

Zach Lewis, Hospicare Residence Nurse

Zach Lewis first joined Hospicare in 2022 as a per diem nurse before becoming a full-time Hospicare field nurse in Cortland. This spring, he accepted a new position in the Hospicare Residence in Ithaca.



Q. What makes the Residence special?

A. The round-the-clock teamwork. We're able to give a lucky few people a safe, warm, homey environment that takes some of the burden off of loved ones, and you can see the weight being lifted as people walk/wheel through the door. How valuable is that?

Q. Did you always know you wanted to work in nursing?

A. If you had asked me if I was going to be a nurse out of high school, I probably would've laughed. I decided to become a nurse in about 2010, when I had a major surgery and realized that while a surgeon can cut you up, it's the nurses who put you back together. Simple as that.

Q. What makes a great hospice nurse?

A. I think it comes down to being genuine and consistently who you are. Everyone will see through anything else, and you'll come across as "phony," to quote Holden Caulfield! Most patients here will accept your faults so long as you try hard and follow through with what you say you'll follow through with.

Q. What's one thing about you that readers would be surprised to learn?

A. I once rode an elephant to an airport to pick up my aunt visiting from Montana. Not comfortable.

Finding Connection in Grief: Hospicare's Bereavement Support Groups



"When my wife died, I felt more alone than I thought one human being could bear. But when I took part in Hospicare's spousal bereavement group, I discovered other people who were feeling the same way, and this by itself reassured me."

Grief can feel incredibly isolating. That's why Hospicare offers bereavement support groups—small gatherings where people who have recently lost a loved one can talk, listen, and connect. These groups, led by our bereavement team, provide a space of comfort and community, whether online or in person.

"No one is going to tell you that you've been grieving too long."

A Judgment-Free Space for Healing

"Grief doesn't have a timeline," said **Laura Ward**, manager of psychosocial services at Hospicare. "When you come to a support group, no one is going to tell you that you've been grieving too long or that you should be over it by now. You're going to find people who are accepting, with no judgment."

Two of our monthly support groups meet on Zoom and are open to anyone in Cortland or Tompkins Counties. A third, in-person group meets at Lifelong once a month and is open to anyone, regardless of residence.

Marcy, who joined our spousal loss support group, initially felt hesitant. "Meeting on Zoom was more comfortable for me at first," she shared. "It was easier to leave if you needed to. But as we kept going, I was surprised by how helpful it was to speak with others who had lost their spouse. There's a special bond there—a very sad, but phenomenal, bond between people who have lost a significant other they lived with."

Edward, another group participant, agreed. "Group members not only spoke of their late partners and other loved ones, and how hard it was to live without them, but they were also able to put their own sadness aside for a while to help others. I found myself feeling stronger when I could say something to someone that was helpful."

Taking the First Step

Grief is deeply personal and sharing it with strangers may be the last thing someone wants to do—especially in the early days of loss.

"Support groups can be intimidating," said **Liz Wood**, a member of the bereavement team. "Especially the first time. We tell people they don't have to speak. There's no pressure. They can sit and listen. But we do encourage people to try it once."

Marcy echoed this advice. "Like any counseling situation, you should try it three times before you give up, even if it's painful. And if this group doesn't work for you or if it's still too painful, try again three months from now."

A Lasting Connection

Even after the formal sessions ended, Marcy and members of her support group continued to meet. "It's a privilege to have this relationship," she said. "To be there for them and talk to them, and to be able to have this connection to expand that relationship."

How to Join a Support Group

To learn more or register for a meeting, visit <https://www.hospicare.org/events/>.



NYS Hospicare professionals preparing for a day of lobbying at the Legislative Office Building in Albany

Advocating for Better Care

On February 12, Joe Sammons, Hospicare's executive director, and three members of his staff traveled to Albany for the Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State's (HPCANYS) lobbying day. While there, the Hospicare team spoke with state representatives to support nonprofit hospices in the state through two measures appropriating \$20 million for hospice workplace development and \$3 million for advanced care planning messaging for the public. If passed, this funding would support statewide growth for all hospices, allowing us to serve a greater number of our community members through our services.

Create a Legacy of Care

The stories of care and support in this newsletter would not be possible without your support. You can continue making a positive impact on Hospicare's mission by creating a legacy gift in your will. Legacy gifts cost nothing today but support Hospicare in 2025 and beyond. Use the free will-writing tool at freewill.com/hospicare to get started.

Hospicare

& Palliative Care Services

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Beverly Hammons Offers a Match

Meet Zach Lewis
Grief Support Groups

Advocacy in Albany

Women Chillin'

On March 24th, 40 swimmers, boaters, and volunteers from past Women Swimm'n' for Hospicare events met at Hopshire Farm and Brewery in Dryden for an evening of celebration, good food, and trivia.

