

"A wonderful organization staffed with caring, attentive people"

Ellen Recko and Melanie Varga see each other almost every day. The high-tech worker and the adult foster home manager have Ellen's mom, Henrietta "Hank" Recko, in common. Ellen pays daily visits to Hank, a patient at Melanie's Oswego Cottage in Lake Oswego. The two women have both experienced, and been moved by, the compassionate care of the medical team from Housecall Providers.

Melanie operates a bright, clean, cheerful, family friendly home. Most of her residents (she generally has five, the legal limit) are quite elderly and in need of considerable care. Melanie was already a fan of Housecall Providers when Hank became a resident in July 2012.

Melanie learned about Housecall Providers when one of her patients entered our care. She quickly felt the benefits of



Photo: Cathy Cheney

"My people who are in the care of Housecall Providers are receiving the finest care, in the comfort of home."

– Melanie Varga

Ellen Recko, left, and Melanie Varga stroll the grounds at Oswego Cottage.

having Housecall Providers as the medical and hospice provider for her residents. They received regular visits from their primary care provider. Those who had transitioned to hospice care in her home were visited by RN's, hospice CNA's, spiritual counselors, volunteers and social workers.

"These people all came to my home to see their patients. It was very different from

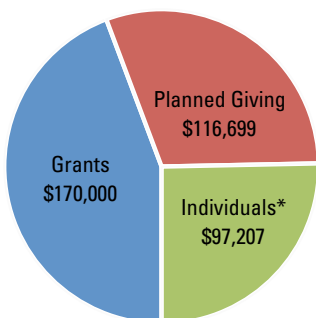
any other practitioner-patient relationships I was familiar with. My people who are in the care of Housecall Providers are receiving the finest care here, in the comfort of home. No one has to drag them out in the rain to an appointment."

Melanie loves the communication between Housecall Providers and herself.

"They make it very easy for me to let them know if something is happening with a patient, and they always communicate with me every time something is going on," she says. "Housecall Providers isn't as formal as other health care providers that we see. They are a lot more personal."

So, when Ellen Recko brought Hank to the home, Melanie talked to her about Housecall Providers' services. It didn't take much to convince Ellen and Hank to apply.

"At first, my mom was not bed bound,



Total fundraising 2013
\$377,906

Thank you to our donors

Last year was a very successful year for Housecall Providers thanks in part to the continued support of committed donors who make our work possible.

*includes business/corporate, churches, groups and trusts

Accomplishments to celebrate, a bright future to contemplate

As spring begins to transform Portland once again, I am struck by the growth Housecall Providers has experienced in the last year. While we have faced challenges, I can proudly say that Housecall Providers' staff and board thrived as we delivered the excellent patient-centered care that is our hallmark. And, we are all extremely grateful for the community's support of our mission in the last year, as we raised more than \$375,000 from individuals, businesses, foundations, groups and trusts. Thank you!



Photo: Andie Petkus

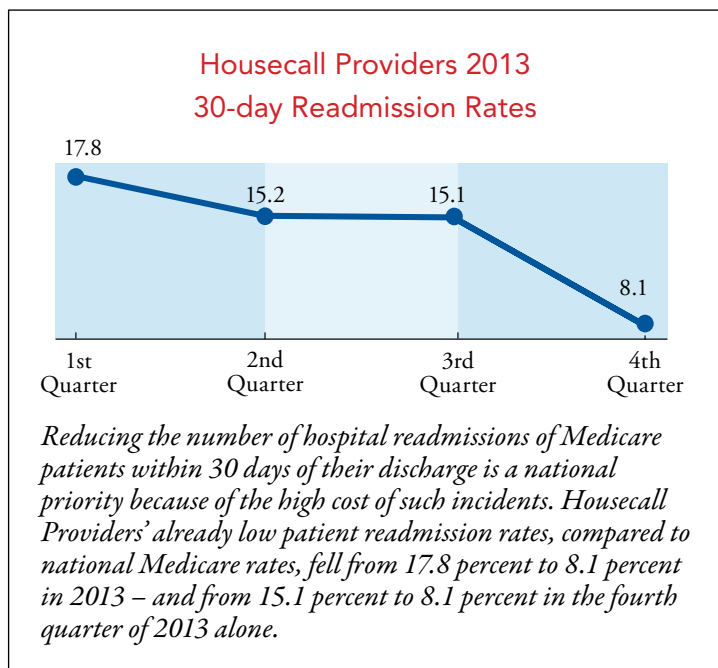
Looking ahead, I can't help but be excited. Thanks to a grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, we were able to hire our first full-time director of development, Gwen Schwartz. Gwen will supervise all fundraising activities and create a strong planned giving program. We are happy to have someone of Gwen's caliber and experience leading this effort. Welcome Gwen!

