



for Every Season

Leaving a Legacy

Have you ever wondered what kind of legacy you will leave behind?

We all want to be remembered – to feel that we contributed something to the world, or left even the tiniest impact on someone’s life. Sharon L. Adler once said, “Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.”

The Seasons Hospice Foundation and Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care worked together to create the **Leaving a Legacy** program to help patients create their legacy and make their personal stamp on the future. Leaving a Legacy is a way to capture life stories, lessons, sentiments, memories, and traditions. Some examples of these would be milestone notes, life interviews, photo projects, slide shows, cookbooks, or audio recordings. Legacies convey what we want remaining and future generations to know and understand about our life experiences. They help us to remember and heal as we carry on important traditions.

Many hospice patients die not long after enrolling in hospice; and, of those who live longer, many have advanced dementia. This is the population with the greatest need to create legacies. Working on a legacy project helps hospice patients and their families deal with end-of-life issues, improve family relationships, relieve anxiety about death, decrease anticipatory grief, and increase a sense of meaning and self-worth.

“Legacy work is important because it focuses on making meaning of the life experienced – and allows a person to define his or her life through a thoughtful, therapeutic project,” said Lindsey Haugen, Director of Supportive Care Services. “This can be healing for

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*small things
matter the most*

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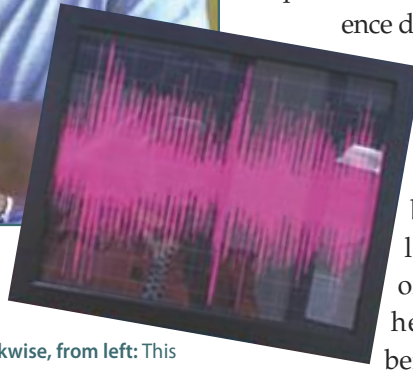
a family member, too: it links that person in a tangible way to the life they are remembering.”

The social workers and volunteers who work with our patients to create their legacy projects have very specific goals in mind. The goals of the legacy projects are to increase patients’ sense of essence and continuity of themselves, increase self-regard and pride, and strengthen beliefs that their prior roles are worthy of investment, even in the face of deteriorating health.

Recently, at our Pennsylvania site, one of our patients, Calvin Harris, was going through a tough time with his cancer diagnosis and was experiencing depression. His Seasons Hospice Music Therapist was working with him to try and work through his grief and lift his spirits. She suggested the idea of turning one of the poems he had written into a song as a legacy project. Calvin not only wrote the words for his song, but, with Music Therapists facilitating the process and recording, he was able to choose the style, structure, tracks, key, instrumentation and other details, as well as play the shakers on the recording.

“You just don’t know,” states Calvin. “First, I was serving in the Air Force during the Vietnam War; then, I was a fireman; then, I got cancer. And now... now, I have a song. You just don’t know what this means to me.”

Calvin found a new sense of pride, hope, and happiness in this legacy project. Legacy projects



Clockwise, from left: This fingerprint painting was done by an army vet that was on our service in Illinois. His handprint is the stem and the leaves on the tree are for his five daughters. Above, left: Memory Bears are hand-sewn from favorite pieces of clothing of patients and presented to loved ones. Top: Calvin Harris worked with Music Therapists to turn one of his poems into a song. Above, right: Seasons Hospice staff helped create this framed piece of the heartbeat of a seven-day-old Seasons pediatric patient.

have proven to provide many successful outcomes for both patients and their families. In patients, they can reduce breathing difficulty and increase a sense of spiritual meaning. Families also experience decreased stress levels when they get a chance to work on a legacy project with a loved one. It is a great way for them to bond, reminisce, and to learn about the history of their loved one. It also helps them with the bereavement process after the death of their loved one.

There are many approaches to legacy projects – each is customized to suit the needs of the patient and his or her family. For example, our Seasons Hospice volunteers help make memory bears which are created from a patient’s clothing. Or, they help make audio

recordable books for children so that they can continue to hear their loved one’s voice to maintain the story-time ritual during bedtime. These legacy projects can help with the healing process for the families.

