

Spring 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**



Spiritual Counselor Scott Winters, hospice patient Ann Secretti and her daughter, Greer Kern.

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Cadence Tanner Spring

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A life lived outside the box

When Greer Kern talks about the life of her mother, former Housecall Providers Hospice patient Patricia Ann Secretti (Ann), she offers us a glimpse into the life of a person who lived life on her terms, an independent, free thinker who never let society dictate who she was and who she wanted to become.

“My mother put herself out in the world during a time when it was unpopular to have unconventional thoughts,” says Greer. “She lived her life following her own passions.”

Greer became the decision-maker and family caregiver for her mother, who lived at an adult care home in southwest Portland and coped with complications from Parkinson’s disease. Last fall her mother was fine and enjoying her daily activities like tai chi and yoga, and then she experienced

a bad fall. “She did not break anything, but the fall initiated a serious decline, especially in her cognition,” says Greer. She enrolled her mother in Housecall Providers Hospice later that month on the recommendation of a trusted provider.

Vagabond tourists

When Ann was just 19 and fresh out of high school in 1966, she and her friend took a backpacking trip across six European countries. “They made the trip with only \$100.

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CEO REPORT

Dear patients, caregivers, family members and community supporters,

As the first buds of spring begin to emerge across our beautiful landscape, so too is a renewed focus on community engagement unfolding here at Housecall Providers. While we have been engaging the community since our beginnings – building relationships with caregivers, facilities and providers to offer in-home medical care – our goal for this year is to nourish those seeds and strengthen our community even more. The pandemic has shown us that resiliency is a delicate quality that is strengthened, not by a single hero that saves us when times present serious challenges, but rather when our networks are strong enough to keep us working together and supporting each other when times are good and when challenges confront the entire community.

Community engagement matures over time – growing from small interactions into a network of partnerships, reciprocal relationships and cooperation. When we connect with others in our community, we care for those interactions and grow our capacity to serve together. We become more resilient – together.

First and foremost, we want to fine-tune our listening ear so we can truly absorb the exchanges and information that flow from the populations we serve. We want to make sure we hear what is truly being requested and how we can facilitate connections that address those needs. As part of that fine-tuning, we are also committing to slowing down to understand the ways we can course correct and improve our engagement with underserved communities, in order to bring the benefits of in-home medical care to all who need it.



Rebecca Ramsay, MPH

We have assembled a group that includes staff from all our programs and members of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee. Its purpose is twofold. First, identify and connect with other community-based organizations serving a similar population to create a caring and engaged network. And second, to strengthen our existing relationships and create a foundation for community to engage around the health care needs of homebound and seriously ill members. We look forward to updating you on our progress and highlighting those partnerships.

In community,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca".

Announcing Remote Patient Monitoring

We are excited to inform our patients, family members and caregivers that we have started a new service called Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM). This service will enable us to stay in close communication with our patients for approximately six weeks in order to help stabilize a condition, improve a health outcome and keep them at home and out of the hospital.

RPM can provide:

- ▶ Education materials about how patients can care for themselves and their medical issues.
- ▶ Monitoring vital signs such as blood pressure, heart rate, weight and oxygen levels.
- ▶ Daily survey to communicate symptoms to providers.
- ▶ Medication reminders.

A primary care team might recommend RPM if they think the patient could benefit from this service. If you would like to learn more about this service or have questions about RPM, please talk with your provider at your next visit.



Mary Minor and Anne Marie Lippert sharing a moment that captures the love between these two sisters.

Changing roles: hospice nurse to family caregiver

As we navigate the intricacies of life, one of the toughest things to do is to see the world through someone else's eyes.

Even though hospice patients and their families often become very close to their care staff and vice versa, the person in each role experiences the relationship through very different circumstances. How does it really feel to take on the role of caregiver to a family member who is receiving hospice care? How can we prepare for something that so few of us have ever done? Hospice care teams know this problem intimately. A family member who

suddenly finds themselves in the role of caregiver often has no experience with anything like the realities of helping a loved one through end-of-life care.

Mary Minor has quite a bit of perspective on her new role as caregiver for her older sister, Anne Marie Lippert, who is in hospice with a diagnosis of Lewy Body dementia. Mary, retired since 2018, spent many years as a hospice nurse at Housecall Providers. She started shortly

after Housecall Providers began offering hospice services in 2009, at the urging of her friend and Housecall Providers founder, Dr. Benneth Husted.

Understanding both sides of the coin

Mary begins by saying that, as a nurse, she knew the other side of the coin is difficult, so she was as prepared as she could be to take on the role of caregiver. But the difficulty of being the person to make hard decisions regarding her sister's care cannot be overstated.

Mary explains that a hospice nurse provides the available options to the caregiver, but actually making the decision is not always simple. "For example, if I stop this or that medicine, is that included? When she was still up and around, what if she had gotten a bad pneumonia? How would I have dealt with that? I don't know." During her time as a nurse, Mary couldn't think of any family that chose not to treat a complication like that. "And I understand that now," she reflected. "But in retrospect that might have been a blessing when I see where she is now."

