when my own strength let me down.
At every turning of my life I came across good friends,
friends who stood by me
even when time raced by me.
Farewell, farewell my friend.
I smile and bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears for I need them not.
All I need is your smile.
If you feel sad do think of me for that's what I'll like.
When you live in the hearts of those you love
remember then, you never die.

~Rabindranath Tagore

Mid-winter (playful!) Volunteer In-service with Elizabeth Pittman

For Hospice and Bereavement Volunteers

Thursday, February 5, 10 am – 12 noon.

Using record albums and album covers we will each create a Self-Portrait Collage. Possible guidelines are:

- On the front cover: As a volunteer, how does my client see me? What do I present and make available of myself when volunteering?
- On the record or inside covers of a double album: What am I containing that I don't show; what's going on in other areas of my life or inside of me (thoughts, feelings/fears-hopes?)
- On the back cover: Who and what backs me up? Where do I get my support?

An alternate idea is to use the front cover as how I saw myself and my world before a loss/change, the inside for how I'm feeling now, and the back cover for how I see myself since that change.

Come and explore! RSVP to Jennifer at 257-0775.

Adapted from The Wintered Spirit by Joyce Rupp

It takes immense trust and hope to see new life waiting beneath the frozen, barren land.
It takes deep courage to remain in the cave of loneliness and painful solitude.
It takes powerful faith to believe in the gestation of a positive future when all is unknown.
It takes compassionate patience to remain by the side of an aching seed in the silent soil.
It takes stout-hearted resilience to endure the soul's contractions of seemingly endless birthing.
It takes vulnerable openness to stay present to deadness and not run from staleness.

We wait for new life, but we do not wait alone.

We wait with the mother bear as the little cub within her takes shape and form.

We wait with the dormant juices of the maple trees gathering up sweetness in their empty limbs.

We wait with the grapes in the vat fermenting and turning themselves into full, red wine.

We wait with the pruned rose bushes sighing for warming sun to sing them into budding.

We wait with the frozen creeks and rivers yearning to be melted into laughing waters.

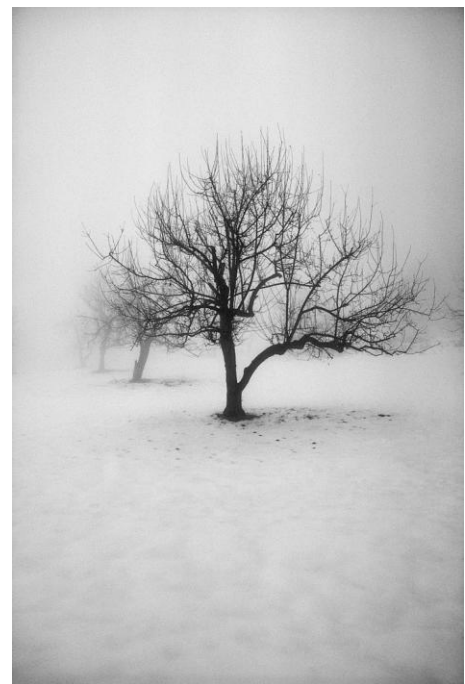
We wait with all humans whose weary lives turn slowly toward re-awakened joy.

We wait with the cosmos which is ever dying and being reborn, giving away and receiving anew.

And while we wait, we struggle to accept winter as a necessary companion, an inner season calling us to be more than we now are, a confident guide taking us on a perilous journey that is part of every dying and every birthing.

It is in the winter of our lives that the enduring Voice within coaxes us along, nudges us into belief, urges us to stay in the dark for as long as it takes for rebirthing to occur.

In our wintered time, it is this One who draws us close, nestles us near to heart, breathes strength into our spiritual bones, and assures us that we are growing wings under the frozen land of our desolate and emptied self.



