

# Volunteer Newsletter

## September 2022

### A note from Ali Maguire Volunteer Coordinator



#### Dying is Hard Work

These four words continue to sit heavy on my heart and since having heard them five months ago when I started my role as volunteer coordinator, they have not become lighter. I have turned them over in my mind, dissected their meaning, tried to reword or rephrase them but still, they perch inside my soul like a weight I can't seem to shed.

Death, to my view, was a release, a liberation from suffering, from enduring pain. Now I am left ambivalent about what death truly means and pondering the very process of dying. Over the past several months I have looked inward to face my own feelings on this subject; to unravel this unease since having been struck with this stark string of verbiage.

I have always encountered life's departure with a sense of curiosity, a reliance of and on anatomical science, and with acceptance of the cliché platitudes I have heard throughout my life- "She is at peace", "He is no longer suffering", "They are reunited with their loved ones". The body itself is simple; breathing ceases, the heart stops, metabolism fades to a stand-still. But what of this "hard work"? This belays the idea of peace, reunification, and serene comfort. And with this question I was propelled to learn its intent and how to make amends with my own discomfort and understand the passing of life a bit better.

The need for love and belonging sits smack in the middle of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs- immediately after physiological and safety needs and before esteem and self-actualization. This makes sense, to move your way up the hierarchy the primal necessities need to be met; otherwise, we are left with an empty space. A life unresolved. Life and relationships are complicated. We are

wired to make deep and meaningful connections- to have a sense of belonging. For some, this is easy. For others trauma has marked their lives in a way that manifests itself in long built walls. Protective but self-harming. And still for others, it may have been fear that held back their deepest desires and time has run its course. The mind is left with the nagging question of "why didn't I allow myself to dream bigger?"

Until recently I had thought the strenuous labor was a physical barrier, but I am coming to realize the hardest challenges we encounter in life are the psychological ones; mired by emotional and mental muddiness. It stands to reason that death would mirror life in much the same way.

The hefty part of accepting this "Hard Work" phrase when applying it to the people we care for or sit with in the hospice setting is that we have little control to ease their mind, other than to be present, hold space, and give them permission to release the disquiet they are gripping with all the force and might remaining in their fragile bodies. As we face our own mortality the challenges are even greater- our questions to ourselves carry a heavier weight, an ownership, a decision.

Life is a messy tangle of interconnectedness. I wonder if we start early and make peace during the tangible journey that we might lessen the burden at its conclusive end. Getting back to Maslow and his depiction of human needs- we all seek the very same things: Love, security, connection, the knowledge that we matter, that we leave a legacy so not to be easily forgotten. I don't know that I feel weightless or that I ever could in this introspective wandering, but I do feel purpose in setting the bedrock to make dying an easier task or at least a bit less hard.

Prayer Shawls are available in the office if you would like to bring one to your patient as well as a variety of cards (condolence, birthday, thinking of you, ...).

## Volunteer Support Meeting

September 29th 3:00-4:00 & 5:00-6:00 in the boardroom. Please let me know if and what time you would like to attend. Zoom attendance is also welcome.



## A note from Robin Haynes Volunteer Coordinator

### AHOC September

**Aroostook Volunteer support meeting** is scheduled via MS Teams for Monday, September 12 from 6:30-7:30pm. Invitation link will be sent closer to date of meeting.

**Mizpah in Grand Isle** will be offering a presentation on Navigating the Grief Journey from 12-4 with hospice team members.

## A note from Sarah Cote Volunteer Coordinator

### Volunteer Support Meetings

*This is the first chance to meet in person since very early on in the pandemic. This will be an informal meeting with the intention of re-connecting, checking-in and attending to a few important items that we have not been able to properly acknowledge.*

**Lincoln** – Wednesday, September 14th CHCS in-person 3-4pm

**Bangor** – Wednesday, September 21st NLHCH in-person 6-7pm & 7-8pm (ten folks per session max)

*\*please note that this is subject to change in which case meetings will be online.*



## A note from Jane Cornman Bereavement Coordinator

### Thursday Morning Drop-In Grief Support Meetings

Bangor area online grief support meetings continue on the first and third Thursdays of the month, 9-10:30 am. Upcoming meetings will take place on September 1 and 15 and October 6 and 20. People who are interested in attending or want more information should contact Jane Cornman (944-5534 or [jcornman@northernlight.org](mailto:jcornman@northernlight.org)).

### Offerings and Outreach:

The Aroostook House of Comfort has graciously shared hand-crocheted and fleece-tied blankets to be given to our patients. Please see any one of the Volunteer Coordinators to pick one out that you think your patient might like. There are several fleece-tied options for children as well.



## Volunteer CEU Recommendations

[From Sun to Sun - A hospice nurse reflects on the art of dying](#) by Nina Angela McKissock, RN. (251 pages)- Volunteer Jane W. (South Portland) describes the book as “A wonderful memoir of the author reflecting on the art of dying. She shares her experience and the stories of twenty-one patients (as well as their families). I like that she refers to them as “guests”, “friends”, or “clients”. She discusses the healing power of touch, not just in the form of massage but emotional healing- listening is a form of touch. “It isn’t the technique of touch that matters, it’s the intention of love and the quality of heart that soothes and heals.” Jane shares “Highly recommend this book!” This book is also highly recommended by Volunteer Deb D. (South Portland).

[Her Beautiful Brain - a memoir](#) by Ann Hedren (181 pages)- Volunteer Jane W. (South Portland) “The author writes the story of her life as a mom as her own mother lives with the early onset of Alzheimers. Ann’s mom had wanted to write her own story someday but did not get the chance. She was courageous and brave. It was a sad but interesting story of the complicated journey and also how confusing and difficult the journey impacts the family.

[Gone from My Sight](#) by Barbara Karnes, Hospice Nurse – Podcast (59 minutes)- Volunteer Ron E. (South Portland) details “she left me with a new message of how important educating our families as well as the patient to take away the unknown as well as reduce fear. The podcast left me with a renewed energy as well as a reminder how sacred our work is.”

### Reflection

**How do you know when you have made a difference for someone you serve?**

We invite you to share your thoughts with your region's volunteer coordinator.

### Fun Fact

**The James Webb Telescope can see 13.6 billion light-years away.**

**The farthest image away from us that has been captured is**

**SMACS 0723**

[NASA's Webb Delivers Deepest Infrared Image of Universe Yet | NASA](#)

[Webb Space Telescope Fact Sheet \(nasa.gov\)](#)