

Every Day Matters

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF
GENESIS HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

A hospice volunteer's journey

If asked what words best describe a Genesis Hospice volunteer, I would respond, "Versatility and personal growth." In 1989, I started volunteer training for the Morrison House. I had no idea what I was capable of doing. Over the years, I had volunteer coordinators who channeled the talents of this painfully shy individual to a person who contributed to the hospice program in different ways, many of which were out of my comfort zone.

I began volunteering with clerical work, which I continue today. I was best suited for these tasks because I seldom had to interact with strangers. However, I soon met other volunteers and eventually helped with events behind the scenes. My first personal contact with patients was sitting with one patient for a short time and feeding a patient. I was not comfortable in these roles.

However, it was helping organize our clown troupe in 2000 and transforming into Melba the Clown that a change occurred. If I wore a wig, clown makeup and costume, I could talk to anyone. At first, I wanted to be the last person to enter the patients' rooms and stand behind the other clowns, but at least I was comfortably interacting with patients. This had been my goal as a hospice volunteer. There was no stopping me as I asked riddles, bantered with other clowns or played the kazoo. Now I am comfortable being first in a room and doing a solo act.

The last few years of my hospice volunteer journey led me to new responsibilities without my clown persona. I have even delivered balloons to patients while singing, "Happy Birthday." I also started sitting with patients in homes and nursing homes. This was a major step for me.

Some people view volunteering as doing for others. Many volunteers say they receive more than they give. As a hospice volunteer, I have seen smiles that melted my heart, heard groans at my terrible riddles and felt hands touch my soul. I have also received unexpected opportunities, wisdom and stories from our patients, long-lasting friendships and a personal change that I could have never imagined in 1989.

- **by Maggie Nussbaum aka Melba the Clown Hospice Volunteer**



HAPPY FALL



I hope this issue of *Every Day Matters* finds you happy and healthy. In the following pages, we focus on resilience, as it is an important skill to have right now. Resilience is the process of adapting to adversity or significant sources of stress.

As a community, we have certainly had to be resilient over the past 18 months. I encourage you to use your support systems and healthy coping mechanisms through the current and any future difficult times.

Our hospice team is specially trained to assist patients and their families through the difficult process of dying. You will learn how our staff is resilient and offers quality compassionate care to our patients and their families. Stay safe and resilient.

Pebbles Thornton

Pebbles Thornton, MSN, RN, OCN

Director Genesis Cancer, Palliative Medicine and Hospice Services



Genesis
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Better Begins Here

Learning resilience at the Morrison House

I am a new volunteer at the Morrison House and have learned the importance of resilience and being able to recover by observing everyone, from the nurses to housekeeping. Their resilience has stood out in three ways:

1. How they view suffering and misfortune.
2. What they focus on during resident care.
3. What their motivation is when interacting with patients.

Misfortune and suffering are a part of human life. Suffering is not to be avoided but faced with kindness and compassion. The Morrison House team is not surprised by the difficulties and suffering that sometimes accompany the end of life. As a result, there is an environment of quiet, compassionate competence.

There is an ancient adage that life contains 10,000 joys, but also has 10,000 sorrows. You cannot be resilient unless you see both.

The second aspect of Morrison House resilience is how the team attends to patients and their families. They have developed a habit of gently pointing out positive elements that arise even in extreme circumstances. They may acknowledge the red bird perched on the windowsill or the flowers in the garden. But most importantly, they affirm the dignity and worth of each person they care for and their stories.

A hospice worker is a person who helps patients recognize positives. They are also at ease with things they can't alter. To be resilient, you consciously and habitually place your attention on the positive.

Finally, the team shows their resilience by their motivation in patient care. As they enter each room, they drop their concerns and ask how they can be helpful.

On one of my first days, I was with a nurse caring for an agitated patient. The patient asked if I could massage the crown of his head. Her answer was simple, "At the Morrison House, we do whatever will benefit the patient." I have seen volunteers bring coffee to families, cut toenails, deliver newspapers, assist with feeding and aid techs on a busy day. All this is done to benefit the patient.

