

# FAMILY *to Family*

SUPPORTING THE  
NEEDS OF CHILDREN

**INSIDE:**

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2018 Recap • Thank You to Our Supporters



Family Hospice  
& Palliative Care

Part of UPMC HNA

# Dear Friends,



It is with gratitude that I write to you in my capacity as Interim Vice President of Clinical Operations for Family Hospice and Palliative Care. Barbara Ivanko, who has served as our dynamic president since 2013, is taking on a new role overseeing special projects that will engage the community and open new doors for us.

I am humbled to step into this space, and I invite you to share in all the latest happenings here at Family Hospice contained within this magazine.

Family Hospice provides compassionate, expert care to individuals with life-limiting illness and their caregivers at the end of life. Sometimes those needs exceed what insurance typically provides. As you will read in this issue, in a variety of cases we can meet these needs and provide enhanced care through grant funding.

For example, a grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation enabled us to buy creativity kits for children visiting the Lawrenceville and Mt. Lebanon inpatient units. The kits offer comfort, engage imaginations, provide distraction, and open

conversations about the dying process. Learn more about meeting the needs of children on pages 2 and 3.

I hope you enjoy the story about the Lesko family, who was able to plan a last dinner at their loved one's favorite restaurant with support from another grant source, The Imagine Harmony Fund.

Grants can play a role in innovative clinical care. This is the case with a new concurrent care program designed to improve the end-of-life experience for patients with end-stage renal disease and their families. This care is supported by a grant from the Family Hospice Foundation, funded by donor contributions. Learn more on page 3.

None of this would be possible without the support of compassionate, engaged and informed benefactors. Thank you for your role in securing this much-needed care for individuals and families in communities throughout Western Pennsylvania.

*Gratefully,*  
**Jennifer Vennare**

*Interim Vice President of Clinical Operations*

## MEET THE \$10,000 RAFFLE WINNER

Hospice reminds us that the bitter and the sweet often are intertwined. Dede Rittman can attest to this. Dede is the winner of our first \$10,000 raffle, something she would gladly trade for more time with her husband, Scott, who was lost to cancer at the age of 59.

To Dede's credit, she is persevering through the loss of her husband, her lifestyle, her job, and her home. She has a new lease on life with the publishing of her book, "Grady Gets Glasses," for kids aged 2 to 28, and hosting an inspirational blog. As a former teacher, she believes in giving back to her community, which is why

she continues to support Family Hospice with donations and the purchase of raffle tickets.

"My husband and our family received so much compassion from Family Hospice, and that is most needed at the end-of-life," Dede reflects. "I'm lucky to be able to give back and want someone to have the same wonderful experience that Scott and I had."

Dede has never won a lottery prize like this before. Her winnings have been put toward the purchase of a new car, which has been an asset in remaining active and pursuing her aspirations.



**We look forward to meeting our next winner. Look for your chance this summer!**

# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Joe Lesko was a cool customer, cruising the neighborhood in his Ford Fairlane back in the day when one afternoon he spied the lovely Ginny standing on the corner by Katilius Furniture in Homestead. As daughter Nanette describes it, so began Joe and Ginny's "happily ever after."

Joe made Ginny his wife, and when Family Hospice and Palliative Care met the Leskos, their happiness had endured for 59 years. Ginny, a homemaker, and Joe, a master plumber, raised three children in Whitaker, Pa. Their family grew to include five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

"It was obvious from the start that family was a cherished value in this home," said Megan Cameron, the social worker who was part of the multidisciplinary hospice team supporting the Leskos along the course of Ginny's advancing illness. Thanks to 'Imagine Harmony,' a unique, donor-supported fund, Family Hospice was able to create an occasion to honor and celebrate that value.

The "Imagine Harmony" fund supports final life experiences that carry significant meaning for patients and their loved ones. For the Leskos, this took the form of a family dinner with Ginny at "The Nest" in Jeannette, Pa. Throughout their life as a family, steak and lobster dinners at "The Nest" were reserved for truly special occasions.

