

Passages

Fall 2003

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F H O S P I C E O F G R E E N C O U N T R Y , I N C .

Champions to the Cause

In her *People and Places* column of the *Tulsa World* newspaper, Danna Sue Walker wrote, "Death isn't a popular topic. It certainly doesn't seem like good dinner conversation. But when Oklahoma Attorney General Drew and Linda Edmondson addressed end-of-life care . . . it turned out to be inspirational."

Indeed, the speeches by both the Edmondsons and Robin Green, the wife of a late Hospice of Green Country patient, brought laughter and tears to the eyes of the more than 170 guests of Journey 2003.

In spite of the tough topics, the evening wrapped up on not only an inspirational note but also a motivational one.

Held on June 5 at the DoubleTree Hotel at Warren Place, the evening opened with a reception for the Edmondsons featuring music by singer John Sawyer. After dinner, Herbert P. Haschke, Jr., HGC board president, and

Brent Wolfe, executive director, shared their appreciation and praise for the HGC staff and volunteers and the tireless efforts of the Edmondsons regarding end-of-life issues.

Champions continued on page 3.



Hospice of Green Country Board President Herbert P. Haschke, Jr., Attorney General Drew and Linda Edmondson, and Hospice of Green Country Executive Director Brent Wolfe.



Journey 2003 honorary chairs Hal and Tracy Salisbury, Hospice of Green Country Director of Marketing and Development Aubrey Ringleb, and Board President Herbert P. Haschke, Jr.

Sincerest Thanks

Hospice of Green Country would like to thank Tracy and Hal Salisbury for their commitment and leadership as honorary chairs of Journey 2003. Additionally, we sincerely thank our generous sponsors:

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We also thank our generous in-kind contributors: Ranch Acres Wine & Spirits, Dragonfly Floral Designs, LLC, and Presentation Services.

Celebrating Volunteers: *Always Caring, Always Sharing*

There is no doubt that volunteers are an integral part of Hospice of Green Country's services. Medicare requires that volunteers provide at least 5 percent of the clinical staff hours, and we have consistently been far above that level. The volunteer staff consists of Volunteer Program Director, Benelle Reeble, PhD, CVA, and one part-time assistant, Jeannie Jones. Hospice of Green Country has approximately 75-100 volunteers at any one time, and two volunteers have been with the organization for 14 years.

Currently, our volunteer corps profile is:

- The majority are female.

- Ages range from 14 to 85 (average is 62).
- Most volunteers work full-time.
- Last year volunteers made 2,255 contacts, gave 6,986 hours, drove 56,212 miles and, most importantly, saved HGC \$184,741 (a 50 percent savings over 2001).

In the past year, the volunteer department processed 1,421 requests from staff and patients for our services, which included errands, patient care, transportation, office work and special events.

The volunteer department is also proud to announce three new projects:

- Volunteers have begun making life history videos for patients and their families.
- HGC is providing temporary food assistance to patients through our membership in the Eastern Oklahoma Food Bank.
- Volunteers are collecting and giving teddy bears to our patients as a small token to remind them that someone cares about them.

In conjunction with RSVP, HGC is now asking people to sew teddy bears and donate material for the "Beary Cares" project.

Volunteers *continued on page 3.*

Volunteer of the Year Awards



Previous Heart of Gold Recipients: (L to R) Jane Ho, Clyde Buchanan, Lou Parks, Gigi Westfall, Pat McKee, John Groth, Margaret Jochims, Vernon Hensley, Donna Rice, Cathy Harris, Jeannie Jones, Carol Soflin, Kevin Smith, Suzanne Reeble, Elisabeth Ham, Joe Garrett, Sue Young, David Blackburn, Janice Wolak, Bev Cobb, Eric Kessler, Bandy (Pradip) Bandyopadhyay and Lisa Huckans.



2003 Heart of Gold Winners: (L to R) Clyde Buchanan, Jeannie Jones, Margaret Jochims, Janice Wolak, Eric Kessler and Joe Garrett. (Not pictured: Elaine Moore-Jones)



Benelle Reeble, volunteer program manager.



More than 400 volunteers and guests attended the Volunteer of the Year Award luncheon at the Renaissance Hotel April 28, 2003. (L to R) Pat McKee, volunteer; Jeannie Jones, volunteer program assistant; Vernon Hensley, volunteer and last year's winner of the Volunteer of the Year award; Brent Wolfe, executive director; and Margaret Jochims, volunteer nominee. (Standing L to R) Donna Rice, volunteer nominee; Benelle Reeble, volunteer program manager; and Eric Kessler, volunteer nominee.



