

# FAMILY *to Family*

## AT HOME WITH FAMILY

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Family Hospice  
Part of UPMC

Dear Friends,



We are pleased to present the fall edition of "Family to Family." We have much to share with you from what has been a full and productive year.

Learn about our annual symposium for healthcare professionals, "Alternative Models of Care." Our presenters are not only experts in their fields of practice but also on the cutting edge of advancing care and treatment for the most fragile patients.

Our strong ties in the healthcare community benefit patients in whatever setting they call home. As you will read in this edition, one of our volunteers discusses the benefits of hospice in long-term care facilities. You may be surprised to learn that nearly 30% of our patients reside in extended care settings.

Our time with patients and families can extend beyond the few days or weeks that people often assume is the limit of what hospice can provide. Meet the Berchoks, and get a glimpse of what is possible when we are engaged at the right time and can apply the full breadth of our resources and expertise.

Providing education regarding the benefits of hospice before it is needed affords patients and families the information to make sound decisions for their end-of-life goals. I am elated to share the news of a very generous grant awarded by the McElhattan Foundation, which enables us to increase outreach efforts via educational programs and classes for the community as well as for healthcare providers. We can use this financial support to increase awareness of the hospice benefit, facilitate more open dialogue, and honor individuals' values and wishes at the end-of-life.

Additionally, on the subject of financial support, our golf, wine, and holiday dove fundraisers have helped fulfill 14 grants this year totaling more than \$80,000! Support from benefactors like you makes enhanced, compassionate, quality care possible for more than 3,200 patients and their families across western Pennsylvania. For this, I thank you.

Gratefully,  
Jennifer Vennare  
Vice President of Clinical Operations

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF CARE

The 2019 Hospice and Palliative Care Symposium, co-sponsored by Family Hospice and the UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute, was held on Tuesday, April 23, before a crowd of more than 160 physicians, physician assistants, social workers, and nurses.

The symposium provided the opportunity to discuss strategies and resources to help improve the patient experience for the seriously ill and their families. Topics included "Expanded Access," "End Stage Renal Disease Care," "Integration of Palliative Care Across the Continuum in the PACE Model," "Integrative Oncology Advancements," and "Healthcare Disparities of the Seriously Ill."

Dr. Karen Hacker, Allegheny County Health Department Medical Director, joined the symposium as the final presenter of the day.

Dr. Hacker discussed the most recent statistics and outcomes related to health disparities. Her discussion raised questions about the importance of equitable care provision for the underserved as it relates to hospice and palliative care.

Attendee Nancy Patchen, Nurse Educator for UPMC Susquehanna Hospice, said, "The day was filled with great speakers. The UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute and Family Hospice offer amazing support, and I knew the information would be cutting edge. This was a great opportunity to meet and network with nurses, physicians, and social workers who have a desire to provide the best hospice and palliative care possible to our patients."

A similar symposium will be held on Thursday, November 7, at the Altoona Grand Hotel and Conference Center in Altoona, Pa.



Dr. Karen Hacker, Director of the Allegheny County Health Department, (fourth from left) is joined by representatives from Family Hospice and the Palliative and Supportive Institute.

for professionals in the Eastern regions. For more information or to register, contact Eric Horwith at 412-572-8810 or horwithes2@upmc.edu.

Pictured left to right:  
Jennifer Vennare, Family Hospice Vice President of Clinical Operations,  
Sarah Pistella, McElhattan Foundation Program Assistant,  
Lesley Carlin, McElhattan Foundation Executive Director,  
Christine Jamison, Family Hospice Director of Development

## McELHATTAN FOUNDATION

### GRANTS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

"We wish we'd known about hospice sooner" is a frequent refrain spoken by those under Family Hospice's care. It bears a tinge of regret, shared by families and staff.

When a beloved member of the McElhattan family passed away, they had the same reaction. The McElhattans set their sights on developing a plan with Family Hospice to create programs that generate public awareness about hospice care. Change came within one year's time.

"After their loss, the family continued to educate themselves about hospice care and the process of dying and decided to make this a priority of their own charitable foundation," said Lesley Carlin, Executive Director of the McElhattan Foundation. "We began to talk with Family Hospice about creating an initiative that would help other families realize they can say no to 'just one more test.'"

Conversations with the McElhattans produced the framework of what was to become a one-year \$62,000 grant to Family Hospice from the McElhattan Foundation. "We are so grateful to the McElhattan Foundation. The programs we've created will differentiate us from other hospice providers," explains Christine Jamison, Director of Development at Family Hospice. "This grant allows Family Hospice to increase educational opportunities for people in the community as well as for healthcare professionals."