Nanette recounted how this wish unfolded. "Mom had been declining. She loved her family dearly and really wanted to spend one last memorable occasion with us. Being able to have a family dinner one final time made a huge impact on my mom and on all of us. Mom's spirit that day wasn't very strong in the morning. But once she got dressed up in her favorite outfit and was at the restaurant, she seemed full of life. She had a wonderful time with all of us and enjoyed every bite of her favorite meal, including the leftovers the next day!"

"We were so grateful for the generosity of those who made it possible to have this last memorable time with our mother," Nanette expressed.



The Lesko family enjoys a special meal together at "The Nest" in Jeannette.

To support the "Imagine Harmony" fund, please contact Christine Jamison, Director of Development for Family Hospice and Palliative Care, at **412-572-8812**, or [cjamison@FamilyHospicePA.org](mailto:cjamison@FamilyHospicePA.org).



## SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

Coping with the death of a loved one is difficult. Often, children grieve differently than adults and feel the loss more deeply than others. Family Hospice and Palliative Care social workers are trained to work with families to ensure the safety and support of grieving children.

Hilary Kramer, Family Hospice Social Worker, stresses that it is important to include children in hospice discussions with families. “We need to make sure everyone in the family is doing okay, not just the adults,” Hilary says. “It is essential to ensure that children have support in school and at home along the course of illness as well as after a loss.”

Allison Stockley, Manager of Volunteer and Bereavement Services for Family Hospice, adds that for children to have grief support at home, adults also need to be properly educated and prepared. “It is important to support adults with their own grief and educate them on the needs of grieving children,” Allison says. “We have resources to share that talk about how to support and nurture a grieving child, as well as how to identify normal responses to death and when to seek additional help.”

Parents often struggle with whether children should be included and informed of the dying process. While it can be difficult to prepare children for death, Hilary finds that it helps to discuss it ahead of time. “It actually makes the situation easier for children if adults talk to them about it honestly,” Hilary says. “More often than not, they’ll understand that death is part of life and it will help them learn how to deal with their grief.”

A grant through the Family Hospice Foundation is giving the bereavement staff the tools they need to support children. These programs will help children in the community to address specific, grief-related issues by using crafts, games, and group discussions with bereavement counselors.

Helpful resources were recently derived from a grant through The Pittsburgh Foundation. Recently, Family Hospice and Palliative Care was notified of their inclusion in the 2018 Wish Book, a project by The Pittsburgh Foundation that contains inspiring projects from 75 non-profit organizations in the region. Using the resources from The Pittsburgh Foundation, Family Hospice purchased children’s activity kits for both inpatient units in Mt. Lebanon and Lawrenceville.

# FOUNDATION GRANT FUELS INNOVATION

Family Hospice and Palliative Care is partnering with the UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute (PSI), and Dialysis Clinic, Inc. (DCI), the largest non-profit dialysis provider in the country, in an innovative concurrent care program for end-stage renal disease patients with limited life expectancy who are receiving dialysis. “Concurrent care” refers to the provision of hospice services along with dialysis for a limited duration for qualifying patients when the goal of care is palliative.

“This initiative aims to allow earlier hospice access to a group of chronically-ill patients who suffer from end-stage renal disease and rarely die comfortably at home,” explains Dr. Keith Lagnese, Chief Medical Officer for Family Hospice.

The Family Hospice Foundation awarded a grant that funds care for complex palliative interventions that are not covered by insurance. The \$50,000 grant has been renewed in support of this innovative program.

The hope in having these activity kits is to provide comfort for those children visiting a family member or friend in the inpatient hospice unit. The hands-on activities included in each kit can be a bridge to open conversation with children and enhance their sense of security. “We want children to feel welcome in this environment,” Jennifer Trone, Clinician Fellow for the Lawrenceville Inpatient Unit, says.



In the case of an end-stage renal disease patient with a prognosis of less than two months, the grant can fund a finite amount of dialysis treatments for patients who are transitioning to a focus of comfort. This allows hospice to support the patient and family in their decision making regarding care, defined by the patient’s goals and values.

