

# **HOSPICE IN THE PINES**

## **Volunteer Newsletter**

Volume 1, Issue 1

July 2007

### Plan to attend our first Lunch and Learn

Volunteer Gathering  
**Thursday, August 23rd**

Noon – 2:00pm

Lufkin office

Come give **BRENDA WARD** a big hug for her fabulous leadership as volunteer coordinator at Hospice in the Pines. As most of you know, she has decided to run for Grandmother of the Year by spending more time with her young grandchildren. Brenda started out as a volunteer and we are so very thankful that she has agreed to continue in that role so she hasn't left us – just changed hats!

At our first Lunch and Learn you will meet our Community Outreach Coordinator, **PATSY PINER**, see old friends and meet new ones.

Please RSVP 936/632-1514 (Lufkin) or  
936/327-8888 (Livingston)

and feel free to bring a friend with you!

**\*\*COMING SOON\*\***

### **Volunteer Training**



***"Volunteers are the heart  
of Hospice"***

If you or a friend would like to know how to become a hospice volunteer, please call *Patsy Piner* at the numbers below. If you have been through volunteer training before but would like a refresher course, call and chat with *Patsy* about that too. All are welcome. Dates and location of the training to be announced at a later time. Get on the list soon so you will get the info when it is available.

Call 936/632-1514 (Lufkin)  
Or 936/327-8888 (Livingston)

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## **VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S CORNER**

Dear Volunteers,

I need your help!

I am new to Hospice in the Pines but not to hospice. For 10 years, I was the Volunteer Coordinator at Houston Hospice (previously Hospice at the Texas Medical Center), so I know how wonderful hospice volunteers are. I can't wait to meet you all and start figuring out what you like to do and how to keep you busy doing great things for our patients and their families.

On the front this newsletter is an invitation to my first volunteer function – please take a moment to mark it on your calendar and plan to attend so we can put a face with each other's name. Also, volunteer training is coming soon. I plan to have a training session in Livingston in September and another one in Lufkin before the end of the year. Let me know if you are interested in attending – everyone is welcome – even those of you who have already been trained can come for a refresher course!

**Out and about in the Community:** We are always willing to spread the word about our hospice and our mission to any group. If you are a member of a group or know of groups who have guest speakers, please suggest *Hospice in the Pines* or give me their names and I will call them and offer to get a speaker for them.

**Did you know** – that you **must** have a TB test each and every year if you wish to be an active hospice volunteer? If you are not sure or think you need a TB test, please contact me so we can get it taken care of right away. We want you to be ready to go when we call with your next assignment.

I am in the Polk County Office most of the time but if you want to speak to me –just call the Polk County office at (936) 327-8888, the Lufkin office (936) 632-1514 and they will get the message to me or you can email me at: [ppiner@hospiceinthepines.org](mailto:ppiner@hospiceinthepines.org)

*Patsy Piner*

## **HATS OFF TO:**

**FAYE PALMER** for hosting the first “Get –Acquainted” meeting at her home so the Onalaska volunteers could meet our new volunteer coordinator. Also, Faye and **LULA BOGGS** have visited several hospice patients in a Livingston Nursing Home.

**WILBER WRIGHT** for being willing to take whatever patient assignment comes his way.

**LOIS GUSE** for sitting with a patient each week so the family can get a much needed and appreciated break.

**PAT MERRIWETHER** and **MARTHA WINDSOR** for going to the IPU to visit a lonely patient on very short notice.

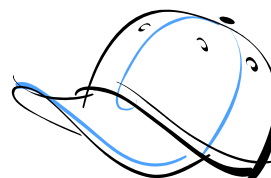
**PAM WEST** for showing up at the IPU at just the right time and doing just the right thing.

**JANET PALMER** for providing her patient and his family constant support and having such a delightful time doing it.

**BARBARA EAVES** and **BILLIE PRICE** for representing *HIP* by faithfully doing blood pressure checks at Belk.

**BRENDA WARD** for spending quality time with her patient.

**AVERY BRADLEY** for rising to the need when our Elliott House employee was out ill.



## **Families sometimes feel hospice care is "too late"**

By Joene Hendry Fri Jul 13, 11:13 AM ET

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - In most cases, terminally ill people are referred to hospice care in a timely fashion, survey findings show, but quite often family members feel the referral was too late to deal adequately with the patient's pain and other needs.

However, a short length of time spent in hospice care does not necessarily mean the quality of care was unsatisfactory. The study found that even though over 58 percent of patients spent less than 30 days in hospice care and about 32 percent spent 7 days or less, the majority of family members felt their relative received appropriately timed hospice referral and that hospice care was satisfactory.

"Despite a very short length of stay, the majority of hospices are providing excellent care," Dr. Joan M. Teno told Reuters Health. "They do a wonderful job of 'rallying the troops' in the middle of the crisis to provide the needed intervention in a short time frame."

In 2005, Teno from Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, and colleagues surveyed bereaved family members of patients who received hospice care from 631 hospice programs. Their findings are published in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management.

Of the 106,514 family members who participated in the survey, 87 percent said their relatives received appropriately timed hospice referrals while 11 percent indicated that the referral was too late.