From Dana Renault, Experienced Goods Volunteer Coordinator

Twenty years ago, Experienced Goods Thrift Shop opened its doors to the southern Vermont community. From Harmony lot to Elliot Street to Flat Street, in the hands of myriad volunteers, staff and store managers, the last twenty years has seen the shop through to its proud presence in 2009 as a steady source of funding for Brattleboro Area Hospice, as a reliable source for recycled, affordable household goods and clothing, and as a colorful marketplace where friends meet and “stuff” changes hands, knitting us together – through our hearts and our things – in ways we may not suspect.

*This month we commemorate the last twenty years of thrift shop glory by talking with a few of the community members who support Experienced Goods with outstanding dedication. I have interviewed three of these “regulars” over the last few days, and tell their stories here that they may remind us of the effect our shop has on our larger community, and that I may openly extend my gratitude to these and to all our regular customers. You are an essential piece in this keenly balanced web of support we call **community**.*

Eve Valentine

Eve comes in the morning, first thing. She is not alone – she never is, because she creates a bustle of excitement wherever she goes. “It’s the thrill of the find,” she says. People get drawn in. Eve is openly passionate about finery, and has a discerning eye for quality in the old and the new. Eve is an encyclopedia of knowledge about brands, makers, periods and makes it her business to spot each and every diamond in the rough that enters the shop. And she’ll tell you all about it, because Eve shares her passion.

“I wasn’t going to buy these plates,” a woman confided to me at the register, “but that woman [Eve] told me how valuable these are. I am so excited!” She left beaming, with four carefully wrapped dishes under her arm.

This morning as I was walking over the foot bridge on my way to work, Eve came toward me, having just left the shop. I catch her in mid-conversation with me, “A real x*&\$%#!! [brand I do not know] plate – black with silver etching!!” She is on fire.

Eve is from Boston. She was raised by her grandmother, a musician who ran a classical music studio, and secondarily by her very young mother, a concert pianist and linguist. Eve grew up in a 1920s house surrounded by nice things – “*Wipe your feet! Don’t lean against the wallpaper!* We used our dining room. I remember my grandmother had some stuff I was allowed to look at, but never to touch.” Eve frequented antique shops on Charles Street throughout her childhood.

“It was a learning thing – like, how to organize gemstones in order of hardness. The dealers would teach you all the time.”

When Eve found herself out of work as a City Planner, she moved to Brattleboro in 2003 where she landed her “lowest paying job ever” managing the Rexall pharmacy. “It’s where I met everyone here – famous people would come in, everyone needs stuff from the pharmacy.” She would visit Experienced Goods on Elliot Street every day at lunch. “I was able to get through a horrible job because of Hospice.”

Eve lives in a small apartment with high ceilings and big windows. “I’ve got Winslow Homer etchings next to a Peter Max signed poster. A small 1920s hooked rug draped over a modern one. And books stacked on the floor – I’ve bought hundreds of books from you.”

Eve misses city life, finds herself a little bored and a bit of “an oddball” in Brattleboro. But it seems Experienced Goods offers her a place to be herself, to commune with people about meaningful *stuff* –

“A lot of stuff could talk... I love stuff with character and personality... stuff that has had a life...”

“Every day I wonder,” Eve says, “*What did I miss?*”

Jaime Guardado

Jaime (pronounced *Hy-may*) has lived in Brattleboro for almost 18 years. He comes from Chihuahua, Mexico where his family still lives. Jaime works as a lumber handler. He appears on all fronts to be a happy man – enjoying the life he has created.

I first took note of Jaime for the vivid collages he makes out of found objects from the shop. He color copies the collages and gifts them to staff – several hang in our sorting room. He frequents the shop several times a week, always bearing an open smile and sweet, simple humility.

I ask Jaime why he has made Experienced Goods one of his regular stops.

“I have been shopping here a long time... I feel comfortable in the store... I see a lot of friends here... There are warm people here who always say *Hi!*”

“The people who bring things in give with love... the people who donate are ‘people-people.’ Buying here helps the people in this town [through Hospice]. Especially now, when people are losing jobs, it is good that someone can get help by shopping here.”

