

CARELINES

A Quarterly Newsletter Published for the Friends & Families of Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc.
Winter 2011



*We Honor
Dr. Robert S. Belk:
Our Glorious Physician*



From the Director's Chair: It's the End of an Era at Caldwell Hospice

Dr. Robert S. Belk has been with Caldwell Hospice from almost the beginning. His mission, motivation, and mercy can never be questioned, and he deserves to have time that he can call his own, finally. But we will miss him.



The people who know Dr. Belk best—folks who work alongside him day in and day out, night in and night out, and patients and their family members who benefit

from his expertise and compassion—describe him as a man of tremendous moral integrity; compassionate, intelligent, a true gentleman, a good teacher, tough when he needs to be; professional, personal, empathetic, competent, reassuring, gentle, kind, gracious, intelligent, soft-spoken, ethical; a Christian man and devoted husband, father, and grandfather; so nice, he even “fusses” nice; a sense of humor; genuine concern for patients, their family, and the staff; showing respect for all; loved and respected by patients he knew when he was still in private practice, and he remembers most of them.

Staff members recall having to lure him off a comfortable front porch or out of a thriving garden with fresh vegetables as he visits with patients. Committed to both work and family, he often combines the two: when his children were young, he brought them to make morning rounds with him. It wasn't unusual to see Jeni, his daughter, coming through the patient care unit door in play clothes, a cheerleading uniform or her Sunday best.

We receive thank-you notes for Dr. Belk's tender and expert care of families' loved ones. He has visited untold numbers of patients in long-term-care facilities, attended countless funeral services, and made

many follow-up visits by phone or in person to bereaved families.

Now, in the closing days of 2011, our Caldwell Hospice family is recalling all that Dr. Belk has taught us about caring for the patients we serve and thinking about funny stories and practical jokes connected to him. We are grateful that we can call him colleague, mentor, and friend.

Dr. Belk knows many stories about Margaret Harper and the house she bequeathed when our hospice needed a “home”; he knows every square mile of Caldwell County and seems to know—and have treated at one time or another—someone in every Caldwell County family. Many of our nurses and medical social workers over the years can point to lessons they learned from “Dr. B” about treating a medical condition, gaining the confidence of a patient's family, recognizing and responding to difficult situations.



In the two photos included in this column, you see Dr. Belk and me on the front porch at Kirkwood, in 1991 and in 2007, at hospice events.

All of us will miss the daily presence of Dr. Belk and Donna Belk, too, who has been generous over the years in accepting all the hours he has spent caring for our hospice patients.

It has been my great privilege to work with Dr. Belk, to learn from him, and to call him my friend.

—Cathy Swanson

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A Moment with Dr. Robert Belk: Thoughts about Retiring



After working as medical director of Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care for nearly 30 years, I've decided it's time to retire and become a full-time granddaddy.

When I was asked to fill in at Caldwell Hospice while a full-time medical director was being sought, I somewhat reluctantly agreed. At that time, I was involved with a full-time internal medicine and cardiology practice, and caring for patients who could no longer have their medical status reversed but were dying, and had only months of life left, was not on my agenda.

I looked at this position as something that was needed and agreed to it as a short-term fill-in situation, at the request of CHPC Board President Parker Williamson (pictured below with me on our sailboat, *Heart and Soul*). It's hard to believe that, 29 years later, not only am I "filling" it, but for many years, it has been my full-time work—after 14 years as a volunteer!



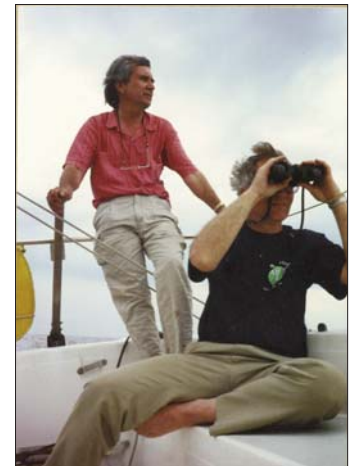
I have found this work rewarding and a constant learning experience as I deal with individuals and families who are working through the dying process.

Some of the words and phrases that explain what I have been a part of include "restoring," "preserving," "allowing a peaceful and comfortable death," and "learning."

This has been an experience in humility, while we have helped people through the many twists and turns of life, as they prepare for death. All of us have our own special needs and desires that occur as our lives are coming to an end.