Importance of naming a medical power of attorney

Reflecting on her experiences on both sides of the relationship, Mary offers the following advice "If you are cognizant, you need to get a medical power

(See "Changing Roles" page 6)

Partner Spotlight: Cadence Tanner Spring

Nestled into the back of a quiet neighborhood in West Linn, with gorgeous vistas across the central Willamette valley behind, lies Cadence Tanner Spring, an assisted living community and home to several community members. Housecall Providers is proud to serve.

Hundreds of institutional partners, from county health departments to medical equipment suppliers, play important roles in helping us deliver quality care to our patients. While each of these partnerships plays a vital role in ensuring our community has access to quality, in-home primary care, Cadence Tanner Spring and its dedicated staff especially highlight the nature of what partnerships and community mean to Housecall Providers and those we serve.

When we asked Paula Jean Baker, the RN Director at Cadence Tanner Spring, to describe the partnership from her perspective, she wasted no time getting to the point. “You are in communication not only with me and Tanner Spring,



Paula Jean Baker pauses for a moment in front of the view from the grounds at Cadence Tanner Spring in West Linn.

but you are in communication with family members, and that helps complete that circle of collaboration for making quality of life for seniors excellent.” She appreciates the ability to cooperate with Housecall Providers and agrees that we are all better when we work together.

Cadence Tanner Spring focuses on nurturing positive partnerships to improve the lives of the residents at the facility, and Paula Jean described this as one of their strengths. She summed it up as a combination

of treating each other like family and following the Golden Rule. “We work together best when we respect each other and take the time to check in.” This focus on tending to relationships as a part of the health care process makes Cadence Tanner Spring an outstanding partner to highlight in our Spring Partner Spotlight. Our communities are stronger when people come together and build relationships to ensure that the homebound and seriously ill have access to the medical care they need. ■

Outside the box

(From page 1)

My mother was very optimistic and positive. She didn't see any obstacles," says Greer. At the time, hostels were \$.50 a night, but \$100 was still a meager sum for such an ambitious trip. Even so, says Greer, "They didn't see any reason a hundred dollars wouldn't be enough."

Authentically engaging

When Ann, the youngest of eight children, returned from Europe, she decided to move to Mexico, learn the language and immerse herself in the food and culture of the country. When she returned to the States, she enrolled in college in Montana. There she met Greer's father, who soon proposed, and three months later they were married.

They made the decision to go "back to the land," where they would grow their food, make their own furniture and clothes, and live on their own terms on 40 acres outside Colville, Washington. Greer remembers those days fondly – almost always having braided hair with bear oil, moving outhouses by carrying them, making and taking part in sweat lodges, having fresh eggs and milk, and spinning their own yarn, her mother using the girls' hands as human spools.

The family moved many times, always seeking the next

adventure. Ann had a sincere thirst for what life meant and was always seeking out a deeper understanding. This curiosity took her in and out of different forms of religion and philosophy that she readily shared with the family.

After Greer's parents divorced, her mother put herself through school and became a legal secretary. She balanced her work life with artistic pursuits like belly dancing or restoring a dilapidated house almost entirely by herself. Her interests took her to places her professional work seemed disconnected from.

Even with the struggles of raising two girls as a single mother, Ann made the most of every moment. "Mom taught me how to be in life, and I want to thank her for that because I have never felt fearful of whether or not I could make it in the world."

The hospice difference

The difference Housecall Providers Hospice made to the family was felt almost immediately. "I was able to, for the first time in years, let someone else take care of my mom, and I didn't have to be on the front lines. I could just enjoy my mom," says Greer. "I could actually decide at a moment's notice, 'When should I see mom?' Then I could just shower her with love

and attention without having to think of anything else."

In the beginning days of hospice, Greer noted that she received calls from spiritual counselor Scott Winters. "I'm not used to that level of support," she said. "I was rubbing mom's shoulders while I was with Scott and my mom said, 'That feels good,' and Scott said, 'We can get her massage,' and so we arranged for a massage!"

Greer's narrative of her mom's story offers us a chance to reflect on what we are given and what we make of it. "I used to see an important person as making a mark on the world in some kind of grandiose way," says Greer, "but maybe it really is about living the most authentic life and how that invites everyone around you to do the same." ■

See the full version of this article at housecallproviders.org/blog

Have questions about hospice care?

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

Changing Roles

(From page 3)

of attorney lined up ahead of time because that's a huge responsibility that you are asking of someone." She explained that this matters so much because, if you should end up on life support, would the person you selected be able to turn off the machine if that was your wish?

She further explains that family dysfunction is somewhat typical in end-of-life situations, not as a reflection on families or society, but rather because the situation is extremely difficult. Each family member may be grappling with their own issues at the same

time they are making major decisions for their loved one.

Six seconds from a crisis

Knowing the supportive environment that Housecall Providers Hospice fosters with patients and family members, Mary knew her sister would receive the best care and also what it meant to have a nonprofit hospice directing that care. "When I was working and such an advocate of Housecall Providers, I would be in adult care homes, and some of the owners would tell me about the other hospices and the level of care they received, and it was troubling." Now Mary worries about the surge in for-profit

hospice companies here in the metro area. "My generation is next in line. Who's going to take care of us? What if there is no organization like Housecall Providers when I need it?"

Expanding on the larger lessons she has taken from being on both sides of the hospice experience, Mary suggested that compassion is easier to cultivate when we remember that things can change on a dime. "We are always six seconds from a crisis," she says, "and keeping that in mind can help make the world a better place." ■

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