

Passages

Fall 2006

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF GREEN COUNTRY, INC.

MORE THAN JUST A

Hospice Patient



What is a "typical" hospice patient? When someone thinks of a hospice patient, the stereotype of an elderly, frail patient usually comes to mind. But a hospice patient can be anyone — a child, a young mother, or a middle-age father. Before anyone becomes a hospice patient, they are people who like to have fun.

Dennis Isaacson knew how to have fun and he typically went down whatever road life took him on — without thinking twice. And he usually went down it on a motorcycle, one of his great passions in life. In fact, that's how Dennis ended up permanently in Tulsa. Born in Topeka, Kan., and raised in Lincoln, Neb., he was riding his motorcycle through Tulsa when it broke down — and he never left.

The same road that kept him in Tulsa brought him to his wife, Karen. Dennis and Karen met in 1992 through a mutual friend. She was dating another person at the time, but it was love at first sight when she met Dennis. A few months after dating,

Dennis asked Karen to marry him. She was at first hesitant because they had both been divorced before, but one day she knew she was ready and arranged a surprise wedding in Rogers, Ark. — not a surprise for the family, but a surprise for the groom.

"We had discussed marriage and he kept asking me to set a date. I told him when I was ready I would let him know. That's how I let him know," said Karen with a chuckle. "It was a pretty elaborate thing to pull off without his knowledge, but I did it."

Karen and Dennis would often entertain at home, serving as hosts for friends and family, including his four children, for holidays and special events. Dennis made friends wherever he went, and as an ordained minister he performed weddings for many of his friends — a practice he kept so he could officiate for friends.

When Dennis wasn't with family and friends, you could find him riding or fixing motorcycles. He worked at Jack's Motorcycle Service and regularly attended motorcycle shows, where he usually built the "rat trophy" — an award given to a motorcycle entered right off the street.

Dennis was the first vice president of the first chapter in Oklahoma for American Bikers Aimed Toward Education (ABATE), an organization that promotes motorcycle safety and awareness to schools, civic groups and the general public. ABATE also organizes a 'Toy Run' every year during the holidays to benefit Toys for Tots.

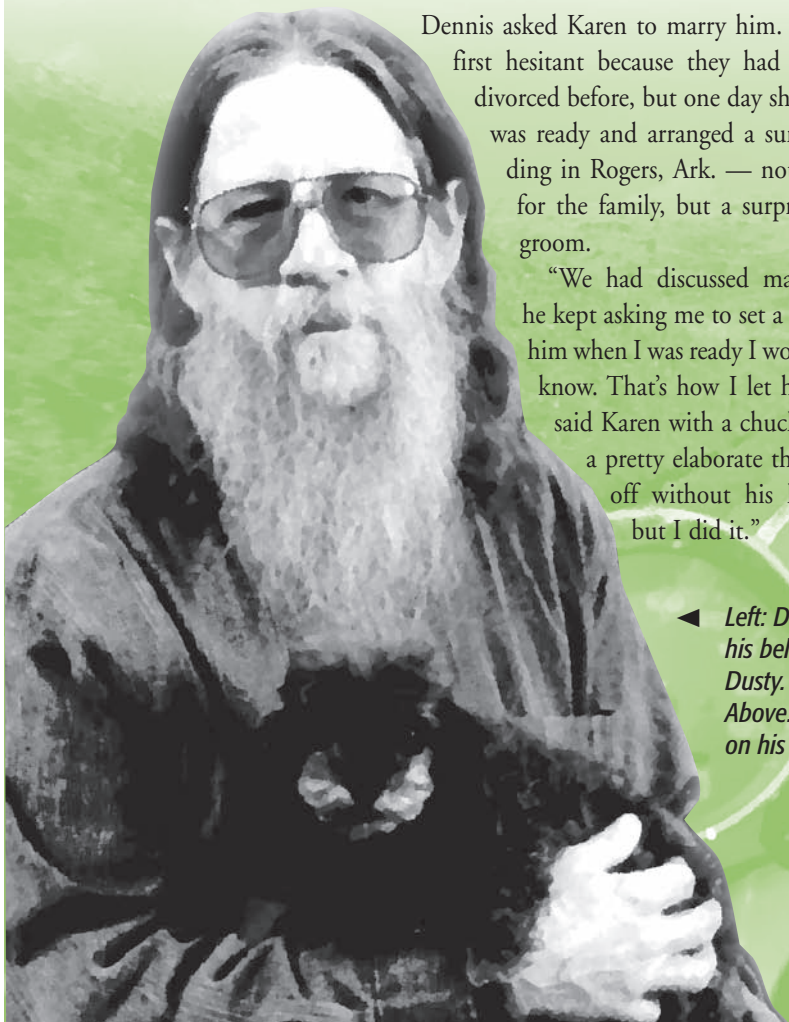
Dennis was happy and active, but soon a terrible diagnosis would change everything. He was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and at the end of July was admitted to the hospital, where doctors expected him to die. Dennis and Karen worked hard to change that verdict.

