Sharing the Grief Journey: It “Takes a Village” to Heal the Loss
A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Once upon a time there was an idea that people with terminal conditions should “suffer in silence” or give up and wait for the end to come. Every day, patients and their families were left not understanding their medical treatments or their prescribed medications, spending sleepless days and nights in unrelieved pain, struggling to take care of everyday concerns (paying bills, shopping for groceries, cleaning house, caring for the children), feeling isolated in their uncertainty and exhaustion.

One day a group of compassionate and forward-thinking people in Caldwell County decided that hospice care should be an option for our neighbors, so we developed a largely volunteer program that brought nurses and social workers into patients’ homes to resolve physical pain, answer questions, and find community resources to help with other problems. Because of that, more people realized that they could spend their final days and months in a meaningful way with their families, their neighbors, their faith groups.

Because of that, we continue to explore additional ways to help patients and their families at the end of life, to educate healthcare providers and citizens, and to spread our services beyond the boundaries of Caldwell County. Until finally, as you read this issue of CareLines, we believe there is no end to the possibilities in quality hospice and palliative care because we are fortunate to live in a community which supports our dedicated hospice providers.

In June we will commemorate our 32nd anniversary of providing hospice care—first in Caldwell County; over the decades caring for patients and families in Alexander, Burke, Catawba, and Wilkes counties, and most recently adding Ashe, Avery, and Watauga counties.

In this issue, you’ll see the ways that hospice care serves patients and families, as you meet the Fritts family; how volunteers such as Leslie Wagoner make large and small but always significant contributions, and how we honor their work at our annual volunteer banquet; how families memorialize their loved ones through our Path of Remembrance; how we recognize our long-term-care facility partners who go Above and Beyond…and more.

You make our “being there” when people need us possible, and we appreciate you every day.

—Cathy Swanson, Chief Executive Officer

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If you received more than one copy of CareLines or received it in error; if you do not wish to remain on our mailing list or if your address changes, please let us know. Call 828.754.0101, write (return address at top of back page), or e-mail us at cchospice@caldwellhospice.org.
COVER STORY
It “Takes a Village” to Heal the Loss

When facing the loss of a loved one, how good it would be if every bereaved individual or family could count on “a whole village” of compassionate support. The Caldwell Hospice philosophy of care encourages this depth of attention to the patient and family’s needs, from admission to the patient’s death and through the first 13 months of bereavement, if desired. For the Fritts family’s grief journey, Caldwell Hospice team members became involved in December 2011, when infant Gavin was admitted to hospice care. The compassionate support of a whole village—Caldwell Hospice staff, the Fritts family, their friends, and their church family—continues, as these next paragraphs illustrate.

Dylan Fritts is one energetic, sparkling-eyed, infectious-grin, nine-year-old boy who likes to sing and play soccer. This year will be his third year attending Caldwell Hospice’s Good Mourning Children’s Grief Camp. “I want to go to Grief Camp every year until I’m too old to go, then I’ll volunteer to help with the first-time kids.”

In 2010 when Dylan learned that he would have a baby brother, he knew it was going to be “awesome!” A mischievous grin fills his face, as he recalls the excitement of being a big brother. “Until Gavin was born, I didn’t have anyone to play with, except Mom and Dad.”

When Gavin was 11 months old, Harvey and Stephanie Fritts learned that he had cancer and a genetic disorder, which meant his body did not have the necessary “tumor-fighting cell.”

“I was mad that my brother was sick,” Dylan remembers.

Once Harvey and Stephanie knew that Gavin couldn’t get well, they decided to bring him home from Baptist Hospital—the day before Christmas Eve 2011. The family, the friends, and the church family would make his time as comfortable, peaceful, and loving as possible. They were referred to Caldwell Hospice, and a steady interaction began with Gavin’s nurse, medical social worker, and the on-call staff. In person and by telephone, they answered questions, checked the pain medications, and shared the moments during the days and nights leading to Gavin’s death in January 2012.