Women Chillin' for Hospicare Makes a Splash



Chuck Guttman, longtime champion and volunteer leader for Hospicare, died unexpectedly in February at the age of 76 while vacationing in Costa Rica. His death leaves his beloved wife, Shirley Ladd, children, grandchildren, along with a bounty of friends, former clients, and legal colleagues, in deep grief at the loss of such an exceptional man.

Chuck, known for his joyful energy and ethical nature, practiced law in Ithaca for over 50 years. He served as city attorney in the 1990s, was a founding member of the Collaborative Law Group, and served multiple terms on both the Hospicare Board of Directors and the board of the Hospicare Foundation.

"We loved him and were grateful for his guidance and support for Hospicare," said Executive Director Joe Sammons in March.

non-profit
organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ithaca, NY 14850
Permit No. 730

172 E. KING ROAD, ITHACA, NEW YORK 14850

& Palliative Care Services

Hospicare



Board of Directors

President: Jane Powers
Vice Presidents: Laurie Mante
and Kathie Schlather
Secretary: Eliza Mulhern
Interim Treasurer: Crystal Doner
Kenneth Clarke, Sr.
Jerry Dietz
Andreia de Lima MD
Betsy East
Joe Mareane
Mary Opperman
Alison Smith
Kansas Underwood
Linda P. Wagenet

The Hospicare newsletter is published twice a year by Hospicare & Palliative Care Services.

Contributors

Margo Holley
Emily Hopkins
Joe Sammons

Design

Linda Mikula

Editor

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.

Find more articles and information on hospice, palliative care, advance care planning, and grief support at hospicare.org.

To receive the Hospicare e-newsletter, subscribe online at hospicare.org

©2025 Hospicare & Palliative Care Services



PHOTO BY EMILY HOPKINS

Dear Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well as we walk the rocky road between winter and spring! It always lifts my heart to arrive, at last, to warm days, blue skies and green fields.

At Hospicare, despite the dark clouds swirling around our government and body politic, I want to share with you—our closest friends—that we have a quiet, steady confidence in our ability to deliver our unique model of care for everyone who needs it for many years to come.

How can we be confident given current events? The answer is not as complicated as you might think. It's the hearts and hands of people who care. They are the ones who do the work and who believe in the simple truth that human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and respect all throughout their lives and especially at the end of their life.

There is no computer that can do this work. There aren't any fancy strategies or complicated funding contracts that can secure our future. The only resource we need—the only thing we've ever needed—is people who care.

In this newsletter, you'll meet some of these people for Hospicare—some who are new to our team, some who have served and supported us for many years. They will tell you their stories of why this work matters, and how they are going to help guide Hospicare to a future where every single patient and family in our community will have access to our services regardless of income or insurance.

The truth is, we are blessed with an abundance of people who care and contribute in so many ways to the mission and work of Hospicare. Although rarely easy, this work is extraordinarily life-affirming, and we simply couldn't do it without everyone whose time, treasure, and talent makes this work possible today and for many years into the future.

In spring, the earth turns inexorably toward warmth and sun. At Hospicare, the people in and around our organization do the same thing for those we serve. Thank you for being part of the Hospicare community.

Joe Sammons
Executive Director

Upcoming Events

Grieving Together: Online Ongoing General Support Group

First and third Wednesday of every month via Zoom

5:30–7:00 pm

Grief Support: In-person Ongoing General Support Group

Third Thursday of every month

1:30–2:30 pm

Location: Lifelong, 119 W. Court Street, Ithaca, NY

On the Cover

Health aide **Tina Wilbur**, who has worked at the Hospicare Residence for 16 years, visits with a resident.



Illuminations, a Community Memorial Event

Thursday, June 12, 7:00 pm–sundown

Location: Hospicare & Palliative Care Services, 172 E. King Road, Ithaca, NY

This annual event, free and open to the public, is held under a tent in the Hospicare gardens.

Registration required.

Email dhavas@hospicare.org for more information.



The 22nd Annual Women Swimmin' for Hospicare opens for registration on Monday, May 5, at 7:00 am. Sign up to swim the lake, be a support paddler, form a fundraising team, or "Go the Distance for Hospicare," by choosing your own activity like bikin', knittin', writin', or walkin'!

Hospicare Founder Issues Challenge for the Future



Missouri native **Beverly Hammons** is one of the public health champions who created and helped nurture Hospicare through its early years from 1978 to 1995—writing its bylaws, successfully applying for its license from the state health department, and serving multiple terms as its board president. She has now pledged up to \$25,000 in her own funds to match all gifts directed to a new "Hospicare Future Fund."

