

Perspective

Winter 2023

A community publication
from Northern Illinois Hospice



Northern Illinois Hospice: A Family Affair

At Northern Illinois Hospice we're a tight knit bunch. Some might say we're like family. But for one of our longtime team members, Tracey Armstrong, that familial feeling rings even more true.

Tracey, a Senior Finance Assistant, has been part of our team for more than 30 years. But her ties with the agency go back even further because her parents, Lola and Gene ("Gus"), were some of our first volunteers and donors more than four decades ago.

The couple grew up in Rockford where Lola later worked as a library supervisor in the Rockford Public Schools while Gus was a purchasing supervisor for Cotta Transmission. They loved Rockford and found it a supportive community to raise their daughters, Tana, Teri and Tracey.

"My parents first heard about Northern Illinois Hospice Association



The Gustafson family (from left: Teri, Gus, Lola, Tana, and Tracey) attends a Northern Illinois Hospice event in 1983.

through a dear friend of the family who was a volunteer," said Tracey. "They were encouraged to become members of the association for just a dollar."

Lola and Gus deeply believed in

the hospice concept and wanted to support Tana and Tracey who both volunteered and worked here, too. The couple helped in administration and the finance department in a

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MISSION

Northern Illinois Hospice is a trusted community partner dedicated to:

- providing extraordinary and dignified care, comfort and compassion to individuals and families at the end of life;
- removing barriers to care access so all eligible individuals, regardless of ability to pay and payment source, receive exceptional care and support; and
- educating others about end-of-life planning and hospice and palliative care.

VISION

Our vision is to be a local and national leader in hospice and palliative care and to enrich end-of-life experiences through our quality, innovative approaches, and supportive education.

CORE VALUES

Community, Compassion, Excellence, Gratitude, Integrity, Quality, Service, Stewardship, Vision

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From the Chief Executive Officer



Northern Illinois Hospice is expanding its mission! An additional service for individuals navigating the symptoms and stress of a limiting illness will be launched early next year. This new service is called Palliative Care.

Palliative Care [*pal-ee-ey-tive, -ee-uh-tive*]

A specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. *Source: Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC).*

Does that sound like hospice? Although the overarching philosophy is similar, palliative and hospice care are distinct services.

Per Medicare requirements, an individual on hospice is expected to live 6 months or less if the disease runs its usual course. Through our palliative program, individuals we will support will have a life limiting illness with a prognosis of up to two years. Palliative care gives individuals an option for pain and symptom management and higher quality of life while still pursuing curative measures.

Our Palliative Care Program nurse practitioner will be an extension of patients' primary care providers (PCP), visiting individuals at home, outside the traditional clinic setting. This nurse practitioner will:

- facilitate discussions about life goals and what quality of life means to them
- document end of life preferences via advance care planning to prepare for future decisions about medical care
- manage symptoms related to the serious illness and side effects of medical treatments
- provide education and support on the serious illness and disease trajectory
- offer resource information and guidance
- help the individual stay at home, avoiding unnecessary ER and doctor visits

We're just a few months away from bringing our 44-year legacy of exceptional care to a new population, supporting vulnerable individuals and families as well as the medical professionals caring for them. Our mission is blossoming in a profound and vital way.

Northern Illinois Hospice, the region's most experienced provider, is doing more great things for our community!

Make today the BEST day!



Lisa Novak
Chief Executive Officer

Volunteer Helped Keep Passion Alive

Northern Illinois Hospice patient Evelyn Shields loved to paint.

Once a month for the last year, Evelyn could be found at a small table in front of large windows painting a picture with her Northern Illinois Hospice volunteer, Marilyn Meyers.

The two ladies bonded over past art projects and how they both were working with watercolor more than ever before.

They started by flipping through an inspiration folder filled with images of birds, tea cups, and leaves. They chose brushes and paints from Evelyn's personal collection to start their creations.

Marilyn has been a patient care volunteer with Northern Illinois Hospice for more than four years, and was very excited to learn of a new patient who loved to paint.

"I thought that painting would be a special way to connect with someone," Marilyn said. "And indeed it was wonderful. Evie was a lovely person."

As they painted each month, Evelyn told Marilyn stories about the art she loved so much and about life, family, and her experiences.

She started painting in college as a hobby. And while she continued to love the art medium, she put her brushes down to raise her children but was happy to pick them back up in her 50s.