"Dennis was in the hospital for a while, but we eventually qualified for hospice and went home. I wasn't going to let him die in the hospital," said Karen.

The hospital recommended Hospice of Green Country and Karen immediately called. "It was an easy choice. So many people had good things to say."

Karen met with social worker Linn Kuhnel and instantly felt at ease. "She made everything so easy. I could tell from within a few minutes of meeting her that I could tell her anything, and that she was on our side."

More continued on page 3.



◀ *Left: Dennis and his beloved dog, Dusty.
Above: Dennis on his first bike.*

GIVING MORE THAN EXPECTED MAKES

Miracles Happen

Volunteers for Hospice of Green Country come from all walks of life, bringing a diversity of talent that helps us meet the needs of our patients.

By giving more than expected every day, volunteers make miracles happen for our patients and their families. It might be mowing a yard, styling a patient's hair, transporting patients to doctors' appointments, making Life History videos, grocery shopping, delivering supplies, participating in the Holiday Project and memorial services, sitting and talking with patients while caregivers do errands, or holding the hand of someone who is dying so that patient knows he is not alone. In addition, other volunteers work in the office and support the clinical staff by putting together charts and diaries, calling bereaved families and friends, working on computer projects and helping with mailings.

Who are these people who take time to give service for someone else at a vulnerable time of their life? They are courageous volunteers who set aside their personal interests to touch the lives of others and to help them live the last days of their lives with meaning. They offer a smile and a ray of sunshine to others and yet ask for nothing in return. They learn to have a sense of humor in the face of adversity, fear and stress. They offer compassion and love to make another life more meaningful.

National Volunteer Week was April 24-28 and we celebrated all of our volunteers' accomplishments with a catered banquet, entertainment and awards at Tulsa's All Soul's

Church. With a theme of "Volunteers Make a Difference Every Day" and more than 110 in attendance, guests, board members and staff came to honor our volunteers and acknowledge them for the 6,100 hours they worked and more than 56,000 miles they drove in the past year.

At the banquet, the Heart of Gold Award winners were announced. This prestigious award is given to volunteers who have personally excelled on behalf of the Hospice of Green Country Volunteer Department. This year, the Heart of Gold Award recipients were: Betty Engelbrecht, Terri Wantiez, Donna Calvin, Delores Cummins, Ann Box and Ron Swetnam. Volunteer Department staff awards were also presented for outstanding support of our volunteer department to Pete Brown, Chaz Gaut, Linn Kuhnelt, Christy Lyke and Camille Zumwalt.

If you are interested in volunteering with Hospice of Green Country, training is offered four times a year. To find out more, call 918-747-2273 or visit our website, www.hospiceofgreencountry.org.

For all they give, the one thing volunteers continually say is that they receive more than they give. So to all of our volunteers, we say thank you and express our gratitude for all you do. ✨

Benelle Reeble, Ph.D., CVA is director of volunteer and bereavement services.



From left: Betty Engelbrecht, Terri Wantiez, Donna Calvin and Delores Cummins. Not pictured: Ann Box and Ron Swetnam



Volunteers are all smiles at the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet.



www.hospiceofgreencountry.org

More continued from page 1.

Everyone from Hospice of Green Country made a favorable impression on Karen and Dennis. "Everyone from hospice was so nice and so good at what they do. I was worried about how Dennis would react to having strange people in and out every day, but Dennis really liked everyone, especially Pete [Brown, home health aide]. After he left, Dennis looked at me and said 'I liked him,' which was pretty big for him to say that," said Karen.