Stephanie wanted seven year-old Dylan and his nine-year-old cousin Kaylee to have all the support they needed, so she arranged for visits with Jessica, a Caldwell Hospice medical social worker. They drew pictures and talked; drawing seemed to work, even when words couldn’t.

When Jessica told Dylan about Grief Camp, he wanted to attend. He explains that he was nervous the first time, holding onto his mom until he saw Jessica and recognized one of...
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the adult volunteers, a retired teacher from Sawmills Elementary School. Last year, his mom says, Dylan was so ready that “he told me to leave!”

At Grief Camp, children explore their losses and their feelings through arts and crafts. Dylan likes designing the memory stones, pressing firmly into the wet cement all the carefully chosen small stones and other decorative objects in different colors that made him think of Gavin. The two memory stones Dylan created have a special place in the flower bed at their home.

Last year, the children were asked to bring fabric from home for making Teddy bears. Dylan brought Gavin’s blue blanket, with its embroidered phrase, “I love HUGS.” The blanket was sewn and stuffed by the adult volunteers into a one-of-a-kind Teddy bear. “What do you do with the Teddy bear?” Stephanie asks. “I sleep with it,” Dylan answers.

Using a sand art project, the staff and volunteers encouraged the children to explore their emotions by filling jars with layers of sand in different colors. “Each color meant something,” Dylan says. He placed a lot of gray sand in his jar; he thinks that it represented sadness or—“I had a ton of anger.”

For grieving children, Grief Camp “is a good outlet to talk without mom and dad there,” Harvey says. “Sometimes, with their parents, children ‘put on the tough face.’”

Stephanie echoes the importance: “It’s a place to go and learn that they’re not the only ones” who have lost a loved one.

For Dylan, “Grief Camp is a fun way to express your grief.” He encourages other children to “try it the first year. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to go back.” In the future, Dylan promises to be there for the younger, unsure first-time campers.

For grieving families, finding the tools, the words, and sometimes the permission to grieve can be very hard to achieve. Caldwell Hospice encourages families to explore its various bereavement support programs and groups, to ask for help when they need it, and to understand that grief is natural: it will take as long as it takes to heal.

Stephanie, Harvey, and Dylan Fritts—are buoyed by compassionate support from friends, family, the church family, and Caldwell Hospice—are honoring the memory of Gavin, as they hang a stocking for him each Christmas and hold a birthday party for him each January, at Dry Ponds Baptist Church, inviting the public and charging admission for food and games; they also have a yard sale and silent auction. Proceeds go to the American Childhood Cancer Organization (www.Acco.org/AboutUs/AboutACCO.aspx). In the first two years, they collected $6,000. They also participate in the annual Caldwell County Relay for Life. Harvey, Stephanie, and Dylan Fritts are members of the village it will take to heal other grieving people.

To learn more about Caldwell Hospice’s bereavement programs, including Good Mourning Children’s Grief Camp for children, ages six to 12, who have lost a loved one through death, contact Caldwell Hospice’s bereavement staff at 828.754.0101. Caldwell Hospice’s Good Mourning Grief Camp is sponsored each year by Greer-McElveen Funeral Home and Crematory and a special friend of CHPC.

Left: Dylan Fritts creates a Teddy bear from one of Gavin’s blankets at CHPC’s 2013 Children’s Grief Camp.
Above: Harvey, Stephanie, and Dylan Fritts at the 2012 Children’s Grief Camp balloon release.
BRAND NEW LOOK, SAME QUALITY CARE
Targeting a Higher Quality of Life

Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care has renamed its palliative care program AIM: Advanced Illness Management to make its purpose clear—providing specialized medical care to improve quality of life for people affected by serious illness, at any point in the illness, and alongside treatments meant to cure. AIM is not hospice care, which serves the more intensive care needs of people with a very limited prognosis.

