

The Power of Playing On

by Phil Taylor, Senior Writer and Columnist, Sports Illustrated



On a bright, cloudless afternoon a man with a bushy white beard kicks a soccer ball with a younger woman. He moves surprisingly well for a 72-year-old, but when the ball gets past him he chases and kicks it in the opposite direction of the woman, having forgotten all about his partner. The woman calls to the older man with the gentle patience of a mother to a child. "No, no, Dad," she says. "Kick it back this way. That's right. Come back to me."

But John Plankinton isn't coming back, at least not the one his daughter, Robin, has known most of her life. Alzheimer's disease has stolen the man who loved reading science magazines and cooking Asian dishes, the one who refereed soccer games in and around Menlo Park, Calif., for more than 20 years. The disease seems to tighten its grip daily, but as it does, Plankinton's friends and family hold him more firmly in their embrace.

Robin and her mother, Evie, Plankinton's wife of 51 years, have brought him to this grassy field at Burgess Park to play pickup soccer, just as he has at lunchtime twice a week for the last 25 years. "Perry Mason reruns, Chinese

food and soccer," Robin says. "Those are the things that make him smile." But first among those is soccer. Evie has to keep Plankinton's cleats hidden for fear that he would put them on at any time and go wandering off in search of a game.

Seven months ago Robin told a few of the other longtime pickup players about her father's diagnosis. They had noticed some erratic behavior, and after her explanation it all made sense. "I didn't want it to ruin their experience to have my father running around out there when he's not even always aware of which team he's on," Robin says. She would have understood if they had suggested he watch but not play anymore.

But there is something about a regular pickup game, no matter the sport, that bonds its players. They might not all know every other player's last name, or what each does for a living, but the love of the game connects them. For an hour and 15 minutes every Tuesday and Thursday, the men who come to Burgess Park are a soccer family, and you don't leave family behind. It never occurred to them to play without Plankinton. They responded the way soccer players respond when something unexpected has happened in a game, but it hasn't changed anything that really matters. "The attitude," says Greg Mack, a 10-year Burgess regular, "was just, Play on."

Plankinton plays on, as his wife and daughter keep watch. On this afternoon he has a

Montgomery HOSPICE

Eugene B. Casey Foundation's Continued Commitment to Casey House

Donation made in Honor of Dr. John Saia

Casey House, the only inpatient hospice facility in Montgomery County, was built with funds and land donated by the Eugene B. Casey Foundation. In February, the Foundation demonstrated its continued support for Casey House with a million-dollar donation to the Casey House Endowment for Nurses and Nursing Aides. The gift was made "to honor the work of Dr. John Saia on behalf of the Casey House." The Foundation acknowledged the "families that have been helped by the loving and tender care provided at Casey House."



John S. Saia, M.D. F.A.C.P. was a long-time resident of Montgomery County, and, with his wife Barbara, raised three children in the area.

Dr. Saia provided medical care to County residents for more than 40 years, practicing Internal Medicine and Pulmonary Medicine. He earned his medical degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine. Before coming to Montgomery County, he served as captain in the United States Air Force and was Head of the Internal Medicine Department at the Base Hospital in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Dr. Saia was frequently included in Washingtonian



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From Ann's Office

Montgomery Hospice: A Community Supported Nonprofit

Montgomery Hospice's vision is "to bring comfort by providing the best care to our community's multicultural residents who are facing serious illness and loss." In other words, we do two things: we help people who are dying, and we help people who are grieving. We receive Medicare, Medicaid and insurance payments for the first of those two, but not for the second. And those payments we receive often do not adequately cover the cost of providing medical, spiritual and psychosocial support to dying patients and their families.

Montgomery Hospice is a nonprofit organization. The tax-deductible contributions given to us

are critical since the money that we receive from Medicare and insurance companies only pays for part of our costs.

Donations allow our staff to:

- support grieving family and friends for 13 months after the death of their loved ones
- run support groups for children who have lost a parent or sibling
- educate high school students about coping with all the different losses they encounter
- provide hospice care to people who do not have any insurance or other way to pay
- provide specialized hospice services to children and teenagers
- care for patients with acute symptoms at Casey House
- ease patient symptoms through the use of complementary therapies
- share our professional end-of-life expertise with other clinicians
- educate the community about end-of-life and advance care planning

- consistently go above and beyond to meet the needs of our patients.

