



Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter*

April 2007

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
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“HOLDING OUR OWN: EMBRACING THE END OF LIFE”

A new film by Vermont filmmaker Camilla Rockwell

Featuring Hallowell and Deidre Scherer

Thursday April 5, 8:00 pm The Latchis Theater

\$12/person or \$20/for Hospice Supporters

This one hour film—featuring the work of artist Deidre Scherer of Williamsville, the music of Brattleboro Area Hospice chorus Hallowell, and an interview with Dartmouth Hitchcock professor and author Ira Byock, M.D.—will be followed by a panel discussion about aging and dying, and a brief performance by Hallowell. The event will benefit the Brattleboro Area Hospice and Fuzzy Slippers Productions, and is open to the public. Tickets are \$12/person or \$20/for Hospice Supporters, and may be purchased at the door, at Experienced Goods Thrift Shop, 77 Flat Street in downtown Brattleboro, or reserved ahead of time by calling Brattleboro Area Hospice at 802-257-0775.

Rockwell, a hospice volunteer in Burlington, produced *Holding Our Old* as a means of initiating conversations about a time of life that is often difficult for families and healthcare professionals to discuss. The film is appropriate for all age groups but may be of particular interest to baby boomers facing the death of their parents and considering their own final life passage. Featured artist Deidre Scherer has been sketching the elders she calls her “mentors” for many years, producing exquisite fabric portraits that have been exhibited in galleries and museums all over the U.S., Canada, England, and Japan. Her appearance on film to talk about her unusual work has been long awaited. Kathy Leo and Hallowell, the hospice chorus she founded three years ago, are also featured; the film includes footage of Hallowell singing songs from their recently released CD *Angels Hovering Round*.

Holding Our Old was selected by the Green Mountain Film Festival for a screening in March but this will be the film’s first public screening in southern Vermont. Area residents may be familiar with Rockwell’s 2005 film, *Stone Rising: The Work of Dan Snow* about the Dummerston stone waller, artist, and author. She also co-produced *Pioneers of Hospice: Changing the Face of Dying*, released in 2003, which presented a brief history of the modern hospice movement.



Two Hands Joined © Deidre Scherer

“I am very impressed with the sense of community here in Brattleboro and grateful to all the area residents who supported this project and shared their work with me,” says Rockwell. She is especially delighted to include piano pieces by local musician and composer, Jan Norris, in the soundtrack as well as interviews with former Hospice Care Coordinator Noree Ennis, Pastor Lise Sparrow of the Guilford Community Church, and several members of Hallowell. Recalls Rockwell, “Some of our best moments occurred while shooting at Thompson House, a local nursing home. Activities Director Sandy Ware couldn’t have been more helpful and welcoming to us. To witness Deidre and the members of Hallowell offering their comfort and service was a powerful instruction about being with people at the end of their lives. Both Deidre Scherer and Kathy Leo have been marvelous teachers for me.”



LIGHT SUPPER FUNDRAISER

Prior to the film "Holding Our Own",
April 5, 6:00 pm at the Latchis Lounge

Brattleboro Area Hospice will hold a light supper next door at the Latchis Lounge prior to the show. Dinner will include various Asian and Italian choices, along with wine and beer, dessert and coffee. The cost is \$20/person all inclusive including a glass of wine or beer. All proceeds will benefit the hospice and bereavement programs of Brattleboro Area Hospice. For more information, contact Brattleboro Area Hospice at 257-0775.

DAN SNOW WORKSHOP

Dear Hospice Volunteers,

You have a once in a lifetime opportunity to participate in a stone wall building workshop with Dan Snow that will benefit BAH. Dan is a world renowned stone wall builder and he has generously offered to do a two day workshop as part of the renovation and improvement of our memorial garden. No experience or tools are necessary. This will be fun and experiential.

What we build in May will be a tangible, lasting contribution to the garden for decades. Tentative dates are Saturdays May 12 and 19 with a rain date of June 2. The workshop is open to 12 participants who can commit to both days. We will meet from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm with a lunch break. We also need a non-participant who will act as a steward and helper.

The steward does not have to pay; their help will be payment enough. This is a benefit for the garden fund and we are asking a donation of \$50.00 - \$100.00 or more if you'd like, for the two days. To register call Jennifer at 257-0775; registration deadline is April 20, after which we'll open this up to the wider community. Please note: if necessary ground preparation is not completed in time for a May workshop, we will move the wall building to Saturdays in June. Be sure to leave your phone number so we can call to confirm dates. Call soon: this will fill up fast! See you at the garden!