"Beverly has a unique perspective on the role Hospicare plays in the community health care system," said **Joe Sammons**, Hospicare's executive director.

"There are two factors that make Hospicare so special," said Beverly. "The first is its remarkable commitment to high-quality care that is independent of any existing health system or insurance company. Everyone gets the best care possible, regardless of their insurance, their income, or the health system they are served by. The second factor is that the community is such a big part of the service, in volunteering and, of course, in donations. People like

Calling All Confident Paddlers!

"Women Swimmin' for Hospicare wouldn't be possible without all the paddlers!" said volunteer safety lead, **Chris Burnett**, who oversees the course and multiple layers of safety in place on the water.

We're seeking 140+ competent kayakers, canoeists, and SUPers, plus a few powerboaters and experienced wave runners to register at womenswimmin.org starting May 5.

Sign up is easy, and volunteering involves one mandatory pre-event orientation meeting and around 4 hours of your time on Saturday, August 9. Join us and spread the word! The event is both meaningful and fun.

"Hospicare partners with every provider," Sammon said, "and takes all insurances."

the Rev. **David Evans**, **Patricia Trethaway**, **Ruth Pettengill**, **Matt Herson**, **Bill Scott**, and **Dr. Willard Schmitt** all played key roles in founding Hospicare."

In recounting the community generosity that led to the construction of the Hospicare Residence, the first freestanding hospice residence in New York State, Beverly is quick to highlight the involvement of **Chris Malloy**, **Bernie Malloy** and his wife **Judy Malloy**, who served as president of the Hospicare Board after Beverly's terms.

Beverly explained, "Working with **Jerry Nye**, the second executive director of Hospicare, the Malloys rallied their colleagues in the construction trades and skilled volunteers to donate their labor to build a house in the Horizon residential development in Lansing to then sell at public auction. They also recruited local suppliers to donate the building materials. The proceeds provided the substantial down payment for the present Hospicare facility."

Director Sammons emphasized how the Beverly Hammons Challenge Match and the Hospicare Future Fund will offer community members another chance to support accessible care that is also financially stable and independent.

"Hospicare partners with every provider," Sammon said, "and takes all insurances."

It's that independence that gives us the ability to focus on each person's unique needs."

In 1970, Beverly was a 22-year-old Peace Corps volunteer in a part of Ecuador so remote "you had to walk there." Her team's mission was to train local young women to be their remote communities' midwives, paramedics, and health care educators.

"Two of us volunteers went back in 2013," Beverly Said, "and the women told us about their successes. The reunions were so emotional. We all cried tears of joy. Part of my heart is there."

Another part of Beverly's heart is with Hospicare, the incredibly resilient, community-supported nonprofit hospice provider that makes sure anyone in these two counties has access to a compassionate nurse, home health aide, spiritual care, a social worker, and volunteers, either at their home or in Hospicare's Nina K. Miller Hospice Residence.

"Hospicare's early years were exceedingly difficult," Beverly recalled, "because Congress had not yet authorized Medicare insurance to pay for hospice services, and most commercial health insurers were declining to pay for hospice care. This left the board, **Fran Ahern Smith**, who was the first executive director, and the staff and the volunteers to raise money themselves to pay monthly bills. Things have gotten much better, but we still must pull together to assure Hospicare remains financially viable far into the future."



New Events and Communications Staff



Dana Havas, who joined the Hospicare team as the new community events and development associate in the first week of January, will coordinate this year's Women Swimmin' for Hospicare event with the help of dedicated volunteers.

Dana has served in the agricultural sector as a senior project manager at American Farmland Trust and before that as the agriculture team leader at Cortland County Cooperative Extension.



Margo Holley, who for many years worked at the Cortland YMCA, most recently as director of operations, joined Hospicare in February as the marketing and communications manager.

We are so thrilled to welcome Margo and Dana to the team!

Celebrating Betsy East



Each year, **Assemblymember Anna Kelles** asks for nominations from the community for a Women of Distinction award. On March 13, it was announced that **Betsy East** (pictured left), who has not only been involved with Women Swimmin' for Hospicare since its early years but is also a cherished board member and friend to Hospicare, was nominated for this award.

In the recognition announcement, Assemblymember Kelles shared that Betsy, "is a formidable force when it comes to supporting this agency and this event, and her influence can be seen in every aspect of it—from fundraising to safety protocols to the after-event celebration. She is an inspiration and a quiet and remarkable supporter of Hospicare and this community."

Congratulations, Betsy!