

## We're growing – come join our team!

Housecall Providers and its hospice service are experiencing rapid growth, because we offer a service the community values. To continue to grow and fulfill our mission, we need to find more employees to join us in this exciting venture. Recently, we talked to several of our employees to find out why they love working here, and who they think might fit the profile of a successful member of our team.

These employees—Dr. Andrew Sperlin, Nancy Jean Buettner and Ginger Harris—all cited several benefits in common. Among them:

- Smaller caseloads
- Closer relationships with patients
- The value of in-home visits with patients
- Care provided by a team of experts, including nurses, nursing assistants, doctors, social workers, bereavement specialists, chaplains, volunteer caregivers
- The shared sense of mission among team members
- Flexible work hours and few required visits to the home office

Now, let's hear more about why people love their jobs at Housecall Providers!

**Dr. Andrew Sperlin** has been working as a physician with Housecall Providers for more than a decade. His prior background varied greatly. He began making occasional housecalls to patients as a practitioner in Spokane, WA, because he saw the benefits of a housecall for certain patients. His career then took a very different course from many of his peers. He practiced medicine in Africa for six months, spent seven years in Yakima, WA, treating a mostly poverty-level population, and then worked as a physician in the Multnomah County correctional system. The move to Housecall Providers fit seamlessly with his deep compassion for his patients' well-being.



"The mission here was appealing to me," he says. "I think everyone who comes here and stays awhile does so because they like the mission of serving people who are not otherwise served. The home visit is so much better for them, and for me."

Dr. Sperlin enjoys the challenges of providing health care to patients whose needs are great. There are no standard ways of treating many ailments. The physician must be creative and take time to understand the patient and their surroundings.

"It's satisfying to help people who are suffering," he says. "Most of the needs that I address are fairly intense. When you ease their symptoms, it makes you feel like you are doing some good. You are also addressing the comfort of the caregiver, who often finds their work very challenging."

Dr. Sperlin carries a caseload of 105 patients and visits an average of five patients a day. He prefers the pace of the housecall system. "If you get delayed, you know that person is at home waiting, not in some office waiting room," he says. "And I can schedule my paperwork around the rest of the job. I'm not working late in an office filling out charts and forms. I'm doing it at home when I have time."

The team approach is something Dr. Sperlin appreciates about Housecall Providers' model. "This team's sense of camaraderie is so wonderful," he says. "We all meet once a week, and have the opportunity to discuss the perplexity of unusual cases with the rest of the team. This does not happen on any regular basis in the regular medical practice today."

What physician would flourish in the Housecall Providers environment?

*Read more on page 4*

# Letter from the Director

**T**he past year has been an exciting one for Housecall Providers. Our hospice program has been Medicare-certified for over a year and is thriving, with a patient census of 61 at this writing. We have gathered a fabulous hospice interdisciplinary team, and are learning what it means day-to-day to integrate hospice with primary care.



*Benneth Husted and Terri Hobbs*

We have had our primary care electronic health record for almost six months. Despite the huge learning curve, we are truly committed to the improvement in patient care that our electronic health record makes possible. Our greatest need for 2011 is more primary care clinicians to better meet the medical needs of an aging population. Over the past year we have added several great nurse practitioners; but we need more if we are continue to accept new patients. We are working to enhance new clinician orientation and mentoring, as well as upgrade pay and benefits to be competitive. Our clinicians agree this is very satisfying work, and most would not consider going back to office-based practice.

We would also like to grow our board of directors. We currently have 12 committed individuals, but the terms of several will be ending soon. Call if you would like more information.

Last but not least, we need more hospice volunteers. Each volunteer receives 28 hours of training on a variety of end-of-life topics. It is an opportunity to accompany one of our patients on this sacred journey. If hospice work calls to you, call us!

*– Benneth Husted, DO, Executive Medical Director*

## Board of Directors

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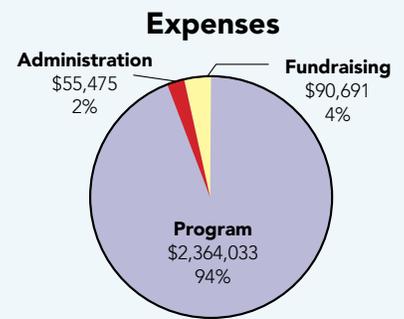
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## Your Support Helps Us Succeed

The chart above shows something we strive for: 94% of our revenue goes to support our program, 4% to fundraising and 2% to administration.