Frances Herbert-Poma,
Hospice Memorial Gardener,
BAH Bereavement Program

FUNERALS:TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE. WHAT IS POSSIBLE?

Part of the Wellness in Windham County Series
Brew Barry Conference Center at BMH
April 30, 2007, 7-9 pm.

We are fortunate in our community to have a number of professionals who can assist when death occurs and decisions need to be made. By becoming aware of what possibilities there are at the end of life, we can all be better prepared to move ahead with what needs to be done when the time comes.

The presentation and discussion will focus on funerals and what alternatives there are for those

who might want to memorialize a loved one or oneself in a non-traditional way. After viewing the PBS documentary film about home funerals called *A Family Undertaking*, we will explore what resources and options are available for people making funeral plans for themselves or loved ones.

To register for this free event, call Brattleboro Area Hospice at 257-0775.

VOLUNTEER LEADERS

We are pleased to announce Lava Mueller is our new vigil volunteer team leader. As team leader, Lava will work with us to organize and arrange volunteers when we have a request for vigil volunteers from a family or facility. If you have expressed interest in doing vigil work, you can expect to hear from Lava in the coming months.

We are also looking for:

- A volunteer to be Soup Team Leader—this would

involve organizing volunteers who are willing to cook and/or deliver food to clients and their families.

- A volunteer who is willing to oversee and organize our medical lending shed located at the office.

If you are interested in being involved with either of the above, please call Beth (x106). Thanks for all you do!

GOOD CLEAN FUN!

If you happened to have noticed that Experienced Goods looks particularly sparkling these days, it is Tracy we have to thank for much of that. Tracy has been with us since October and not only do we love the lack of dust bunnies, but we have been getting all sorts of compliments on her housewares displays as well. Tracy is one Vermonter who didn't mind the unseasonably warm weather this winter. Despite the fact that she grew up in this area, she prefers the warm, unlike her son, Hunter, who is ten and loves to be outside whenever possible, despite the weather. Tracy gets to thaw out a bit when she works part time for Rashid's Greenhouse when they start planting. She also has two dogs to play with in her free time! She enjoys working at the Shop because she feels as though it is giving back to the community.

We get all sorts of clothes at the shop, and some

of them are a little crazy, but regardless, when we need someone to fashion them, there is Rachel. I have never seen a hat that Rachel doesn't look great in! She came to us from Alaska, via Buffalo, and landed in Brattleboro to attend the Social Justice program at SIT. Fortunately for us, she arrived in June, so we had a summer full of fun before she started with her classes, and now she works a couple of days a week. Like Tracy she is in the houseware department, and she has two also dogs; unlike Tracy, she loves the outdoors regardless of the weather (prepared by Alaska and Buffalo). Since the snow has come she has been snowboarding and snow-shoeing. Rachel likes working at the Shop because of the fun atmosphere (partly her doing!) and enjoys the customers and the people she works with. I think we are all pretty fortunate in that aspect!

WINTER BEREAVEMENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Congratulations to the nine participants who recently completed the Bereavement Volunteer Training. They are Katherine Barratt, Bettina Berg, Betty Chamberlin, Trudy Crites, Noel Dery, Fiona Gordon-Macleod, Carolyn Gregory, Sarah Swift, and Jesse Webster. We are grateful to have them join our growing pool of volunteers who provide support to community members who are grieving

a death. Thanks also go to BAH volunteers Gladys Clemens and Flynn Johnson for coming to speak with the participants about their experiences as Bereavement Volunteers.

"Love and death are the greatest gifts that are given to us; mostly they are passed on unopened." Rilke

When I am liberated by silence,
when I am no longer involved
in the measurement of life, but in the living of it,
I can discover a form of prayer in which
there is effectively no distraction.
My whole life becomes a prayer.
My whole silence is full of prayer.
The world of silence in which I am immersed
contributes to my prayer
~ Thomas Merton

The Body's Small Purposes

Ralph Earle

His lungs like exhausted fishermen
drew in their glittering
catch of oxygen and his heart
called to the receding
tides of the blood.

His bony fingers
curled around mine.
I read from Mary Oliver
how the soul may be hard,
necessary, yet almost
nothing, how we all know
the sand is golden
under the cold
waves thought our hands
can never touch it.

The hearing goes last,
the doctor said.

If you're fortunate
this happens only twice,
as we have two parents,
and although a measured number
are called to bear the sorrow
of a child passing,
and although one spouse
outlasts the other,
all come in the end
to this day that is broken
in the middle, never to finish.