At Caldwell Hospice, we know that the physical and psycho-social needs go hand-in-hand. We try to help our patients and their families address both to ensure a peaceful passing. We work with the entire social unit to provide patients' loved ones with support as they work through the difficulty of losing someone who means so much to them and adjusting to life without the person they have come to love, and often depend upon, as well.

Thanks to our staff, our Board, and all of you who have made this opportunity possible. Caldwell Hospice has been a major focus in my life and I think it always will be.



Milestones in Dr. Belk's Career

1973	Joined Thompson Medical Specialists, practicing cardiology and internal medicine
August 10, 1982	Joined Caldwell Hospice's Board of Directors (a volunteer position); agreed to serve as medical liaison and as part-time volunteer medical director
May 23, 1995	Retired from private practice
January 1995	Received <i>LA Dysart Citizenship Award</i> : Caldwell County's Man of the Year, awarded by Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce
March 1, 1996	Named the full-time medical director for Caldwell Hospice
April 2007	Awarded for 25 years of volunteer service to Caldwell Hospice
June 2007	Received inaugural <i>Robert S. Belk MD Excellence in Hospice Care Award</i>
November 2011	Retired as Caldwell Hospice's full-time medical director

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We extend our sincere thanks for all you did during our loved one's illness. You all made his last weeks much more comfortable and that was his wish. With your help, he was able to be at home...We will forever be grateful for everything.
—a Caldwell Hospice family member

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May God bless all of you, especially all the doctors and nurses and all caretakers. We could never say thanks enough to you for your care and kindness to us.—a Caldwell Hospice family member

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....Not only does Hospice care for each patient with respect, and tender loving care, but offers the family kindness and courtesy in many ways to face the inevitable when the time comes....Hospice is a gift for all those in need, and Lenoir is blessed to have those who do the special work you do.—a Caldwell Hospice family member

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Dry Ponds Baptist Church, Grace WOM
Gary "Shannon" Holman
Angie Brown

CONTRIBUTORS
Hogan Family Foundation, Inc.
Stevens Family Foundation, Inc.
Whitnel Ruritan Club
Bobby L. Austin
Kay Bumgarner
Jerry L. Chester
Dr. Marc Guerra
Shirley Hailey
Eric & Barbara Hartley
Travis Hartley
Paul & Sally Hunsucker
Cleo Justice
Jearld L. Leonhardt
Lucienne Lyons
Fred & Betty Piercy
Nina Pritchard
Mildred P. Van Dyke

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
Abington Road Baptist Church
Banner Elk United Methodist Church

Berea Advent Christian Church
Bethany Baptist Church
Buffalo Cove Baptist Church
Cajah's Mtn. Baptist Church
Cedar Rock Baptist Church
Center Grove Baptist Church
Central Advent Christian Church
Christian Fellowship Church, Community Group
Clark's Chapel Baptist Church, Adult Ladies' Class
Clover Baptist Church
Clover Baptist Church, Berea Class
Concord Baptist Church
Dry Ponds Baptist Church
Dudley Shoals Baptist Church
East Flat Baptist Church
Faith Baptist Church Fellowship Baptist Church
First Advent Christian Church, Hattie Steele Circle
First Baptist Church, Granite Falls
First Baptist Church, Hudson
First Baptist Church, Whitnel
Flemings Chapel Baptist Church, Adult Men II Class
Grandview Park Baptist Church
Hibriten Baptist Church
Hildebran United Methodist Church
Hildebran United Methodist Church, Hutto Class
Johnston Chapel Baptist Church
Joyceton Baptist Church

Lenoir Pentecostal Holiness Church
Life of God Christian Outreach
Little Rock Baptist Church
Livingston Memorial Baptist Church
Mountain Grove Baptist Church, Living Word Class
Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Susie McCall's Class
Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Cynthia Marshall's Class
Nazareth Advent Christian Church
Patterson Grove Missionary Baptist Church
Piney Grove Baptist Church, Kindergarten VBS
Refuge Missionary Baptist Church
Silver Run Baptist Church
Smith Grove Baptist Church
St. Martin's Lutheran Church
Temple Hill Baptist Church
United Presbyterian Church
Word in Truth Ministries
Yadkin Baptist Church
Yadkin Valley Baptist Church, Golden Nuggets
Zion United Church of Christ, Women's Guild

UNITED WAY CONTRIBUTORS
The following names were omitted from the United Way list in our Fall 2011 issue:

Chris Beard
Ken Coffey
Donna Harmon
Danny T. Hayes

Caldwell Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc., gratefully acknowledges memorials and contributions received between 01 July and 30 September 2011. Please notify us if we have omitted a donation from this listing. Contributions received after 30 September 2011 will be listed in our Spring 2012 issue.

Newsletter mailing list policy. Carelines is published four times a year. Each person who makes a contribution to our hospice during the six months prior to a mailing will receive the next two issues. Individuals may ask to be placed on our "do not remove" mailing list; in that case, they will continue to receive the newsletter every quarter.

Dr. Robert Belk: Master of Medicine and Kindness

Dr. Robert Belk...still takes time to sit, to listen, to hear what isn't being said. "How are you feeling within yourself?" he'll often ask as he sits by the bedside of a dying patient. It is a question for the heart and the soul, one that digs deeper than the physical ailments that a patient usually recounts to his or her doctor....

Dr. Belk views death...as a final natural act, and when medical science has done what it can do to prolong life, he believes there is still much to be done with physical comfort, the power of presence, and an understanding that dying...is a physical, emotional, and spiritual endeavor.

....Dr. Belk has become the face of [Caldwell] Hospice in our medical community....Dr. Belk respects and values the input of our nurses, medical social workers, certified nursing assistants, and counselors in the overall care of a patient. There have been occasions when he has visited a patient in the home and then called our office to advocate for bringing that patient to our inpatient unit, based on the family's acute emotional needs.

By the bedside, Dr. Belk is a gentle man who listens and builds trust with both patients and their familiesDr. Belk treats each patient with dignity and respect, and cares for each patient with concern and tenderness....

Dr. Belk keeps a small notepad in his shirt pocket for updating information about patients. One Caldwell Hospice nurse said, "He has always been respectful and honest with patients and their families, even when the information is hard to hear....He advocates for what he feels is best for the patient and holds to his principles, even if it's not popular."

A Caldwell Hospice medical social worker said, "A husband and wife (married almost 70 years) told me Dr. Belk had been their physician, [and] he suggested a visit. They lived in a very rural area and were absolutely floored when Dr Belk walked through their door....The tube coming from the patient's stomach was leaking, and the wife couldn't get it stopped. Dr. Belk put on gloves, did some arranging, and bandaged the patient. The couple would have needed to drive at least 25 miles to see a doctor. When they tried to thank him, Dr. Belk replied, 'You are much too kind.'"

Dr. Belk even takes call while sailing, knowing exactly where he needs to be for his cell phone to make connection....

A Caldwell Hospice staff member recalled that "my mother-in-law had been ill for over six years...My father-in-law had a heart attack, and while we took care of his needs, we brought my mother-in-law to the patient care unit. Dr. Belk made a connection with her that no other doctor she had seen over the years had....He was brave enough to tell her what no other doctor would: 'You have fought a good fight but you have come to the end.' And she was okay with that because she trusted him. Just a few days later she died in the PCU."

A medical social worker writes, "Although Dr. Belk never knew my sister, he guided her and me through difficult health issues. He spoke as if he knew her personally. Toward the end of her life, she would take information from Dr. Belk to her own doctors: 'this is what Dr. Belk is suggesting' or 'this is what I want.'"

"While they never laid eyes on each other, she trusted his opinion and loved him for taking the time to listen and act as if he had known her his whole life. When my youngest sister died unexpectedly, and I awaited the autopsy results, Dr. Belk asked me whether I had received them yet. He said, 'Let me know when you get them. You shouldn't read them alone, so I will read them with you, since your family is out of state.' How many doctors would even think to do that?"

Another medical social worker writes, "My grandmother was admitted to our PCU....She was losing sight in one of her eyes because of her fast-growing cancer...she wanted to be like Dr. Belk and wear a patch over [that] eye...That afternoon, when he came back to check on her, he handed her an eye patchDr. Belk worked with the nurses on the PCU until my grandmother was comfortable and at peace for the six weeks until she died."

If patients' families need explanations about the patient's condition, a letter to an employer, a legal entity, etc. to explain their circumstances, Dr. Belk helps them. A staff member writes, "My friend had a cruise planned...but her mother was a terminal patient on our PCU. My friend

(continued on page 9)



Above left: CHPC staff join Tony Deal and the Neighbors to serenade Dr. Belk, with a new composition, "He's Got Bedside Manners"; above right: Dr. Belk and Donna Belk listen as Chaplain Steve Butler provides Kirkwood history at Dr. Belk's retirement luncheon.

Dr. Belk: The Praise Continues

(continued from page 8)

struggled with trying to make the best decision about whether to go or lose the money already paid on the trip. Dr. Belk wrote a letter to the cruise ship company; it gave them a refund. Later on, they were able to go on the cruise of their dreams and take their daughter, as well."

Dr. Belk....has made an extra trip to the PCU more than once so that he can speak with an out-of-town family member who has just arrived in Lenoir.

Another employee said, "Dr. Belk has been here for my mother, father, other family members, and friends when their time has come to die....All of us get comfort from him and feel the safety of his knowledge and love for his patients."

The grandmother of one of our medical social workers was admitted to our PCU: "He talked with my family and educated them on my grandmother's cancer progression, as well as the dying process...."

A hospice family member said, "Dr. Belk went above and beyond for my father and for our family, often returning to the patient care unit at night to talk with our family. After my father died, Dr. Belk met with my brother and me to help us deal with our grief. He just knew the right words to say. I will always be grateful to Dr. Belk."

"Dr. Belk is always willing to come out and check on any patient [in the long-term-care facilities] that the team is concerned about," said another staff member. His visits with patients are very helpfulThere have been so

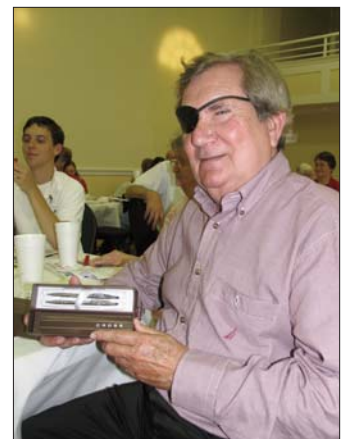
many times he has helped us explain the patient's decline and impending death."

A former Caldwell Hospice board member and retired nurse told about watching him in the early days, as he worked with patients, hospitals, and other medical professionals to make this hospice "work." The needs of Caldwell Hospice were always at the forefront of his attention.

Caldwell Hospice hired Dr. Thomas Ray in 2007, and he learned that "Dr. Belk's signature question is 'How can I help you?'" He is "an eminent hospice physician with an outstanding reputation in the Unifour medical community, a leader by example who understands and sincerely appreciates the role of each interdisciplinary team member."

Dr. Belk takes the time to know the employees, to learn about their families, their health, their interests. When his co-workers are ill, he will visit them; when they have medical questions, he will gather the necessary information to answer them.

"Dr. Robert Belk is admired by his peers, his patients, and their families," said a Caldwell Hospice nurse. "Each morning, he sits and talks with families, for as long as they need him.... When called to be informed of a death, he always inquires about the family, and 90% of the time will come back to the PCU to offer sympathy and support. It is easy to see how much this means to the patients and families we serve...."



Photos (top row, L to R): Dr. Belk and Dr. Ray pose in courtyard at Kirkwood; Dr. Belk at CHPC's 25th anniversary celebration in 2007; Dr. Belk and CHPC staff members celebrate renewed accreditation from ACHC; (bottom row, L to R) Dr. Belk with wife Donna Belk at CHPC's 25th anniversary celebration; board members Joe Delk and Dr. Belk receive years of service awards at 2003 volunteer banquet; Dr. Belk shows off award for 25 years of service at CHPC's 2008 volunteer banquet.

Dr. Belk: Thanks for the Memories



Left: Parker Williamson, Mr. Forlines, Donna Belk, and Dr. Belk; Above: Dr. Belk and Parker Williamson.



Dr. Belk joins the Conga line at 2005 Staff Retreat.



Above: the Belks at 2001 Volunteer Banquet; below: the Robert S Belk MD Excellence in Hospice Care award, at CHPC's 25th Anniversary, June 2007.

Left: the Belks at 2008 Volunteer Banquet, when Dr. BELK was recognized for his 25 years of volunteer service; Right: Miss Margaret Harper—Dr. Belk has many stories about her.

Retirement Reception for Dr. Belk December 1, 2011



Pictured at right, the Belks and Cathy Swanson; Below left: Dr. Belk and Bobbie Triplett Curtis, another CHPC pioneer; Below center and right: reception catered by the JE Broyhill Civic Center Catering Group.



CHPC Medical Report: Physician Changes

Dr. Dennice Herman joined Caldwell Hospice on Nov. 1 and began a month of preparation with retiring Medical Director Dr. Robert Belk and staff physician Dr. Thomas Ray, learning "the hospice way" of providing care to hospice and palliative care patients.



"We are pleased to have Dr. Herman join us," said Dr. Belk. "Her background in family medicine, the relationships she has developed with her patients and their families, and her knowledge of the community make her an excellent fit."

"The greatest gifts I have to give to patients and families are my compassion and general concern for their well-being," Dr. Herman said. "What better way could I share these than through providing hospice and palliative care?"

"Caldwell Hospice serves more than 135 hospice patients and 165 palliative care patients each day," said CHPC Executive Director Cathy Swanson. "With the addition of Dr. Herman, families can be assured that their loved ones will receive the best end-of-life care from the finest team imaginable."

A 1986 graduate of East Carolina University's School of Medicine, Dr. Herman earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1972. Prior to her

tenure in family medicine, she practiced emergency medicine at Caldwell Memorial Hospital for seven years. She has served as medical director for Caldwell Physicians Network and for Shaire Nursing Center, previously.

With Dr. Belk's retirement, Dr. Thomas Ray has been named to succeed him as the organization's medical director. Dr. Ray joined Caldwell Hospice as staff physician in October 2007. He earned Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) certification in 2009.



Dr. Ray, who oversaw the development of Caldwell Hospice's outpatient palliative care clinic, serves palliative care and home hospice patients, and he cares for patients in the Forlines Patient Care Unit. His approach to Caldwell Hospice patients combines his medical skill in addressing physical problems

and his compassionate concern for them. Dr. Ray says, "You may not cure, but you can alleviate pain and distressing symptoms."

He graduated from medical school and completed his residency at the Medical College of Virginia.

Stay tuned for the Spring 2012 issue of *Carelines*: Drs. Herman and Ray will discuss at length their ideas regarding the growth of hospice care and the exciting challenges ahead for them and for Caldwell Hospice, as it enters its 30th year of providing care, educating, and meeting the end-of-life needs for patients and their families in this community.

2012 Wish List

Snacks (ind.-size) for patients' families
 Ind.-size cereals & soups; instant oatmeal or grits
 Applesauce
 Artificial sweetener (*Equal*, *Sweet 'n' Low*)
 Dish cloths, dish towels (light colors)
 Paper towels
 Napkins
 Aluminum foil
 Plastic wrap
 Storage bags (qt. & gal.)
 Coffee (cans, regular & decaf)

Bottled water (ind.-size)
 Disposable coffee cups (8-oz. size)
Solo cups (16-oz. size)
 Paper plates and bowls
 Plastic spoons and forks
 Large boxes of tissues
 Baby wipes, unscented (refill packs)
 Liquid soap (8-oz. bottles, etc.)
 Lotion (ind. size)
 Deodorant (ind. size)
 Toothpaste (travel size)
 Mouthwash
 Nail clippers
 Hair brushes

Wide-tooth combs
Pledge dusting wipes
Mr. Clean Magic Erasers
Amazon.com gift cards for teen/children grief books, music, etc.
 New copies of Dr. Seuss and nursery rhymes books
 Music CDs (instrumental, gospel, inspirational, etc.)
Disposable cameras for patients and families at Stevens and Forlines patient care units.



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Path of Remembrance

As this year draws to a close, Caldwell Hospice & Palliative Care announces a way to honor or memorialize a special loved one. Please consider donating a personalized brick for placement in our ***Path of Remembrance***, the walkway from the Kirkwood front porch to our Stevens Patient Care Unit.

Each brick measures four-by-eight inches and can hold up to three lines of engraving. With a \$200 tax-deductible donation to Caldwell Hospice & Palliative Care, you can purchase a brick, personalized for your loved one.

For more information or to place an order, please call 828.754.0101 or e-mail prc@caldwellhospice.org.