

## Children Need Grief Support Too!

For the second time, the Hospice House gardens hosted children to “plant memories.”

On Thursday, August 20th, a dozen children and numerous volunteers and staff clad in masks and practicing social distancing, participated in Hospice Alliance’s Planting Memories event.



Children show off their “planted memories” in the Hospice House Gardens.

“We know that it can be helpful to process grief by participating in rituals, traditions and reminiscing,” said Jenny Sytkowski BSW, CHPSW, Hospice Alliance Bereavement Coordinator. “Since children experience loss too, we developed an event to promote healing and to integrate the loss into life.”

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## Grief Support is an Integral Part of our Care

Hospice Alliance supports our patients’ families and anyone in the community experiencing grief through our bereavement services. We believe that grief support is vital in the healing process. Often, grieving begins long before a death occurs. There is grief that hits at diagnosis. There is grief that occurs when watching a loved one’s decline. There is grief we experience due to distance and a longing for the way things used to be. With patients in our care, our social workers support loved ones as they navigate through these forms of grief.

However, once a patient passes, or if a community member reaches out while experiencing loss, our Bereavement Team becomes

instrumental in assisting the bereaved through his or her grief. A variety of services – from individual consultations to drop-in group sessions with a traditional approach, to healing sessions featuring aromatherapy and meditation are all offered.

The mission of the department is to meet the bereaved “where they are at” to provide discussions and ideas to work through the individual’s unique grieving process.

“When I’m out in the community, I always tell people what a fantastic bereavement program Hospice Alliance provides. I personally experienced grief when my brother

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Jennifer Sytkowski, Bereavement Coordinator and Marge Puntarec, Chaplain are joined by service dog, Sam, as they meet to review bereavement strategies for children.

## A Message from our Executive Director



Rita Hagen,  
Executive Director

### *The Greatest Caregiver Tribute*

This is the story of our new Registered Nurse (RN), Elise Conway. Her life's journey to Hospice Alliance is a tribute to our caregiving teams.

When I learned Elise wanted to join Hospice Alliance as an RN, I got chills all over. Thinking about it again brings tears to my eyes.

This is her story: "I was 24 years old waitressing at Olive Garden. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. My Dad got liver cancer. He was 51. We had hospice at home

because he wanted to pass at home. It was too much for my Mom to be giving him his medications. She was very overwhelmed."

"I was the oldest of three. My little sister was 16. So, I just stepped in and started giving my Dad his meds. After he passed, I realized I wanted to be in the medical field. I got my medical assistant degree and worked for a family practitioner for five years. Then I went to nursing school. **I always wanted to do hospice after Hospice Alliance helped me take care of my Dad. It was just something in me. I felt it was something I was meant to do.**"

"I felt I was meant to be there for patients and their families, teach them how to take care of their family member because it can be super overwhelming."

What really warmed my heart was to hear how Hospice Alliance's caregiving team had served her family many years ago.

"They were very helpful in educating me on how to give the medications, and signs and symptoms. Having that dynamic of the team—chaplain, social worker, nurse, CNA (Certified Nurse Assistant)—really helps every aspect of what you're going through emotionally. They're super sensitive, understanding and passionate about what they do."

**I love sharing Elise's tribute with our caregivers. Her life journey is a testimony to their professionalism and compassion.**

For the future, Elise shared, "I hope to make the transition into the end-of-life as easy, comfortable and peaceful as possible for the patient. I want to be there for the families to let them know they're not alone. They have an entire team to reach out to. I want to ensure that they have the right information so they are comfortable and confident in caring for their loved one."

Welcome, Elise. We're gratified to be on your journey.

Rita Hagen, MSN, RN  
Executive Director

*Children Need Grief Support Too! - continued from page 1*

The event was open to any child (including teenagers) who have experienced loss. Each participant could work on a flower planting project, enjoy refreshments and listen to music.

"We pride ourselves on offering our bereavement services to the public – not just patients' families. Children are an integral part of our community and we are proud to play a part in their healing," added Rita Hagen, Executive Director.