"Our foundation liked the dual-pronged approach of educating both the community and the healthcare providers," said Carlin. "Family Hospice helped us realize that members of the medical field are often unsure about when it's the right time to refer someone to hospice care — or how to start the conversation with the patient and their family."



"Healthcare professionals are conditioned to try everything they can to keep a person alive and it's hard to gauge life expectancy," comments Jennifer Vennare, Vice President of Clinical Operations at Family Hospice. "When you're tending to families who don't want to 'give up' and who don't understand their options, it becomes difficult to have the hospice conversation. We hope this grant leads to better communication and informed decision making."

Research demonstrates that patients enrolled in hospice care experience fewer hospitalizations, endure less invasive procedures, and are more likely to experience death in the location of their choice. Through this grant, Family Hospice can demystify misunderstandings about hospice that often delay needed care.

Healthcare professionals can access continuing education courses and a symposium that will discuss advancements in hospice care and the expanding scope of treatments, diagnoses, circumstances, and populations. Family Hospice is also providing the community with free classes and seminars about end-of-life planning and available resources. Patients' families will benefit from caregiver training classes and instruction about personal care, safe transfer, nutrition, and patient and caregiver safety.

To learn more about available programs or to schedule a talk, contact **Chrissy Meduho** at **412-398-1395** or **meduhoc2@upmc.edu**.

*Mickey Berchok (left), his wife, Barbara, and Family Hospice Social Worker, Megan Cameron, talk about the events of the upcoming day.*



## AT HOME WITH FAMILY

**B**efore his stroke, Mickey Berchok was a busy, sports-obsessed, active man. He was a teacher in Clairton, as well as a football coach, prior to retirement.

“Mickey was always interested in any sport — golf, bowling, swimming — he taught tennis for a period of time, and became a football official in his later years,” said Barbara Berchok, his wife of 52 years. “He was the extreme opposite of me! Always so busy with activities and friends.” When Mickey experienced a debilitating stroke a few years ago, all the activity came to a screeching halt.

Barbara met Mickey during a blind date that was arranged by one of her friends from work. “I thought the date started off poorly because I gave him the wrong directions to my house!” Barbara laughed. The couple grew up in Pittsburgh and have lived here ever since. They have one son and one grandson, who live in Philadelphia.

Mickey has been on service in his home with Family Hospice for a little over a year, after a decline in his health following the stroke. Barbara was his primary caregiver before Family Hospice stepped in. “I took care of Mickey for more than two years prior to hospice, so I understand how much work it takes. It’s unbelievable how much you don’t know until you’re faced with something like this,” Barbara said. “The help and benefits we have received from Family Hospice are incredible. They take all the guesswork away and supply you with everything you need. The nursing care is wonderful — Megan always answers my questions and gives me peace of mind. The access to doctors is amazing. Hospice has this magical way of ordering a medication and it arrives at your door. It’s beyond great!”

Barbara and Mickey have been able to take advantage of many services Family Hospice provides. “It is of the utmost

importance that you have some sort of help on an ongoing basis,” Barbara explained. “We have a volunteer who comes to our home every Wednesday evening to spend time with Mickey. Another comes and cuts Mickey’s hair. We have a priest who visits and provides spiritual care for Mickey. These are the things that keep me going.”

Family Hospice Social Worker Megan Cameron has been working with the Berchoks for over a year. “She is so comforting and always asks how I am feeling,” Barbara said. “Megan and I have great conversations and she constantly helps me find solutions to problems I am having.” Barbara explained that not only is hospice an unbelievable service, but the people who come along with it, like Megan, are even more exceptional. “She takes the anxiety away — and there’s a lot of anxiety sitting in this seat.”

When Mickey and Barbara decided it was time for Family Hospice, Barbara didn’t know what to expect. Now that she and Mickey have been involved with Family Hospice for more than a year, one thing is for sure — she never expected to receive such remarkable support. “The services we have received from Family Hospice have been so comprehensive,” Barbara said. “I had no idea hospice would be so compassionate and supportive. Everyone who visits is constantly smiling and helpful. I also wasn’t expecting the amount of emotional support I received as the caregiver.”

One of Barbara’s most important requirements was that Mickey stay in their home. “He’s the most comfortable this way, which is all I want. It gives me peace of mind because I know that he is being well taken care of,” Barbara said. “Now, we are both at peace during such an important phase of life.”

The hospice experience has been eye opening for Barbara in many ways. “Mickey and I were always equal partners before the stroke, but afterward, I started having to do everything...it was scary,” Barbara said. “Hospice is something that is irreplaceable. It’s made something that I thought was completely impossible, possible — to be able to care for him the way I want and the way I know he would want.”