"It was hard for Karen to leave the house," explained Pete. "She was homebound for a couple of months because Dennis didn't want to be alone with anyone he didn't know. After

Dennis had been in our care a week or so, Karen was able to go out and make funeral arrangements because Dennis became comfortable enough with me and the other staff who took care of him."

Dennis passed away on August 3 and Hospice of Green Country is taking care of Karen through the bereavement process by providing her with grief counseling and booklets as well as follow-up phone calls. She still misses him every day, but she knows where he is and what he's doing.

"He loved to ride so much that I'm sure that's where he's at right now, riding his bike in the sky."

Compassionate Doctor Joins Hospice of Green Country

DR. FRANCES HAAS, D.O. has joined Hospice of Green Country as assistant medical director. Haas currently has a private practice at the University of Oklahoma Physicians Internal Medicine Clinic.

Haas has more than 10 years experience in the medical field, but her road to becoming a physician was not a typical one.

A native of Boonesville, Ind., Haas's family moved to Missouri when she was in high school and she attended Missouri State Southern College. While she knew she wanted to be a doctor, her mother wasn't as sure.

"When I started college, I chose nursing because my mother was against me being a physician. Back then, women studied to become teachers and librarians, not doctors," said Haas.

"I was 37 when I told a physician friend the one thing I regretted was not becoming a physician, and that I was probably too old to pursue it. He said 'You're never too old,' so I started medical school at age 39."

Haas enrolled in the College of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of Health Sciences in Kansas City, Mo. She was happy there were plenty of older students in her class — though one younger student did point her out to his mother as a "non-traditional" student.

After completing medical school, Haas interned at Tulsa Regional Medical Center, where she specialized in internal medicine and HIV medicine. She says it's her calling and it came to her while at Mass one day.

"It's the only time it's really happened, but I'm glad. The HIV program has really become a passion," said Haas.



Dr. Frances Haas, D.O.

When she's not working or volunteering at the Bedlam Clinic, Haas spends her free time at home with her husband, Murray Thibodeaux, and their beloved Great Danes.

The couple's affection for Great Danes began with a dog named Mr. Ed, but soon they decided to expand their family and add a female companion, Isabel. Sadly, a terrible accident took Mr. Ed's life. But since then, Isabel has given the Haas family generations of Great Dane puppies that have brought joy to their home and to others.

In June, a Sand Springs family tragically lost their Great Dane to an abundance of bee stings. Sympathizing with the family's loss, Haas and her husband decided to help.

"Since we lost Mr. Ed, we knew what it was like to lose a dog you really loved. It broke our hearts when we saw the little girl who lost her dog, so we gave her one of ours."

Though she stays busy at work and at home, Haas jumped at the opportunity to work at Hospice of Green Country when asked by Dr. Dala Jarolim, one of the agency's medical directors.

"I was interested to work with Hospice of Green Country for many reasons. I want to learn more about how to give medications to people who can't receive them in traditional ways," said Haas. "I also believe in the 'quality of life' versus 'quantity of life' for end-of-life patients, as well as the need to care for the families as much as the patients — because they need it just as much. There are great opportunities here and I'm looking forward to getting started." *

Grief and the Holidays

HOW YOU CAN COPE

Seasonal holidays can be especially difficult times for people who are grieving.

They are more vulnerable to physical and emotional disturbances, than at any other time in their lives. That's why Hospice of Green Country offers suggestions to help bereaved individuals who are grieving prepare for the approaching holidays:

Accept all of your feelings. Tears, loneliness, sadness, even depression are natural reactions to the loss of a loved one. Holidays, birthdays and other special days can trigger a deep sense of loss long after you thought those feelings were gone. Accept yourself wherever you are in the process of grieving. If you find you are able to enjoy some of the festivities, you are in no way betraying the memory of your loved one.

Plan ahead. Decide what you can comfortably handle and let your needs be known to family and friends. Do you want someone else to take over some of the holiday responsibilities? Do you want to follow the traditional holiday routines, or do you want a change this year? Do you want to prepare holiday meals as you have in the past? Do you feel comfortable talking about your loss at family gatherings?