As her family traveled, they would take photos of landscapes in foreign countries like Sweden, bring them home, and let her repaint the scene. She would then sell her art at craft



Northern Illinois Hospice volunteer Marilyn Meyers paints with patient Evelyn Shields this past summer.

shows and had sets of her hand-painted cards for sale at Stockholm Inn.

She started with oils, tried acrylic, and used charcoals, pencils, and pastels. She painted portraits, landscapes, and ended up loving birds, dogs, and flowers.

Her works of art were displayed proudly all over her room at Fairhaven Christian Retirement Center and can be found in troves in her children's homes. Evelyn said she could get lost in her painting for hours.

"It feels good when I'm painting," she said. "When I'm painting, it seems like I'm in a different world. My own world."

Marilyn felt the same way. That's what made spending this time together just as precious to Marilyn as it was to Evelyn.

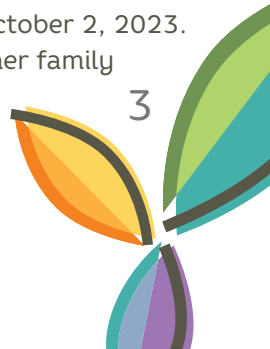
Having that connection with patients is the reason why Marilyn volunteers with Northern Illinois Hospice.

"I look forward to meeting each patient and finding ways to provide support during their journey," she said. "Connecting with someone at this special time in their lives is so meaningful.

Last summer, Evelyn and Marilyn painted the same inspirational bird; with the same brushes and the same paints. Both original artworks turned out slightly different, but beautiful. The two laughed while showing off their final products, and chatted about what may be their inspiration next time.

Hospice care is about finding ways to live while having a terminal illness. Evelyn got to do what she loved - paint, and Northern Illinois Hospice volunteers like Marilyn help make it possible.

Evelyn died on Northern Illinois Hospice services on October 2, 2023. We continue to keep her family in our thoughts.



Stress-Busting is Beneficial

In November, Northern Illinois Hospice wrapped up the latest session of The Stress-Busting Program for Family Caregivers.™ It's an evidence-based program that provides support to family caregivers. The class covers stress management techniques, including breathing, meditation, massage, art, aromatherapy, journaling, and music. The final session is comprehensive and sets the participants on their path to wellness.

The class is led by Volunteer Program Coordinator Sheila O'Leary, MAHS, and Hospice Liaison Jennifer Ramsby, RN, CHPN. Both became certified teachers of the program last year and enjoy helping others learn to manage stress and cope better.

"The course is unique; our last session focused on chronic illness," said Jennifer. "What stood out for me was how the class learned from each other, what worked and what didn't, so everyone could grow."

Sheila agreed with Jennifer and said how much she loved the feeling in the classroom each session. "There was such honesty and openness. Participants learn from each other; it always reminds me of the incredible learning curve of caregiving and how important it is to have support."

Jennifer and Sheila make a dynamic duo as instructors because they complement each other so well. They lean into

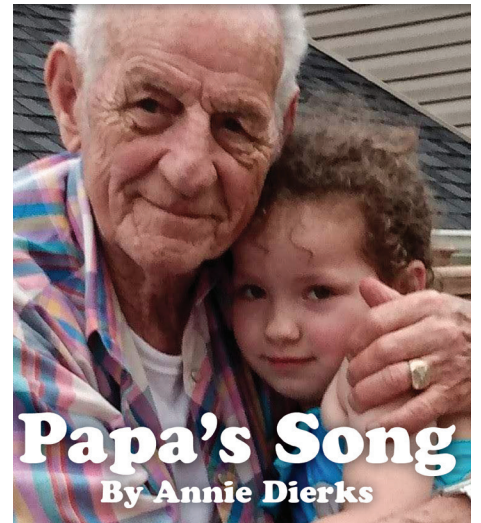
their strengths to teach each class and educate others based on what they learned through their own caregiving journeys. "For me the joy comes from drawing people out and getting to know each participant better," said Sheila. "People bring wisdom with them when they walk through the door. We create safe spaces to hear how their weeks have been. It touches my heart and challenges my mind."

The instructors each shared how hard it is to be a caregiver 24/7. It affects a caregiver's mind, body, and spirit. That's why it's so important to have a team of resources, including a place like Northern Illinois Hospice, where people are willing to help.