With its focus on comfort and better quality of life, AIM can relieve or ease such symptoms as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite, and difficulty sleeping, but that is not all the palliative care program offers.

The program assists patients and family members in setting health care goals, communicating, managing pain and other symptoms, and coping with the emotional issues that surround a serious illness. Spiritual support is available, if requested.

The team—physician, nurse practitioner, and nurse, with medical social worker and chaplain support, when needed—provides services in patients’ homes, in long-term-care facilities, or in hospitals to treat their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

AIM is a collaboration between Caldwell UNC Health Care and Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care.

To learn more about AIM, talk to your doctor, call 828.754.0101, or visit www.caldwellhospice.org.
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Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc., gratefully acknowledges memorials and contributions received between 01 January and 31 March 2014. Please notify us if we have omitted a donation from this listing. Contributions received after 31 March 2014 will be listed in our Summer 2014 issue.

Newsletter mailing list policy: CareLines is published four times a year. Each person who contributes during the six months prior to a mailing will receive the next two issues. Individuals who ask to be placed on our “do not remove” mailing list will receive the newsletter every quarter.

PATH OF REMEMBRANCE
A LASTING TRIBUTE

Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care offers an opportunity to remember your loved one with a lasting tribute. A personalized brick in memory or in honor of your loved one, church, business, or civic group can be part of the Path of Remembrance, the walkway from our beautiful front porch to our patient care unit at Kirkwood in Lenoir.

Each four-by-eight brick can be purchased for a donation of $200 and comes with a certificate which recognizes your gift. For an additional $25, you can receive a duplicate of your brick with felt backing. For more information, contact us at 828.754.0101.
MAKING YOUR WISHES KNOWN FOR END-OF-LIFE CARE

Reflect, Talk, Appoint, Act

Sharing your healthcare preferences with family and friends is one of the most important conversations you will ever have. No matter what your age or health condition, it is important to think about how you want to be cared for during the last months/days of your life.

How can you prepare yourself and your loved ones for making these important decisions? Here are a few helpful hints:

Reflect

Acknowledging your beliefs, values, and concerns. Imagine that you become seriously ill. This may be a time to complete unfinished business or a time to re-examine relationships, events, values, decisions, and tasks that are important to you.

Wellbeing and quality of life. Enjoying time with people you love brings a sense of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment. You may also have spiritual beliefs or religious practices and/or other rituals or traditions that are very important to you.

Making decisions when you face a serious illness. Regardless of your health condition or any disability you have, currently, the following areas are important because they will change with time—(1) breathing: How do you feel about needing mechanical assistance to breathe? Initially when a person cannot breathe, medical staff will insert a tube into his/her windpipe to open a passage to get air into the lungs. Then, a ventilator can be used to help get air into the lungs, mechanically; (2) eating and drinking: serious illness often causes problems with normal eating and drinking, so you and your family may face questions about artificial feeding and fluids. Artificial feeding (through a tube) is often assumed to relieve symptoms and prolong life, but it can cause pneumonia, bedsores, vomiting, lung congestion, and diarrhea. Providing IV fluids to someone who is dehydrated may help in the short term, but when provided to patients who are dying, it can cause problems.

Talk

Conversations about end-of-life choices are difficult for many people to face. Expressing your wishes for treatment and care during an illness is a “touchy” subject for many people. It may be helpful to talk about specific kinds of events that frequently raise issues about treatment preferences, such as: failure of treatment for advanced-stage cancer; no response for more than a month following a stroke; severe head injury.

Appoint

“Who can I trust to make the decision I would make for myself?” You cannot tell your healthcare agent/healthcare power of attorney every detail about every circumstance, but if you talk honestly and frequently, that person can have a good idea of what matters to you.