Seasons Hospice Foundation’s purpose is making memories by fulfilling a wish or providing financial support for a patient/family that will create a lasting memory. Go to www.seasonsfoundation.org to further memorialize your loved one and create memories that will last a lifetime.

“You just don’t know what this means to me.”

– Calvin Harris

For more information about our Leaving a Legacy Program, please call Seasons Hospice Foundation at **847-692-1000** or visit **www.seasonsfoundation.org**.

Compassionate Allies Program: Teaching Future Physicians about the Gift of Presence and the Value of Legacy

By Luisa Kcomt, LMSW

In a classroom of premedical school students, the instructor asks, “So tell me, after you graduate from medical school and are taking care of patients, how many of them will eventually die?” The students have a look of confusion and wonderment in their eyes. One student raises his hand and says, “10 percent.” Another student guesses, “20 percent.” Finally, one student proclaims, “They will all die.” There is a pause of realization in the room. The instructor continues on, “Then, should you learn how to care for a dying patient? Becoming a Compassionate Ally is one way to learn how to be present to a dying person.”

Offered by Wayne State University and sponsored by Seasons Hospice Foundation in collaboration with Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care, the Compassionate Allies Program is a service learning opportunity for premedical school students. On-boarded as special volunteers, this program brings premed students into the homes of hospice patients to learn the gift of presence and understand the impact of legacy projects. The students provide companionship visits and facilitate the completion of legacy projects with patients and their families. For most, this experience is their first exposure to end-of-life care. Research is being completed to understand how these experiences have impacted the students in their journey to become the next generation of physicians.

Preliminary results show that the students are benefitting a great deal from this special program. They are learning about the importance of a holistic approach to care. For some, this experience has impacted their career aspirations by strengthening their interest in palliative or end-of-life care. It has taught them the value of empathy and compassion in their relationships with patients. They are witnessing the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of patients, in addition to their physical diagnosis. Some of the students reported that the program has made a personal impact on their lives by increasing their appreciation for life and death and has taught them to savor the time that they have with their



own loved ones. Life holds a deeper meaning for them as they learn to live in the moment.

Joseph*, one of our Compassionate Allies in Michigan, assisted a female patient in completing a life review. Margaret’s* life story was published in a hard-cover book which also contained photos from her past. Before she died, Margaret was able to give a copy of this book to each of her seven grandchildren. She was proud to know that her life had meaning and that her legacy will continue to live on through her family.

As a Compassionate Ally, Joseph was deeply moved by this experience and provided the following testimonial:

I cannot explain through words how rewarding of an experience this has been for me throughout the companionship and the writing of the book itself. Knowing that, through this opportunity, I was able to give someone who I had just recently met a gift that was so well received has given me a whole new perspective on both patient relations and on the end of life and associated medical practices. Often, students, including myself, get bogged down and held back by what they see themselves as unable to do, clinging to the assumption that they cannot make a real difference unless they have the necessary qualifications – medical degree or not, I have seen firsthand that students have the ability to create truly remarkable differences in others’ lives. I am so grateful for all of the support from the hospice staff that allowed me to be a part of this incredible program, and I hope that it continues to offer similar opportunities for students in the future. The creation of a legacy project allows both the volunteer and patient to tap into the depths of the human condition, explore the boundaries of our own mortality, and then push them by creating something so beautiful as to forever make present and known the legacy of an individual.

(continued on pg. 4)

Do you get a little (or a lot) crabby if something forces you to reroute the usual path from your bed to your morning coffee? Does your extended family always gather for a tailgate party on opening day? Does it not really seem right, or cause a raised eyebrow, if the newest family member does not use Grandma's recipe for the Thanksgiving stuffing? Have you ever uttered the words, "But, we always do it that way!" If the above or similar experiences apply to you, then welcome to the human family of ritual, tradition and routine.

Celebrations, traditions and routines, while looking different, are integrated into the fabric of life of every individual and family on the planet. They serve the purpose of providing identity for family in the larger cultural context, transmitting customs, values and beliefs, meaning-making, providing safe places for the expression of strong emotions, rites of passage and healing. Celebrations, traditions and routines provide structure and stability in an ever-changing world. They provide a way for groups and individuals to decide who is "in" and who is "out." There is a lot riding on how individuals and families do what they do.

