

Love Is a Legacy That Will Never Die by Abigail Trafford

"Granny -- what happens to you when you die?"

The question comes from Brooks, my grandson. We are all sitting at the kitchen table: Granny and Brooks, age 7, and his cousins Sophia, 6, and Lila, 4. Their mothers (my two daughters) are upstairs, sleeping in, and Granny is in charge.

What happens when you die? Too early for this! I get the coffeemaker going, find the Cheerios, pour the milk.

"Yeah, Granny, what happens?" Sophia asks.

I dissemble. "Well, I'm pretty young," I begin. "I'm probably not going to die for a while." Finally the coffee is ready, and I pour myself a cup. Maybe we can now talk about something else.

Silence. Three pairs of brown eyes stare at me. The children wait for an answer.



Abigail Trafford, Washington Post columnist, award-winning journalist

"Well, I won't be here anymore," I mumble and take another sip of coffee. The children look confused. Not here? Not in the house? Brooks points to the kitchen cabinets. "But what happens to all your stuff?" he asks. That's easier to answer: "Your parents will take care of the stuff," I say brightly. The children, only slightly reassured, keep staring at me. I have to focus on the question.

Perhaps this is one of the gifts of grandchildren: to keep us focused on the issues that really matter. News events dominate daily conversation: the home mortgage meltdown, a bombing in Pakistan, the race for the presidency. But what about the Big One? Death. Hard enough to explain subprime loans to young children, let alone al-Qaeda or even the electoral college. How to explain the roll of generations, the natural cycle of birth, life and death? The notion of peace everlasting? Sophia, Lila and Brooks are so young. Life lies ahead of them.

"When I die, my body will be gone," I begin. "But one part of me never dies. My love for you never dies. When I die, all my love jumps inside of you," and I turn to Brooks and tickle his chest. He smiles. Then I tickle Sophia and Lila. All my love jumping inside you. More giggles.

"You know, let's say you have a big test one day and you're nervous. Just before the test, you can take a deep breath and say to yourself: 'My granny loves me!'"

"That's great, Granny," Brooks says.

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Montgomery HOSPICE

Hospital Liaisons: supporting patients and hospital clinicians behind the scene



Nora Garvey, Jackie Murphy, Hospital Liaisons

Transitioning patients from a hospital to Casey House or to home is one of the most challenging chapters for patients and their families facing end-of-life care.

Montgomery Hospice smoothes this transition and advocates for patients and their caregivers. Five years ago, the Hospital Liaison position was created to make this happen. Today we have half dozen Hospital Liaisons on staff visiting Montgomery County hospitals on a regular basis.

The role of the Hospital Liaison is multifaceted. They provide vital support to patients who are facing the frightening news that curative treatments are no longer an option for them. They help family members come to terms with their loved one's terminal diagnosis. They provide assistance to the hospital staff whose primary mission was to cure the patient. In other words, they make the transition between the hospital and Casey House or home as comfortable as possible for everyone involved.

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From Ann's Office

Medicare reimbursement for hospice care at risk

At Montgomery Hospice, we are always monitoring legislative events at the state and federal level. Coordinating with other Maryland hospices, I attend and testify at committee meetings in Annapolis, including the Maryland Senate Finance Committee. I also participate in efforts to educate lawmakers at all levels about the value of hospice care.

Hospices nationwide have been affected by recent Medicare rate cuts. Since the majority of hospice patients receive Medicare benefits, lowering the amount of money that is paid for hospice care for these patients is a critical problem for all hospice programs. Although the recent stimulus package temporarily rescinded this year's cuts, there is a real threat that they will be reinstated in the fall. We appreciate the ongoing help of our county, state and federal lawmakers reminding Congress that hospice care saves money for the Medicare

program. A recent Duke University study found that hospice care reduces costs to Medicare by thousands of dollars per patient, savings which add up to billions per year. This cost savings will become even more important as "baby boomers" age and have more healthcare needs. The Duke researchers said that hospice provides the "rare situation whereby something that improves quality of life also appears to reduce costs."

A specific source of concern for Montgomery Hospice is a federal determination that Montgomery County is not part of the Washington, D.C. "urban area," thus reducing our reimbursements even further. This determination was made despite the fact that Montgomery County shares eight miles of border with the District of Columbia. Three other Maryland counties, the District, fifteen Virginia counties and even a county in West Virginia are all considered

part of the Washington region. The hospices in all of those jurisdictions receive higher Medicare payments than we do. We will continue to fight this nonsensical decision.