Our involvement in the Independence at Home (IAH) National Demonstration Project gives us another huge reason for optimism. As part of IAH, we have become a major player in shaping the future healthcare legislation for medically fragile patients in the U.S. At this writing, we don't yet have our first year results. But our team was successful in reducing 30-day hospital readmissions and trips to the ER—two major national healthcare objectives.

We did this in part by investing in a transition nurse who, working with our social worker, closely monitored patient trips to the hospital, for emergencies and longer stays. Our team communicated regularly with our patients and their hospital caregivers as they transitioned in and out of the hospital. By improving patient care and coordinating medication reconciliation upon their release, we saw the hospital visits and readmissions drop significantly among our patients. The early results supported our belief that coordinated care led to better outcomes.

Next, we hired two additional RN's and added another social worker to provide *transitions of care* services to all our 1,400 patients, not just those 200-plus IAH patients. Although the transition team's services are not billable,

this patient-centered model of care makes a huge difference to our patients. Simply reducing ER trips and 30-day hospital readmissions greatly enhances their quality of life. In the first quarter that our transition team was completely operational, **30-day hospital readmission rates were reduced by nearly half!**



We know that our care model saves money while enhancing the quality of our patients' lives. By making home medical visits, we achieve the medical profession's triple aim: better care and better health at a lower cost. We fully expect Medicare to recognize this by creating a new way to reimburse us for the expenses of making a house call. Without a different payment system to treat homebound individuals, clinicians across the nation will find that a house call practice is not sustainable, unless they are supported by hospitals or universities.

We at Housecall Providers represent one of the few home medical visit models that is both independent and sustainable. But to continue to provide these desperately needed services, we need your help. By supporting Housecall Providers, you not only fill a critical community need, but you send a message to Medicare and other insurers that you believe in our care model.

Thank you for continuing to believe in the work we do.

– Terri Hobbs, Executive Director

Welcome Gwen Schwartz, Director of Development

In February, Housecall Providers took another big step forward as an organization when Gwen Schwartz joined the staff as our director of development. This is a newly created position that brings a full-time fundraising professional to our team for the first time in our history.

Gwen has a strong background in fundraising for healthcare organizations. Her most recent employer was Care Partners (formerly Hospice & Palliative Care of Washington County). While there, she led the organization through a name and brand change as their director of development and marketing. Previously, she was employed for 10 years by Providence Health Foundations in a variety of development roles.

As director of development for Housecall Providers, Gwen will supervise all fundraising activities, with a special focus on cultivating new donors, securing major gifts and



Photo: Andie Pekus

creating a strong planned giving program. “I look forward to putting my variety of nonprofit management and fundraising experience to work for Housecall Providers,” she said.

Gwen assisted Care Partners in developing its first strategic development plan and its first successful fundraising event. She also engaged with community members to recruit four new board members. “We were thrilled to be able to find someone as qualified as Gwen for this vitally important position,” said Terri Hobbs, executive director of Housecall Providers. “She not only has the background we were looking for, but has already shown boundless enthusiasm for taking our fundraising efforts to a much higher level.”

The position was made possible by a grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust.



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but it was difficult to get her in and out of her wheel chair for doctor’s appointments,” Ellen says. “When we found out Housecall Providers comes to the house – well, you can’t beat that with a stick!”

Suddenly, Hank was getting regular and top quality medical care, and Ellen didn’t have to constantly take off from work to take her to the doctor. Ellen was so happy with Oswego Cottage and Housecall Providers that she wrote a letter to the *Lake Oswego Review* praising both.



Patient Hank Recko is visited by adult foster home manager Melanie Varga and Hank's daughter, Ellen. Photo: Cathy Cheney

“I would like to make Lake Oswego residents aware of two great resources for the elderly,” she wrote. “The first is Oswego Cottage Adult Care Home. My mother has been there for more than a year and I can’t say enough about how much happier she and our family have been since she moved there.