Family Hospice, PSI, and DCI will be gathering valuable data along the course of the initiative. In the long term, the hope is that demonstrating improved clinical outcomes and a better patient and family experience via this new model will impact government policy and remove the

regulatory barriers to accessing the right care at the right time, earlier than is possible presently.

Says Elena Nosal, Family Hospice Senior Clinical Manager, “The patients we have enrolled in hospice earlier have been able to make choices about their care, while avoiding intensive care and hospital stays at end of life. A goal-centered transition improves quality of life for this special patient and family population.”

**For more information about this program, or about any aspect of patient care, call 1-800-513-2148 or visit [FamilyHospicePA.org](http://FamilyHospicePA.org).**

The clinical staff at the inpatient units strives to maximize positive experiences for children by creating an environment that is as normal as possible for children. “We try to promote play,” Connie Lewis, Family Hospice Social Worker, says. “The sounds of a child laughing and talking are just as therapeutic to other patients and families as it is for the person they are visiting.”

For more information on meeting the needs of grieving children, visit [FamilyHospicePA.org](http://FamilyHospicePA.org) or call the Family Hospice and Palliative Care Bereavement Department at 412-572-8829.

# 2018 WRAPUP

## Thank you to all who donated, volunteered, and attended events in support of patients and families in 2018!

Family Hospice hosted its first Donor Appreciation Dinner for those who made a significant contribution in 2018, welcoming more than 40 guests. Guests learned about programs that donations helped fund and information about the future of the organization.

Last spring, 116 players and more than 30 businesses supported the 31st Annual Charity Golf Outing, which raised more than \$63,000. Joann Grieco supports this event because her friend spent his last days at Family Hospice. "The first year I invited three of his favorite golf partners to the event," Joann reflects. "This fun and fitting tribute makes me return year after year."

The annual Gateway Clipper Memorial Cruise welcomed more than 100 recently bereaved and raised \$7,000. First-time cruiser, Donna Pecovish, said, "The staff and families shared laughter and tears and helped make memories of loved ones more treasured."

The 5th Annual Family Treasures Sale presented by the Friends of Family Hospice Auxiliary Group amassed more than \$28,000.

The Holiday Memorial Doves program raised \$30,000. This year's program included engraved silver ornaments from Wendell August Forge.

By supporting these events, you are helping to provide enhanced care for many families. We hope that we will be a part of your plans in 2019.



The memorial boat cruise brings loved ones together for remembrance.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Join Family Hospice for A Tasteful Gathering on Wednesday, April 24 from 6 to 8 p.m.



- Wine, cheese, and chocolate sampling at the Whitehall House in Brentwood
- Live entertainment
- Only 100 tickets available
- \$60 per person or \$100 per couple

RSVP by April 1 to Dianne Whetsell at 412-572-8874 or [whetsell@upmc.edu](mailto:whetsell@upmc.edu).

### Don't miss the 32nd Annual Charity Golf Outing on Monday, May 13 at Valley Brook Country Club.

- Enjoy 18 holes of golf and games of skill
- Dinner and awards
- Raffle baskets with items such as event tickets, gift cards, and merchandise
- Silent auction and 50/50 raffle

To sponsor, golf, or attend the dinner, please visit [FamilyHospicePA.org](http://FamilyHospicePA.org) for more information and to register.

Save the date for this year's Family Hospice Treasures Sale – September 28-29, 2019.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Donations of \$500 or more are recognized in print. List reflects donations made in 2018.

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A scenic photograph of a golf course with lush green grass, sand traps, and a dense line of trees in the background under a clear sky.

FAMILY HOSPICE  
*32<sup>nd</sup>*  
ANNUAL CHARITY  
GOLF OUTING

**MAY 13, 2019 • VALLEY BROOK COUNTRY CLUB**

Please visit **FamilyHospicePA.org** to register. Contact Dianne Whetsell at **412-572-8874** or **whetsell@upmc.edu** with any questions.