While we support ongoing efforts to modify Medicare regulations enforcing fairness and quality in all hospice programs, we will continue to fight unwarranted rate cuts, especially cuts that will adversely affect the residents of Montgomery County. I personally will work to ensure that the seriously ill in our community continue to receive the high-quality end-of-life care that Montgomery Hospice has been providing for the last 27 years.

Ann Mitchell, MPH

President & CEO

Montgomery Hospice's Award-Winning Volunteers

A Slinky, a crystal bird, a Crockpot and a framed picture of the Smothers Brothers were among the awards presented to Montgomery Hospice volunteers at the 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. The variety of these awards reflects the many different ways that Montgomery Hospice volunteers serve the community. Although the awards themselves were not serious, the accompanying presentations conveyed the sincere appreciation felt for the

generous gifts of time and talent contributed by each of the award-winning volunteers.

Patient care volunteers are an integral part of the Hospice at Home team. They work closely with the medical director, nurses, certified nursing assistants, social workers and chaplains to care for seriously ill Montgomery County residents and their families. They play cards, read books, write letters and

often just listen. They are part of the team of professionals who cared for 1,440 patients in 2008 alone.

"Montgomery Hospice volunteers need to be caring and compassionate—and also flexible," was the explanation for the presentation of a Slinky to Bobbi DiGoia at the dinner. Bobbi's willingness to be flexible with the scheduling of a patient visit (and the rescheduling of this

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High-Quality Hospice Care: Assessing the Options

How can physicians and families select a hospice?

Dr. Joan Teno, researcher and medical school professor at Brown University, coauthored an article in the February 11th issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association containing specific information for physicians about hospice and palliative care programs. She discusses when to refer patients to hospice and provides tools to help physicians evaluate the different hospice programs that are available in their areas. Because “there is variation in the delivery of these services and in the quality of care,” she encourages doctors to ask a series of questions. Using a list of questions allows them to look for the “three C’s”—care that is competent, coordinated and compassionate. In other words, a quality hospice program should include:

- **Competent care provided by an interdisciplinary staff** with medical, social work, spiritual, volunteer and bereavement services.
- **Coordination of patient care** including close communication with primary care physicians.
- **Compassionate care** that treats all patients and families respectfully and compassionately.

Although the JAMA article is written for the medical community, patients and families may benefit from the information and may also ask detailed questions of hospice providers.

*‘Referring a Patient and Family to High-Quality Palliative care at the Close of Life’
Journal of the American Medical Association
February 11, 2009 Volume 201, No. 6 2009*

Finding a Quality Hospice Program: Questions to Ask

Does the hospice have a team of professionals providing medical, nursing, social work, volunteer, bereavement, and spiritual care?

Can patients reach a staff person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?

Is care provided to patients in their homes, at nursing homes, and in assisted living facilities?

Does the hospice have a dedicated, inpatient, acute care facility?

Does the hospice have a full-time medical director?

Does the hospice collaborate closely with patients’ doctors?

Does the hospice have tools in place to serve non-English speaking patients and families?

Is the hospice accredited by JCAHO (Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations)? Is the hospice Medicare certified?

Does the hospice accept Medicare, Medicaid and/or other insurance?

Does the hospice have professional counselors who provide grief support and education to patients and families?

Does the hospice have medical staff with specialized hospice certifications?

Gala Sponsors

A Celebration of Life



Gala co-chairs Catherine Leggett (L) and Suzanne Firstenberg (R) thank Congressman Chris Van Hollen for his support of hospice care and honor him as a “Montgomery Hospice Hero.”

Montgomery Hospice would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support of our 2009 Gala.

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Love Is a Legacy That Will Never Die *(continued from page 1)*

"I have an idea," Sophia says. "What if we put a picture of you on the wall and then when we get up we can say: 'Good morning, Granny!'"

"That would be wonderful," I say. "We'll always be in touch."

"Good morning, Granny," they all shout, and burst out laughing.

Lila waves her hand at me. She hasn't touched her Cheerios: "Hi, Granny!" I blow her a kiss. "Can I have a waffle?" she asks.

I smile. It's all about love. The most precious gift I can give these youngsters is a legacy of love. And they give me the opportunity to plant the seeds of caring in the next generation. In death, the love endures. In life, the acts of caring, big and small, create a state of "relatedness," of being involved in the lives of people you care about.

All the research shows that "relatedness" is key to health and well-being as people grow older. Everyone needs an intimate circle of family members and friends. According to psychologist Laura L. Carstensen, director of the Stanford Center on Longevity, older men and women may have smaller social networks, but they often have stronger core circles of people who are essential to their lives.