I am in awe of the Morrison House team and am grateful for what I have learned. I am honored to volunteer alongside courageous, resilient people.

- **by Thomas Broadwater**
Hospice Volunteer

John Krouskoupf's Honor Flight

On September 9, 2021, John Krouskoupf, a Genesis Hospice patient, participated in an Honor Flight to Washington D.C. Honor Flights are conducted by non-profit organizations and take veterans to visit the memorials of their respective wars. John is a Vietnam War Army Veteran.

After the trip, John shared he enjoyed going to the Arlington Cemetery, the Vietnam Memorial Wall and Changing of the Guard.

John said the Honor Flight had a Mail Call where he received letters of appreciation from Veterans Affairs and Genesis Hospice staff. He also received a hat from the Honor Flight program. John said the program did a wonderful job, and he is appreciative of the experience.

- **by Sue Frye, LSW, BSW**
Hospice Social Worker



Being resilient during grieving

When I think of resilience, I immediately think of the families of the patients that we have had in our hospice program. As a Bereavement Consultant with Genesis Hospice Care for the past 14 years, I've encountered thousands of individuals in the grieving process. I am continuously in awe of their strength and willingness to put in the necessary work to face their grief.

Michelle Obama once said, "Grief and resilience live together." They are not mutually exclusive, but they do shape each other. Each day that you grieve, you show how resilient you are. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but rather different ways.

One question that grieving people often hear is, "When are you going to get over it?" and it is typically not well received as we do not simply "get over" the death of someone that we love. What happens is we all take different amounts of time learning to live with our new normal.

It's a big step for a grieving individual to ask for help. It is not a lack of strength but rather a show of resilience. I consider resilience as the power of using our strengths, and they are just as different as the individual that possesses them. I'm proud of every bereaved person and their resilience to difficult situations.

- **by Kelli Ross, MSW, LSW**
Bereavement Consultant, Morrison House

Genevieve Long's 100th birthday

I am privileged to be Genevieve (Genny) Long's Genesis Hospice home social worker. This led to a delightful conversation with Genny and her daughter, Judy, near Genny's 100th birthday. Genny's parents were from Poland, and Genny was one of ten daughters. She has two younger sisters living.

Genny said her family learned to be resilient by growing up on a farm. They picked crops, made hay and tended a large garden. The family did not own a tractor, so they used horses and a wagon. As the family was so large, they also made their clothes and wore a lot of hand-me-downs.

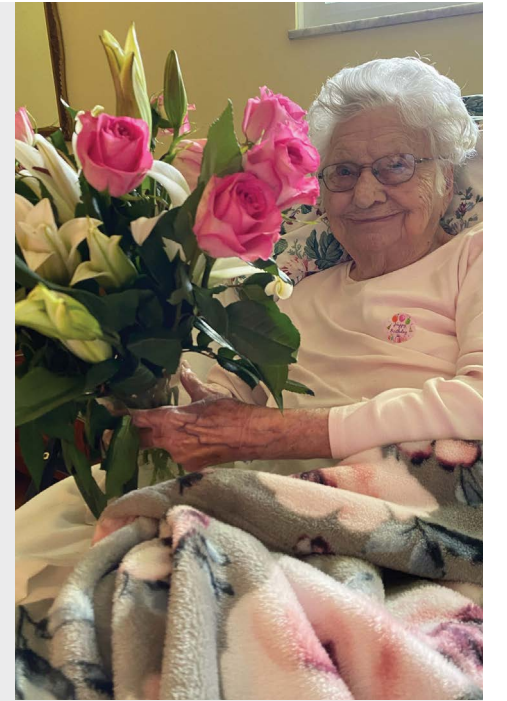
Before marrying her husband, Genny worked at factories in Canton and Akron, Ohio, while her fiancé served in the Navy during WWII. Genny had six children, five daughters and one son who has passed. While raising her children, Genny did not work outside the home and admitted that she was afraid to drive, so she never got her driver's license. Genny and her husband traveled after he retired, and her favorite place to go was Jekyll Island in Georgia, with some of her sisters and their husbands. They also visited Hawaii, California, Colorado and Florida.

