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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**



Hospice patient Lee Zuanich always looks forward to visits from her hospice team. Here she is talking with Social Worker Fran Kincaid.

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Housecall Providers Hospice team puts a reluctant patient at ease: 'It is nothing to be frightened of'

When Lee Zuanich's son broached the subject of hospice, the 97-year-old wanted no part of it. "Hospice spells death," she told her son, John. "I don't want to go on it."

John, however, knew the true role of hospice. So he continued talking with his mother, who had a disease that had progressed to a certain point. And as Lee listened, she thought, "Oh, it doesn't sound too bad."

Her view after more than four months with Housecall Providers Hospice? "I've been most happy," she enthuses. "Most happy."

Lee noted that former President Jimmy Carter has recently done a great deal to shed light on the benefits of hospice care, and that encouraged her to take a second look. On hospice since February, he is helping dispel the belief that hospice equates with stopping care and giving up.

In reality, hospice patients have a care team composed

(See 'It is nothing to be frightened of' Page 5)



Bearing witness to someone's life brings healing and builds community. Dean Yamamoto, Spiritual Counselor, and Laura Hansen, RN, of Housecall Providers recognize the power of such ceremonies.

Housecall Providers offers much more than medical care

In the dining hall of Prestige Senior Living Riverwood, Spiritual Counselor Dean Yamamoto and Hospice Nurse Laura Hansen, RN, covered two tables with cloths in soothing shades of blue and green. They added flowers and a mound of smooth white and black stones.

Dean and Laura are at home at Prestige's Riverwood in Tualatin. They walk the halls regularly visiting residents who are either primary care patients or enrolled in hospice. On this day, the pair had planned a bereavement ceremony that would serve two purposes.

First, celebrate a beloved resident who had passed away unexpectedly and without family. Second, offer a chance for residents and staff

to remember other departed residents and loved ones.

Dean has seen how simple services like these have the power to touch people deeply and bring an important measure of closure.

Dean and Laura invited the gathered residents and staff to approach the table, one by one. As they placed a stone in the vase, each said a few words about someone who had passed.

A moving sense of closure and healing filled the room. Many eyes filled with tears. For some, the ceremony was a time to honor loved ones. For others, it was a chance to find peace by forgiving someone.

And for all, it was a chance to further build community – which Housecall Providers tries to do, at every turn, by serving as a true partner.

The ceremony was meaningful for residents and staff alike, Resident Services Director Shaunie Martinez reflected afterward. And it was just one example of the impact that Dean, Laura and the rest of the Housecall Providers team members – social workers, liaisons and care team members – has there, she said.

Shaunie described Dean as “made for this work.” Laura continually goes above and beyond for her patients, Shaunie went on, adding that nurse Laura “is part of our community, and she loves these residents.”

To be of service to a community is an honor, but to become a part of that community is truly special. “Everybody from Housecall Providers has been like that with me and the staff,” said Shaunie. “A lot of companies say they do that. But they don't deliver.” ■



Housecall Providers Primary Care patient Linda Planque enjoys a sunny day from her cottage balcony.

Being a ray of light who brightens the world

Linda Planque's life hit a turning point several years ago. After about 30 years with multiple serious chronic illnesses, Linda's doctor gave her a sober assessment: She might need to move to a long-term care home.

Transportation to and from Linda's many medical appointments was putting her at higher risk of injury from a fall or other hazard. It was also taxing her ability to get the medical care she needed.

Linda recalls this situation today from the beautiful little cottage where she lives with the help of the Section 8 program. She delights in watching her grandchildren and great-grandchildren play in the yard. Home is a daily reminder that despite her adversities, she has made her life work well – determined to find pathways to peace.

One of those paths led to Housecall Providers Primary Care, whose medical visits are one key to Linda living on her own. Another is the caregiver assistance she arranged through Aging and Disability Services.

Importantly, Linda has created a purpose-filled life that includes sharing her experiences and inspiration. She manages Facebook groups for those with similarly rare and hard-to-understand diseases, and those who are differently abled.

For Linda, it was important to accept that being differently

abled did not mean she couldn't be useful. "That," Linda said, "is the biggest thing people get in their head." But, she emphasizes, "you can still have compassion and understanding."

Members of her Facebook groups have expressed their gratitude in countless ways, including sending her handmade quilts. "We're all just working together to make a better world when you get right down to it," she said modestly.

Linda says her Housecall Providers care team helps her maintain the attitude that her diseases do not define her. She recounts visits from Spiritual Counselor Dean Yamamoto: "We have tea, and he remembers all my family members. He asks me how my kids are by name. He doesn't dwell on what is bad. He shares what is good and helps me acknowledge those things I can't change, so I can focus on what is good."

Her whole Housecall Providers primary care team is reassuring, she notes. And, in her view, "that's what people need most."

Linda's life is centered around so much more than her condition. Her resiliency is fed by the beauty she sees around her, the support she gets from family and her care team, and her sense of purpose from lighting the way for others. ■

Hospice volunteer follows her heart into spiritual counseling

Many Housecall Providers volunteers have had a significant life experience that led them to give back to their community in this way. For Megan Gibb, M.Th., a family member who received hospice care completely changed the trajectory of her life.