When a family experiences a death, every celebration, tradition and even the simplest daily routines have to be renegotiated and reimagined within the reality of the loss. Indeed, things will never be "the same." The first year of holidays, celebrations, traditions, and routines is particularly challenging. While each provides the stark reminder that our loved one is gone, each is also an opportunity to



Rituals, Loss & Grace

By Rev. Jan Kwiatkowski, LMFT

acknowledge and integrate that loss, and begin the process of making new meaning and creating new identity.

This is hard emotional work that happens underneath the cooking, cleaning, putting up of decorations or buying gifts. It's why we may burst into tears at the "oddest times and places." And, it's why we sometimes avoid these events. It may be that the family events we thought we couldn't get through, we do. And the ones we thought would be easy have us feeling like an emotional train wreck. It's all normal, bumpy, and part of the healing process.

There is no one right way to get through the celebrations, traditions and routines of our lives when we've lost someone. But, it is important that we acknowledge the loss, let the tears and laughter come, and do what we reasonably can to participate in family life events. And, it is important that we be gentle with ourselves.

Anne Lamott says, "I do not understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us." My prayer is that you allow the mystery of grace to meet you and lead you gently to the place you need to be.

Finally, if you notice that you or a loved one is not sleeping, is isolating, not eating, is drinking more, is thinking or talking about harming themselves or someone else... or anything that is an unhealthy or drastic change lasting more than two weeks, check in with your doctor, a trusted friend, clergy person, or grief support group. Give Seasons a call, we are here to help.

(continued from pg. 3)

Seasons Hospice Foundation is committed to educating the community and the greater healthcare continuum about the importance of end-of-life care. The Compassionate Allies Program supports our hospice patients and families through companionship visits and legacy projects while teaching a future generation of physicians about the art

of hospice care. This program was piloted in Michigan with Wayne State University and is now launched in Illinois in partnership with Northwestern University. To bring the Compassionate Allies Program to your community, please contact Seasons Hospice Foundation at 847-692-1000 or Foundation@seasons.org.

*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

A New Seasons Community: Online Support Groups for Grief and Loss

By Terry Glusko, MS, MT-BC

Everyone needs some type of support system to navigate through the journey of grief. The death of a loved one can be an isolating experience, and the grieving person may feel reluctant to burden friends and family with the true extent of his or her emotions. Meanwhile, said friends and family may be grieving the same loss in their own way without the necessary tools for healing in the grief process. Therein lies the stigma of an individual opening up vulnerabilities within one's personal community.

Bereavement support groups provide a safe and neutral space for individuals to share the challenges of living with grief. New members are able to share personal experiences of their loss while others provide

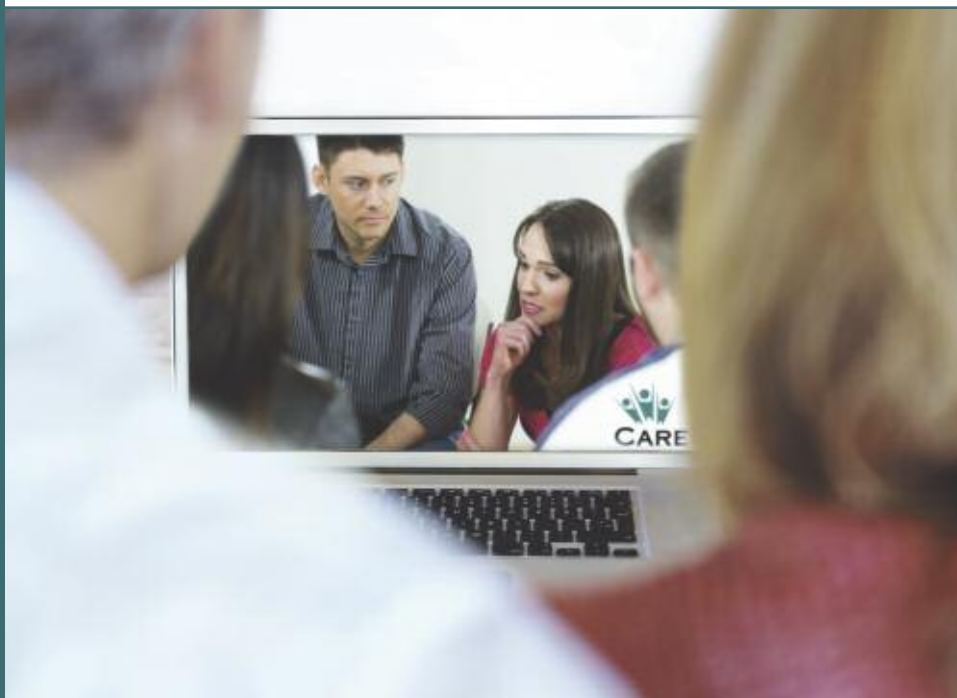
validation, support, and problem-solving. Support groups nurture the process of storytelling, learning new coping skills, companionship, understanding others' perspectives, and self-care.

