

# The A-Team

asera  care Hospice Volunteer Newsletter

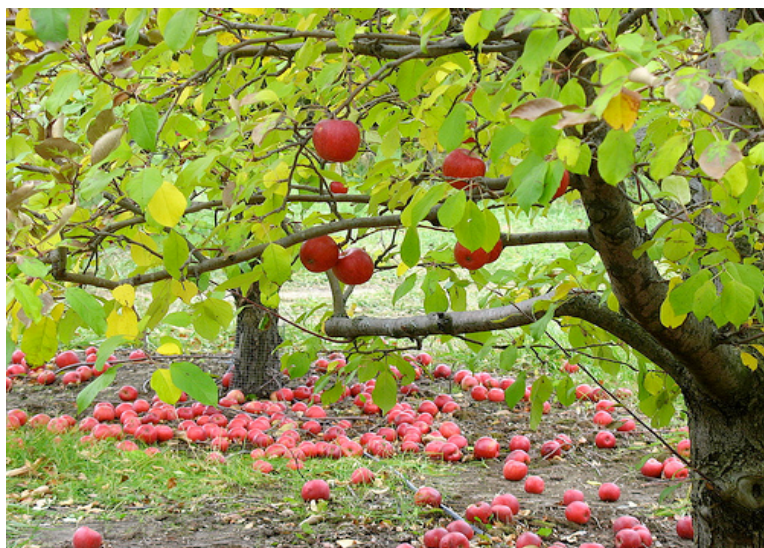


## An Encouraging Word:

“WE CANNOT ALL DO GREAT THINGS, BUT WE CAN ALL DO SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE”

~MOTHER THERESA

## You Did It!



A big thank you to all who came to the Annual Apple Orchard party at Dr. Sonntag’s home. There were over 50 people in attendance. My Executive Director, Carol Skare, was so pleased to meet the volunteers. She extends a big warm autumn thank you for your much-appreciated services; “we couldn’t do what we do without you.”

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## Timely Tips and Reminders

- **Reminder:** Wash your hands. This is flu season and there are a lot germs spreading around. Please wash your hands upon arrival of your visit and departure.
- **Reminder:** If you are sick stay home. It is considered proper etiquette to not visit a facility if you are feeling ill. We want you to protect you and your patient's immune systems from having unnecessary contact with outside germs.
- **Tip:** Do something autumnal with your patient. For most of our patients, this will be the last fall they experience. Make it memorable by bringing in some fall décor, showing pictures of your kids dressed up in Halloween costumes, or simply by reminiscing about fall traditions. For example, Rob's patient loves to retell her story of how her husband loved her apple pie.
- **Tip:** Do you have a knack for being a brilliant listener? Does your patient like to reminisce? Talk with your volunteer coordinator about borrowing our audio recorder. Turn a sweet conversation into a memorable audio recording for the family to treasure forever.

## The Book Nook:

### Recommended Books, CDs, and Media

It can be especially difficult for a young child to deal with death and the loss of a loved one and for the adults in a child's life to help them through the process. This month we feature some books for young children that come highly recommended by a friend who has special knowledge of children's books.

*The Goodbye Boat*----by Mary Joslin (1998) is a lovely picture book that helps explain the loss and absence experienced when a loved one dies. Appropriate for younger children.

*Water Bugs and Dragon Flies*----by Doris Stickney (2004) uses an ancient fable to explain transformation to a new life in a way children can grasp. Appropriate for younger children.

*Sad Isn't Bad: A Good Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss*---by Michaeline Mundy. (1998) This book offers children and adults suggestions on helping children with the grief process and ways to help them deal with the feelings that accompany grief. Ages 4 to 10.



## Helpful Hospice Hints:

### Grief Support Groups



Just as hospice care for the dying has grown over the years and become a respected way to serve those facing the end of life, there has been a similar growth in and respect for the use of grief counseling and support groups to serve the needs of those who have suffered the death of a loved one.

Grief support recognizes that the needs of family, relatives and friends who have lost a loved one, while different than the needs of the dying, can also be addressed in a supportive and nurturing manner.

There are two kinds of grief support groups available in many, if not most, communities; anticipatory grief support and bereavement support.

Anticipatory grief groups help those whose loved one is still dying. Such people might need support even while their loved one is dying to deal with such issues as anger, fear, watching a loved one decline physically, dealing with the stress of being a caretaker, handling children's needs, working with care facilities and agencies, finding the right help for themselves and their loved one, and a myriad of other problems. If they have time, counseling or participation in a grief support group even before death can provide excellent support.

After the death of the loved one, grief support groups can offer "survivors" support in many ways; emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically. It has been proved that "survivors" often experience physical illness, depression, substance abuse, spiritual distress and other problems after losing a loved one.