**We have been rapidly growing!** In July 2009 we started our own hospice. This has added an important new program to our organization. In the last 18 months Housecall Providers staff has doubled from 30 to 60 employees. We are successful and growing—but growth comes with a cost.

In July 2010 we began implementing an electronic health record, which has been challenging and a huge financial commitment. This is something we had to do to accommodate our growth and position ourselves to become a demonstration site for Independence at Home (IAH)\*. The transition from paper charts to computerized medical records has been more costly to implement than anticipated because of our uniqueness. These software systems are created for the standard office practice; and customization for the house call practice has been expensive; but we believe electronic health records will enhance patient care, and so we have absorbed the cost.

**As we transition to a more mature organization, we must invest in our infrastructure to continue to grow.** We need your financial support to maintain our current pace.

Please consider sending a gift to help us fulfill our mission of caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our city.

*– Terri Hobbs, Administrator & Development Director*

\*IAH is a concept created by the American Academy of Home Care Physicians and sponsored by OR Senator Ron Wyden in the health care reform law. IAH is based on the belief that proactive patient care, including house calls when needed, saves Medicare dollars. Under IAH, medical practices would be able to share the cost savings.

## Profile: **Alan O’Kain** Past Board Chair

Helping those who are most vulnerable has been, quite literally, an article of faith for Alan and Victoria O’Kain. Their religion teaches that followers must reach out to the needy. For some years, the O’Kains did so by supporting poverty-stricken children in third world nations. “We always thought that children represented the most vulnerable in our society,” Alan says.

Then they learned about Housecall Providers and the people that it serves. “It opened our eyes,” he says. “We learned that not only are older people vulnerable, but many of them are even more vulnerable than the children we were supporting. We were truly blessed to be introduced to Housecall Providers.”

That was more than five years ago. Both Victoria and Alan joined Housecall Providers’ board of trustees; Alan served as board chair for two years. Today, the couple’s understanding of the value of Housecall Providers mission has deepened to the level of a new calling.

“As we got to know more about the patients, we realized just how vulnerable they were,” Alan says. “In many cases they are abandoned by their families. They have no one. It really tugged at our hearts. It feels good to support this organization.”

Housecall Providers in a way rounds out the O’Kains’ community service. Now, they are making a difference at both ends of the life spectrum. Over the years, they have provided financial support for orphans around the globe—India, China, Thailand, Mexico. Then two years ago, they adopted a five-year-old Chinese orphan and are about to adopt another older orphan. “Those are the tough ones for the adoption agencies to place,” Alan says. “Our hearts just go out to them.”

The O’Kains have seen the Housecall Providers board grow and mature over the past five years. And just as they know that the organization’s management values their guidance, they also know that their financial support is going toward much needed services.

“It’s just a blessing to be involved with this group,” Alan says. “If there are people who are looking for the right nonprofit to support, either with their time or dollars, this is one that you can’t help but fall in love with.”



## Make Housecall Providers a part of your legacy

When the time comes to turn your attention to estate planning, we at Housecall Providers urge you to make us part of your legacy. With our expansion into hospice services, the need for us to build our infrastructure is greater than ever. Without additional medical staff and support personnel, our ability to care for new patients is limited. By including Housecall Providers in your estate planning, you will help bring our signature health care services to more members of our community.

A planned gift offers tax advantages to the donor. To gain the full advantage, we suggest consulting a professional. Now, we have an opportunity to offer personal assistance with estate planning from one of the region’s foremost authorities on estate planning—with absolutely no obligation. Gene Christian, of Charitable Estate Planning Northwest, has graciously agreed to meet with anyone interested in learning how to plan and put in place a personal bequest, trust or endowment gift of any size.

To learn more or to set up an appointment with Gene, call 503-988-4743.