“The second wonderful resource is Housecall Providers, a nonprofit organization [that] offers medical care to

homebound seniors and persons with disabilities. Not only do they work exclusively by making house calls, they can also prescribe medications, offer hospice care when needed and accept payments from many insurance companies. Housecall Providers is a wonderful organization staffed with caring, attentive people who only want to help their patients get well and/or live comfortably.”

Later, as Hank’s health deteriorated, she entered Housecall Providers Hospice. She didn’t have to even switch rooms. The hospice team managed her care from that point on.

Melanie is grateful for the support our hospice staff provides her. When a Housecall Providers hospice nurse or hospice aide pays a visit to her home, she says, they take over the routine daily care functions that Melanie otherwise has to do. “It is very different and makes my job a little easier,” she says. “I am thankful for their presence in our community.”

Did you know ...

- Our primary care patients can choose our hospice, when appropriate, while still remaining under the care of their clinician.
- HCP hospice services are only available to our existing primary care patients.
- Our hospice is accredited through the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP) demonstrating our services are of the highest quality.
- As a mission driven nonprofit organization, excellent patient-centered care is always our top priority.

Making a Difference, One Stitch at a Time

By Barb Gorman

For people afflicted with dementia and Alzheimer's, staying present can be a constant struggle. The mind makes it difficult to stay grounded as it propels one into the past, bringing on feelings of anxiety, depression and anger – all while leaving an abundance of nervous energy in its wake. It was for this reason that Housecall Providers Hospice Director, Rebecca Ashling, MSN, RN, asked our volunteer department to recruit quilters who could create "busy quilts" for these hospice patients.

Luckily for Housecall Providers, Marguerite Kendall, mother-in-law of our board member Annette Kendall, answered the call. Marguerite, who has been sewing since the 1960s, contributes to two local quilting guilds, Sewing Sistas in Sherwood and The Wilsonville Piecemakers. Creating beautiful and comfortable works of art is only part of the story, though. The Wilson Piecemakers guild, for example, has been providing quilts since 1990 for various organizations including local hospitals and community groups like CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), veterans' associations, Royal Kids Camp, women's shelters and the group's local fire department.

The "busy quilts" are meant to occupy the patient's mind with tasks like buttoning, zipping and



Photo: Annette Kendall

Marguerite Kendall displays one of her prized "busy quilts."

snapping as well as providing a variety of textures in different patterns and shapes for feel and comfort. Many patterns are themed, like camping, the Southwest, cats, flowers and billiards, to evoke past interests or hobbies.

Marguerite not only found resonance in Housecall Providers' mission, but also discovered an exciting challenge in the project. "I learned the basics of quilt making from being part of Sewing Sistas, but learned more advanced quilting techniques from the women involved in

The Wilsonville Piecemakers," she said. "This level of skill has enabled me and other women in the guild to create the different 'busy quilts' for Housecall Providers."

"We are all so appreciative of the women who have put so many thoughtful hours into making the 'busy quilts' for our hospice patients who are struggling with memory loss. To have a resource like this that we can offer our patients has been a great joy for our hospice nurses," Ashling stated.

Indeed, our patients have enjoyed the comfort that the quilts have provided – perhaps sensing the care and thought that the women have put into every stitch. "It was a big boon for me to learn that there is such a need out there for quilts because when I started making them, I didn't know anyone that needed one," Kendall continued.

For more information, you can reach Marguerite Kendall at margo0922@yahoo.com or inquire about joining The Wilsonville Piecemakers through the Wilsonville Community Center at 503-682-3727. You don't need expert skills to volunteer. "Even sewing quilted squares together in a 1/4" seam would further our work to help those in need," Kendall said.

Sign up for our E-news!

To receive the latest news and stories from Housecall Providers, please visit housecallproviders.org.

The sign-up form is on the left hand column.

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If you do not want to receive future mailings from us, please let us know and we will gladly take you off our list.

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Our mission

Housecall Providers is a nonprofit medical practice dedicated to delivering, coordinating, and advocating for the quality medical care that homebound seniors and persons with disabilities need to experience healthful lives in their own homes.

Housecall Providers Hospice, in concert with primary care, serves our community by offering physical, emotional and spiritual support to persons completing life's journey and those who love them. We strive to add quality of life to this sacred time.

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