



THE SPIRIT

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Wood River Valley Newsletter

September 2021

SET IN STONE

On a recent backpack trip in the Sawtooth Mountains, I was reminded of the glorious landscape we call home: the bright blue sky, the pristinely clear alpine lakes against a backdrop of rugged mountains, rippling rivers cascading over rocks, a mama bear and her cub stripping wild berry bushes, the skyward call of the birds. Many people travel long distances to experience what we have right outside our doorsteps. However, it can be jolting to encounter the juxtaposition of landscapes. One can cross a pass into a different river drainage and suddenly be surrounded by the aftermath of fire: limbless trees, blackened and upright, dusty ground, the feeling of hot sun on the skin now unprotected by a natural canopy. Whether it is the destruction after a wildfire, smoky air, avalanches, or falling rock from an earthquake that restructures lakes and hikes, we are continually reminded of the ever-changing natural world, that our landscape does not come with a guarantee of permanence. The large stone mountain walls are, perhaps, not quite “set in stone”.

There are echoes of this reality in our own lives. When things feel orderly, expected, symbiotic and refreshing we interpret this as good. We strive to replicate these moments. We resist anything that disrupts these realities as unwelcome. But sometimes in our journeys we take a few steps and look up surprised to find ourselves in a dramatically changed landscape, one more stark and with a kind of ruggedness that is not easy to find beautiful. Perhaps it is a challenging work environment, a pandemic, a distressing family situation, financial difficulties, a recent diagnosis, a death of a loved one, a crisis of faith, a loss of a dream, just one thing or many that can suddenly change the terrain of life. Working in hospice and palliative care certainly lends itself to these encounters with a new and difficult reality.

I am attempting to learn to accept that life is lived in exploring the terrain in all its variety – that the variety *is* the expected, the symbiotic, the orderly. Just as the natural world cycles through these scenes ultimately creating the dramatic topography of our valley, our own life’s landscape is ever evolving. We are ever evolving.



In This Issue

- Introductions & Farewells
- Generosity Playing Out
- In-Services
- Important Dates
- Coming into the Computer Age, One Click at Time

Introductions and Farewells

The past few months have certainly brought changes to the faces you see at HPCWRV. We had our first graduate volunteer class of 2021 after having a hiatus for over a year and a half. We are so excited to welcome **Heather Black, Becky Brown, Lisa Erikson, Sam Eurich, Jan Hafer, and James Wilson** to our group of patient care volunteers. These six individuals participated in our first ever virtual volunteer training. Since COVID precautions prevented our usual meet-and-greet at the finale of the class, please make sure to find these folks and welcome them to our team at the next in person get-together! We are sad to say good-bye to several volunteers. COVID-19 had required us to suspend our direct patient care volunteer program for over a year. With the past year of uncertainty, many of us have reappraised our lives, reviewed our commitments, changed careers, or even changed locations. Consequently, we have had a few individuals whose lives have moved them a different direction than volunteering with HPCWRV. A deep thank you and farewell!

We are saying adieu to **Susan Woodruff** and **Amber Sela**. Susan has been a nurse with our organization for the past five years. After she retired from St. Luke's Operating Room, she decided to offer her comradery, skillset and years of experience to our team on a per-diem basis. Throughout the years, Susan could be seen at our volunteer events, teaching an in-service after attending a National Conference, and would flex to work 1-2 days a week especially during times when we struggled to find the right nursing employees who could work on a full-time basis. Susan has decided that this fall is the perfect time for full retirement, and she plans to leave our organization to pursue her many other interests of gardening, travelling, hiking, cross country skiing, and going on dog walks with Roxy. We wish her all the joys of a happy retirement! Amber Sela has worked as a nurse for our organization for four years, and has taken a position to work with the Blaine County School District as a school nurse at the elementary school that her two boys attend. This will be a wonderful fit for her family and a much easier schedule to keep then trying to rush back from seeing hospice patients to make it in time for school pick-up. (A challenge that Amber has undertaken very willingly throughout the years of commitment to both hospice and her family life!) We will miss Amber's dedication, personability, organizational skills, and her mastery of making sure our supply closet never got too low on certain medical items. Of course, we know that BCSD will benefit from her addition to their team and wish her all the best.

We are very pleased to welcome three nurses who have joined our team this summer. **Kristen Allen** worked for HPCWRV from 2005-2007. Kristen has been going back and forth between her home in Ketchum and the Sacramento area, where she and her husband have lived for a number of years. Now that her youngest daughter is in college, Kristen plans to spend more time in the Wood River Valley and manage a recently acquired alfalfa farm in the Bellevue Triangle. In all her spare time, we plan to take advantage of her organizational knowledge, effervescent personality, and compassion on a per-diem basis.