Grief support groups provide the support of a community of those who share a common situation, making a grief group a safe and caring place to share one's loss. Participants find particular comfort in being with others who have suffered similar pain and loss because they know that the group members can truly empathize with their feelings and situation. This support often extends beyond the completion of the structured group based on new acquaintances and friendships made in the group.



## *Grief Support Groups (continued)*

Grief support groups also offer practical suggestions to the bereaved, providing skills and tools to deal with their changed lives in addition to the companionship and sense of community they create.

In choosing a grief support group, it is important to take into account the particular needs and background of the bereaved person. Needs can vary based on a person's cultural background, spiritual or religious affiliation or lack of it and, sometimes, based on the kind of loss suffered.

In the Twin Cities area there are grief support groups for the loss of a spouse, the loss of a child or baby, loss due to AIDS, to Alzheimer's and other specific kinds of loss. There are also both religious-affiliated groups and secular groups.

As you serve your patients as a hospice companion or vigil volunteer you might identify a need for family or friends to participate in a grief support group. If so, you can fill them in a bit on the value of such groups. Then you can refer them to Tom Davis, or Steve Robertston Aseracare's Spiritual Care Coordinators or to Jo Ann Schultz, Bereavement Coordinator, for information on an appropriate group.

Knowing about grief support groups and making a referral is just another way you can help both your patient and the family.



**Steve Robertson**

Spiritual and Bereavement Coordinator



**Tom Davis**

Spiritual Care Coordinator

## INSIDERS' INSIGHTS

We're still looking for YOUR input. Please let us hear from you.

Can you share a special story about one of your patients? It doesn't have to be long!!

Does the HVA website work well for you or do you have suggestions?

What do you do on visits with patients who have trouble communicating?

Email your short stories, comments, suggestions and questions so we can share them with fellow volunteers to: [Renee.Gasch@aseracare.com](mailto:Renee.Gasch@aseracare.com).

## Interview Insights:

### *Sharing Suggestions for Companion Visits*

Pam Knuston has been serving on Aseracare's A-Team for three years as a companion volunteer and has some great ideas for companion visits. We talked to Pam recently and asked her to share her creative tips with the rest of the A-Team. Here are some of the things Pam uses in her companion visits. We hope they'll help you too.

#### **TIP # 1**

When filling out the HVA Volunteer notes that you submit to Renee, describe very specifically the activity you engaged in that was successful with your patient. What topic did you read about that your patient enjoyed or suggested? What was the name of the book? What was the title of the music or CD you shared? What game did you play? If we each include specific information like this, it can be compiled and shared with others later to keep all of us perking with new ideas and materials.

#### **TIP # 2**

If you have a portable DVD player (or your children do), you can enjoy some beautiful DVDs with your patient that combine both an audio and visual experience. **The Cedar Lake DVD Series** has the following DVD selections available.

#### Nature Series

- ✚ Lovely scenes and soothing music

#### Alzheimer's & Dementia

- ✚ Especially created for patients with these difficulties

#### Pain Management

- ✚ Specifically for relaxation and re-focusing

#### Holiday Selections

- ✚ Blending winter scenes and gentle holiday music

The DVDs can be purchased singly or as a series. See them at [www.cedarlakedvd.com](http://www.cedarlakedvd.com)

#### **Tip # 3**

A Q Chord is a portable, digital version of a harpsichord. It can be played by anyone and is small enough to be placed on a patient's lap or on a nearby table. (Sounds similar to the Reverie Harp we wrote about last month, doesn't it?) Different functions can be selected. Then the patient or the visitor can play songs or just "make music." Pam tells of a patient who, while rather withdrawn and quiet at first, was so inspired by the Q Chord that she soon remembered four favorite songs. She even wanted to sing them and proceeded to do so, showing more joy and engagement than she had for some time. Pam pointed out that neither you nor the patient need to feel intimidated if you're not musical. It's just making the music that matters. The Q Chord is available at Groth Music but is rather expensive.

#### **Tip # 4**

Hand massage, **if appropriate for your patient and with prior permission from the patient, staff and Renee**, can be a special treat.

#### **Tip # 5**

Try out different activities your patient might be able to participate in such as:

- Large print Word Find or Word Search books
- Trivia Sports Games
- Old radio shows such as *The Shadow* and *The Green Hornet* are available on tapes and CDs. Older patients often remember these old shows fondly and have fun listening to them again.
- Use just the question cards from board games such as *Trivial Pursuit*, *Apples to Apples*, *Buzzword* or other similar games to play just for points or...just for fun.

**Thanks, Pam, for some great tips. Your editors are sure there are more helpful ideas out there to share and we hope we'll hear from more of you soon with other suggestions!**