We are extremely grateful for those who gave to us during our recent Gentle The Journey Campaign. The campaign had an \$8 million goal, which I am pleased to announce we reached in 2013. Four million dollars of that money was used to create an endowment to support Casey House nursing services, and four million was used to pay for Montgomery Hospice's operational and program needs. Your donations to the Campaign made a real difference to your neighbors, and will continue to make a difference for Montgomery Hospice.

Thank you so much for your support.

Ann Mitchell
President & CEO

The Man in the Mirror by Loren Bullock

Nowadays I am always somewhat surprised when I look at that old man in the mirror looking back at me. The features are familiar. I have watched his hair thin out and turn to gray over the years. I remember him looking back at me when I first started to shave at fifteen or so. He looked back at me in his Navy Ensign's uniform in World War II. I've watched him age, but I never seemed to feel the same corresponding change in me. In so many ways, I am the same me of that little boy of five, or that shiny new Ensign, or that young Assistant Professor of Physics, or that IBM Branch Manager. I am still the me that is curious about everything, fascinated by the stories of history, and in awe of the complexity and wonder of life itself.

I recognize that the old man in the mirror has been all those things too, but I always think that I am standing up straighter, striding out with my head up, standing at military attention at the playing of the National Anthem - until I see him in the reflection of a store window. So although we are good friends and know each other pretty well, there is still a disconnect.



So when you see him on the street walking with a cane, please recognize that there is really a different person inside, a person who is very much alive and interested in all the people around him, and who is grateful to be a part of this amazing thing called life with its gift of love. I accept each day to be enjoyed, but also to be used. I am still struggling to be a better human being each day.

So I salute you my friend in the mirror, as he salutes me back.

Loren Bullock served in the Navy during World War II. He taught physics at several universities before a long career at IBM. In retirement, Mr. Bullock volunteers as a docent at the Smithsonian.

The Power Of Playing On

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difficult time keeping up with the pace of the game, which includes several players in their 20s and 30s. But there are moments when his soccer instincts muscle his disease out of the way. A teammate sends the ball down the right wing, and Plankinton heads straight for the goal to get in position for a cross. The ball comes to him, but he's not mentally or physically quick enough to do anything with it, and it bounces off his shin. The other half-dozen times he touches the ball go much the same way, but Plankinton hears nothing but encouragement.

As Evie watches, she talks about the bittersweet nature of life with an Alzheimer's sufferer. "I try never to use the word *remember* around him, because I know that he probably can't," she says. After 51 years they have been robbed of what should be one of their greatest pleasures—the ability to reminisce. "But on the other hand, everything he does is like he's experiencing it for the first time."

It is like that with this game. Plankinton runs, sometimes with a purpose, sometimes with none, but always with joy. The game ends, and the other players direct him toward his wife and daughter. Does he always recognize them still? "So far," Robin says. As they head for the parking lot, Robin asks, "Did you have fun, Dad?" "Fun," he answers, smiling. Robin and Evie know that he won't have any specific memory of this game by the time they get home, but that doesn't matter. "He's happy now, and it's just about the present for us," Evie says. "About being in the moment."

What do you do when the past is a fog and the future is foreboding? You hold on to the present. You play on.

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Casey House Donation

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Magazine's list of "Best Physicians." Dr. Saia served on the boards of Suburban Hospital, Montgomery Hospice (2001-2007) and the Eugene B. Casey Foundation.

Ann Mitchell, Montgomery Hospice President & CEO, describes Dr. Saia as a compassionate doctor, who truly cared for each individual and who connected deeply with his patients. "Dr. Saia understands the comfort that hospice care provides, and was honest and forthright in describing hospice services to his patients."

Montgomery Hospice is grateful to Dr. Saia for his many years of service to Montgomery County and his dedication to Montgomery Hospice. Montgomery Hospice is also grateful to the Eugene B. Casey Foundation for its donation, which will allow the nurses and nursing aides at Casey House to serve dying patients for years to come.



Not only is this a wonderful tribute to Dr. John Saia—whose wisdom, sensitivity and humor added so much to our board—but this also is a wonderful honor for Montgomery Hospice which, through strong management, continues to reify its mission to our community with such dedication.

Suzanne Firstenberg
Montgomery Hospice Life Director

Helping Teenagers Deal with Losses

by Linda Tebelman, Director of Bereavement Care



Adolescence, that time between childhood and adulthood, can be treacherous territory for teens as well as parents. Teens face many challenges, including physiological and psychological changes, as well as social and academic pressures. They may also be experiencing losses for the first time.

