Pillows and purses hold fond memories

When we experience the loss of someone close to us, we begin a difficult journey as we adjust to life without that special person. It can be very helpful along the grief journey to find ways to remember and honor your loved one, and to continue to hold their memory close to your heart. Niagara Hospice volunteers provide a unique way to help comfort our hospice family caregivers after they have experienced a loss. Volunteers Rita Beitz and Karen Feger craft purses, pillows and bears from articles of clothing. For

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Niagara Hospice voted a Best Places to Work

Niagara Hospice recently took Second Place in the Large Company category of Buffalo Business First’s 2015 Best Places to Work competition. To participate, staff completed an on-line survey covering questions about their workplace environment, job satisfaction, employee recognition and appreciation. Winners were announced at a Rock ’n Roll themed luncheon at the Buffalo Convention Center on March 24.

Niagara Hospice disciplines of care were well represented at the luncheon by staff from nursing, social work, spiritual care, housekeeping and dietary. Many thanks to all of the Niagara Hospice staff who provide exceptional experiences to their patients and family members.

Niagara Hospice Clinical Assistant Judy Gifford, LPN (left) and Vice President of Hospice Services, Kay Dekker, RN proudly display the Niagara Hospice Best Places to Work Award.
Hospice care decreases depression symptoms in surviving spouses

According to a new study led by researchers at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and recently published in JAMA Internal Medicine, hospice care can positively impact family members’ mental health even after the passing of their loved one. The study examined depressive symptoms in surviving spouses of patients with a variety of illnesses. Researchers found that spouses of patients receiving hospice services for three or more days were less likely to become depressed as spouses of patients who did not receive hospice care.

According to Katherine Ornstein, Ph.D., MPH, Assistant Professor of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and lead author of the study, “These differences are even more substantial one year after death.”

The study analyzed data from the surviving spouses of 1,016 deceased patients. Researchers then monitored these spouses through the bereavement process up to two years after death. “Hospice is focused on symptom management and comfort care, which may relieve patient suffering and reduce depression for families. Hospice also includes services specially designed for caregivers, including bereavement counseling. Advance care planning occurs in a hospice setting, which may also relieve stress for families,” Ornstein said. “We simply do not know which component or components are most impactful.”

Family members often benefit from the wide range of physical, spiritual, social and emotional resources that are offered through hospice. These benefits are most prevalent among family members whose loved one was referred to hospice sooner in their disease process, allowing ample time for the hospice team to learn patient and family dynamics and address each individual’s unique needs.

Ornstein said, “If we want to understand the impact of hospice care, we should consider the potential benefit not just to the patient, but to the caregiver, and perhaps the entire family and social network. We need to remember that care near the end of life affects not only patients, but also their loved ones.”

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**SUNSET DRIVE CAR SHOW**

**Saturday, July 25**

A car show to benefit Niagara Hospice. All car types can be entered. Registration 9am-12pm, Awards at 4:00pm • Rain Date: July 26th

Pre-registration: $15 • Day of: $20

Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities available. Contact Niagara Hospice for registration information at (716) 280-0780 or visit the Event Calendar page at NiagaraHospice.org to download a flyer.
Hospice at Jeanne’s House staff bake for blossoms

Staff from Hospice at Jeanne's House - a Northgate Health Care Facility and Niagara Hospice collaboration - hosted a bake sale in April thanks to a generous number of donated baked goods. Lisa Kurilovitch and Kristin Human, Niagara Hospice Hospicetality Advocates, and Carla Marsh, Director of Specialty Social Work Services at Northgate, coordinated the sale to raise funds for a garden for Hospice at Jeanne's House residents.

The bake sale was a huge success, selling about fifteen different baked goods and raising $160. "We could not have done it without all the generous donations and support of the Niagara Hospice and Northgate staff, as well as some of the residents and their families," said Kurilovitch. "The residents are really looking forward to warmer weather and being able to plant and take care of a garden." Kurilovitch said several residents are experienced with agriculture because they either grew up on a farm, owned a farm, or just had a green thumb as a hobby. Those residents in particular are looking forward to once again taking part in an activity that they enjoyed so much in the past.

Carla Marsh said, "This bake sale was very beneficial to residents and their families because it gave them a chance to help a good cause. It would be great to see this become an activity in other facilities."

Proceeds from the sale helped to purchase annual and perennial flowers, herbs, and patio tomato plants for the gardens located in the courtyard outside the Hospice at Jeanne's House unit at Northgate Health Care Facility in North Tonawanda. Marsh said plans are to plant lavender that can be enjoyed throughout the summer and then harvested in early fall to be used in craft activities with residents. Mint will also be grown and enjoyed in summer tea beverages.

To learn more about Niagara Hospice care in the skilled nursing facility setting, call (716) 439-4417 or visit: www.niagarahospice.org/nursing-home-program.

