

Fall 2022

# The Patient's Advocate

An update from a national leader in home-based medicine



**Housecall  
Providers**

Part of the CareOregon Family

**Improving lives  
by bringing  
health care home**



As the pandemic winds down, more people like Martha Falcon Hidalgo are getting in-home medical care, shown with Advanced Illness Care Nurse Monica Ontiveros.

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## Have questions about hospice care?

Reach out to our office at  
**971-202-5501** to discuss  
any questions or get  
more information.

[housecallproviders.org](https://housecallproviders.org)

## New initiatives help drive resurgence of growth

After nearly two and half years of reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 virus, last month, Housecall Providers saw clear evidence that all three in-home medical programs have recovered from the worst of the pandemic.

Primary care is once again serving 1,500 patients and our advanced illness care program (community-based palliative care) and hospice have each surpassed pre-pandemic census numbers. "Now that the pandemic is better controlled, more patients are seeking care in clinics and hospitals," says CEO Rebecca Ramsay. "These are the interactions that generally drive referrals for the care we provide to seriously

ill and homebound individuals across the metro area."

Housecall Providers also launched major initiatives during the past two years that support the return to higher numbers of patients.

We hired our first-ever behavioral health counselor to better support our primary care patients who have co-occurring behavioral health conditions.

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“Happiness” Photo © 2022, Yvette Sanchez. Used by permission.

## Daughter’s pictures create a legacy of love

**Yvette Sanchez never imagined her mother’s end-of-life journey would take center stage in her studies when she was accepted into the 2021 Master of Arts program at Academy of Art University.**

At the time, Yvette felt called to capture the beauty, triumph and tragedy of life through photography. Six months before starting classes, her mother Anita, now a Housecall Providers Hospice patient, suffered a massive stroke. Suddenly, Yvette’s desire to reveal deeper truths about life through art took on a more urgent and personal quality.

“It was a sad moment but also a happy one,” she recalls. “Not knowing how much time we have left together is hard, but that makes the moments we still have all

that much sweeter.” Anita’s doctors determined she would not likely recover, and the care facility recommended Housecall Providers Hospice. “They explained that hospice doesn’t necessarily mean she is going to die tomorrow. It just means she can go home and spend her time with her family,” said Yvette, who brought Anita home with her in March 2021. And, as Yvette’s photo “Happiness” shows, her family created much to remember. She feels the love and memories will resonate with her family for generations.

Wanting to create a legacy of her mother, Yvette started compiling a family tree, combing through old photos, and putting together a book of her mother’s life and history. And of course, she kept taking pictures. “I feel like having this book will bring joy to my family,” Anita says. “It will help them know where they come from.”

Yvette’s first class, Concept Photography, required her to select the theme that would eventually become her thesis. After talking with her mother, she chose Living While Dying. She would document the joys and heartaches of the human experience surrounding illness and death, using as the focal point her family’s experiences dealing with her mother’s condition.

Yvette acknowledges her academic program would probably have been too difficult if she didn’t know her mother was happy and well-cared-for by Housecall Providers Hospice. “They are such wonderful people who have been so supportive. I really believe all the care and love they have given my mother is why she is still with us,” she said. And while her mother is unlikely to come off hospice, after a year and a half Yvette is grateful they’ve had so much time together.

Yvette will soon present her thesis work. She feels incredibly fortunate to have been able

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Craig and JC strike a pose for the camera.

## In-home medical care brings progress and hope

**Craig Ostrander is easy to like with a broad grin and exuberant personality. Despite significant challenges, he is hopeful and looks forward to each new goal he sets. But he wasn't always like this.**

Before receiving care from Housecall Providers, life wasn't so good. "I was hopeless," says Craig. Suicidal, in fact. Craig wanted to share his story, because after the difficulties he has endured he wants people know that there is light at the end of the tunnel. For him, that light is Housecall Providers.

Craig is a partial quadriplegic. A swimming accident when he was sixteen left him almost completely paralyzed from the neck down yet experiencing intense pain.

"I felt like my doctor didn't believe me — couldn't help me — and I couldn't get out of bed," Craig says. Over the next several years, undiagnosed

pain led Craig to seek out drugs to manage his pain. Without a doctor to monitor his dosages, he faced the new problem of addiction. What his previous doctors hadn't diagnosed is called autonomic dysreflexia. This very serious condition causes excruciating pain and requires aggressive treatment.

Fortunately, Craig was referred to Housecall Providers, and introduced to Primary Care Medical Director JC Provost. JC is a specialist in pain management and, after listening to Craig and examining him, was able to quickly diagnose the condition.

"We started seeing each other about twice a week, trying to disentangle the situation," says

JC. "It took some time to get Craig on the right medications so we could move forward." Once stable, with his dysreflexia being treated, Craig's affect and mood began to improve.

The changes in Craig's life can hardly be overstated. Through the benefits he receives from CareOregon Advantage, he is being fitted for a new motorized chair that will help him get outside without triggering his dysreflexia, as well as other services that will assist him in becoming more independent.

"Everything that usually takes so long, started happening very quickly and I have my team to thank for that," Craig says. "They were doing everything they could, like finding services that I didn't even know (about). When you feel that people are finally listening and really want to help you, that is when you feel hopeful. They are like family to me now."