Heart of Gold winner David Canahl, "King of the Food Pantry."

Volunteers *continued from page 2.*

On May 2, 2003, Green Country celebrated National Volunteer Week by recognizing our volunteers at a beautifully catered banquet. The theme this year was "Volunteers: Always Sharing, Always Caring," and eight people were given the Heart of Gold Award for outstanding service. The 2003 recipients were Elaine Moore-Jones, past board president, Clyde Buchanan, David Canahl, Joe Garrett, Jeannie Jones, Margaret Jochims, Eric Kessler and Janice Wolak. Two Hospice of Green Country special staff awards were given to Sandra Mosby and Janet Teel, RN, for their continuous and outstanding

support of the volunteer department. Special volunteer awards went to Vernon Hensley, for driving more than 8,000 miles for Hospice of Green Country in 2002, and to Donna Rice, volunteer assistant, for all the time and energy she has put into supervising office volunteers and calculating statistics for the past 11 years.

Without our volunteers, Hospice of Green Country could not provide as many services to our patients and families. One family recently wrote, "Hospice of Green Country has provided us with many services, but the gift of our volunteer has meant the most to our family!" *

Our volunteer wish list includes many things that will only enhance our capability to meet the needs of our agency. The wish list includes: VHS tapes, a digital camera, a salad bowl, serving utensils, and easels to display posters. For more information on our program or the next training session, please call Benelle or Jeannie at 747-2273.

Medical Perspective

BY JEFFREY ALDERMAN, MD

Recently, I was asked to help a friend who was facing a tough situation. His uncle had suddenly become ill and was admitted to the intensive care unit of a local hospital. Unable to speak or breathe on his own for several days, it quickly became clear that my friend's uncle had little hope for a meaningful recovery and would likely not survive much longer. What bothered me was that no one from the hospital had taken the time to explain the circumstances to the family, nor underscored the grave prognosis their loved one faced.

My own experience with hospice began in 2000 when a relative was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. At first I was skeptical of the ever-present hospice staff. They seemed to be doing nothing to help my relative. With time, I began to realize that they were doing everything — comforting my family, explaining the dying process, preparing us for each stage of his illness — all the while making sure that my relative's symptoms of pain and suffering were controlled. It wasn't until after he died that I realized how thankful I was

for the hospice staff. The doctors, nurses and social workers had spent hours explaining the circumstances to me, keeping me involved and educated. As a result, I felt less sad, less scared and more empowered.

Family members suffer from anxiety and depression while their loved one is dying. A recent study showed that when communication between health care providers and family members is frequent and ongoing, anxiety and depression levels are significantly reduced. The fact remains that good communication is still sometimes lost in the health care process.

If someone you know feels helpless or frightened watching a loved one die, encourage them to make sure all of their questions are answered and fears are addressed. Know that knowledge is power and understanding provides comfort.

Communication can be the best medicine. *

Jeffrey Alderman, MD, is the new associate medical director at Hospice of Green Country. He practices internal and palliative care medicine and teaches at OU-Tulsa College of Medicine.

Champions *continued from page 1.*

The couple has championed end-of-life care, services and laws in the legislative, medical and social service sectors for decades. Their efforts have increased both Oklahomans' awareness and access to improved medical care, comfort and dignity when confronted with life-ending situations.

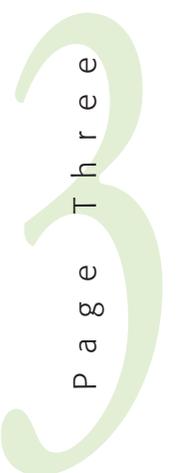
As president of the National Association of Attorneys General, Edmondson chose "end of life" as his presidential initiative and has

hosted a series of listening conferences across the country, as well as compiling a resource book that will be given to the attorneys general of the other 49 states.

Edmondson calls Linda his "angel on my shoulder" and praised her for her many years of direct contact serving the dying and their families as a medical social worker and in her role as manager of The Oklahoma Alliance for Better Care of the Dying.

Both hope that the work they contribute today will strengthen the hospice movement, citing it is not just important today but for the future. "We and those we love will someday die in this system or in another system that we create for ourselves," said Linda.

Thanks to their leadership and example, hope for a brighter ending for many friends and loved ones is in sight. *



Willing & Able

"To the world you might be one person, but to one person you might be the world." – Unknown

Hospice of Green Country's admission team means the world to so many patients and families. The admission team consists of four deeply dedicated hospice staff members — Dale Shannon, LPN, (clinical coordinator), Janet Myers (support services assistant) and admit nurses Margene Osgood, RN, and Mary Fluker, RN, CHPN.

