

The A-Team



Hospice Volunteer Newsletter

An Encouraging Word:

The great opportunity is where YOU are. Every place is under the stars. Every place is the center of the universe.

~John Burroughs



You Did It!

It doesn't matter how much you have,
But how much you've **shared** with other.

It doesn't matter what kind of house you have,
But whether your love has made it a home.

It doesn't matter how many friends you can count,
But how many **friends** you can count on.

It doesn't matter how well you do in life,
But how much **good** you do.

It doesn't matter how much love you have gathered,
But how much you've **given** away.

In This Issue

An Encouraging Word

You Did It!

Timely Tips and Reminders

Book Nook

Helpful Hospice Hints:
"Playing Music"

Interview Insights: Prayer Shawls

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Timely Tips and Reminders

- **Reminder:** Get rid of the last phone number list I sent you and up-date it with the new attached list.
- **Reminder:** Volunteers are not allowed to “feed” patients. Volunteers may only arrange food items and offer what is present. If a facility staff member asks you to feed a patient-- educated and clarify your role with the facility. If a patient asks for food or water that is not present, ask the staff for permission to get the requested item.
- **Monthly Aseracare University:**
[August Aseracare U is Tuberculosis](#)
 When completing the post-test, please email back your answers including the name of the test in the email. Each test is due back the end of the month. If there is anything I can do to make this process easier for you please let me know (such as sending the test hard copy, etc.). Do note that it is a requirement for each volunteer to complete his or her monthly Aseracare University.

Up- Coming Training Schedule: (all optional for current volunteers)

- Orientation
 - September 12th, 2009 10-4pm
 - October 10th, 2009 10-4pm
- Companion Training
 - September 19th, 2009 10-4pm
 - October 17th, 2009 10-4p
- Vigil Training
 - September 19th, 4-6pm
 - October 24th, 10am-12pm
- Reflections Training
 - October 24th 12:30-2:30pm

The Book Nook: Recommended Books, CDs, and Media

- ***The Four Things That Matter Most*** by Ira Byock. Dr. Byock is an international leader in palliative care. This book addresses healing and maintaining relationships with the people we love, even in the most difficult circumstances, based on lessons Dr. Byock has learned from his work in hospice care. This is a good book to recommend to families dealing with difficult relationships before and after losing a loved one.
- ***Evacuation Plan: A novel from the hospice*** by Joe M. O’Connell. A rare fictional treatment of hospice volunteering and the final journeys of fictional patients, this novel has been described as compassionate, bittersweet, and even funny.
- ***On Death and Dying*** by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. Perhaps many of you have read this classic work on the process of death, grief, and bereavement which sets out the stages that patients and their families go through in accepting death. Since the 1970’s Kubler-Ross’s book has had an important impact on hospice care in the United States. If you haven’t read it, it’s worth doing so and, if you have, it’s well worth reading again especially if you are new to hospice work.



Helpful Hospice Hints

USING MUSIC IN HOSPICE COMPANION AND VIGIL VISITS

Much research has been done and many articles written on the benefits and comfort of providing music to those who are ill and dying. There are several ways you can help hospice patients enjoy those benefits, both as a companion volunteer and as a vigil volunteer.

1. If the patient already has her own CDs and a CD player in her room you can ask if she would like to listen to a selection of her choice during a visit.
2. You can ask the patient or family members what the patient's favorite music is or for suggestions. If they have ideas and have not yet brought any music in, you can encourage them to do so.
3. If no music is available and there are no suggestions, you can ask the facility if they have any appropriate CDs to borrow while you are there or you can bring some of your own CDs to a visit.
4. You can also ask the staff at the facility if a CD player is available if the patient doesn't have one.
5. Choose quiet, soothing music such as instrumental or soft vocal selections. If you know the patient is religious, a selection of religious music would be a good choice.
6. Always check with the patient if possible. Sometimes the patient might prefer a quiet room without even the distraction of music.

In many communities across the country, musicians volunteer to go to nursing homes to provide music in-person, even to hospice patients. There are small singing groups, guitarists, violin players and others who have become involved in this kind of sharing. If you know of anyone who would like to share a gift of music, please let Renee know. Maybe you can be the vehicle for providing such a gift to your patients and other AseraCare hospice patients.

(For more information see links in the HVA's Hospice Volunteer News, Winter, 2009)

INTERVIEW INSIGHTS:

A MANTLE OF CARE AND PRAYER

An interview with Joan Johnson, Coordinator of the Knitting Ministry at St. Luke's Church in Bloomington, MN.

Mantle--Anything that cloaks, envelops, covers.

Prayer Shawl--A mantle of love for the wearer to wrap around them when they go out, when they are down, when they sleep, when they feel the need for love and support. (Joan Johnson in *The Knitting Knews*, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Bloomington, MN, May 2009)

Isn't it amazing what a difference one person can make? Several years ago one woman, Joan Johnson, learned about a Prayer Shawl Ministry at St. Olaf College. As a knitter she was intrigued and inspired so she investigated and soon started knitting prayer shawls herself for the program. Soon it occurred to her that her own church could start a similar program. So Joan went to work to make that happen. In September 2002, knitters at St. Luke's began to knit prayer shawls for those who needed extra comfort and prayers due to illness, accidents, surgery and other suffering.

Fast forward eight years to 2009. The Knitting Ministry now has 20 knitters who lovingly knit care and prayer into gifts for others. These talented women have knitted



Interview Insights (continued)

The dedicated knitters now provide five prayers shawls a month for AseraCare hospice patients, for a total of 60 a year, in addition to the other shawls they create and distribute. The shawls are all knitted to the same pattern using beautifully-colored yarns of all hues.

Each prayer shawl is a very personal gift of love, support, and prayer from the individual knitter. Every shawl carries a tag with the knitter's name and a note to let the recipient know that knitter will be praying for him or her. When AseraCare distributes a prayer shawl to a new patient, the knitter is notified of the patient's name so she can pray specifically for Mary or Les, Laura or Richard.

What a gift of time, love, and prayer! Each shawl takes about 15 to 20 hours to complete. That translates to a total of approximately 900 to 1200 hours given to AseraCare patients by the 20 dedicated knitters of St. Luke's---not to mention the additional hours of prayer.

The goal of St. Luke's Knitting Ministry is to provide the love of God through the gift of a beautiful, cozy, comforting prayer shawl to those who suffer. As Joan Johnson so movingly said in the Ministry's Newsletter, "Knitting yarn into shawls and weaving prayers into them for God's love and comforting, healing presence creates a vessel for God's mysterious presence in the lives of others."

If you see one of these lovingly-crafted, beautiful shawls in your patient's room, now you'll know just what a multi-layered gift it is and what comfort it brings.