Niagara Hospice Hospicetality Advocates Lisa Kurilovitch and Kristin Human sell baked goods to raise funds for the gardens at Hospice at Jeanne's House.

Hospicetality Advocate Lisa Kurilovitch plants flowers with Hospice at Jeanne's House resident Lillian Haseley.
Hospice and BOCES bring services to Niagara County

Until recently, there were no programs offered locally to train individuals who wished to pursue a career as a home health aide (HHA). Instead, they had to travel to Rochester to receive training - a process that was inconvenient, timely and costly for everyone involved.

As the only hospice provider in Niagara County, Niagara Hospice looks to recruit the best staff for each discipline of care. Home health aides are an essential part of the Hospice team. They provide basic bedside care and assist with bathing, dressing and eating. The HHA often spends the most time with the patient and family, so proper training is essential.

Kay Dekker, Vice President of Hospice Services said, "We were having a great deal of trouble finding exceptional home health aide candidates to provide care to our patients, both at home and at Hospice House." In 2013, looking for a solution to recruit well-trained HHA's, Dekker approached the Orleans-Niagara BOCES program to collaborate on a home health aide training program in Niagara County.

As part of the application process to the state education department to become a certified program, BOCES needed to partner with facilities willing to provide sites where supervised training hours could be provided. Niagara Hospice agreed to provide space for the training programs at Niagara Hospice House, located on Sunset Drive in Lockport. Following the approval of the state education department, BOCES started training home health aides from all over Niagara County. Karen Kwandrans, RN and Health Occupations Coordinator at BOCES, said: "The HHA's had a wonderful experience at Niagara Hospice. Janet and the staff were great!"

Janet Ligammari, RN and Niagara Hospice House Clinical Director, was equally enthusiastic. "It has been so rewarding to work with the home health aides at Hospice House," she said. "These training programs have really benefited HHA trainees as well as the organizations where they will one day work, including Niagara Hospice."

**BOCES has a history of support and collaboration with Niagara Hospice.** Most recently, students from the Orleans-Niagara BOCES Niagara Career and Technical Education Center (NCTEC) Culinary Arts Program made a donation to support Niagara Hospice's work. The students in Mr. Bob Ihle's class raised $500 at their Thanksgiving baked goods sale and Annual Open House pasta dinner. Over 300 pasta dinners were served at the event. Many of the students that participate in the program go on to careers in the culinary arts. Two graduates of the NCTEC Culinary Arts Program, Tiffany Clark and Jen Anderson, now work in the culinary department at Niagara Hospice House.

"We are fortunate to have such a wonderful vocational high school program in our area, particularly one that also supports community organizations like Niagara Hospice," said Sal Lipuma, Director of Support Services at Niagara Hospice House. "We are very grateful for their continued support and enthusiasm."

The NCTEC Culinary Arts Program has been a long-time supporter of Niagara Hospice through various fundraisers, and by baking desserts for several Niagara Hospice events for the community and bereaved family members.
families who wish to do so, they can provide a shirt, tie or other cloth garment and volunteers will sew a pillow or purse for them so they will always have their loved one near.

Jennifer Amor, MS, Manager of Bereavement Services said, “Even when our loved one is no longer here with us physically, we still love them and want to feel connected to them. Having something like a memorial pillow or purse helps gives you something tangible of your loved one’s to hold and touch, and it can be very comforting.” The service, which started in November 2014, is the brainchild of Rita. As of June 2015, twenty-four purses and forty-three pillows have been crafted and given to family members. And the recipients are very grateful. Rita recently spoke at a Niagara Hospice volunteer training where she had the pleasure of meeting a family caregiver taking part in the training. She recognized the name and asked if she received a purse from Niagara Hospice. She replied that she had indeed and Rita let her know she made it for her. The family member expressed her gratitude and was happy to meet the crafter who has helped her remember and honor her husband in a very special way.

Niagara Hospice volunteers are also providing comfort to our hospice family caregivers in another important way, by making supportive phone calls throughout the year. The Niagara Hospice Bereavement Department takes special care to reach out to bereaved caregivers by both mail and phone for the thirteen months after their loved one passes away. “For many people, just having a caring bereavement counselor or volunteer call to check in and see how they are doing, and to remind them that Niagara Hospice is still here for them, gives them so much comfort in their grief,” says Amor. Having volunteers to help make some of those supportive calls is a great way to ensure we can reach out to all the over 1,000 caregivers we contact each year to offer support. And it is not just the bereaved who benefit from the calls, the volunteers making the calls get so much out of the experience as well. According to bereavement volunteer Janet Wolanske, “It is very satisfying to make that personal one-on-one connection. I love it.”