Don't be afraid to make changes. The holiday traditions may be too emotionally painful this year — consider making new holiday traditions for yourself and your family. The following are some suggestions:

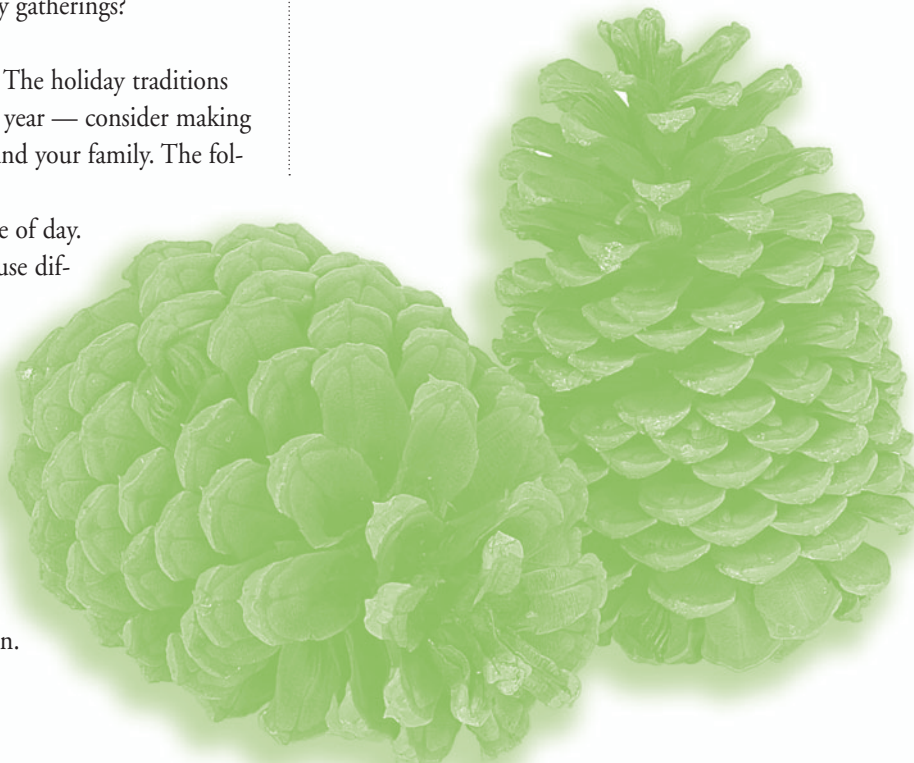
- Open your gifts at a different time of day.
- Have dinner at another place, or use different china or place settings.
- Attend a different place for your holiday worship.
- Let children take responsibility for the decorating or cookie making tasks.
- Volunteer to help people who are in need by serving dinner to needy families through a local homeless shelter or feeding kitchen.

Honor your loved one. Hang a stocking by the fire, light a candle, have a chair at the dining table or select an ornament in his or her memory. Author Robert Anderson reminds us, "Death ends a life, but not a relationship."

Set priorities. As a person who is grieving, know that you may not be able to function at your typical pace. Fatigue can lead to depression, even under the best of circumstances. Divide tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. Share holiday tasks and errands with family members or friends. Learn to say "No thank you" to social invitations when you are too tired or if you sense that memories will be painful.

Help another person in need. Helping someone else can be a very effective way of healing after a loss. Contributing to someone else diverts your attention away from yourself. If you have the energy, there are many people who need your help. Possibilities include volunteering at nursing homes, libraries and civic organizations. You may have a friend in need or a neighbor who needs your help. *

For more information about handling grief, contact Hospice of Green Country's bereavement department at 918-747-2273.



Is Your Spirit Well-Fed?

Spirituality is a hot topic these days. You don't have to look far to find news stories, workshops, best-selling books and movies that address some aspect of spirituality.

What is spirituality, anyway? According to most dictionaries, the definition of spirituality reads something like, "of or pertaining to the spirit." That answer then begs the question, what is the spirit? According to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, the definition of spirit is, "the vital principle or animating force within living beings."

As a chaplain, I find that people often forget about the needs of the spirit when they are experiencing significant life stresses and challenges. We may understand we have physical needs related to diet, exercise and adequate sleep. We may also understand we have emotional needs that can be met through significant relationships like family or friends. But spiritual needs are often shelved when life seems unmanageable or when we find ourselves in survival mode.