Hospice referral sources include hospitals, physician offices, nursing homes, and patients and their families. Once referred, the admission team helps patients and their families connect immediately to our services by offering direct consultation and evaluation. The admission team also serves as an ever-present advocacy group with a familiar face.

When a patient or family calls Hospice of Green Country, they will immediately be connected with Dale. She determines whether the patient's diagnosis meets criteria for hospice service, handles the protocol for payment and makes sure there is a physician's order. Most importantly, Dale ensures that every patient who is appropriate for hospice care receives service — regardless of his or her ability to pay. Dale also serves as the primary liaison to the physicians' offices and communicates to the primary care physician if the referral is made from a different physician. In every way, she is an asset who facilitates continuous trust with physicians, patients and their families.

Following a conversation with Dale, the patient and family receive an introductory visit to further determine the patient's needs and confirm hospice eligibility. The evaluation addresses four major points: the diagnosis, symptoms, financial situation and a general assessment of all needs. The initial visit by our admission team serves to alleviate anxiety and educates the patient and family about hospice care. Additionally, the admission team makes arrangements to obtain necessary equipment for the home and, if needed, assist in transferring the patient from the hospital to his or her home. Through this initial encounter, the admission team is more able to inform the assigned case manager.

From start to finish, the admission team works to effectively move toward the goal of fulfilling the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient. *



Dale Shannon, LPN, Margene Osgood, RN, Janet Myers, and Mary Fluker, RN, CHPN.

Staff Achievements

Scott Draughon, MSW, LSW, completed the Comprehensive Bereavement Skills Training in February 2003 at the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado. The training was conducted by Dr. Alan Wolfelt, director of the center and an internationally noted author and grief counselor. Wolfelt's instructional emphasis is on "companioning" rather than "treating" the bereaved through honoring life stories.

Draughon is one of 18 classmates selectively chosen from 15 states and the only Oklahoman in his class. Draughon also was recently confirmed to serve a three-year term on the Tri-County Council on Aging, which is an advisory and advocacy group for the elderly in Tulsa, Creek and Osage counties. Draughon will be a member of the Legislative and Education Committee. He was nominated by a group member, approved by the group's executive committee and appointed by Tulsa Mayor Bill LaFortune.

The Steady Rock of

Hospice

BY ROBIN GREEN

I keep a small turquoise stone with me wherever I go. Sometimes I take it out and rub the smooth surface. I remember.

I have a friend that lost his young wife in a tragic medical mishap. He calls his stone a grief rock.

"You see, at first you are chained to grief 24 hours a day and it is impossible to move," my friend explained. "Then the rock gets smaller and you drag it with you throughout the day. With time, it becomes small enough to travel with you, like a cherished companion."

Six years ago last April I became a widow at the age of 40. My husband, Wayne, died from a brain tumor. He was given a five-year life expectancy but he lived for a dozen years. Most of them were happily focused on living, raising our children, enjoying family and friends.

However, as his health deteriorated and our insurance coverage depleted, the days seemed endless. A large immovable grief rock sat on our chests.

One day in a yoga class, I shared my struggles. One student suggested I call Hospice of Green Country, and we did.

From that moment forward a community of people came to lift the rock from our chest to provide respite. A hospice nurse came with medication and information. Spiritual advisors, social workers and aides came as well.

A volunteer named John gave his time and heart. One night Wayne woke in loneliness and fear and called out for John. This loyal volunteer drove 30 minutes to the nursing home to sit by Wayne's side until the sun rose in the sky.

Hospice provided a firm rock foundation to make the last years palatable and poignant.

Sometimes, I take out my stone and rub the smooth surface. I remember how much I loved Wayne. How much I miss him. How grateful I am to Hospice for their support.

I tuck it away in my pocket. It is with me always. I remember. ✨



John Groth and Robin Green



THE IMPORTANCE OF *Remembering*

BY KELLY WRIGHT, MSW

One day I was driving down the highway with a friend when we passed an arrangement of flowers by the side of the road. She made a comment about how sad the roadside memorial was, and she could not understand why people felt the need for that kind of tribute. Obviously, she had not experienced the loss of someone significant to her. If she had, she would have known how important it is to find some way to remember and recognize a loss.

The act of remembering is crucial to the healing process. There is no right or wrong way to remember; the important thing is to find a way that works for you. There exist ample opportunities to express grief by remembering.