In our family, a state of "relatedness" is reinforced by the annual ritual of coming together in the summer on an island in Maine.

One late afternoon, I am hurrying to set up for a party for my younger daughter's 10th wedding anniversary. The clan gathers: my intimate circle and the larger circle of extended family and friends. The guests arrive: toddlers and teenagers, parents and grandparents; the formerly married, the never married, the currently married and the newly married.

One by one, they stand up to give a toast, sing a song, tell a story.

I look out at the mass of youngsters screaming across the field; they weren't here 10 years ago. A whole new generation has been born. I find my cousin, my playmate from when we were their age so long ago. You must remember this. We hug. A soft breeze comes in from the southwest. The ferry goes by. The children take turns on the swing. More hugs, more laughter.

But there is also a note of sorrow: Another cousin, who is in his 80s, is in hospice care now. Bittersweet are these milestone celebrations.

What happens, Granny, when you die?

An eagle flies in and sits on a nearby tree. Everyone stops and looks: Majestic, proud, defiant, the eagle turns its profile to the crowd. Silence . . . awe. Look! Look! Catch a glimpse before it goes. And then the eagle spreads its wings and flies away.



I survey the gathering and see interlocking circles of couples and individuals, bound together by shared experience and the ties of love, loss and friendship. These circles sustain and embrace us. On the front lines of longevity, we have a mission: to keep loving and caring for others, to steward future generations, to craft a legacy by weaving our past into the present.

And then we fly away.

The children are ready for cake and ice cream.

"Hi, Granny!" Good morning, Granny.

Abigail Trafford, an award-winning journalist, is a columnist and former health editor at The Washington Post. She is the author of the bestselling and critically acclaimed books "Crazy Time" and "My Time." In 2007, she was a visiting scholar at the Stanford Center on Longevity at Stanford University. She lives in Washington, D.C. and Vinalhaven, ME.

This column is based on the epilogue of Ms. Trafford's latest book, "As Time Goes By." It is printed with the permission of the author and of The Washington Post.

Montgomery Hospice's Award-Winning Volunteers *(continued from page 2)*

visit three times in one day) demonstrated Bobbi's ability to adapt to patient needs. The crystal bird paperweight presented to Adrienne Allison was a symbol of the "early bird" award, acknowledging Adrienne's willingness to arrive at one family's home as early as 6:00 am. Carole Cohen's receipt of a Crockpot will help her continue her delivery of chicken soup as comfort to families busy with other caregiving duties.

The Riderwood community's active set of volunteers contribute in a variety of ways. Trained and led by two Montgomery Hospice Leadership Volunteers (Martha Vayhinger and Edie Range), members of the Riderwood team visit patients and families, and also knit shawls for them. These volunteers are much appreciated by their neighbors. One expressed it this way: "the warmth of their compassion carries over whenever I use the shawl."

"They were very different and each outstanding in their own way," stated Carolyn Patterson when she publicly thanked the patient care volunteers who helped her family when her mother was receiving hospice care. These words were especially meaningful coming from Carolyn, another type of hospice volunteer. For over ten years, Carolyn has been working in the Medical Records department. Her attention to detail and her precision have been invaluable to the organization over the years. Her experience with her mother gave her the opportunity to meet some of the other volunteers. "Even though I'd been through the volunteer training, I was a paper pusher. I was totally clueless as to what the home visitors do. I found out. They are kind and loving and attentive and reliable. They were just wonderful."

Tea cups given to Lucie Campbell and Carol Ann Puglise symbolized the contribution of the volunteers at Casey House, Montgomery Hospice's acute care inpatient facility. Lucie and Carol Ann provide tea and refreshments to families at Tea Time. Other Casey House volunteers provide lavender oil hand massages for patients and families.

The Smothers Brothers award presented to Frank Sullivan and Jack Walsh demonstrated the organization's appreciation for volunteers who provide community outreach. The outreach volunteers help educate the community about the value of hospice, and about some important facts: that hospice services are completely covered by Medicare (and most insurance plans); that some patients are discharged from hospice; that patients can "check out" of hospice whenever they want; and that patients can keep their own doctors when they enter hospice.

In 2008 alone, Montgomery Hospice volunteers donated 10,500 hours of their time. 200 patient care volunteers made 3,800 visits and drove

approximately 40,000 miles to visit patients. Bereavement volunteers donated hundreds of hours making phone calls and assisting with support groups and workshops. All volunteers go through a rigorous three-day training program, which includes communication skills, understanding grief, supporting caregivers, safety, spirituality, confidentiality and self-care.