Megan was so moved by the experience that in 2017, after waiting the recommended year after a loved one's passing, she applied to become a hospice volunteer with Housecall Providers.

At the time, Megan was an urban planner working with regional government doing public-private partnerships. She met with Housecall Providers Volunteer Coordinator Todd Lawrence to discuss a position that would be the right fit. Megan began doing companionship visits – spending time with patients in their homes or care communities – as well as sitting vigil with patients.



Volunteer Coordinator Todd Lawrence has recruited several volunteers who later became staff, including Megan Gibb, now a spiritual counselor.

She found the deep humanity of these visits fulfilling in a way that few experiences can be.

“I was sitting vigil with different patients because they didn't have any family, or maybe their family needed a break,” said Megan. “I found that a very compelling experience. Someone's death is a sacred time, and it's an honor to be there with them.”

As her connection to the volunteer work deepened, and she witnessed the value that the Housecall Providers spiritual counselors offered their patients, Megan approached Todd to explore pursuing a career in spiritual counseling.

Todd helped Megan set up meetings with the spiritual

counselors and hospice leadership to learn more about the role. In 2021, Megan took a leap of faith. She quit her job to focus on pursuing a Master of Theology with a concentration in Health Care Chaplaincy.

In June 2022, while finishing her degree, she began an eight-month hospice chaplain internship with Housecall Providers. Because leadership knew how well-suited Megan was to the work, they enthusiastically offered her the internship.

“To be a hospice chaplain, you must do a placement somewhere where you are seeing patients. So, I was grateful that everyone was willing to clear the way for

(See “Volunteer follows her heart,” Page 6)

'It is nothing to be frightened of'

(From Page 1)

of individuals who specialize in serious illness care. They work with the patient and family to create a personalized plan. Doctors, nurses, certified nursing assistants, social workers, spiritual counselors and sometimes volunteers collaborate to ensure that patients and families have the support they need.

Although hospice was designed for those with a life expectancy of six months or less (should the illness run its natural course), the average hospice length of stay is nearly 90 days. Individuals live longer or shorter depending on their disease progression.

Too often, patients are referred to hospice when they are near death or their symptoms are uncontrolled. Even then, their hospice team can still provide much care and assistance. But the benefit is much greater for patients who are able to be enrolled in hospice for at least two or three months. They and their loved ones have time to develop deep relationships with their hospice team and shift to focusing on quality of life.

"If there is one thing that our clinical teams hear time and time again, it is that our patients

and families wished that they had come on hospice sooner," said Richard Holman, Housecall Providers Hospice Director.

And now for the once-reluctant Lee, hospice includes nightly checks from her son, John, and daughter, Debora. She is visited regularly by Housecall Providers Hospice team members Laura Hansen, RN, Social Worker Fran Kincaid and Spiritual Counselor Sam Aylor.

"I can't say enough about them," said Lee. "You have to be on hospice to understand. Even though you're a complete stranger, they care about you."

Sam has been especially beneficial in helping Lee accept the reality of hospice, she says, describing him as a doll, a good listener and the only kind of religious person that she's ever cared for. "He's been so kind," she said, "and not pushing any religion or telling me I should believe this way or that way."

Lee has, however, converted into a believer in hospice care. She has a message for those who may be putting it off for some of the same reasons that she initially did. "If we've lived, then we are going to die. But hospice, they make it easy," she said. "It is nothing to be frightened of. They put you at ease." ■

Our wish for you: Discuss death and end-of-life care before you must

Major decisions often don't come easily. They may involve a good amount of soul searching before you feel content with your chosen course. For many, choosing whether or not to stop curative treatments and transition to hospice care is one of those times.

One way to help ease that decision is to learn about hospice before you or a loved one becomes a candidate for this specialized end-of-life care.

Hospice, which became a Medicare benefit in the early 1980s, is a philosophy of care that focuses on comforting and supporting patients and their families so they can stay centered on their quality of life and their time together. It is a holistic approach to an individual's physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

As nonprofit experts in serious illness and end-of-life care, Housecall Providers encourages families to talk about death and end-of-life care before a health event takes place. ■

Volunteer follows her heart

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that because Housecall Providers had never had a hospice chaplain intern before,” said Megan.

Leadership was so impressed that an open position was held for her, bringing her on part time while she completed her schooling.

Megan has been working full time in her role as a spiritual counselor at Housecall Providers Hospice since February of this year. “I do feel very blessed and lucky to be part of Housecall Providers. It is clear people are so happy to be at this

organization,” said Megan. “I really appreciate the fact that our staff truly embody the value of patient-centered care. I hear again and again from family members how supported they felt by the hospice team and that they feel their loved one was well cared for.”

Megan’s success as a spiritual counselor followed her profound experience of volunteering. While not all volunteers move into roles at Housecall Providers, several have. “I feel like when you volunteer for us that we should volunteer for you, too,” said Todd. “I hate losing a volunteer, but this is my favorite way to lose them.” ■

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