# We're growing—come join our team!

*Continued from front cover*

Dr. Sperlin lists the following attitudes and characteristics:

- An independent and flexible person who can set his or her own schedule and does not need the office structure to thrive.
- A person motivated primarily by healing patients in a thoughtful, creative way. (“If you like a lot of action such as you find in the ICU, you probably aren’t right for Housecall Providers.”)
- A person who is not frustrated by hard-to-diagnose situations.
- A person who works well in a team environment.
- Someone who is comfortable working with the ailments that accompany advanced age, such as dementia, Alzheimer’s, incontinence, etc.

“This is such a pleasant place to work,” he adds. “I find it so rewarding to be doing something every day that meets a real need.”

## Ginger Harris

*Family Nurse Practitioner*

Ginger Harris recalls the moment during her job interview when she knew she’d answered the right ad. She explained to founder and Executive Medical Director Benneth Husted that she was excited about the position, but was a bit short on

the experience required.

“Benneth said to me, ‘I want to make sure that you’re a good fit for our team.

That means more to me

than how much experience you have. And I think you are a good fit for us.’



It was important for me to hear her say that,” she says.

Six years later, Ginger Harris still loves her job. “It’s a thankful job, a rewarding job,” she says.

The working conditions suit her: flexible hours, good pay and benefits, the ability to work from home, the dedication of the staff to Housecall’s mission. But beyond those benefits, she values the continuity of care for the patients.

“Seeing them in their homes offers huge advantages in terms of the care we can provide,” she says. “You know them, the caregiver, the living situation.”

As patients move from home visits, where Harris supervises their care, to hospice, the Housecall team provides a seamless transition of services.

“Our patients truly appreciate what we do for them. They are a thankful group, and we hear such great feedback from them.”

For Ginger Harris, the finest moment of her work is “the conversation.” That’s when all involved realize that the end of life is near.

As the patient’s care supervisor, Harris is there when the time comes for a patient to transition from home visits to hospice. “I like that work at the end of life,” she says. “It’s kind of hard to explain, but having that conversation about what happens next is extremely important. It’s the kind of thing that doesn’t happen in the ICU. It’s a special moment.”

As a family nurse practitioner for Housecall Providers, Ginger Harris has a caseload of 75 patients. She cares for most of them for about a year, although that time varies greatly, she says. She sees about a quarter of them each week (her job is

three-quarters time), and reports to the home office just once a week.

“I do love my job. I’m thankful that I could help someone at this time of their life. It’s part of life, and it feels good to know that you contributed to making someone’s passing as peaceful as possible.”

## Nancy Jean Buettner

*Nurse Case Manager, Housecall Providers’ Hospice care*

After two decades as a nurse in a large health care organization, Nancy Jean Buettner was ready for a change. She wanted a warmer and less stressful work environment where she could pursue her hospice care work and enjoy a better balanced life. But she never expected to

find a work environment quite as hospitable as Housecall Providers’ Hospice.

“I feel like the luckiest nurse in town,”

Buettner says. “It is so intimate here, a great working environment.”

Buettner made the move to Housecall Providers’ hospice care service in 2010. The last five years of her nursing career had been devoted to hospice care, which she calls “the work.” She felt drawn to it as her career progressed, and once she made the transition, she knew she’d made the right call.

“It’s truly an honor to be allowed into a person’s life at this time,” she says. “I love the work, but unfortunately, I did not always love the job. Previously, my case load was enormous—more than 20 patients,



which is a lot in hospice care. And there were a lot of other elements about the job that made it increasingly unpleasant.”

She learned about the hospice service at Housecall Providers through a friend. Ultimately, both she and her job share partner made the move to the recently launched hospice care business.

Housecall Providers’ Hospice has many advantages compared to other hospice services, she says. She particularly values the fact that Housecall Providers physicians actually continue to visit their patients in hospice, unlike the reality of the office-based health care model. Among other benefits of the job: smaller caseload (10-12 per nurse manager), job flexibility, a 40-hour work week and the team approach to patient care. Each hospice patient receives care from an entire team of experts, including nurses, nursing assistants, doctors, social workers, bereavement specialists, chaplains, and volunteer caregivers.

Then, there are the intangibles.