What touches your spirit in everyday life? How do you "feed" your spirit so that it continues to sustain you when times are hard? A few weeks ago I found myself sitting in my car for a few minutes as I waited for a phone call. As I looked around, I saw concrete and gravel, buildings and businesses, and I felt the heat emanating from the pavement. I felt discouraged and worn down from the daily grind. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed some feathers drifting down to the pavement. Curious, I got out of my car, walked over to a tree a few feet away, looked up and saw a red-tailed hawk above me. I felt my heart jump. As I watched her (and she watched me), I was overcome by the majesty and grace with which she carried herself. My spirit felt an instant boost as I reflected on this beautiful creature. As I returned to my car, I realized I had forgotten about the heat and the busy city bustling around me. My spirit had been refreshed.

As spiritual creatures, we have to remember that life is bigger than our own personal stories. I find it easy to get caught up in my own personal drama at times, forgetting that I'm only one thread in a giant tapestry of living beings on this planet. It takes time and effort to find the things that resonate within me, the things that feed my spirit. A good book, a favorite song or melody, meditation and prayer, a long walk in the coolest part of the day...these are some of the things that speak softly to my spirit and assure me something about life is good, even when circumstances may be telling me otherwise.

Take time to seek out those things that refresh and revitalize you. You will find they make the journey richer and more meaningful. Remember to feed your spirit today. ✨

Delana Taylor, MABC, LPC is the director of spiritual care.

Hospice Welcomes Patient with *Open Arms*

With a lot of dedication, research and help from donors, Hospice of Green Country launched its Hispanic Outreach Program — *Brazos Abiertos* or “open arms.” The program recently proved invaluable to one Tulsa family.

Juan was a 33-year-old father who arrived from Mexico with his wife and 8-year-old daughter to work as a laborer. Unfortunately, within a couple of months Juan became seriously ill and was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a virulent form of cancer.

Juan was unable to work, as was his wife who was nine months pregnant. The family — along with Juan’s mother who had arrived to help care for him — moved in with Juan’s brother and three sisters. They watched helplessly as Juan’s health deteriorated, but they felt confident he would get better. Juan had battled a brief illness before but recovered. Why should this time be any different?

Unfortunately, this time was different because the cancer was incurable. Juan checked into a hospital, where communication became a problem because the family only spoke Spanish. They didn’t understand his diagnosis or what was going on with Juan’s treatment.

Hospital staff contacted Hospice of Green Country to assist with the family, and Lorena Arista-Whelan, Hispanic Outreach Specialist, spoke to the family in Spanish to provide resources and meet their needs.

After working with the family to educate them on what hospice was and how it could help both Juan and his family, Juan was accepted into Hospice of Green Country’s care. Lorena met with the family almost daily to help the RNs and case managers monitor Juan’s medications and to serve as a translator between the family and Hospice of Green Country medical staff. It soon became clear that Juan had two wishes — to see his baby born and go home to Mexico to die surrounded by his family.

Linn Kuhnel, Juan’s social worker, immediately began the process of locating funds and resources to help make Juan’s wish come true. During that time, Juan’s baby boy was born and the need arose to get a quick turnaround on the baby’s birth certificate so he could be ready for travel.

Applications with the Dream Foundation and Trinity Hospice Foundation proved successful for funds and a gas card for the drive to Mexico. After securing the birth certificate within a 24-hour turnaround time, the family was off.

Juan died eight days later on June 29, surrounded by his loving family, his wishes fulfilled.

“It was a continuous education experience about hospice care and the Hispanic community — for Juan, his family, and us,” said Lorena. “One of the biggest obstacles was overcoming the trust issue. Hispanic families always take care of their own, so it took them a while to trust us to help with Juan and other things, like cleaning or other chores.”

“Our hospice care process isn’t the same process in the Hispanic community. We always talk to the patient about their care and progress, but in the Hispanic culture you usually talk to the family about that, not the patient.”