You can look on the Internet and find numerous sites that allow you to submit your loved one's name and write a brief statement about him or her which people from all over the world can read. This type of experience provides a window into the needs of someone dealing with grief. It is important to remember privately a loved one who has died, but it also is important to do so publicly. We want the world to know we lost someone. We want the world to remember that person because he or she mattered to us and is still with us daily.

Another way to remember a loved one publicly is through a memorial service. *Webster's Dictionary* defines a "memorial" as "Anything intended to preserve the memory of a person or event; something which serves to keep something else in remembrance." Often a memorial comes in the form of a funeral soon after the death. However, even if your loss was more than a year ago, it is still extremely important to recognize your loss and remember your loved one publicly and in a way that helps the healing process.

Hospice of Green Country offers memorial services twice a year in Tulsa and in Claremore for the community and all the families of our patients. These services offer families the opportunity to recognize their loss in a community that shares their grief. One family member who attended a spring memorial service said, "To see all the others who have lost loved ones made me feel less alone and gave me hope and courage to work through my grief."

At the spring memorial service in 2003, author and speaker Doug Manning touched many with his wonderful mix of humor and empathy. Manning travels the world letting grieving people know their grief is normal, which is refreshing for the bereaved to hear.

During the spring memorial, the names of loved ones who had died were read and families were presented with personalized cards from the Hospice of Green Country staff. These cards contained written memories and feelings that the staff had about the person. One family member said that the card was "worth more than a thousand roses." It is important that people know others remember, too.

We look forward to the fall memorial service that will be held on November 9, 2003. This service will be a time of remembering and celebrating the lives of loved ones. As a symbol of the circle of life, memorial trees will be given to each family in remembrance of their loved ones. Everyone is welcome, even if your loved one was not a patient of Hospice of Green Country. Public remembrance is vital, and we are pleased to offer the forum to make that happen. ✨

Kelly Wright is the director of bereavement and social work at Hospice of Green Country.

from the executive director



Brent Wolfe

Hospice of Green Country has a rich and unique history of serving our community. More than 15 years ago, a group of concerned citizens and physicians came together to fill the need for a community-based hospice and created Hospice of Green Country, a free-standing nonprofit agency.

The number of hospice providers in Oklahoma's Green Country has increased dramatically throughout the years. The majority of new providers are for-profit businesses and their entry has radically impacted the hospice world. The financial bottom line, at times, seems to be the predominant element affecting service delivery in the hospice industry. Although HGC is continually aware of being a financially sound organization, we strive to be first and foremost a mission-driven organization.

All patients and families receive the same excellent care at Hospice of Green Country regardless of their ability to pay. In order to maintain this universal standard of care, we rely on the generosity of our community to help underwrite the cost for those patients who have no medical coverage. Our patients and families are grateful for this support and the HGC staff is always mindful of our responsibility back to the community.

I am very proud of the history and reputation of Hospice of Green Country and of the continuing standard of excellence that we strive to set. We truly belong to the community and are always working for each of you. Together, we are able to stay true to our mission and maintain the quality of care for which Hospice of Green Country is known. *

from the president



Herbert P. Haschke

Managing Financial Responsibilities in a Difficult Economy

In today's economic environment, the board of directors and staff leadership recognize the responsibility of managing the financial resources of Hospice of

Green Country. Our commitment to our mission and Courtesy Care patients makes this an even greater responsibility. Since January 2003, we have experienced a 33 percent increase in Courtesy Care patient costs compared to our 2002 figures.

To address these financial responsibilities, the board and executive committee meetings focus on financial performance, and two questions are always asked:

- Are revenues coming in as budgeted?
- Are the operating costs being managed as well as possible?

Any areas of concern are addressed and aggressively followed up on. To help meet these needs, the board has achieved 100 percent financial participation and continually searches for new sources of financial support to cover the projected \$350,000 needed to cover Courtesy Care costs.

On behalf of the board of directors, I promise each patient, our staff, and our many friends and supporters that we will meet the challenge of sound financial management in these hard times. *

Herbert P. Haschke, Jr., LLB, CPA

President, Board of Directors, Hospice of Green Country

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hospice programs

Mark Your Calendar!

Thursday, September 11

*Tulsa Area United Way
Day of Caring*

November

National Hospice Month

Sunday, November 9

Fall Memorial Service

Monday, December 8

Stay-at-Home Tea

HGC Mission Statement

Hospice of Green Country is a nonprofit, community-based, United Way agency dedicated to providing compassionate and quality end-of-life care to patients and families – regardless of ability to pay.

Hospice of Green Country Staff

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Jenny Alexopoulos, DO – Medical Director
Sharon Noel, DO – Medical Director
William Smith, Jr., MD – Medical Director

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