Craig sees progress almost every day. A life that seemed impossible only a year ago is not only possible, it's a reality he thought he would never experience again. Craig's new outlook is a prime example why Housecall Providers' mission is so vital to many people who, like Craig, struggle to get their medical needs met outside of the clinic setting. ■



# Intent on gratitude, woman finds grace too

**Kathleen Vinson had been caring for her husband Gary for ten years as he slowly gave ground to Alzheimer's disease.**

Complications from a surgery sent him into a steep decline that ended at home where he eventually passed, under the care of Housecall Providers Hospice and surrounded by his family.

Despite hearing that Gary could undergo dialysis, navigating complex medical decisions and second-guessing herself at every turn, Kathleen was able to stay positive and bring joy to Gary and their son, daughter in law and grandson as they spent Gary's final days together at home.

Her decision to focus on gratitude helped her find grace and meaning in the face of great loss.

Housecall Providers Hospice care was one of the things she felt grateful for. "From the moment I said 'hospice' (Housecall Providers) took over and everything happened so fast," Kathleen said.

"They came in and they set up the bed, showed me how to



**Kathleen Vinson committed herself to fostering gratitude even as her husband's illnesses progressed.**

work it, gave me a wheelchair, talked to me about what would be necessary. And, what made it so easy, is that they really listened to me."

Even more than that responsiveness, the feeling that she also was being cared for by the team helped her through.

"They put a magnet with contact info on the fridge telling me that I could call them 24 hours a day," says Kathleen. "They came to check on us, helped with the ostomy, they talked directly to Gary, they were kind and gentle."

Even so, the difficulties, coupled with knowledge that she would soon be a widow, required Kathleen to dig deep to find the emotional resources she needed for herself and her family.

When asked how she managed to stay so positive through such a difficult time, Kathleen answered frankly, "I worked at it. Finding joy and grace and being positive, it was an intention." She kept a gratitude journal, in which she reserved time to write every morning. She paused frequently to reflect on things for which she could be grateful.

A dramatic turning point in her grieving process came when her pastor told a story of visiting his father's grave and what came to him to say was, "I forgive you for leaving me." Kathleen realized then that, even with all her love, she had missed the small part of her that was angry at Gary for leaving her, even though she knew it was not by choice.

Letting go of that anger made her realize she was lucky to be able to have such a powerful

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Hospice Medical Director, Dr. Brian Leese shares why he is a hospice physician.

## Memorial event hosted for 2022

Housecall Providers hosted its first memorial service since the onset of the pandemic. The annual event brings together staff with family and friends of patients who have passed on our primary care, advanced illness care or hospice programs. Please see our website for this story. ■

### Pandemic recovery

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We also invested in practice management tools to streamline processes for the influx in new patients.

In addition to these initiatives:

- ◆ Outreach staff started a community engagement workgroup to create and strengthen partnerships with other community-based nonprofits serving similar populations and marginalized communities.
- ◆ Part-time providers were hired in primary care and hospice to help onboard the surge of new patients into those two programs.
- ◆ Primary care hired its first-ever liaison, Rita Isaac, to support new patient intake efforts and to improve customer

experience by helping to minimize wait times.

- ◆ Housecall Providers joined the community of practice for the Connect Oregon coordinated care network of health and social service providers and began using the associated UniteUs platform for interagency referrals and outcome tracking.

Thankfully, Housecall Providers has not experienced the high level of turnover that many health care organizations have suffered through. We rely on our highly knowledgeable, multidisciplinary employees who work in the community and in the office to ensure patients and families are getting their needs met.

“Staff persevered through some extremely challenging years and worked tirelessly because they knew the health

and well-being of so many was at stake,” says Rebecca. “Their determination and continued commitment, during what has undoubtedly been the most challenging time in their professional careers, makes this recovery that much more special.”

Across the country and in our own community, patients and families have suffered greatly over the past two years, says Rebecca.

“We know that patients haven’t been getting all the care they need during this pandemic due to fears related to COVID-19. Housecall Providers is thrilled to once again be able to offer our expert in-home medical care to a growing number of patients. ■

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## Intent on gratitude

(From Page 4)

sense of grief because it meant that she had experienced an equally strong sense of love.

She describes many of those feelings in a poem she wrote which is published at the end of her story on the Housecall Providers blog. Grieving and loss affect each of us in different ways, and there is no right way to experience grief. Still, Kathleen's experience might help others find gratitude where it may seem impossible to find. Approaching gratitude with

intention — looking for those slender rays of sunshine in a sky full of clouds — gave Kathleen the courage, the strength and the grace she needed to navigate one of the most difficult events of her life.

While Kathleen found her hope and love from an inner wellspring, her journey was supported by her community and by the care she and Gary both received from Housecall Providers Hospice. ■

## Picturing love

(From Page 2)

to share her program with her mother, and to have processed her own feelings through art. "Paying attention to what is really going on around us is a powerful way to make the best of every moment."

See selected photos from Yvette's thesis catalog at [yvette-sanchez-photography.com](https://yvette-sanchez-photography.com) ■