

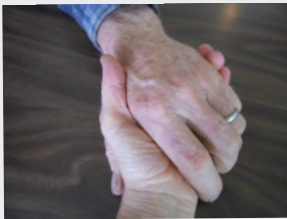
Spring 2017



HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Compassionate care for the terminally ill, their caregivers and their families
Serving our community since 1978

Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County (VHOCC) is a 501c3 non-profit charitable organization, whose service area stretches from Diamond Point to Joyce.



The mission of Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County is to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support to terminally ill patients and their families with free around the clock registered nursing availability and trained volunteers.

This support enables patients to live out their final days as fully and comfortably as possible. Ongoing grief support services are also offered to the families and to anyone in the community who has experienced the death of a loved one.

Since its inception in 1978, all services have been provided free of charge to patients and their families; VHOCC does not bill any government agency for its services.



Orphaned Elders

*Will you still need me, will you still feed me
When I'm 64*

Sang The Beatles fifty years ago.

Those questions are becoming all too real for many seniors today who find themselves alone, without close family or community support, and a declining ability to meet their basic daily needs.

Recent census data lists the over 65 population in Clallam County at almost 27% overall, with Sequim, proper, being closer to 40%. Nationwide, it is estimated that roughly 50% of citizens over age 65 live alone, with women outnumbering men over two to one. The stresses of living alone will likely worsen for the Baby Boom generation due to having fewer children, more childless marriages, and more divorces compared to previous generations.

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Office Reception Volunteers

Volunteers of the month

November: **John Lewis**

December: **Annual**

Volunteer Luncheon

January: **Frank Finney**

February: **Lori Jacobs**

March: **Betty Conger**

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Additionally, traditional family supports have been eroded by physical distance, work and family obligations, and other demands on our children's lives that preclude them from also being directly involved

in their parents' lives on a frequent basis. This is predicted to increasingly become the "norm" in the coming years, producing a growing population of what has come to be known as "orphaned elders".

What to do? First, remember we're all in this together. Perhaps you've noticed that your neighbor, Mary, hasn't been to church since Fred died. Offer her a ride! If Jack is looking uncharacteristically scruffy and hardly leaves his house anymore, maybe invite him over for dinner or take him a plate of homemade goodies. Or just say "Hi" and really listen to his response when you ask "How's your day going?" Even the briefest interaction can make a person feel connected.

Perhaps you can help your neighbor solve a problem as small as getting the lawn mowed or as big as finding a ride to that doctor in Seattle. Do whatever you reasonably can, either personally or by helping your neighbor find appropriate resources in the community that can help make life a little easier. But also remember that, as in all stages of life, some people are happy to paddle their own canoe - no matter what shape you think it's in. So, again, really listen to what they say would help most. And, in helping a friend navigate a problem, you may learn something along the way that will help you remain connected.

Here are some basic needs that may require a fresh look, along with just a few of the local resources that may be of assistance:

Housing - Is the 3 bedroom house more than you can keep up with? Maybe time to consider downsizing to a conveniently located single level living situation, independently or complete with onsite meals and transportation support. Senior Information and Assistance (452-3221) can provide a list of senior housing options. Or just a need a few small home repairs, grab bars, or a wheel chair ramp to keep your home sweet home but can't afford the cost of labor? Volunteer Chore Services (417-5640) may be able to help. Just need someone to come in and do a little housework and run a few errands to keep you on track? Depending on your level of need and financial circumstances, Senior I and A can likely help you sort out the options.

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Legal and Medical Issues – Particularly if you have no close friends or relations who can agree to see that all of your end of life wishes are carried out, it's important to get these things in order. Who will make these decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself? Talk to your doctor about formalizing your advance health care directive. If you have an attorney, it's never too soon to develop a will and advance planning on financial and legal matters. If you can't afford an attorney, contact Senior I and A for a free 30 minute consultation with a pro bono lawyer. And if you, or your friend, just cannot make head nor tail out of medical bills or which supplemental insurance would be best for your particular situation, Senior I and A can hook you up with local volunteers with State Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA).