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*Since children experience loss too, we developed an event to promote healing*  
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Volunteers safely distribute individually packaged treats.



Painting pots prior to planting is a fun and meaningful activity.



*Grief Support - continued from page 1*

passed away much too young after a battle with cancer. My mom was having a tough time, too. I was fortunate to be able to recommend our program to her and took advantage of it for myself as well – despite my brother living in St. Louis and not in our service area. My mom was surprised

“ We truly believe in the importance of grief support, and the programming that we offer demonstrates our commitment. ”

and very grateful that anyone suffering loss was welcome. This was an incredible help during the most difficult time in both of our lives,” said Ted McMahon, Community Liaison, Hospice Alliance.

In addition to the one-to-one and group meeting opportunities, caregivers receive frequent bereave-

ment editions of “Hope Notes” tailored by timing to coincide with the typical stage of grief the recipient is experiencing. The personalization allows for the inclusion of relatable topics and appropriate approaches to manage thoughts and feelings.

Rita Hagen, Executive Director, Hospice Alliance added, “We truly believe in the importance of grief support, and the programming that we offer demonstrates our commitment. Medicare mandates that hospices ‘provide bereavement services’ but because they do not reimburse for it, they stipulate no criteria or benchmarks. It’s up to individual hospices to prioritize the service and determine how comprehensive the program is. We are grateful to our donors because their gifts make our robust bereavement program possible.”



Stay connected! Like our Facebook Page!

Hospice Alliance & Hospice Alliance Foundation • [www.hospicealliance.org](http://www.hospicealliance.org)

## Lynda Becker Celebrates 30 Years

It could easily be said that Hospice Alliance wouldn’t be where it is today without Lynda Becker who celebrated her 30 Year Anniversary at the end of August.

“I started in the office at 1015 65th Street with not even 20 employees, and now look at where we are,” Lynda shares – her enthusiasm evident.

During her tenure, she’s worked in Hospice Alliance’s five locations. She started out doing Medicare billing and accounts payable for medicine and medical equipment. Since those days and a degree as a Medical Assistant, she’s done medical transcription, chart audits and scheduling - often from home when her two children were small. In more recent years, she’s handled admissions and supervised our team of CNAs.

She notes her fortune in working for an organization that she is proud of – not only the mission, but the people she’s worked with. From the founders such as Connie Ferwerda and Nancy Piasecki, to the current team, she notes that Hospice Alliance truly attracts the best people. (And, we think she is one of the BEST of the BEST!)



Lynda Becker takes a moment to celebrate the big 3-0!

# Hospice Alliance is Committed to Community Education

Hospice Alliance has established itself as a trusted resource to bring relevant matters of interest and importance to our community. Considering the

recent challenges of gathering in a traditional setting, our professional development and public education presentations are frequently offered virtually.



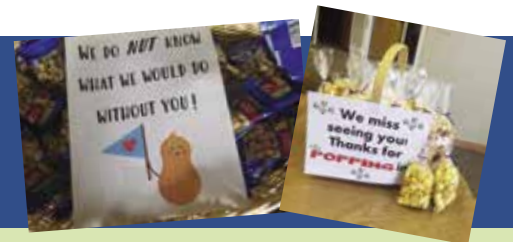
Recently, Jo Ann Brown, LCSW, Hospice Alliance Social Worker, hosted a presentation developed for healthcare professionals entitled “Cultural Diversity and Considerations.” The content focuses on becoming aware of the nuances and commonalities of cultures to increase the quality of care through empathy and understanding.

“Being conscious and educated in the traditions and experiences of ethnicities and cultures is key to enhancing our quality of care,” said Rita Hagen, Executive Director.

In addition to timely topics, Hospice Alliance has an exhaustive list of educational offerings for the community and professionals including hospice care, palliative care, dementia and navigating difficult conversations such as last wishes.

Jo Ann Brown, LCSW, prepares for one of her many educational programs now hosted via Zoom Meetings due to Covid-19.