Each person who comes to the class is in a very different place in caring for their loved one. "They really seem to enjoy a break from the caregiving routine and the opportunity to get their feelings out," said Jenny.

Even the instructors benefited from leading the class. "You teach what you learn," said Sheila. "These classes remind me to reintroduce mindfulness, meditation and breathing into my own life."

Northern Illinois Hospice will offer more sessions in early 2024. For more information on this program, call 815.398.0500 and ask for Sheila in Volunteer Services.



The Healing Power of Music

Our hospice team always looks for special ways to connect with our patients' families. This fall, our music therapist/bereavement coordinator, Jen Conley MT-BC, LPC, made one of those connections with the granddaughter of a DeKalb County patient.

Together, Jen and 7-year-old Annie, wrote a song in tribute to her "Papa." It was used at his memorial in October and made a lasting impression on all who heard it. Jen was also given a ukulele she was able to pass on to Annie, which the family greatly appreciated.

Scan to hear
"Papa's Song"



Northern Illinois Hospice: A Family Affair

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variety of ways including filing and making copies. They even rolled up their sleeves to assist with carpet removal when the agency moved to the former Newburg Road location. Tracey recalls her parents attending all the annual meetings, helping with set up and bringing punch to the annual benefit each spring.

This year, Northern Illinois Hospice took a very personal turn for Tracey and her family as her parents both entered hospice care.

Tracey shared that her mom 'took one long road out of this world' with both declines and rebounds in health over many years. "The day Mom was admitted to our hospice was the same day that Dad was moved to the Wesley Willows Health and Rehab Center from his apartment. It was so nice to have the cohesiveness of the same hospice caregiver team for both Mom and Dad."

Tracey's work family stood beside her the entire time through her parents' struggles. She's so grateful to the nurse who made sure that her dad had a chance to say goodbye to his bride of 72 years. "It was the most beautiful, heart-breaking moment that we had ever witnessed," recalled Tracey. "We will always be grateful to Nurse Amy for making that happen."

Tracey thanks so many others here who helped her parents and gives a big shout out to the entire organization. "After all these years with Northern Illinois Hospice, I experienced firsthand just how truly wonderful you all are!" said Tracey.

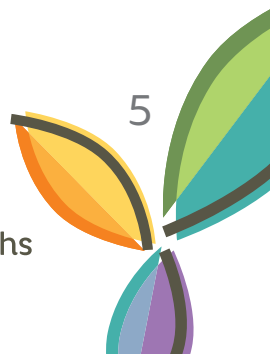
These are the moments that matter. Caring for families when they need us most. That's why we're here.



Above: Sisters Tana and Tracey work a booth for Northern Illinois Hospice during a Rockford Lightning basketball game in the early 1990s.



Right: Gus and Lola Gustafson volunteered for Northern Illinois Hospice for more than 30 years and were recognized in 2011 for their commitment to the agency.





Top left: Julie Callaway, Foundation Board Member Julie Altenbernd, Kelly Schultz, and Ed Clending golf in support of Northern Illinois Hospice. Top right: Dylan Whitcher golfs for team M3 Insurance. Left: Aldeen Golf Club hosted the 35th annual event. Above: Bridget Finn and Nancy Kaney sell raffle tickets on the course.

A Tee-rific Day of Giving & Golf

On July 31, 2023, the Aldeen Golf Club, paired with sunny 81-degree weather, made it the perfect location for Northern Illinois Hospice Foundation's 35th Annual Charity Golf Event.

The day began with registration followed by a buffet lunch and welcome from Julie Humpal, 2023 Charity Golf Event Chair, and Lisa Novak, Northern Illinois Hospice CEO. Golfers were in their carts for a 12:45 PM shotgun start, and play wrapped up at about 4:30 PM. Post-play, golfers, and volunteers gathered at the Illinois Bank and Trust Pavilion for hearty appetizers, awards, and the 50/50 raffle drawing.

"Year after year, our charity golf event's success can be attributed to the wonderful people and businesses involved," said Julie Humpal, 2023 Charity Golf Event Chair and Northern Illinois Hospice Foundation Board Secretary. This year, there were over 60 sponsors and donors, 40 volunteers, and 104 golfers. "Our 35th Annual Charity Golf event and Guest Bartending event raised over \$68,000," added Julie.