Teens we have worked with in our local high schools have shared some of those losses with us. Their lists are long and include being defeated at a sporting event, losing a phone, studying hard but not getting the anticipated grades, experiencing their parents' divorce, breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, and having someone they love die. Some of the most profound losses they experience are intangible, such as the loss of innocence or childhood, loss of trust and respect, or the loss of identity and self esteem. The teenagers speak volumes about the challenges they face. Many of their losses go unrecognized by the adults in their lives, yet all have significance in big and small ways. And all losses bring grief.

cont. on p. 5

Loss and Grief Education for High School Students

Montgomery Hospice provides Loss and Grief Education to Montgomery County Public School students by teaching classes in loss and grief as part of the Health Education Curriculum. Classes have been provided at Winston Churchill, Magruder, Walter Johnson, Wootton, Richard Montgomery, John F. Kennedy, Seneca Valley, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Walt Whitman, Einstein, Clarksburg, Blake, Northwest, Rockville and Blair High Schools.

These classes help Montgomery County students think about losses that occur throughout life and to learn skills for managing grief as they experience their own personal losses. This program is free of charge to the school and the students.

Montgomery Hospice bereavement counselors go to the high school and teach one full day of Health Education classes, usually five to seven classes. Through this program, in one day, 150 to 200 high school students are provided basic information and education on grief. The counselors have also been invited to teach in the summer school Health Education classes.

All of the Montgomery Hospice bereavement counselors hold graduate degrees and are experienced counselors and trainers.

Other high schools that are interested in having Montgomery Hospice come to their school should call us (301 921 4400) and ask for a bereavement counselor. We will work with you and the Health Education teacher in your school to set up a date to visit your school.

Loss and grief are a natural and normal part of life. Everyone faces personal grief and loss throughout life. Enabling teenagers to have some understanding of grief can make a positive difference in the way they grieve and support each other through difficult times.

resources for grieving teenagers and their families

Books

- Bode, Janet. *Death is Hard to Live with: Teenagers Talk about How They Cope with Loss*. New York: Bantam Doubleday, 1993.
- Dougy Center, The. *Helping Teens Cope with Death*. Portland, OR: The Dougy Center, 1999. (www.dougy.org)
- Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Grieving Teen: a Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends*. New York: Fireside, 2000.
- Grollman, Earl A. *Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Kremenz, Jill. *How it Feels When a Parent Dies*. New York: Knopf, 1991.
- Silver, Maya and Silver, Marc. *My Parent Has Cancer and It Really Sucks*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Fire, 2013.

Websites

- [The Dougy Center](http://www.dougy.org)
- [TeensHealth: Death and Grief](http://www.dougy.org/teens/teenshealth/deathandgrief)
- www.childgrief.org
- www.childrengrief.net
- www.healingthespirit.org

(The National Center for Grieving Children & Families) www.dougy.org *"Each teen's grieving experience is unique."*
http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/someone_died.html *"Grief is a healthy process of feeling comforted, coming to terms with a loss and finding ways to adapt."*
"There is no set time for grief to 'be over.'"
"Today's children face grief and loss issues we never dreamed of."
"Many adults assume teenagers will take care of themselves. Adult support is necessary to allow the teenager to discuss any anger, guilt or responsibility they may feel."

The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens by Teens at The Dougy Center

A grieving teen has the right....

- **to know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances.**
- **to have questions answered honestly.**
- **to be heard with dignity and respect.**
- **to be silent and not tell you her/his grief emotions and thoughts.**
- **to not agree with your perceptions and conclusions.**
- **to see the person who died and the place of the death.**
- **to grieve any way she/he wants without hurting self or others.**
- **to feel all the feelings and to think all the thoughts of his/her own unique grief.**
- **to not have to follow the "Stages of Grief" as outlined in a high school health book.**
- **to grieve in one's own unique, individual way without censorship.**
- **to be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self and at others.**
- **to have his/her own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death.**
- **to be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to the death.**
- **to not be taken advantage of in this vulnerable mourning condition and circumstances.**
- **to have guilt about how he/she could have intervened to stop the death.**



This Bill of Rights was developed by participating teens at The Dougy Center and does not represent "official" policies of the Center.

Helping Teenagers Deal with Losses cont. from p. 3

How do we, the caring adults in their lives, help support them through the many losses and changes of adolescence, as well as the more profound losses of relationships or deaths of friends and family? Our first step is to recognize and validate that these experiences are difficult and stressful. We only add to their stress and isolation if we dismiss what they are feeling with comments such as, “You think you’ve got problems, wait until you have to work for a living.”