*Barbara and Megan chat over tea and cookies.*

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# 2019 WRAP-UP

## OUR DAY ON THE FAIRWAY

Family Hospice was fortunate to welcome ninety-six golfers with “a grip” on the importance of what hospice services mean to the community. The 32nd Annual Charity Golf Outing was held on May 13, 2019 and raised more than \$60,000 for patient programs and services, some of which include funding for hardship cases, comfort items at the bedside, and bereavement programs.

Golfers enjoyed 18 holes in the format of their choice and contests such as games of skill and a shoot-out for \$50,000. The evening concluded with a dinner and auction featuring meteorologist Jeff Verszyla as the emcee.

We appreciate the support of all sponsors, golfers, auction donors, volunteers, and staff who made the event a success!

**Please mark your calendars for next year’s golf outing at our NEW LOCATION — South Hills Country Club, on Monday, May 18, 2020!**



Golfers had a great day on the course while raising more than \$60,000!

## UNCORKED

Family Hospice held its first *Tasteful Gathering* wine sampling event on Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at The Whitehall House in Brentwood. The featured winery was Kavic, based in Carnegie, which offered classic and internationally inspired white and red selections. Complementing the flavor experience were delectable pairings from Chantal’s Cheese Shop in Lawrenceville and My Favorite Sweet Shoppe in Bridgeville.



The employees from **Julian Gray Associates** enjoy wine and cheese at this inaugural event.

**Proceeds from the event fund programs and services for our patients and their families. We hope that you can join us for the second annual *Tasteful Gathering* on April 30, 2020 at The Amor, located on Steubenville Pike!**

## THE VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

The majority of Family Hospice patients, 70% in fact, receive care in their private homes. But did you know that Family Hospice cares for many patients in long-term care and assisted living facilities? Currently, nearly 30% of Family Hospice patients reside in these communities, where the support of a hospice volunteer can often meet a need that other resources cannot.

All hospice patients have access to dignified care and expert symptom management. Hospice services in long-term care add an additional layer to the team already caring for the patient. “A patient who is at the end of their life needs additional compassion, listening, and support,” says Ann Yaros, Family Hospice Professional Staff Nurse. “Hospice services received in long-term care facilities greatly improve a patient’s quality of life and are a comfort not only to the patient, but to families and staff members.”

Family Hospice volunteers embrace the opportunity and privilege to support patients and their families through a significant and inevitable season of life. They play a critical role in hospice care and are an important part of the hospice team, particularly in the long-term care setting. The level of personal connection and support provided by volunteers makes lasting relationships possible.

Kathy McCarty has been a Family Hospice volunteer for four years. Her father was a patient at Family Hospice for a week prior to his death. The impact of this experience prompted her to give back.

She visits patients in different settings, one of which is long-term care. “I believe that we can be peaceful company to patients and advocates of their treatment in long-term care environments,” Kathy says. “I hope families are comforted, knowing we are visiting their loved one.”

residents to a peaceful space outside or an activity that the patient would otherwise not be able to attend. Other “Candlelight” volunteers will sit with a patient during their final hours of life, which is especially valuable to family members and friends who live out of town. Still others play music or bring animals to visit.



Volunteers are essential members of the hospice care team. “We are so fortunate at Family Hospice to have an amazing team of volunteers who offer companionship and a listening ear,” says Ann. “They are able to bring a piece of the outside world to our patients who are no longer able to interact in the larger community.”

Some volunteers who visit patients in long-term care facilities escort

“We are lucky to have the benefit of volunteers who come from different backgrounds and who can offer many services to patients,” Ann says.

“Sometimes, family members are just not equipped to meet the needs of a hospice patient in a private home,” says Kathy. “Long-term care is an important option for families; no matter where you receive it, hospice is a God-send.”

**To learn more about volunteering with Family Hospice, call 412-572-8806.**



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Go Green! If you would prefer to receive your copy of our newsletter via e-mail, sign up from the home page of our website or contact **Helen Stickney**, Development Assistant and Donor Database Manager, at **412-572-8457** or [hstickney@FamilyHospicePA.org](mailto:hstickney@FamilyHospicePA.org).

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## *Deck the Halls*

All of us at Family Hospice wish you a season of peace and love.

Please consider joining us in a long-standing tradition of remembrance with a dove ornament. For your gift of \$35 or more, we will place your loved one's name on a dove to hang on the tree of your choice.

Also available is a 3½" x 4" silver metal dove ornament from Wendell August Forge. For \$150, a name can be engraved and hung in the Lawrenceville inpatient unit or mailed to your home.

All proceeds from the holiday dove program benefit patient care, fund programs, and educate the community about the advantages of hospice care.