The award-winning attendees at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner enjoyed meeting each other and learning about the variety of ways that each one contributes. The deep appreciation of their work is expressed by one patient family: "I hope your volunteers know that their efforts are very much appreciated. I so admire the folks who are engaged in making these efforts to help families and patients at the end of life. It's a wonderful gift and I can only wish that volunteers feel deep satisfaction in the benefit of their work."



Edie Range (volunteer), Terrie James-Taylor (Volunteer Services Manager)

Teens Honor Their Grandmother



Brian and Haley Whitt, middle school students at Rosa Parks Middle School, were close to their grandmother, Barbara Zemil. They thought of her often in the year after her death. They remembered how Montgomery Hospice had supported her and their family, caring for their grandmother under the Hospice at Home program and also at Casey House. Brian told *The Gazette* that the people from Montgomery Hospice “helped her a lot and made her last few weeks of living very good.” So as they began planning their bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, they thought of Montgomery Hospice.

At the age of 13, Jewish boys become a “bar mitzvah” and Jewish girls become a “bat mitzvah,” adults in the community. The words “bar mitzvah” and “bat mitzvah” mean “son/daughter of commandment” and refer to the obligations of all Jewish men and women to follow the commandments of their faith. One of the commandments involves thinking of others before oneself and helping those in need. The term “mitzvah” has also come to informally mean a “good deed.” As part of becoming a “bat mitzvah” and a “bar mitzvah,” Haley and Brian decided to hold a walk to honor their grandmother and to raise money for Montgomery Hospice.

Many volunteer hours were spent organizing, planning and publicizing. On September 28, despite gray skies and the threat of rain, the two siblings proudly led fifty-six walkers on a “Walk 4 Hospice.” Walkers remembered Mrs. Zemil on the first anniversary of her death and had the opportunity to read hand-made educational signs about grief and about Montgomery Hospice. Over 200 people made contributions, resulting in a total of \$6,128, far surpassing the original \$3,000 goal.

Last month, Haley was honored as one of Maryland’s two top youth volunteers when she was given The Prudential Spirit of Community Award. This nationwide program honors “young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism.” Haley will be presented a Prudential Spirit of Community silver medallion and attend an awards program in May.

Montgomery Hospice is grateful to Haley, Brian, their family and all the “Walk 4 Hospice” walkers for their support. This “mitzvah” honors the memory of their grandmother and allows others to receive care. As Haley’s award letter aptly stated: “Young volunteers like yourself are inspiring examples to all of us; you are our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.”



Brian and Haley Whitt

Hospital Liaisons *(continued from page 1)*

The Hospital Liaison explains to patients and their family members what to expect during this process, assesses their needs and provides supportive counseling. At the attending physician’s request, the Hospital Liaison explains the benefits of hospice services to the patient and family. In 2008 alone, our Hospital Liaisons made a total of 2,261 visits to patients and families in hospitals.



The services that our Hospital Liaisons provide are not reimbursed by Medicare or commercial insurers, yet it is essential that patients and families leaving hospitals have accurate information to make wise decisions about follow-up care. Hospital Liaisons act as patients’ advocates and often go above and beyond the call of duty to keep the lines of communication open between the hospital staff, patients and their families, and the hospice interdisciplinary team that will support the patient following discharge. Our Hospital Liaisons facilitate a regular exchange of information between external and internal hospital social workers, nurses, and physicians. They also help families experiencing internal conflict to communicate with each other.

Hospital Liaisons’ roles and responsibilities are many and not always easy, but their reward comes from hundreds of families who are grateful for their guidance and help at one of the most difficult times in their lives.

Music Heals the Heart

George Cary loved music. A lawyer and government executive by profession, he often listened to classical and Big Band music. He particularly enjoyed live music, frequently attending church concerts and performances by a light opera company. Last April, his family celebrated this fondness for music during their last weekend together. His daughter, Lisa Cole, played her guitar and, along with her mother and other family members, spent hours singing his favorite hymns. “It was the last thing we could do for him,” she said. The songs they sang were particularly meaningful to her mother, Katherine, who had spent many years with her husband sharing music.

Recent research studies have found many benefits of music for hospice patients. These benefits include decreased perception of pain, reduction of anxiety and heightened relaxation. For many patients, music is a powerful connection to spirituality and provides a strong emotional link to the past and to loved ones. Karen Rush, a Montgomery Hospice nurse, attests to the fact that hearing is one of the last of the senses lost by dying patients.