Transportation – Having a plan for getting out of the house for both business and pleasure is key to overcoming an orphaned elder's sense of isolation. That is where a friend providing an occasional ride can be a huge boost when one's driving days are over. Public and private transit, as well as Paratransit and Medicaid transportation for eligible seniors, can also help fit the bill, albeit after navigating the options for the most appropriate service. Transportation to medical services is also a popular request made of Volunteer Chore. And, if you still drive yourself, consider becoming a volunteer driver (or a volunteer of any sort) is a great way stay connected to your community. Give Volunteer Chore a call!

Nutrition – When living alone, it's all too easy to settle for whatever food is around and requires little effort to make. Preparing an extra plate for your lonely neighbor is a simple gesture that can nourish both body and soul. Offering to take care of their grocery shopping can also be a huge assist. Consider taking your neighbor out to explore either the Sequim or Port Angeles Senior Centers which offer light lunches at a reasonable cost in the midday along with a full course dinner meal at 4:30 pm, Tuesday through Friday. Home delivered meals are also available to homebound seniors.

Socialization – Probably the most powerful way to overcome feelings of becoming an orphaned elder is to remain connected to community. Both the

Sequim and Port Angeles Senior Centers offer a full slate of activities for physical or mental engagement, along with the ongoing opportunity to make new friends over a cup of coffee and piece of pie. Take your friend to explore what is being offered!

In summary, Clallam County is fortunate to be relatively awash in activities and services aimed at not leaving seniors behind along with a community of volunteers and professionals for whom that is the goal.

We'll get by – with a little help from our friends.

Ram Dass says, "...one works on oneself as a gift to other people so that one doesn't create more suffering. I help people as a work on myself and I work on myself to help people."

The more music, the better!

The snow started falling hard. The car did not have snow tires. Getting over the Siskiyou Pass on I-5 was imperative before chains would be required or worse, before it would close as it sometimes happened in winter storms. I was fearful to drive on so much snow and I was anxious trying to hide my anxiety from my two adopted children staring out the back windows with worry written all over their pale faces. They had never been alone with me, their brand new mother, before and certainly not in a situation where the presence of their adoptive father would have immediately assuaged their fears. Once off the interstate freeway, there was to be no more cell phone reception and I guessed, rightly, that we would be alone on the narrow 2-lane road snaking along the river for the last 30 miles.

What kept me going? I sang, and I made the kids sing with me. It took a long time to get home because I drove slowly. But we never ran out of songs. We even found a peaceful place in our minds to appreciate the silent beauty of the falling snow. ...

**"Music expresses that which cannot be said,
and on which it is impossible to be silent"**

Victor Hugo

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Like all ICUs, this one blinked and buzzed. Wires and tubes were connecting the man to the machines. Unresponsive and in a deep coma, his only signs of life were the lines going up and down and numbers on the machines, indicating fast heart rate – too fast – and high blood pressure – too high. What to do? Whisper words of encouragement that may not make sense anymore? Stroke his hand that may not feel touch anymore? All I could think of was to sing, very softly, and repeating these few songs, eventually dropping the words, repeating the same melodies. When I tried to leave to make room for the nurse checking him, she said “please stay and keep singing if you can, it helps” and pointed at the readings on the machines: the numbers were lower. He was calmer. ...

These two powerful experiences have proven me that the power of music cannot be ignored to relieve stress, alleviate anxiety, and distract from pain and worry. Music can have a similar positive effect in many different situations requiring a therapeutic approach.

Hence the development of music therapy programs to formalize music therapeutic treatments.

Volunteer Hospice is currently able to offer music therapy with Joshua Frey, a music therapy student from North Dakota, who is with us for a few months. Joshua has experienced how music can positively impact the lives of those who participate in it. In his words, “Participation in music is such a powerful and personal experience, yet it gives us a sense of unity and connection with one another. We have music in nearly every aspect of our lives, and it is my goal to assist those in need by providing them with the gift of music. According to the American Music Therapy Association, “Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.”

Joshua writes, “Music interventions are used to address a client’s physical, emotional, spiritual,

cognitive, and/or social needs. While music therapists use music to address client needs, it is important to note that the client does not need to be a musician, or have any formal musical training, to benefit from music therapy. Populations served by music therapy include, but are not limited to: people affected by autism, developmentally and cognitively disabled, people with dementia, Parkinson, Alzheimer’s, people recovering from a stroke. Music therapists can work in schools, hospitals and outpatient clinics, correctional facilities, community mental health programs, senior centers, nursing homes, hospice programs, or private practice.