Judy shared that Genny was a good role model for her daughters. She said Genny was understanding and caring and that her house was always open for their friends. Judy also said her mother is humble and never complains.

To celebrate Genny's 100th birthday, her daughters planned a special lunch. During their visit, the florist delivered five bouquets. In all, Genny received ten bouquets, three cakes and over 150 cards. Genny admitted it feels good to be remembered by so many.

Genny said she feels good. She feels she reached this age by living right, praying and healthy eating. Genny also expressed gratitude for the care she is receiving through Genesis Hospice and is especially grateful for her nurse Jeremy and her MST Kesha.

- **by Diane Gebhart, LISW-S, LICOC**
Morrison House



Being part of the hospice family

Being a hospice volunteer requires resiliency, but it shouldn't deter someone from giving their time.

I attended an in-service where hospice clowns performed to show volunteers their role in the hospice family. Afterward, I told my mom, "I'd like to do that." So, I did. I completed hospice training and was welcomed into the hospice clown family.

My hospice role isn't limited to clowning, though it is what I enjoy the most. There's something special about helping hospice patients, their families and friends smile. How can one describe when you're playing "Amazing Grace" on your kazoo, and a person who seems non-responsive begins to mouth the words? Or the sense of peace when a patient is close to death and asks you to play "I Did it My Way?"

I have also done home and facility visits, sat with patients and sent cards. This aspect of hospice might be where resilience is more likely to be a factor. While in their home or an assisted-living facility, you're on their turf, and you may have to bend or adapt accordingly to accommodate a patient's likes or dislikes or a facility's guidelines. Regardless of the circumstances, I have always left a visit feeling appreciated.

Regardless of your role in the hospice family, you are an invaluable part of the team.

The smile at the desk or answering the phone plays a vital role in making hospice happen. Dr. Henry Cloud said, "Moods are contagious ... make sure you spread good ones."

Whatever might be going on in life, please take a moment to realize it will pass and show your resiliency by spreading good moods.

- **by Mary Perone**
Hospice Volunteer



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



Spiritual matters

As you read this issue of *Every Day Matters*, I trust that resiliency has come to the forefront.

Certainly, these last two years or so have brought resiliency to the public discussion as COVID-19, vaccines and stressed hospital systems worldwide dominated almost every aspect of our lives. From the early stages of the pandemic to the current Delta variant that had a huge impact on our country, resilience describes the people working to contain it and care for those infected. But what does being resilient mean? Why is resilience considered a favorable trait?

Resiliency means to bounce or spring back; to come back into shape after being stretched or pressed. The definition also includes recovering strengths, spirits, good humor, etc., quickly. Being resilient or possessing resiliency means a person can come back quickly from a difficult situation and has the mental fortitude to overcome a difficult time in life.

The last word the dictionary uses to define resiliency is buoyant. For me, buoyant conjures up an image of a boat floating on water, being moved by the current, but always staying on top. Each of us has to have some buoyancy in our lives. The currents that flow through our lives can take us in many directions. Sometimes, the best we can do is stay afloat, keeping buoyant, being resilient. We may get knocked down and pulled in many directions, yet being resilient allows us to stand up and return to a state of balance.

Whether caring for COVID-19 patients, dealing with trauma, counseling a person thinking of taking their life, or managing pain and other symptoms for a person at end-of-life, being resilient helps those of us doing these difficult things to come back and do it again. Being resilient keeps all of us afloat so that we can garner the energy, compassion and hopefulness that brings us back day after day to care for our fellow humans. Being resilient in body, mind and spirit touches the very fabric of our being. To keep caring for others in the face of adversity and anguish is not only a mark of resiliency but also a reflection of the goodness and love we share with those facing a time of great need.

- **by Tim Patton, M.Div., BCC**
Hospice Chaplain

Genesis Hospice helps patients and their families live life to its fullest. If you'd like to volunteer, donate or need more information, call 740-454-5364 or go to genesishcs.org.

Every Day Matters is published twice a year for friends of Genesis Hospice & Palliative Care.

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