My heart glowed
like a well of clear water.
There are no words
for this communion,
this hope that his eyes,
turned from the
sunny branches outside,
could summon a vision
of his loved ones,
his wife of fifty years,
his sister dead in childbirth
before my time,
souls knowing already
this passage and awaiting
him in whatever form of glory
we the living
can conjure for them:

my brothers, me,
our children, all the others
still casting the nets of our breath,
still sifting the golden sands.

One time in his search
for love after my mother died
he told me it never ends.
But it does. On a broken day
the breath stops
and the cells gently fall asleep
and the soul, perhaps puzzled
by this coming to rest
of all the body's small purposes,
rises and looks on the silence
and the dear souls drawn close
and the great hovering angels.

I sat alone with him
until two heavy men in
white shirt sleeves brought
a collapsible cart
and carried him down the dusty stairwell
into the light, his face still wearing
the mask of exhausted surprise.

He left us a sweet generosity
of spirit, to magnify
the golden light
we all carry inside,
and the complications
between parent and child,
one person and another,
the lost nerve-endings,
the thoughts never finished,
were carried away
and composed and dressed neatly
for out friends and neighbors
to say goodbye to
and rendered in the fire of the crematory
to a small box of ashes
to lie until the world is made anew
next to my mother's remains
where the spring wind
blows the catkins and pollen
across the gray stones
and ants build
their tiny cities of dust.

FROM VOLUNTEER ELEANOR TEMPLE...

As a hospice volunteer I would like to tell you about my friend, Carrie. I didn't know Carrie's mom. I only saw her a few precious times. And because Annabel was deaf, I couldn't communicate with her, other than to make the "I love you" sign which she taught me.

But I had the privilege of sharing the death experience with Carrie and her sister, Cathy. There wasn't much I could do, but my phone line was open. They could call me at any time. We talked many times about what was happening in her mom's body. Many details. How can I make her more comfortable? Should we give her more morphine? Let's increase the Adavan.

But what I observed through the long two plus weeks was beautiful. Carrie and her sister, Cathy found so many ways to make mom feel safe and loved. Mom knew that daughters would be there round the clock. And they were. As the end was nearing, I had so many thoughts about this whole beautiful process. I decided that I needed to write them down randomly.

As I finished the last words of this poem Carrie called to say that her mom had gone in death to heaven. What a blessing to at last be free.

Submitted by Eleanor Temple
with permission from the family

Mom, I Love You

You can't hear me say it,
But you know by my touch.
I won't let them hurt you,
I'll be by your side.

Let me prop you with pillows,
Relax Mom, and rest.

Your smile is so sweet,
Heaven is near.

Let me wash your face,
Let me comb your hair.
Kisses and snuggles
will help you feel safe.

Your body is dying,
But that is O.K.
You need to let Jesus
Carry you through.
I gladly release you
into his care.

But still you linger.
I'm here for the long haul.
I will watch you closely,
Every breath, every frown.
What are you thinking
In your silent world?
Don't be afraid, Mom,
I'll hold your hand.

With breathing so labored,
How hard it must be.
Your fever so high,
Your skin is so dry.
Let me put lotion.
Let me rub your hand.
Turn you so gently,
Hoping it won't hurt.
I'll sleep right beside you,
I'll be here all night.

Maybe before morning
The angels will come,
Then heaven...And Jesus...
And Malcolm, your love.

I've done all I can,
To ease you through.
And memories I treasure
will linger for years.

I love you, Mom.

Brattleboro Area

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Calendar

*Beginning April 2, Monday, 6:30-8 pm. *NEW* eleven-week Loss Writing Support Group. Facilitated by Muriel Winter Wolf.*

April 3, 10, 17, 24, Tuesdays, 12:15-12:45 pm. Silent sitting at Hospice Office. Information: 257-0775.

April 5, 12, 19 and 26, Thursday, 5:30-7:00 pm. Bereavement Support Group. Facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman.

April 5. Volunteer Report Forms due.

April 9, Monday, 3:30-5 pm. Good Grief Children's Program for children 8-10 yrs old. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider.

April 11 and 25, Wednesday, 4-5:30 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards.

April 11, Wednesday, 12:30-2 pm. Monthly Volunteer Support Meeting, BAH Upstairs Meeting Room.

April 16, Monday, 5:30-7:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting.

April 30, Monday, 7:00-9:00 pm. Funerals: traditional and alternative. What is possible? Presented by Bettina Berg. Part of the Wellness in Windham County Series, Brew Barry Conference Center at BMH. Free, register by calling 257-0775.

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