Music therapy has also been shown to be effective for individuals in end of life and palliative care. The main focus of hospice music therapy is to address a client’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Music can be used to alleviate pain and nausea, and treat emotional issues such as depression, anxiety, fear, anger, and grief. There are many ways to bring

music into a patient’s home: singing, playing a musical instrument, music assisted relaxation, songwriting, lyric analysis, guided imagery, and improvisation. Any patient or family member can benefit from music therapy; there is no need to be a musician, or to have any formal musical training. A trained music therapist will know how to identify the best modality for the patient’s and their family’s particular needs.”

Even the simple act of listening to someone sing can have positive effects. As evidenced by the documentary, “Alive Inside: a Story of Music and Memory,” a person with Alzheimer’s listening to their favorite songs with headphones can have a wonderful experience in re-engaging with life. Many choirs and musicians will spend time in nursing homes. A recently formed choir on the Olympic Peninsula, The Clallam County Threshold Choir, affiliated with the nation-wide Threshold Choir, whose “mission is to sing for and with those at the thresholds of life,” now offers its services to the terminally ill.

All in all, we can benefit from more music in our lives!





VHOCC has many volunteers who serve our patients, and offer support to families and caregivers by providing respite for a few hours from time to time. Typically we respite volunteers have no special training in caring for patients. Most of us are old, so our physical strength is also limited. Common sense and experience, however, equip us to be useful in a limited role.

We hope to get better at some basic caregiving tasks in order to better serve the increasing needs of the families and caregivers. Toward this goal VHOCC nurses have experimented with informal training of a few respite volunteers. Results seem promising

but time constraints abound. Growing our own skilled respite volunteers from our present volunteers is going to be a long slow slog.

In the meantime, in the hope that we might upgrade our respite capabilities more rapidly, we are asking for help from new special volunteers who have expertise and experience in patient care. You would be asked to undertake three important jobs. First, you would teach and demonstrate hands-on patient care to small groups of respite volunteers in a classroom setting. Second, you would judge the respite volunteer's capability and advise what to try to do and what not to try. And third, you would accompany a respite volunteer, from time to time, to assist in the caregiving tasks. In this process you would ensure the volunteer would follow your example with direct hands-on instruction.

VHOCC respite volunteers regularly accept the challenge of doing their best, lacking many skills, to better support patients and caregivers. Please consider helping us to get better at what we do.

Contact the Volunteer Services Manager at 360-452-1511.

Events

Cedars At Dungeness Lady Niners Memorial 9-Hole Golf

Tournament: May 18

Esprit: May

Olympic Cellar Winery Summer Concert: August 12

Clallam County Fair booth: August 17-20

Programs (registration required)

Community Education & Volunteer Training in Port Angeles

Wednesdays, September 20 – October 25, 6:30 – 8 pm

Port Angeles Grief Support Groups

Mondays, April 24 - May 29, 6:30 - 8 pm

Tuesdays, July 11 – August 15, 2 – 3:30 pm

Sequim Grief Support Groups

Mondays, June 5 - July 3, 1 - 3 pm

Mondays, September 11 – October 9, 1 – 3 pm

For more information go to www.vhocc.org/calendar

Call 360-452-1511 to register to any program above

*Drop-In Support Groups in Sequim & Port Angeles (after completing a Grief Support Group)

*Bereavement One-on-One Support

*Survivors Workshops twice yearly

*For dates & locations & to register, call 360-452-1511

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

VHOCC is publishing three newsletters each year (April, August, and December). But only you, dear reader are receiving this issue as it is an email only issue.

Thank you for helping us keep our costs low by getting electronic delivery. Encourage your friends to subscribe to the email version!

Like us on Facebook



We use our Facebook page to share information about VHOCC and the hospice movement worldwide. Our goal is to educate, inform and inspire visitors to our page and deepen the understanding of all the benefits of hospice to patients, their families, and the community at large.

We invite you to "Like" our page and start seeing our posts in your news feed.