Erik Griffin, has followed a similar career path to Susan's background, recently coming from the St. Luke's Operating Room. If you have had a surgery, you may have "seen" him while anesthetized. One of the main reasons he has decided to join HPCWRV was the desire to have more interactions with patients. When he isn't working full-time with our organization, he and his partner can be found biking, rafting down a river, or working on house projects. We are very excited to have his caring and adept persona meet patient's and family's needs.

Adali Pacheco also came from St. Luke's. As a relatively new nurse, she had been working nights while getting her nursing degree. She recently joined our team as she wanted to transition to working part-time and having the majority of those working hours be during daylight. Adali married this summer, which means she has been busy planning a wedding, meeting with relatives who flew in for the event, getting out to Galena for mountain biking with her family, and all the while, learning a new job. Adali's soft and kind demeanor and her bilingual capabilities have been wonderful assets that have greatly benefited our patients.

Kay Harden is filling a new position at our organization as the first Licensed Social Worker that we have had on staff. Kay moved here this summer after selling her condo in Denver, in order to be able to enjoy the more western Rockies of Idaho with her partner. She brought with her an elderly dog, who is acclimating to his new environment just as Kay is. They trio can often be found camping on the weekends. Kay is working part-time with our organization while also working part-time at St. Luke's. We are happy to have her fresh approach and years of experience leading our support groups, facilitating our bereavement program, and meeting with patients and families to help connect them to community and state resources.

The board has also experienced a few changes. Our board president's, Al Stevenson, term expired this spring, and we now have Micki Chapin at the helm of our board. Micki has aptly stepped into this leadership position. Micki is someone who has been very interested in the intricacies of non-profits in our Valley for a number of years and has served on our board for three years. It is very much in character that she is dedicated to learning and familiarizing herself with issues pertaining to hospices not just locally, but also nationally. In addition, HPCWRV is happy to welcome **Erin Pfaeffle** to our board. Erin has worked as the director of St. Luke's Community Health for years and has served on a number of non-profit boards in our community. Our two organizations have collaborated for years; therefore, Erin is very familiar with our organization. We are excited to have her experience and community knowledge of healthcare and resources benefiting our board.

Generosity playing out

During our six-month drought of finding staff despite wide-spread advertising, it became clear in several interviews that housing was a barrier for anyone moving into the Wood River Valley. After hearing the recent news and researching the issues, an anonymous donor graciously gave funds to start a housing endowment. This endowment is in the infancy stages and we are still determining how it can best be utilized, but it has provided a welcome potential for HPCWRV to begin thinking how housing may no longer be a barrier to staffing.

You also may have noticed the recent landscaping changes to our building. Thanks to the Dumkes and Lynn Campion and Ted Waddell, our Memorial Tree has been moved to our office building. Since 1991, when our Memorial Tree was first established, the Dumkes have generously covered the cost of maintaining our beautiful evergreen on the commercial property they initially owned. Throughout the years, the ownership of the commercial property has changed hands, and it began to make sense to change the location of our Memorial Tree. This became a reality this past August thanks to the afore mentioned donors, along with Sun Valley Garden Center, who did the installation and landscaping work. We look forward to celebrating this year's commemorative service right on our own premises.



Help Us! Sign Up!

1. Bake a treat for the FBS Group. Open dates: Oct 7, 14, 21 and the 28th.
2. Help with the Tree Mailer on Friday, November. 5th. We need (12) people. You will pick your package up at the office and do the stuffing of envelopes at your home to put in the mail on Friday, November 12th.
3. For National Hospice Month we need (12) bakers to bake 6 SMALL loaves of sweet bread. Drop off at the office November 8th, before 11:00 AM
4. We need (3) people to bake 1 dozen Christmas cookies or bars for Coping with the Holidays~bring to the office November 18th before 5:00.
5. We need (14) people to bake 2 dozen Christmas cookies for the Memorial Tree. Please bring to the office on December 6th before 1:00.