Family members who thought the referral was "too late" compared to those who judged it to be "at the right time" were more likely to report that patients did not receive adequate help with pain (10 percent vs. 5 percent), difficulty breathing (10 percent vs. 4 percent), or dealing with feelings (18 percent vs. 8 percent).

Family members of patients referred "too late" were also more likely to report unmet family needs. Nearly 19 percent cited a lack of emotional support and 41 percent felt uninformed about what to expect. By comparison, just 10 percent and 25 percent of family members of appropriately referred patients felt the same.

When seeking hospice care for a family member, Teno advises asking if hospice centers have adequate staffing and programs that meet both the patient's and the family's needs.

"Ultimately," she said, "we need to educate the public about the benefits of early hospice referral so they can get the full benefit of hospice services and not just an intense intervention in the last days of life."

SOURCE: Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, online June 21, 2007.



## Good intentions and Yard Art

By Patsy W. Piner

Have you ever made plans to do something that you thought would make someone else very happy and possibly put you in the running for sainthood? Have you ever followed through and done that special thing only to have it blow up in your face? Well, I did just that. And I think I learned a thing or two. At least, I hope I did.

In 2002, my grandson, Ty, had tubes placed in his ears for the second time. I took off work so I could help my daughter, a single mother, navigate the halls of Kelsey Seybold in Houston with a cranky 5 year-old in tow. Ty came through the procedure with flying colors and in a surprisingly good mood. He and his stuffed frog companion were a hit with the day surgery staff. By 10:30am we were seated at Denny's watching Ty enjoy his pizza breakfast. At one point, he looked at his mom and said, "Why is my voice so loud?" Mission accomplished with the tubes - maybe the number of daily "What did you say" questions from Ty would decrease.

Ty wanted to ride with me to his house, so we followed his mom out to Katy. As I was driving, I decided Ty deserved a special treat because he had behaved so well during a potentially difficult time. Ty's favorite animal is the frog. I told him that he had been such a good boy that I had a surprise for him. So off we went to Big Lots in Katy for a wonderful grandmother/grandson outing - bonding forever by picking out the perfect frog. A frog, I dreamed, that he would keep by his bed for the rest of his life, remembering me fondly, long after I am gone. He will stroke his frog, look up to heaven and mouth yet another thank you to his beloved grandmother as a tear rolls down his cheek. Yes, this would be a wonderful time. I just knew a precious memory was about to be born.

Well, it became a memory all right, but I sure wouldn't call it precious! Whatever made me think taking a 5 year-old boy fresh out from under anesthetic frog shopping at a junk store was a good thing? We got a cart and he spotted the perfect frog immediately, a purplish gray blob holding an opalescent sphere. Ty claimed this one for his room and into the cart it went. Next he saw a leaping frog - perfect for his sister Lauren, he said, not hearing my protests that she did not like or want a frog. A glossy brown speckled frog from the discount aisle for his mom was the next winner followed quickly by a gray-green frog holding a deformed water lily for the front porch. And finally, the family frog, a bright green specimen in striped swimming trunks. There were five frogs in our cart. Not two, like I planned, but five. I firmly explained that he had to choose his two favorite frogs; we could not buy all five. I saw the beginnings of a human melt down right before my very eyes. His head started bobbing and his lips started quivering. His eyes began to water and the whimpering was bubbling just below the surface.



My daughter gasped when she saw the display of frog yard art on her coffee table. Horror was etched on her face as she stared at them and then at me, repeatedly. She could not speak but her eyes told me she was not happy. Finally, a whispered "Mom!" was all she could manage to utter. We sat down to talk to Ty reasonably about the downfall of excess and how pitching a fit in public was not acceptable behavior, but Ty was sticking to his guns. He wanted all five frogs, in fact, he said he loved all five of these frogs and he was not willing to give any up. Today, proudly displayed on the fireplace in my daughter's Katy home are five yard art frogs. My daughter is talking to me again but Ty still asks why I won't take him shopping anymore.

What was I thinking? I had the very best of intentions when I took Ty frog shopping. I knew what I wanted the outcome to be. What went wrong? Why did my wonderful plan fall apart?

Those of us who volunteer with hospice always have our hearts in the right place. We show up to visit with our patients and families full of good intentions, wanting to do all of the right things for all of the right reasons. But sometimes fate is not kind and we get thrown a curve or maybe a frog or two. Should we stop? Of course, not! We keep on trying, learning from each incident and hopefully, we end up much wiser for the next patient.



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## **THE RIGHT TO HOPE**

...Hope is a journey, not a destination; its value lies in the exploration. Hope is the way we live life, and the journey of hope should last until we end.

This is very hard for loved ones and the medical community to understand. Our thinking is limited: we only see hope in a cure, and we feel hopeless when we believe there is none. The dying, however, see the value of living hopefully rather than hopelessly, and that is why they choose hope as their companion on the final journey.

David Kessler, Life Lessons

Note to volunteers: When a hospice patient expresses a hope to you, whether you think it is realistic or not, the simple thing to remember is to *acknowledge the hope*. Appropriate responses might be: “That would be nice”, “I hope so too”, “Tell me more”, or just acknowledge that you have heard this with a smile. Hope is the possibility that something will happen, not the probability; acknowledging that hope, not agreeing or disagreeing with it, is a gift we give to our patients and families.

Taken from Horizons – Houston Hospice Volunteer Newsletter Summer 2005

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED