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## Contributors

Margo Holley  
Emily Hopkins  
Joe Sammons

## Copy Editor

Sue Handy Baldwin

## Design

Linda Mikula

## Editors

Margo Holley  
Emily Hopkins

## Printing

Arnold Printing

## Hospicare & Palliative Care Services

607-272-0212  
info@hospicare.org  
hospicare.org

Our newsletter is mailed twice a year to patients and family members, donors, community supporters, and other friends of Hospicare. If you have received multiple copies of this newsletter, please let us know so we can correct the mailing error. In addition, we welcome your thoughts or feedback about the contents. Contact us at [communications@hospicare.org](mailto:communications@hospicare.org).

Find more articles and information on hospice, palliative care, advance care planning, and grief support at [hospicare.org](http://hospicare.org).

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PHOTO BY EMILY HOPKINS



Dear Friends,

Here's some wonderful news: More people in our region (Cortland and Tompkins counties) are getting excellent palliative and hospice care from us than ever before.

As of today, we are providing care management and emotional and practical support to 76 patients and, by extension, their caregivers and loved ones. That's up from an annual average of just 62 patients on service at a given time.

We're making house calls, assessing needs, providing guidance and encouragement, listening, and helping people celebrate life by living it as comfortably as possible.

The health care system may have challenges surrounding access, compassion, and affordability, but hospice and palliative care are notable exceptions to that unfortunate trend. Because we are a not-for-profit hospice supported by over 6,000 generous people every year in addition to the work contributions of nearly 90 patient services volunteers, we are able to routinely go above and beyond what people have come to expect from our overworked and underfunded health care system.

Massage therapy, companion animal visits, music therapy, comfort items not covered by Medicare or other insurances, respite care, one-on-one bereavement support, frequent visits from our nurses and aides, spiritual care, social work help with both emotional and practical concerns, and a beautiful homelike patient residence for those who can no longer live at home—all of this is available because of gifts from thousands of thoughtful people in the community. If you are one of these people, thank you.

Enjoy this year's spring newsletter! And please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any comments, questions, or stories to share.

With warm regards,

Joe Sammons

Executive Director, Hospicare & Palliative Care Services

On the cover:

## What are you celebrating today?

That's what we asked dozens of our friends and neighbors at the Cortland Chamber Showcase in March. Visitors wrote their answers on colorful paper hearts, which we hung along the top of our table, turning our booth into a little "wall of good things."

**Celebrate Every Day** is a new Hospicare initiative focused on noticing what matters: love, connection, comfort, and the small moments that carry us through hard seasons. You'll see more of it at upcoming events and in the stories we share online.

Follow us on Facebook or sign up for our monthly newsletter to stay in the loop.



**Celebrate  
Every Day**

# Gifts of Gratitude and Admiration from an Extraordinary Couple

**D**an Karig still remembers the first time he noticed his future wife, Joane Molenock. She was wearing a bathing suit on the beach. They were both doctoral students at the prestigious Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, in the 1960s, where the lunchtime tradition was for students and faculty to gather on the shoreline to picnic, sunbathe, and swim. Dan was studying geology and Joane was researching marine crabs.



they encountered had not seen a woman of European ancestry before Joane's visit.

In her retirement, Joane took up a hobby that would come to bring her great joy and some recognition: orchid cultivation. In 2019, she wrote in *Orchids* magazine, the bulletin of the American Orchid Society: "It all began when I decided that I finally wanted to do something that I liked, which is growing plants, primarily orchids and herbs." She went on to

After a long and happy marriage, Joane died at Bridges, a care facility in Ithaca, in November of 2024. She had suffered from Parkinson's for 20 years and cancer and dementia for five years. Before moving to Bridges, Joane's primary, daily care had been provided at home by Dan.

"Dr. Jander put it well when she said I became a 'pretty damn good home health aide,'" Dan remembers with a laugh. "But I am not a real nurse, not a doctor."

**Dr. Lucia Jander**, Hospicare's medical director, was Joane's longtime primary physician and one of a handful of doctors in the region who regularly make house calls.

One of the things that sets hospice apart from other parts of the medical system is that all hospice patients receive regular house calls from their care team.

Dan and Joane came to rely on their Hospicare care team, which included nurse **Nichole Faulkner**, who is known by her colleagues and patients for being a matter-of-fact, compassionate, and hardworking nurse.

"She was there when Joane died," Dan says. "She just showed up. I don't know how she knew."

"I was visiting almost daily by then," Nichole remembers.

One of the most important measures of the quality of care a hospice is providing is the frequency of visits in the last days of a patient's life.

"It's the statistic that says the most," says **Joe Sammons**, Hospicare's executive director. Nurses and aides are tuned into their

## After she died, Dan continued making regular gifts to the agency, to help sustain its work with patients.

patient's conditions, usually visiting in the last few days of life. It's important to family members to have the support of clinical team members they've come to like and trust during those most difficult days toward the end of their loved one's life.

But Dan and Joane were involved with Hospicare before Joane fell ill. They were regular volunteer safety paddlers for Women Swimmin' for Hospicare, the organization's annual peer-to-peer fundraiser.

"I'm pretty sure I'm the one who started paddling," Dan says.

Unsurprising, as Dan could be qualified as a semi-professional athlete. He participated in cross-country skiing races all over the world well into his seventies and paddled in numerous long-distance canoe races, including the Adirondack Canoe Classic, a three-day, 90-mile race from Old Forge to Saranac Lake. Joane partnered with him on that race three times.

In addition to encouraging Joane to train for races, Dan took her with him on many international research and racing trips. When he was the resident research scientist on a deep-sea drilling project, Joane would sometimes fly out to meet him when the ship was in port. Together they explored several far-flung places, including the remote Indonesian island of Nias, where the children

become an award-winning breeder who created several hybrids and opened an orchid nursery. Her approach to orchids reflected her meticulous nature honed in a science career, her dedication, and a sense of humor. "Why do equitants bloom in New York?" she wrote in *Orchids*, "... perhaps the main factor is a concerned caretaker who waters just the right amount ... or perhaps they thrive because of the smiling sprite on the back bench listening to Beethoven's Sonata 'Appassionata': Who knows?"

Toward the end of her illness, Dan and Joane began making significant gifts to support Hospicare. After she died, Dan continued making regular gifts to the agency, to help sustain its work with patients. He holds out hope to put her in first place this summer. In 2025, he made a \$15,000 gift to support Dr. Jander's swim across Cayuga Lake in the 22nd Women Swimmin' for Hospicare. "I wanted her to come in first," he says ruefully. But at the last minute, another donor swooped in with a large gift to another swimmer's campaign.

"As long as Dr. Jander swims," Dan says, "I will support her."

# Why I Support Hospicare

In sharing their reasons for giving, they paint a picture that includes concern for others, appreciation for past help, interest in keeping Hospicare around for themselves and others in the future, and a desire to honor loved ones.



## Linda Woodard

My husband died of prostate cancer in 2012. We had Dr. Garbo as our primary care provider (he's wonderful), and when treatments stopped working, we turned to hospice.

We started [receiving hospice support] in August and he died in early November.

It happened so gradually. For a while we were embarrassed to have this person visiting us once a week, but as my husband got sicker, the visits became progressively more important.

It breaks my heart when I hear people died within two days of signing on to Hospicare. Having hospice behind me was very important and very comforting. I supported Hospicare before that happened, but the experience of Hospicare helping me and my husband solidified my strong support. I've talked to friends who've been at a for-profit hospice, and that is a very different experience.

I am firm supporter of death and dying aid. I'm thrilled that the state has passed a law allowing for this. My husband wanted to have this option, but he didn't.

*Linda Woodard is a longtime supporter and Women Swimmin' paddler.*



## Alice Moore

My mother-in-law in California was very sick. We called Nina Miller, former Hospicare executive director. She was so compassionate and helpful. We ultimately didn't bring my mother-in-law here to Ithaca, but it was so comforting to know you could pick up the phone and talk about the

dire situation of someone in your family passing when you didn't know how long it would be. Hospicare is where you turn when you're desperate and really need compassion and guidance. And it's the right place because you all know what you're doing, know how to handle it, know how to give guidance, and you care. All those features of Hospicare are critical to human beings who are facing this situation.

*Alice Moore, who served two terms on the Board of Directors, and her husband, Robert Smith, have been Hospicare supporters since 1998. Their daughter Alicia Kenales is a current member of Hospicare's board.*

## OUR DONORS AT A GLANCE

\$1-\$999

6,485

donors

Total given in 2025

\$659,513

\$1,000-\$9,999

180

donors

Total given in 2025

\$344,012

\$10,000 OR MORE

19

donors

Total given in 2025

\$440,626



Dina Maxwell (right) with her mother and stepfather, who both received hospice care.

## Dina Maxwell

When my stepfather was diagnosed with mesothelioma in 1999, I had no idea he would be dead less than four months later.

San Diego Hospice (which is, sadly, no longer in existence) helped to manage his pain and walked with us through his illness and eventual death. They knew how to help us focus on what mattered. I will never forget the hospice nurses—they were angels on earth.

**“I will never forget the hospice nurses—they were angels on earth.”**

I don't know if our family would have been able to get through the loss as well as we did without hospice. They are there for the family as much as the patient. Death is the end for the patient, but the family must get through the grief, the loss, and keep living. Thankfully, hospice was there to help us. I will be forever grateful.

*Dina Maxwell made a \$5,000 gift in 2025 to the Hospicare Foundation to help build back reserves spent during the pandemic. Her gift was matched 1:1 by the Beverly Hammons Challenge Match. Beverly Hammons helped found Hospicare and was the first board president, in the early 1990s.*

Why do you support Hospicare? We'd love to hear your story. Email Emily Hopkins at [ehopkins@hospicare.org](mailto:ehopkins@hospicare.org) to share.

## Meet a Hospicare Ambassador



**“The care and support each of my parents received was beyond measure.”**

Some people come to hospice work through a calling. Others come through experience. For Deb Roe, it was both.

Decades ago, Deb watched friends navigate the end of their loved ones' lives with hospice support alongside them. In the mid-1990s, it became personal. Caring for both of her parents through serious illness, she brought hospice care into their home—first for her father, then for her mother—through an organization in the Hudson Valley.

“The care and support each of my parents received was beyond measure,” she says. “It made the very end of their lives easier. And it enabled me to keep them at home, which I knew they wanted.” The support she received as a caregiver, she adds, was equally meaningful.

Those experiences have stayed with her. When she learned about the Hospicare Ambassadors program, she saw a way to give something back.

The Ambassadors program brings together Hospicare staff and community volunteers to spread awareness across Tompkins and Cortland counties. Ambassadors staff information tables at community events, speak with local organizations, and help connect neighbors with the care and support Hospicare provides. It's a flexible commitment, just three to five events per year, with monthly meetups, full training, and plenty of support along the way.

“I have no medical training,” Deb says, “but I was trained as a teacher. Talking with people, doing public outreach, sharing what Hospicare offers, that's something I feel comfortable doing.”

Deb hopes the group can help more people in Tompkins and Cortland counties understand the full range of Hospicare's services and put some long-standing misconceptions to rest.

“There are still too many myths about hospice,” she says. “That's something we can change.”

To learn more about the Hospicare Ambassadors program, visit <https://hospicare.org/Join-the-Hospicare-Ambassadors/>.

# More Than Memory Boxes: Finding Connection Through Creative Grief Support



“Grief can feel a lot of things, including heavy. And creating can allow for a little lightness.”

What surprised many participants wasn't just what they made; it was who they met. “What strikes me as most memorable was the sense of connection with the loved one I lost and to those who were there too, with their memories and love for theirs,” Michelle shares. “There was something deeply healing and profound about working in quietness and in tandem with one another.”

“Clay for the Healing Heart” is just one offering in Hospicare's bereavement and expressive arts program. Past workshops have included watercolor painting, creative writing, and movement and dance. Each workshop offers a safe, supportive space to honor your grief, and the person you're grieving, in the company of others who understand.

Through our Art of Grief series, Hospicare offers free creative workshops that help community members process loss, honor the people they've loved, and find connection with others walking a similar path.

Last fall, a group gathered at a local pottery studio for our “Clay for the Healing Heart” workshop. Over the course of an afternoon, participants created memory boxes, small clay vessels designed to hold mementos of the people they'd lost. The instructor guided them through construction techniques, but the designs came entirely from the heart.

**Teresa** shaped flowers into the lid of her box. “My mom's faith in prayer, including to my patron saint, Teresa the Little Flower, has held significance throughout both of our lives,” she explains.

**Michelle** let intuition guide her hands, experimenting with tools and textures to create something that reflected her mother's unique style. “I wanted to try all the ‘things,’” she says. “What also influenced the design was looking around the room at what everyone was doing with their projects.”

“You don't need experience with art to participate,” Teresa notes. “The instructor walked us through construction and was encouraging with our designs. Each participant created something lovely and unique to them.”



Bereavement programs combine art and support to help participants better process grief.

This programming exists because of a community that believes no one should carry grief alone.

“I feel blessed I live so close to Hospicare and have the organization in my community,” Michelle says. “I could not have made it through much of this alone. And I haven't.”