At Casey House, Montgomery Hospice’s inpatient facility, many families use music. Theresa Johnson, Clinical Director of Casey House, says that families often play music in the patients’ rooms to promote relaxation. A

“Where words fail, music speaks”
~ Hans Christian Andersen

family will bring in specific musical selections that have played a part in their loved one’s life. “I’ve seen music bring families together, they sing as a group and they listen to each

other. They move from distress and worry to expressing their feelings and start to really listen to each other.” Theresa continues, “Music can calm and relax those in distress, not just patients but families of patients, and staff members. Nothing is more soothing than



Katherine Cary and her daughter, Lisa Cole

to see families singing to their loved ones as a group. They feel as though they are able to bring joy into this person’s last few days of life.”

After her father died, Lisa Cole looked back on these precious hours together sharing music and reflected “I wish more families had the opportunity to do that.” She was grateful to the Montgomery Hospice team who helped care for her father at his home. As she considered ways to “give back to these people who helped us so much,” she thought of the music that had been so meaningful to her family. She decided to record a collection of music to share with other hospice patients.

Lisa started by composing an original piece of music entitled “Gentle the Journey” based on Montgomery Hospice’s mission statement. Along with a group of Montgomery Hospice staff members, she selected other songs that were comforting and spiritually uplifting but not specifically from one religious tradition. Other people helped out—she received

financial support from a cousin, use of a room at her church, and technical advice from a friend. While juggling work and family, Lisa spent long hours researching copyright law and recording and mixing music. The finished CDs are now being provided by Montgomery Hospice chaplains to appropriate patients and the original songs are available on a website that Lisa built (JournEase).

Lisa remembers her father: “He was a very special man and a spiritual man. The music created in his honor is a testament to his life and gives us such satisfaction. That is the way he raised me—to help others. I wanted to honor the kind of person he was.”

Circle of Light Society

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. We are especially grateful to these members who had the foresight and generosity to help us prepare for our future.

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tree of lights

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 Victor N. Moretti, Sr.
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 Yousef Miami
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 Thomas O'Connor, Jr.
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 Anthony Scarnati
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 Father of Scott Schiller
 Jerome Schiller
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 Donald B. Scott
 Viola and A. B. Scott
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 Erminia Vasquez
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 Leo J. Walker
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 Elizabeth "Bette" Walsh
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 Jacob Lockwood Wright
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 Dimitrios Zaharopoulos
 Dr. Zarin's Mother and Father
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1355 Piccard Drive, Suite 100
Rockville MD 20850-6101
301 921 4400
www.montgomeryhospice.org

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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- Open to all Montgomery County Residents. Free. Pre-registration required.

- May 6 **Remembering Mom and Dad:** A workshop for adults who have lost a parent or parents. 7:00-8:30 pm Montgomery Hospice, 1355 Piccard Drive, Rockville.
- May 12 **Parent Loss Support Group.** For adults who have experienced the death of one or both parents. Group meets each Tuesday from 6:30-8:00 pm for six weeks at Montgomery Hospice, 1355 Piccard Drive, Rockville.
- May 13 **Afternoon Grief Support Group.** If you're grieving the death of a loved one, this group meets each Wednesday from 1:00-2:30 pm for six weeks at Trinity Lutheran Church, 11200 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.
- May 20 **Loss of a Child Support Group.** For parents grieving the death of a child of any age. Group meets each Wednesday from 6:30-8:00 pm for six weeks at Montgomery Hospice, 1355 Piccard Drive, Rockville.
- May 21 **Evening Grief Support Group.** If you're grieving the death of a loved one, this group meets each Thursday from 6:30-8:00pm for six weeks at Hughes United Methodist Church, 10700 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring.

Fundraising

- Sept 26 **Hospice Cup XXVIII.** America's largest charity regatta held on the Chesapeake Bay is followed by a fun, family-friendly shore party. This annual festive event raises money for hospices in the Washington, DC area.
- Oct 4 **Montgomery Hospice Derby Duck Festival.** Come to the annual Derby Duck Race and Festival. Enjoy a free afternoon of crafts, food, family entertainment and a water race of 10,000 rubber ducks! Noon - 3:00 pm. Seneca Creek State Park, Gaithersburg.

Volunteer Training

- Oct 16, 23 and 30 **Professional volunteer training** prepares volunteers for their work supporting patients with life-limiting illnesses and the families. 8:30am-4:00 pm each day. Montgomery Hospice, 1355 Piccard Dr., Rockville. Pre-register.

For information about any Montgomery Hospice event or activity, contact us at 301 921 4400. Visit www.montgomeryhospice.org for updated calendar information.