We only add to teens’ stress and isolation if we dismiss them with comments such as, “You think you’ve got problems, wait until you have to work for a living.”

Here are some ideas that may help you to support grieving teens:

- **Let them know you care.** Send them a text, tweet or email, leave a note on their pillow, send them a card in the mail — tell them you care.
- **Create time for connecting.** Take them for pizza or ice cream. Sit with them at the end of the day as they are settling down for sleep; the dark can create a sense of space that can be helpful to teens. Check in while you are driving them; the car is a great place to talk and can be less intimidating than the kitchen table.
- **Reach past the responses: “fine” and “nothing.”** Teens want to know that you are really listening and care about their answers. So ask open-ended questions and wait for their replies. Talk less and listen more.
- **Be honest.** Teens have a heightened awareness to what they perceive as condescension. They want and deserve to know what is happening.
- **Let them grieve in their own way.** No two experiences of loss are exactly the same. Their loss is unique to them. Crying and sadness are common in grief, but some teens may react with humor and laughter. Expect the unexpected.
- **Remember that the breakup of a relationship or friendship may seem to affect them more than the death of a grandparent.** Peer relationships are primary for teens and these losses will hit them hard. Be prepared; their expression of grief for a family member’s death may come weeks or even months after the loss.
- **Watch for unhealthy ways of coping.** Teens may turn to alcohol and drugs to numb their pain. Pay close attention to their activities and friends.

The death of a close family member or friend is usually the most difficult loss for teens to experience. The sudden death of a friend who was killed in an accident, a parent who dies from a heart attack, or the death of someone from suicide all add the extra challenge of dealing with the trauma of the death as well as the loss of the individual.

Often teens will feel numb when first told the news. This period of numbness is protective as they try to take in what has happened and its impact on their lives. In order to help teens through these challenges, remember to:

- **Encourage them to express their feelings.** They may do this through art, music, writing, dancing or even sports. Dedicating a sports season to a departed friend or family member can be a great way to honor that person. Creating memorial pages on Facebook or other social media can be very important to teens.
- **Let them be teens.** After a parent’s death, adults sometimes tell teens that they are now the “man or woman of the house.” People may also tell them “it’s time to grow up.” Teens need to know that the adults are still in charge and will be there for them. They can help with younger siblings just as they did before the death, but that is not their main responsibility. Their job is to finish high school and prepare for their next steps as young adults.
- **Explore the resources in the community.** Montgomery Hospice holds support programs for teens who have lost a parent or sibling. You can also consult with their school counselors and ask about other supportive services and professionals.
- **Get help for your own grief.** If you are also affected by the loss, getting support for yourself is a great way to support the grieving teenager. Finding a counselor or joining a support group is not only good for you, but presents a positive model for coping for teens. Call Montgomery Hospice Bereavement Care to find resources or to talk with a Bereavement Counselor.



Remember that grief can be a complicated and stressful experience and generally will take more time than we imagine. Remind teens that we never really get over the deaths of those we love, but we do learn to live with our grief and to find ways to honor and remember our loved ones.

Corporate Partners

Montgomery Hospice is grateful to our 2014 Corporate Partners. Donations through our Corporate Partnership program help to underwrite educational programs and other initiatives that inform county residents about our services.

Businesses and organizations interested in becoming a Montgomery Hospice Corporate Partner for 2014 should contact:

Marlene Bradford, Director of Development
301 921 4401 x146
mbradford@montgomeryhospice.org

Thank you to the 2014 Corporate Partners listed below.

Gold Level Partner



Joseph Gawler's Sons, LLC has been part of the Washington D.C. community since 1850 and is honored to be one of the oldest funeral homes in the area. Joseph Gawler's Sons, LLC started on Pennsylvania Avenue, just blocks from the White House, but moved to our current location in 1964. Our beautiful chapel has the capacity to seat up to 220, along with our 6 state rooms designed to assist families of all sizes. We are proud to be part of the history and future of this great city and the Greater Metropolitan area. Due to our dedication, care, and persistent service excellence, we have had the honor of serving several former Presidents of the United States.

At Joseph Gawler's Sons, LLC our priority is to help all families that come through our doors. We understand that losing a loved one is a life event that is unique as the person who has left us. Our compassionate staff can assist each family with a customized service and experience based on your or your loved one's wishes. We pride ourselves on assisting families through the most difficult time with an unmatched service level. For more information, please visit www.JosephGawlers.com.