Act

In addition to your healthcare agent/healthcare power of attorney, be sure to give copies of the advance directives to everyone who needs to know your wishes: other family members, all of your healthcare providers, and maybe a friend, your clergy, your lawyer, etc.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES: documents which identify the life-prolonging medical treatments you do/do not want and who you want to make those decisions in your best interest, when you cannot. Once signed, witnessed, and notarized, they are legal documents.

Living Will—in this document, you state what life-prolonging measures you want and do not want when any or all of the following conditions apply:
- you have an incurable or irreversible condition that will result in your death within a relatively short period of time;
- you become unconscious and your healthcare providers determine that, to a high degree of medical certainty, you will never regain consciousness;
- you suffer from advanced dementia or any other condition which results in substantial loss of your cognitive ability and your healthcare providers determine that, to a high degree of medical certainty, the loss is not reversible.

Health Care Power of Attorney—in this document, you name the person to whom you’re giving the authority to make healthcare decisions for you when the attending physician determines that you are incapable of making the decisions related to your health; his/her authority continues during that incapacity or until your death.

For more information, contact:
Caldwell Hospice at 828.754.0101 or www.caldwellhospice.org;

In Caldwell County, call 828.757.8635 to pre-register for the Senior Center's “living will clinic,” held on the second Thursday of each month at 1:30 p.m.

(source: Caring Conversations®: Making Your Healthcare Wishes Known. Center for Practical Bioethics, copyright 1999, revised 2013.)
Follow Caldwell Hospice on facebook for the latest updates on quality end-of-life care.
Volunteers are essential to Caldwell Hospice’s desire to be “companions for the journey” to terminally ill patients and their families; in fact, the federal Medicare Conditions of Participation require hospices to have volunteer support count for at least five percent of direct patient service hours. Caldwell Hospice’s volunteer support far exceeds that requirement: 14.21% in fiscal year 2012-2013! Volunteer assignments are as varied as the ages and backgrounds of the people who take on the tasks.

Leslie Wagoner’s journey with Caldwell Hospice began as a volunTEEN (volunteers ages 14 to 17), continues as an adult volunteer, and—since August 2013—as a certified nursing assistant on staff.

As a volunTEEN, Leslie says, “I loved going to patients’ homes to visit and to nursing homes to play Bingo; having parties for patients in the patient care units and getting to meet their families, too.”

Leslie completed Caldwell Hospice’s VolunTEEN training during the summer of 2010 and served in South Caldwell High School’s VolunTEEN Club during her junior and senior years. As a volunTEEN, Leslie says, “I loved going to patients’ homes to visit and to nursing homes to play Bingo; having parties for patients in the patient care units and getting to meet their families, too.”

For patients, Leslie’s visits are a blessing. “I am happy to know there are young girls who will visit older people such as me and help us out,” says a Caldwell Hospice homecare patient. “Leslie cleans my house, waters my plants, works in my flower garden. She writes letters for me, makes copies, and mails them to my family.”

Leslie’s high school advisor describes her: “one of the most conscientious young women I know—goal-oriented, committed to excellence, and genuine. She volunteered humbly.” The assisted-living center’s activities director says, “Leslie arrived with her beautiful smile, caring ways, and giving spirit to bring joy to the residents.” She resolved disputes between residents and led the activities during her volunTEEN club’s monthly visits.

Leslie recruited students for her high school’s volunTEEN club, encouraged them to be examples for other students, and led them in completing projects without direct adult supervision. “Leslie is an outstanding example of a true, dedicated volunteer,” says one of Leslie’s high school classmates. “She definitely has influenced me! President of the VolunTEENs Club, spending extra hours at the local hospice, helping out at the Wig Bank, and playing Bingo with residents in the nursing homes. I am honored to know her.”

Caldwell Hospice staff members appreciate Leslie’s maturity, dependability, and determination to achieve her goals. Crystal Burch, Caldwell Hospice Volunteer Support Specialist, applauds Leslie’s impact on younger volunTEENS as Caldwell Hospice’s first-ever peer mentor.