The Art of Grief series will continue in the fall, but our bereavement team offers several other programs to the community, including a new Walking with Grief series.

**Shasta**, who discovered the class online, reflects on how creative expression gave her grief somewhere to go. “One opposite of loss is expression, even though it can feel really hard to access sometimes,” she says. “Grief can feel a lot of things, including heavy. And creating can allow for a little lightness.”

To learn more about upcoming workshops and Hospicare's bereavement programs, visit [hospicare.org](http://hospicare.org) or call 607-272-0212. All programs are free and open to community members, whether or not your loved one was in our care.

# Go the Distance for Hospicare

## Any activity, any age, all summer long

You don't have to swim across a lake to make a difference.



Go the Distance for Hospicare is a community fundraiser that invites anyone and everyone to take part in Women Swimmin' for Hospicare on their own terms. Choose a meaningful activity, set a goal, raise funds from friends and family to sponsor your activity, and keep it going all summer long. Bike your commute to work. Bake for a local food kitchen every week or month. Set a hiking goal. Host a lemonade stand. Knit, run, paddle, photograph, or dream up something entirely your own. If you can imagine it, you can do it.

Every stitch, every mile, every bake, every make, every action—counts!

Last year, Go the Distance participants raised \$75,000 for Hospicare. Incredibly, that level of impact comes from everyday people doing everyday things with extraordinary purpose.

The event runs from May 4 through August 8, 2026, and wraps up with a celebration for all participants on the shore of Cayuga Lake, where fundraising prizes are awarded and achievements are cheered. Along the way, Go the Distancers can earn



incentive prizes as they make progress toward their goals. We're also hosting an ice cream social in late summer to celebrate their accomplishments, as a small additional thank you for their impact.

Launched in 2020, Go the Distance opened the door for the whole community to share in the spirit of Women Swimmin', regardless of age, gender, or swimming ability. Past participants have included swimmers, boaters, volunteers, families with kids, and longtime Hospicare supporters. There is no limit on who can get involved.

For **Lynda Sovocool**, the meaning runs deep. She has been connected to Women

Do what you love and help to support compassionate care in Cortland and Tompkins counties.

Swimmin' for more than a decade, first as a volunteer and then as a swimmer with Team Owasco. She participates each year in memory of a dear friend who received care at Hospicare's residence, as well as others she has loved.

"It means to dive in and do all that I can for as long as I can to help support this amazing cause," Lynda says. "It is an honor and a privilege to give back to an organization that gives so much to our community."

That spirit is what Go the Distance is all about.

In whatever way you choose to participate, you are helping ensure that people in Tompkins and Cortland counties facing serious illness and grief have access to compassionate, expert care.

Registration opens May 4 at [WomenSwimmin.org](http://WomenSwimmin.org). How will you "Go the Distance" for Hospicare this year?

Every stitch, every mile, every bake, every make, every action—counts!



Art by Bethany Parisi

**Mark your calendars!**

Women Swimmin' and Go the Distance for Hospicare registration opens Monday, May 4, at 7:00 a.m. Sign up at [WomenSwimmin.org](http://WomenSwimmin.org).

## Upcoming Events



**Walking with Grief**

May 8, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m.  
 Nina K. Miller Residence  
 172 E. King Rd., Ithaca

Walking with Grief offers a compassionate space for individuals coping with the loss of a loved one. This group is designed to support those in mourning with tenderness, community, and opportunities for gentle healing. Multiple sessions will be held throughout the summer and fall, each with a different theme.

Attendance is Free. Register by May 6.

**Illuminations Community Memorial**

June 11, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.  
 Nina K. Miller Residence  
 172 E. King Rd., Ithaca

All community members are welcome to attend to share and take part in a ritual of honoring and remembrance of a loved one who has passed. Enjoy the Hospicare gardens, light a luminaria in memory of a loved one, and share in a special program of remembrance, concluding with a sunset rendition of "Taps" by our pond.

Attendance is Free. Registration is encouraged.

[Register or learn more about these and other events at hospicare.org/events.](http://hospicare.org/events)

**Cortland Spousal Support Group**

Beginning June 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
 Cortland Age Well Center  
 165 Main St., Cortland

A 5-week group offering men and women who have lost a spouse or partner the opportunity to process their loss in a supportive and confidential setting.

Attendance is Free. Register by June 2.

**Presentations and Workshops**

Hospicare offers presentations and workshops on advance care planning, preparing a death binder, grief, Hospice 101, and more!

To learn more or to schedule us to speak at your community group, please call 607-272-0212.