*As the Hospice Alliance staff continues to navigate the challenges of Covid-19, words (and treats) of gratitude and encouragement are frequently provided!*



## The Giving Tree

We are humbled to be chosen again this year as the recipient of the Lighthouse Lacer’s amazing Lace Tree. Members of the organization complete dozens of handmade lace ornaments to decorate a 4 foot tree, which they donate to Hospice Alliance to raffle.

“We are blessed that the Lighthouse Lacers have selected Hospice Alliance as their charity of choice. The hours and hours of time and amazing talent the lacers put into their work is something to behold,” said Rita Hagen, Hospice Alliance Executive Director.

In addition to the grand prize Lace Tree, which will be available for viewing after mid October, a winter-themed basket and handmade afghan are being awarded to the second and third tickets drawn.

**Tickets are just \$2 each or 3 for \$5 and will be available at our administrative office or by calling 262.652.4400. The drawing will be in early December.**

**Not only are the prizes great, but the cause is worthy! Buy your tickets today!**



Lace tree from a previous year.



## Simple Ways to Support Hospice Alliance

At Hospice Alliance, we hear so many families ask for ways to “give back” for the care we provide for a loved one.

Rita Hagen, Executive Director, says, “Many families, grateful for our services, feel giving back to Hospice Alliance is important. There are many vital ways to support current and future patients, their families and loved ones. Some require nothing but a few minutes of your time.”

Families may choose to purchase a commemorative brick to honor their loved ones. The bricks are available for \$150 or \$500, with most of the investment supporting Hospice Alliance’s programs and services. For more information, or to order a brick visit: [www.hospicealliance.org](http://www.hospicealliance.org).

Many families choose to share donations gathered at the time of a loved one’s funeral. They mention Hospice Alliance as a charity of choice in the obituary. When we receive donations “in memory” of a patient, the family’s chosen member receives a thank you letter listing those who made gifts. Families can also provide a list of contributors if they would like a special acknowledgement sent. When working with your funeral director or writing the obituary, simply state: “The family wishes donations be made to Hospice Alliance.”

Our families write the most beautiful thank you cards after

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*Many families choose to share donations gathered at the time of a loved one’s funeral.*

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a loved one passes in our care. Our staff deeply appreciates these kind, heartfelt words. If you would like to share your experience, a story of how one of our team members exceeded expectations, or how someone made your loved one feel special, you may call us at 262-652-4400 – or send us your story either during or after their care. Your stories can help encourage others to consider hospice care when they need it and also inspire others to make gifts that carry our compassionate care forward.

Maybe simplest of all, if you have time or talent volunteer with Hospice Alliance or share

a gift card which can be used to support any number of initiatives at our Hospice House.

Finally, don’t forget to take advantage of the 2020 IRS law that gives everyone a \$300 charitable deduction. See IRS forms or consult your tax advisor.

Our families and caregivers are forever grateful for each act of your kindness to advance our mission.

You can donate  
online at  
[www.hospicealliance.org](http://www.hospicealliance.org)



The Hospice House participated in the “Heart Hunt” an initiative to encourage creativity and provide a reason to be outdoors during “Safer at Home.”



Our 7th Annual An Evening of Wishes will be held Saturday, **March 6, 2021**. Details for a safe environment are still being determined. For more information about attending, sponsoring, donating or volunteering, call Megan Frazer, Marketing and Development Manager at 262.652.4400.

## Upcoming Events

Please check [hospicealliance.org](http://hospicealliance.org) as all dates and times are subject to change due to COVID-19.

### Ring and Remember

November 12, 2020  
Virtual Format

### Evening of Wishes

March 6, 2021  
Details Coming Soon



10220 Prairie Ridge Blvd.  
Pleasant Prairie, WI 53158

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## Dining for Donations

### MOD Pizza

October 14 – 10:30am-9pm

### Nothing Bundt Cakes

November 16th – 21st – Place orders all week!

### Shopping at Jack Andrea

December 9th – 4-8pm

### Jose's Blue Sombrero – Racine

January 21

### Cousin's Subs

Pleasant Prairie in front of Target  
February 12

### Kenosha Brewing Company

April 22nd



### Hospice Alliance

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For Your Support!**