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization recognized Leslie in 2013 with a Certificate of Appreciation in the “Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice” Teen Service division. And no one was surprised.

Leslie completed Certified Nursing Assistant I (CNA I) training while in high school and cares for hospice patients as an “as needed” staff member in Caldwell Hospice’s two inpatient units. In August 2014, she will begin CCC&TI’s nursing program, and plans to earn a Bachelor’s degree in Nursing at Lenoir-Rhyne University or Appalachian State University with a focus on pediatric nursing: “I want to be a shining light to those around me. My purpose is to help others.”

The commitment to helping others—children in her church, residents in assisted-living facilities, neighbors, classmates, hospice patients—began in Leslie’s
childhood. No one told her to help; no one said, “This is the right thing to do.” She just watched her parents: “Their actions were the conversation that told me what I needed to do.” Leslie responded in a big way.

If you are looking for a way to help others, consider volunteering with Caldwell Hospice. The next adult volunteer training sessions will be in June, at the McCreary Family Professional Center in Hudson, NC. For more information or to register, contact Volunteer Coordinator Brittany Bonn at 828.754.0101 or volunteercoordinator@caldwellhospice.org.

Caldwell Hospice Volunteers Honored for Years of Service

Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care celebrated all its volunteers and awarded years of service recognition at the 2014 Volunteer Appreciation Banquet, “Caldwell Hospice Barnyard Bash.”

Pictured are (standing, L to R): Gene Woods (20 years); Bud Faw, Linda Lewis (five years); Roger Goble, Marlene Alexander (15 years); Nina Smith (five years); Marti Kardol (15 years); Sadie Hicks (five years); and Board Member Houston Groome (25 years); (seated, L to R) Becky Effler (15 years); Ruth Kincaid, Betty Johnson (five years); Sadie Woods (15 years); Loretta Clark (30 years); and Mary Brown (10 years).

The following volunteers, recognized for service to CHPC, are not pictured: Betty Brown, Bud Brown, and Board Member Peg Broihill (30 years); Mary Crisp (20 years); Volunteer Chaplain Steve Austin, Curtis Powell, and Gloria Reese (15 years); Shirley Brinkley, Margaret Crowder, Gladys Ferguson, Sheila Hodge, Deborah Stewart, and Joanne Triplett (10 years); Caleb Coffey, Jim Crawford, Marrisa Foy, Katie Franklin, Mary Hollar, Loes Moore, Janice Story, Delores Teegarden, Elechia Wimbish, and Jared Winkler (five years).

Over 300 volunteers (including adults and VolunTEENs) assist with clerical duties, patient-and-family visits, special projects, yard work, or whatever task is asked of them.

Caldwell Hospice Welcomes New Volunteers


For information or to register, contact Brittany Bonn, Volunteer Coordinator, at 828.754.0101 or volunteercoordinator@caldwellhospice.org.
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WISH LIST • 2014

- Snacks (individual-size)
  for patients’ families
- Applesauce
- Cans of soup
- Coffee (cans, regular and decaf)
- Decaffeinated coffee in single-serve bags
- Hot chocolate
- Napkins
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic wrap
- Storage bags (qt., gallon)
- Styrofoam coffee cups (8-oz.)
- Solo cups (16-oz. for soft drinks, tea, etc.)
- Paper plates and bowls
- Plastic spoons and forks
- Lotion (personal size for men and women)
- Deodorant (personal size)
- Toothpaste (travel size)
- Mouthwash (travel size)
- Orange sticks (to clean fingernails)
- Boxes of tissue (Kleenex)
- “Baby wipes” or refills (not anti-bacterial/adult size preferred)
- Triple-blade disposable razors
- Hair brushes
- Disposable cameras
- AA and AAA batteries
- Amazon.com gift cards to purchase children/teen grief books, music, and resources
- Music CDs (instrumental, gospel, inspirational, meditation, nature sounds)