“We’ve learned so much from helping the family, and with what we’ve learned we can make even more progress toward helping patients and families in the Hispanic community.” ✱

Support for Brazos Abiertos has been generously provided by the Sarkeys Foundation, United HealthCare/PacifiCare, Grace and Franklin Bernsen Foundation, Charles and Pauline Flint Foundation, Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation, Maxine and Jack Zarrow Family Foundation and the Hille Foundation.



Tamra Moore, RN

The letters and cards of appreciation we receive each month tell a story: the staff and volunteers at Hospice of Green Country are dedicated to our mission. Our amazing group routinely gives more than anyone ever expects or would envision included within the scope of hospice services.

These “extras” take many forms, depending on each individual’s need, goal or dream. A few examples of what our staff and volunteers accomplished for patients over the past few months include:

- Securing funds to provide a mother the opportunity to attend her son’s wedding in Florida.
- Reuniting a mother, her six children and four grandchildren, just in time for final goodbyes.
- Making it possible for a young man and his son to experience a Beatles tribute concert.
- Facilitating arrangements for one last trip to Las Vegas and a visit with family.

- Assisting a young father in writing goodbye letters to his family.
- Facilitating the final wish of a young man to die in his home country of Mexico.

The Hospice of Green Country team works together tirelessly to make these and many other special occasions happen for the patients and families who look to us for a quality end-of-life experience. The words of our patients, their families and friends motivate our staff and volunteers to always strive for *more than expected*.

“The anniversary cake was beautiful and delicious.

The flowers were also beautiful.”

A patient’s husband

“You made our 55th wedding anniversary a success.”

A patient & spouse

“Your positive impact on others’ lives and their gracious deaths is more profound than you could ever imagine.”

A patient’s friend

Tamra Moore, RN
Executive Director

from the president



Jane Mudgett

We all like it when people, products and services meet our expectations. Yet what we really want is for someone or something to EXCEED our expectations. We are grateful to experience this daily at Hospice of Green Country in both obvious and less conspicuous ways.

We are always proud when our Fund Development team writes a professional grant request showcasing our services and then receives funding for one or more programs like our “Live Alone” program — their efforts are critical to fulfilling our mission. Our everyday heroes, however, enhance Hospice of Green Country in so many small ways:

- When you visit our conference room, you see over a hundred donated stuffed animals that we share with our patients.
- When we open thank-you notes from grieving families, they are grateful for the loving healthcare and emotional support services we’ve provided.
- Notes arrive with checks that add up to budget-sustaining contributions to support and reinforce our mission.
- Dozens and dozens of volunteers pick up and deliver food, cook meals, share stories and read the paper to people each

day without expecting a thank you beyond the one their heart receives by their actions.

- Tulsa Area United Way contributions allow us to help more people via our Courtesy Care and Live Alone programs.
- We open our food pantry and it continues to ebb and flow — it’s replenished and it’s shared with those in need.

This cycle of giving and receiving, yet never taking, is not unique to Hospice of Green Country, but it is an honorable benefit to our employees, volunteers, board members and donors of all kinds. Our donors come from all walks of life, are of all colors and cultures; their demographics are as varied as quilt patterns, and they give in multiple ways. Their actions — YOUR actions — always give more than we expect.

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

“What is essential is invisible to the eye,” the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

(The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

Jane Mudgett
President, Board of Directors

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Our Mission

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



Tulsa Area United Way



Joint Commission

on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

www.hospiceofgreencountry.org



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hospice events

Mark Your Calendar!

November

National Hospice Month

Thursday, November 9

United Way Victory Celebration

Saturday, December 9

Stay at Home Tea

Remembering Others Volunteer Event

Hospice of Green Country Staff

Frances Haas, DO - Assistant Medical Director
Dala Jarolim, MD - Medical Director
William Smith, MD - Medical Director

Lorena Arista-Whelan
Cleshona Brewer, CHHA
Linda Brock
Pete Brown, CHHA
Kathy Bryson, RN, BSN
Shanna Cody, LPN
Ray Davis
Tracy Duckworth, LPN
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Jacinta Jones
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Christy Lyke, RN, BSN
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Donna Stidham, CFRE
Delana Taylor, MABC, LPC
Janet Teel, RN, CHPN
Marilynne Tuggle, LPN
Irene Veuleman, CHHA
Horace Wellons, M.Div
Janie Wood, RN

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