We are proud to support Montgomery Hospice and their amazing ability to care for families and individuals at such an emotional and stressful time and proud to assist them with many different projects.

Joseph Gawler's Sons, LLC is a proud member of the Dignity Memorial® network, North America's largest provider of funeral, cremation and cemetery services.

Silver Level Partners



Metropolitan Shuttle is a nationwide reservation service for shuttle and bus charter services that operates through a network of vendors that specialize in group travel throughout the major metropolitan areas in North America. We offer a variety of ground transportation that accommodates groups of all sizes.

We do what we do through a network of operators, rather than owning our own vehicles. Therefore, we are flexible with respect to finding the vehicle that is the best fit for your needs and drivers who are experienced and ready for your trip. We have no 'inventory' to 'sell' you – rather, we listen to what you want, determine the best vehicles based on your requested size and features and provide unrivaled customer service and reliability.

To ensure safety and reliability, we routinely review available safety and registration information published by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), as well as periodically verify insurance policies and references on the bus company vendors within our network. In essence, we work with our network vendors every day so that we know first-hand who delivers and who doesn't. Our experience in providing your group with transportation you can count on is one of the key benefits we offer.

"As a Montgomery County business, it is very important to give back to the community where we live and work," says Glenn Orloff, President and CEO. He continued, "I have had a personal hospice experience in another state, and as a result, made a decision to support a local hospice. Metropolitan Shuttle is pleased to join the ranks of other area businesses that support Montgomery Hospice through their Corporate Partnership Program."



Visiting Angels, America's Choice in Homecare, is uniquely qualified to provide homecare services to those in need of assistance with the activities of daily living.

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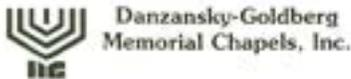
Corporate Partners, cont.

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Each of our organizations meets people where they are and provides loving, experienced, and personalized service and care. Montgomery Hospice "gentles the journey." Visiting Angels cares every day in every way.

We also want to thank:

We also want to thank Adventist HealthCare and Danzansky-Goldberg Memorial Chapels, Inc./Edward Sagel Funeral Direction for their 2014 Silver Level sponsorship. Both organizations have been partnering with Montgomery Hospice for several years, helping us serve the community. More information about their services will appear in the fall issue of Hospice Matters.



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www.MontgomeryHospice.org

award-winning Casey House video:

www.MontgomeryHospice.org/CaseyHouseVideo

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www.MontgomeryHospice.org/OnlineEducation



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We are grateful to our Community Partners who have supported Montgomery Hospice with a gift of \$250 or more between September 1, 2013 and January 31, 2014.

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The Circle of Light Society recognizes individuals and families who have included Montgomery Hospice in their estate plans through a bequest, trust, insurance policy or other estate-planning vehicle. Individuals interested in joining the Circle of Light Society should contact Gerry Vent, Vice President of Philanthropy, at 301 637 1867.



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Gifts made "in memory of" may recognize any person, including members of the community or a Montgomery Hospice patient.

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Frank Colleli
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Jeanne C. Edwards
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Vicki Johnson
Victoria Johnson
Margaret Keeler
The Kohut Family
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Chris Phelan
The Psotka Family
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Max Sartoph
Bobbie and Ken Seidelmann
Casey House Social Workers
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Walling Family
David Walsh
Cindy Whalen
Susan Wilensky

Hospice Matters is a newsletter for family and friends of Montgomery Hospice, a non-profit organization serving residents of Montgomery County, Maryland who are bereaved or terminally ill.

calendar of events

Bereavement Care: free grief education for Montgomery County residents

Remembering Mom and Dad workshop May 8, 7:00-8:30 pm, Rockville

Afternoon Grief Support Group May 13, each Tuesday, 1:00-2:30 pm for six weeks, Bethesda

Parent Loss Support Group May 20, each Tuesday, 6:30-8:00 pm for six weeks, Bethesda

Evening Grief Support Group May 21, each Wednesday 6:30-8:00 pm for six weeks, Olney

Loss of a Child Support Group May 21, each Wednesday, 6:30-8:00 pm for six weeks, Rockville

Volunteer Training

June 6, 13 and 20, 8:30am-3:30 pm, Rockville. Apply online.

Fundraising

Cinco De Mayo fundraiser. May 1, 6:00-9:00 pm, Caddies on Cordell, Bethesda. Food, beverages, door prizes. Proceeds to grief and loss support.

Visit www.montgomeryhospice.org for updated calendar information.

inside this issue

teenagers and grief



resources to help teens deal
with their losses