Seasons Hospice offers a variety of bereavement groups, workshops, and events. Our innovative bereavement services are now proud to launch similar programs in an online format through a partnership with CareFlash and their online Care Community. Online bereavement "rooms" will provide convenient access to grief support programs that cater to specific age, gender, type of loss, etc., while maintaining privacy and confidentiality. For example, adolescents may benefit by connecting with similarly aged

peers who are experiencing a first death, as opposed to seeking help from adults or joining an adult online support group where the adolescent may not be able to relate. Similarly, adults may encounter difficulty helping teens and children cope with grief¹.

In addition to teen and loss-specific adult bereavement groups, Seasons will soon be expanding the platform to include groups for caregivers of active patients, coping through special holidays and anniversaries, creative arts therapies in healing, self-care and wellness programs, and more.

Online groups and workshops will meet live at specific dates and times. Participants can also choose to join the dialogue at their own convenience, 24 hours a day, and remain an active part of the discussions. All online groups will be moderated by a professional counselor or therapist from Seasons Hospice. Furthermore, many programs will include videos, presentations, a platform to share resources, and assignments to complete between group meetings. The goal at Seasons is to add to our traditional bereavement services by creating an energetic and premier online community that provides support and promotes healthy coping. Stay tuned for invitations to our first groups launching in the Spring of 2015!



¹ Gary, J. & Remolino, L. (2000). Coping with Loss and Grief through On-line Support Groups. In J. Bloom & G. Walz (Eds.), *Cybercounseling and Cyberlearning: Strategies and Resources for the Millennium* (pp. 95-115). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Helping Others through SEASONS HOSPICE FOUNDATION

A gift to Seasons Hospice Foundation marks the love and joy that someone brought to our lives, while also helping other patients and their families.

You can be confident that your generous gift is used to enrich lives. Your gift stays close to home and makes a difference to the patients and families in the communities where your honoree was cared for by Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care.



To honor your loved one by making a gift or to learn more about the Seasons Hospice Foundation, please visit seasonsfoundation.org or call **847-692-1000**.



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IF UNDELIVERABLE

seasonsfoundation.org

for EverySeason



If our mailing records need to be updated, or if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Seasons Hospice Foundation at 847-692-1000, ext. 4.

Foundation Fast Facts

Seasons Hospice Foundation is creating opportunities to train the next generation of hospice professionals and to nurture their passion for end-of-life care. Through the **SHF Internship Program**, the Foundation offered internship opportunities in 2014 to:

- 44 social work interns
- 49 music therapy interns
- 3 chaplain interns
- 14 bereavement interns
- 2 art therapy interns

SUPPORT



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314-909-6200
Toll free: 888-461-7733

SEASONS HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

Bereavement support programs and grief counseling services are available free of charge.

For more information, please contact Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care of Missouri at 888-461-7733.

“Perhaps they are not stars but rather openings in Heaven where the love of our lost ones shines down to let us know they are happy.”

– Eskimo Legend