“Things come in from everywhere. [I am attracted to] beautiful things. I have collections of many things. I collect feathers, and all kinds of balls – disco balls, and eggs – marble eggs, glass eggs...”

Jaime describes a ball he found at the shop that spins on hundreds of metal tacks protruding from its surface.

“Handmade items are best – they are one-of-a-kind. Like these fish I found, with faces... there is always something different! It keeps growing and I like this! All the rooms, so much selection, and very organized... I would do nothing different.”

Sharon Dunn

Sharon works at the downtown post office. On her lunch hour, she goes for a walk and includes Experienced Goods on her route.

“Working for the postal service can be very tense. Coming to Experienced Goods calms me, I listen to the music... I feel peace. I feel at home. There are different faces than there used to be, but there are still all kinds of people here I know.”

Sharon has a long history with Brattleboro Area Hospice and Experienced Goods.

“I was a shop volunteer on Elliot Street when we were still hooking clothes with safety pins, not pricing guns. I was part of a group of six women – we called ourselves the ‘Sortin’ Sisters’ We’d come in on Wednesday nights and sort and tag clothes in the basement. This lasted about six years. “

Sharon used to own “Twice Upon a Time,” so is admittedly a Thrift Shop Person, but it is Experienced Goods’ Hospice link that has made Sharon such a dedicated supporter over many years and in many capacities.

“My mother died in the ‘80s of pancreatic cancer. My brother and I took care of her. I was raising my toddler too. We used the hospice in California... It was a very spiritual time.”

Toward the end of Sharon’s stint with the Sortin’ Sisters, she was elected to the BAH Board of Directors where she served for three years. As a Board member, she took the Hospice Volunteer Training.

Several years later, Sharon started meeting with a hospice client at Eden Park, someone she had known from the post office, who had been given a three month prognosis. Sharon and her hospice team took turns visiting this woman, “with our dogs!” over the next three years, until she died, surrounded by the loving support hospice is known for.

“Since then, I haven’t signed up for anything, but I’m a regular customer,” Sharon says.

Sharon sees Experienced Goods as a meeting place, as well as “a place where people can afford to dress their children, to buy new boots, to buy furniture. This has become a *need* place, not just a fashion place.

“If you come in enough, you can find each thing you’ve been looking for. And it feels right to buy recycled. I need less than I used to, but I buy all my Christmas presents here.

“And there’s Gallery Walk – when the Hallowell singers perform – and everyone is crying or sharing a loss together. Volunteering here has been real meaningful...”

“You know, I still go out with the Sortin’ Sisters.”

Brattleboro Area Hospice

Board of Directors

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Victoria Collins
Tim Gerdes, *Treasurer*
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Hospice Office

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

Experienced Goods

Thrift Shop

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

Calendar

February 3, 10, 17, 24, 5:30 – 8:00 pm. Death & Dying for Beginners with Bettina Berg.

February 5. Volunteer Report Forms due.

February 5 & 12, Thursdays, 5:15-6:45 pm. Support Group for Survivors after a Traumatic Loss (for example, work-related or car accidents; suicide; homicide) RSVP to Elizabeth Pittman, facilitator, 257-0775 x 104.

February 5, Thursday, 10 am-12 pm. Self-Portrait Collage In-Service. Facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman. RSVP to Jennifer at 257-0775.

February 10 & 24, 5:10 – 6:00 pm. Silent Sitting, with reading and discussion. February's theme is *Acceptance*.

February 11, 12 – 1:30 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

February 11 & 25, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

February 12 & 26, 2nd & 4th Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm. Bereaved Parents Support Group. Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Upstairs meeting room. Call Melissa or Elizabeth to register.

February 16, Hospice Office closed.

February 19, Thursday. 1 – 4:30 pm. Helping Grieving Children and Teens, an experiential training facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman.

February 23, Monday, 5:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting, Hospice Office.

February 25, 5:30 – 7:00 pm. Volunteer Gathering to meet Ryan and Muriel, refreshments provided. RSVP: Jennifer at 257-0775.

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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