Northern Illinois Hospice Foundation's board and staff sincerely appreciate the kind-hearted sponsors, golfers, volunteers, and friends who made the day so much fun and a successful

fundraiser. Thank you to UW Health, the event's premier sponsor for a third year in a row. A big shout-out to Bobby VanSistine PGA, Aldeen Golf Club's Business Operations Manager and Outing Coordinator, his team, Al Castrogiovanni, and his top-notch Alchemy catering staff for their enthusiasm and attention to detail!

We are beyond grateful to those who came together to help us ensure everyone in our region has access to extraordinary hospice care.

Remember to mark your calendars for our 36th Annual Charity Golf Outing on Monday, July 29, 2024, at Aldeen Golf Club.

2024 Support Groups and Additional Support Offerings

Open to anyone who has experienced the death of someone close to them, our groups and workshops focus on learning, healing and encouragement. All are welcome. To register, please go to our website northernillinoishospice.org. For more information on Rockford area events, email Andrew Vitale at avitale@niha.org and for DeKalb area events, email Jen Conley at jconley@niha.org.



Memorial Pillow Workshop

Free workshop to create pillow from loved-one's button-down shirt.

Saturday, January 27, 2024

10-11 AM or 11 AM-12 PM

DeKalb Public Library

Yusunas Room

309 Oak St, DeKalb

To inquire, email: jconley@niha.org

Bridge of Hope

Bereavement Care Group

Wednesdays: Jan. 17 - Feb. 21

4-5:30 PM

Northern Illinois Hospice/
Gateway Arts Building

2225 Gateway Dr., Sycamore

Bluebirds Fly Bereavement Group

For Children ages 7-12

Mondays: Feb. 19-March 25

6-7:15 PM

Vineyard Church

1051 South 4th St., DeKalb

**This group is not affiliated with any faith tradition

There Are So Many Smart Ways To Give

It's December and a time when many are thinking about the holidays, family, and end-of-year donations to nonprofits like Northern Illinois Hospice Foundation.

Everyone's situation is different. Sometimes it's straightforward. Make a charitable gift, get a charitable tax deduction. But sometimes it's not so clear. For instance, what if you can't use these deductions? It's good to know you can still avoid taxes.

Donors can give appreciated assets (stocks, real estate, etc.) and avoid paying any capital gains tax on the gain. But it's important to remember: don't sell then give. If you do, you'll have to pay the capital gains tax. Instead, give the asset before the sale. A charity like Northern Illinois Hospice doesn't pay any tax when it sells.

If you're age 70½ or older you can give directly from your IRA or IRA rollover. This earned income is never taxed when it goes directly to the nonprofit. This makes it a smart way to give - even better than itemizing deductions!

Here at Northern Illinois Hospice, we thank you for your support. You are appreciated as a donor and friend. Questions? Please contact Susan Lundin, Director of the Northern Illinois Hospice Foundation, at slundin@niha.org.

"Mom lived her 'best life' loving God, family, and friends, in that order," said daughter Holly Beeman. A talented singer, musician, baker, gardener, and animal lover, Winona "Nonie" Beeman also was a hands-on, great-great-grandmother!

When Nonie's eyesight worsened, she moved from the family farm into assisted living, where she made friends and enjoyed activities. "But then, Mom started having pain and falls, and...

Northern nursing a life for the remember years. "N

Northern and liste strength back on "Mom's live her

Nonie celebrated her 100th birthday in style! Her Northern Illinois Hospice care am ensured she as ready to enjoy the milestone and be celebrated with her family.

Get Nonie's full story here!

and shared with permission.

YOU ADDED life TO NONIE'S YEARS

northern illinois Hospice FOUNDATION

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WHAT ROCKS? *We do!*

Northern Illinois Hospice was named the winner of the Rockford Register Star "What Rocks 2023 - The Official Community's Choice Awards" contest for HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICES.

"We are thrilled to be recognized

by our community. We consider it a privilege to care for local residents through end of life and we are so grateful to be honored in this way," says Lisa Novak, CEO of Northern Illinois Hospice. "Receiving this award holds a special place for us as

area families turn to us for expert, compassionate care and comfort."

Northern Illinois Hospice was also honored to have won the "What Rocks in Rockford" award for BEST HOSPICE ORGANIZATION in 2020.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing lists, please call 815.398.0500.