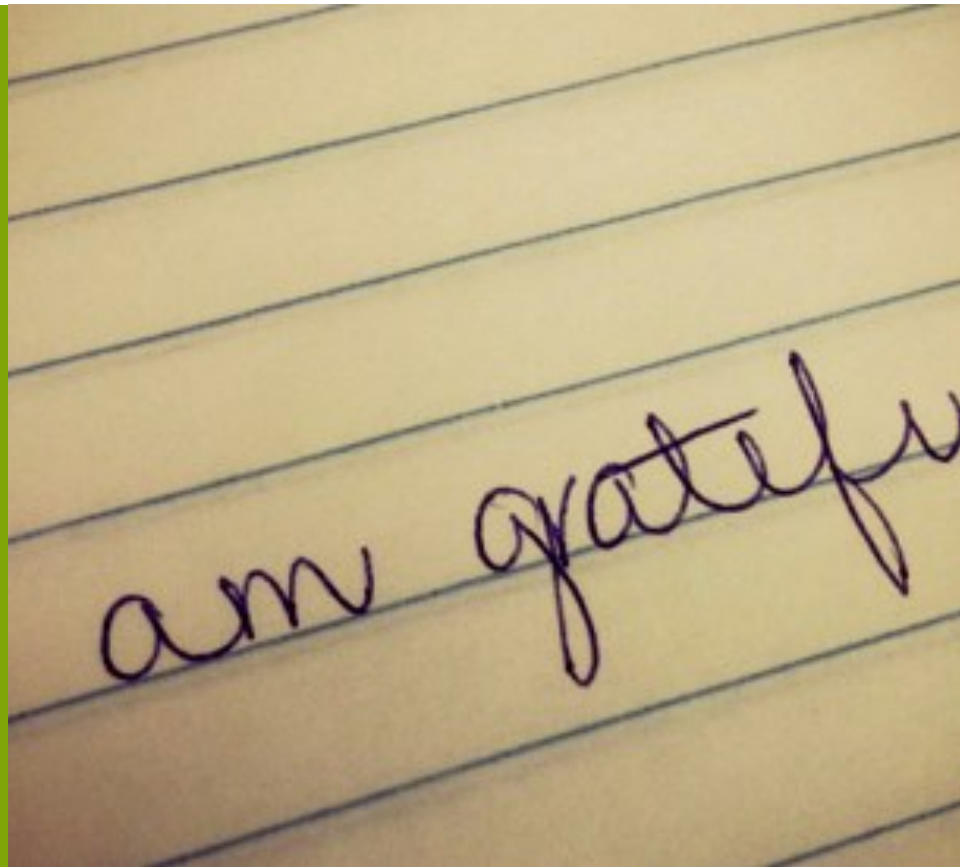
Groups

Fall Bereavement Support Group begins Oct 7 If you know of anyone that may be interested in joining the group, have them call the office.

Caregivers' Support Group meets twice a month...the first Thursday of each month at 11am at the Senior Connection in Hailey and the third Monday of each month at 4pm. At the hospice office

Surviving Spouses with young Children is offered the second Thursday of every month from 12:30-1:30pm .

Our F.R.O.G.S. Support group for children between the ages of 6-12 who have lost a parent or close relative is meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month from 4:30-5:30pm.



In-Services-RSVP 208.726.8464

As usual, you responded to our requests! We are so thrilled for the initiation of our bouquet program. A volunteer has been busily arranging bouquets to be delivered to our patients for the past 6 months. The smiles these bring are difficult to put in words, but they are so very much appreciated. Another volunteer provided some new sheets for our hospital beds. And several of you have submitted a story to be put on our Facebook and webpage. Thank you for the help!

In-services:

October 29th: 10:30-12pm (virtual). *The Latest Coronavirus Information and HPCWRV 2.0:* Dr. Kathy Woods, our hospice medical director, is back with an update! She plans to provide another virtual learning opportunity about COVID-19. Come learn about the virus, what we currently know about vaccines and treatment, how our community is responding, how to best stay safe and prevent being sick, social responsibility for those who have already had the virus and/or vaccine, and how COVID -19 is impacting HPCWRV.

November 16th: 1-2:30pm (virtual). *Volunteer visiting with the non-verbal, less interactive, and memory impaired patients.* Join Criss Fallowfield and Lisa Wild as they share some tips for volunteering with this challenging population group. Whether you are a seasoned volunteer with some ideas of your own or whether you feel at a complete loss of how to have a meaningful visit with this type of patient, this class is for you!

COMING INTO THE COMPUTER AGE, ONE CLICK AT A TIME



COVID-19 changed many of our practices, including the ability to meet in the office collectively as a team for a long while. It became apparent that having the most up-to-date information for every on-call nurse who was not able to make it into the hospice office to pick up updated patient specific information, would prove advantageous. Consequently, in 2020 we received a grant through the Spur Foundation to help cover the cost of initiating an Electronic Medical Health Record (EMHR). **Chelan Keeter**, a Registered Nurse with our organization since 2019, took on the responsibility of researching types of EMHRs, talking to firms, and ultimately settling on a platform suggested by a volunteer. This volunteer, **Laura Theis**, who has a background in IT, has spent over one hundred and sixty volunteer hours honing the platform to incorporate the many varied processes that our organization needed in place to inform and convey information amongst the team. In her time outside of her full-time job, Laura diligently worked getting our platform set up for several months. Chelan and Laura not only worked individually on this project, but spent hours meeting with each other, testing new developments, updating and educating the team on the new changes, and reassessing the process until finally achieving the desired outcome. The tireless dedication of these two individuals has managed to beneficially impact the day to day functions of the nurses and office in a more significant way than anything else that has been implemented. Initially piloting the program in December of 2020, we were able to apply the EMHR to all patients at the start of 2021. Adventitiously, Chelan has become our informatics nurse, and continues to work behind the scenes adjusting the program to continue to better serve our needs with oversight from Laura. In the words of one of our nurses: "The new EMR is amazing and helpful; everything feels more accessible".

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