Niagara Hospice volunteers Rita Beitz and Karen Feger are also busily sewing cuddly teddy bears and comfy pillows for the 2015 Camp Hope campers who choose to provide an article of clothing of their loved one. Campers will bring their loved one’s shirt, pants, or other item along with them to Camp Hope to make the bear or pillow, and then the completed bear or pillow will be returned to them at the September Camp Hope Reunion. Campers are sure to find comfort in these wonderful reminders of their loved one!
Second Annual Hospice Gran Fondo Awards Announced

The Hospice Gran Fondo, presented by M&T Bank, brought its “party on wheels” to Niagara County on May 16th for its second annual ride to benefit Niagara Hospice. Over 600 cyclists gathered at beautiful Krull Park in Olcott and set out on three scenic routes throughout the Niagara Wine Trail. Each route featured refreshment stops at local establishments including Chateau Niagara Winery, Honeymoon Trail Winery, Midnight Run Winery, Victorianbourg Wine Estate, Schulze Vineyards & Winery, Black Willow Winery, and Woodcock Brothers Brewing Company. The fun continued back at Krull Park at the post ride party with live music, lunch provided by Tops Markets, and wine tastings.

Team awards were given out at the post ride party. The Team Spirit trophy went to team Rusty Chain, the Spokes Award for highest fundraising within a Niagara Hospice contracted healthcare facility went to Northgate Health Care Facility’s team McGuire’s Lucky Charms, and the Leader of the Pack award went to Team Artie for the team with the highest fundraising.

Erik Zimmerman, captain of Team Artie, said: “In only its second year, the Hospice Gran Fondo offers something for everyone - the serious cyclist, the novice or the entire family. What a great ride for a fantastic organization. Well-organized and the new start/finish right on the waterfront in Krull Park showcases a local gem in Lake Ontario.”

For a full list of event sponsors, pictures from the ride, and to purchase custom Hospice Gran Fondo cycling gear visit www.HospiceGranFondo.com. All proceeds benefit programs and services provided by Niagara Hospice to Niagara County residents.

Caregiver Survey Message

The Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a family caregiver survey that helps assess patient and family experiences with hospice care. All hospice providers are required to participate in this national survey. Niagara Hospice has selected DSS Research to conduct our survey.

Family members designated as the primary caregiver for their loved one receive the survey by mail. Niagara Hospice encourages those family members to complete and return the survey as soon as possible. Caregivers may also receive a follow-up phone call if the survey is not received within a specific amount of time. We truly appreciate our family caregivers taking the time to help assess our services.
The Longaberger Apple Tree Branch has held a Spring Fling Event for over 20 years. The main purpose of the event is to raise money and awareness for Breast Cancer through information that is handed out in addition to the Longaberger Horizon of Hope Basket. The basket signifies Longaberger’s commitment to give back. Two dollars of each sale, outside of the event, is given to the American Cancer Society through Longaberger. The WNY branch decided to split the proceeds of the Spring Fling to go towards the American Cancer Society and also to their local hospice. Collectively, the Longaberger Apple Tree Branch has donated over $15,000 to Niagara Hospice over the past several years. Many thanks and appreciation to Longaberger Apple Tree Branch!

**716-HOSPICE connects to Niagara Hospice**

Goodlettsville, Tennessee-based retail giant Dollar General is helping to further hospice care by donating the phone number 716-467-7423 to Niagara Hospice. The number spells out a word famous for making a big difference for patients and families faced with serious illness: 716-HOSPICE. Held previously by Dollar General’s regional loss prevention manager Mike Ketchmark, 716-HOSPICE is now live and connects callers directly to Niagara Hospice.

"When I was approached about making the donation, it was an easy decision to make because I knew it would help individuals find the hospice care they need," said Ketchmark. "I actually received phone calls in the past from people looking for hospice services without realizing the connection to the number; making the transfer seemed the right thing to do."

Niagara Hospice director of marketing and public relations, Tricia Degan said: "The main Niagara Hospice number of 716-439-4417 that has been in use for the past 27 years will continue to be active. The addition of 716-HOSPICE is a number people will be able to remember should they have a need to call for information, a referral, or support and other resources for which Niagara Hospice has become known."
Rebekah's Pathway resident Frank Foley and his wife Sylvia renewed their wedding vows, and their love for each other, to commemorate their 24 1/2 wedding anniversary at Rebekah's Pathway at Odd Fellows in Lockport. Frank and Sylvia were married in Las Vegas without telling anyone other than the couple that stood up for them. That same couple celebrated with them again at a beautiful Vow Renewal gathering of friends and family. Niagara Hospice Spiritual Care Counselor Rob Goodlander was privileged to perform the Vow Renewal ceremony and guests enjoyed a cake baked by the staff at Niagara Hospice House. Anytime you ask Frank about his life, he smiles, nods his head and says, "It's been fun."