“We don’t take referrals from outside the Housecall Providers network,” she says, “so our physicians know their patients and I am able to call a doctor directly with a concern or question. In most health care systems, the hospice nurse rarely speaks to the primary care physician.”

The top managers at Housecall Providers are compassionate, visionary and always available to talk, she says. “They have put together a simply beautiful program, one with an open, relaxing work environment where our communication between practitioners and staff is very good.”

## Annie and Maureen “Mo” Olbrich: Hospice therapy pet and owner

Not many volunteers climb into bed with the people they’re visiting and nuzzle them with their noses. But Annie the therapy dog manages to get away with it.

“Annie can just tell when someone is hurting,” says Maureen “Mo” Olbrich, Annie’s owner. “We call her our Velcro dog. She attaches herself to someone. She’s a lover!”

The four-year-old Golden Retriever has been doing therapy service for two years, but only recently began working with hospice patients. The pair went through therapy pet training at the Oregon Humane Society and, after myriad tests of her patience, Annie received her certification.



They had been doing therapy volunteerism with others in need of animal comfort when Maureen met a Housecall Providers employee at a church campout.

“She explained the need for hospice volunteers at Housecall Providers. It sounded like a fit for us,” she recalls. They took the 28 hours in hospice volunteer training and have now become regular visitors to hospice patients.

“Almost everyone responds to Annie, sooner or later,” Maureen says. “Sometimes it’s just petting her for a while, sometimes they talk to us about the pets they used to have. The patient always takes comfort in her being there.”

## Portland Monthly Selects Housecall Providers for Prestigious Award

Our staff is rewarded every day by the gratitude of our patients and their primary caregivers. In November, we received a very different kind of reward: media recognition. *Portland Monthly*, the city’s premier monthly magazine, chose Housecall Providers as one of the nonprofits for its annual “Light a Fire” awards.

Under the subheading, “Honoring Our Elders,” *Portland Monthly* honored us for resurrecting the practice of making house calls to patients and for easing the last days of so many people. It described Housecall Providers as serving “more than 1,300 homebound seniors and people with disabilities or who suffer from multiple chronic conditions.” In addition, the article pointed out that Housecall Providers has grown from Dr. Benneth Husted’s vision 15 years ago to an organization that today employs more than 60 people—and is, of course, continuing to grow!

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Although we make every effort to ensure that all information is accurate, there may be occasional errors. We regret any omissions, misspellings, or other mistakes, and welcome your corrections.

Please contact Kim in our development office at 503-988-5303 to let us know.

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**In Honor of Dennis Sudbury**  
 Helen Sudbury

**In Honor of Anita Warner**  
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**In Honor of Edna Whitworth**  
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Thank you for your support of our Pearls of Promise 15th anniversary dinner and auction held on September 19, 2010.

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*Continued from page seven*

### Additional Providers Circle Donors

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# housecall providers

Housecall Providers, Inc.  
4531 SE Belmont, Suite 250  
Portland, OR 97215

[housecallproviders.org](http://housecallproviders.org)  
503-988-5303

## 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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## Hospice Volunteering: 'Light from the outside world'

Volunteers are crucial to the fulfillment of the hospice mission at Housecall Providers. Not only do hospice volunteers provide help and comfort to patients and their caregivers, but Medicare regulations require that all hospices have an active volunteer base.

Hospice volunteer work is unlike many other volunteer experiences. It is at once enriching and demanding. "All our patient care volunteers must undergo 28 hours of training prior to beginning their volunteer work," says Hospice Volunteer Coordinator Karin



O'Connor. "What we often hear from our volunteers who go through this intense training is that the training itself helps

them in their own lives. They learn about the end of life, what happens, what it's like, and it serves them well later on."

The current hospice volunteer opportunities are primarily geared toward patient care with some limited need for office assistance. Most of Housecall Providers hospice patients are in supported living situations rather than their own homes so the traditional volunteer role of providing four hours a week of respite for the primary caregiver is the exception rather than the rule. Volunteer visits are really about providing companionship to people, being present and listening. "We think of our volunteers as being a light from the outside world because many of our patients do not have frequent visitors. Our patients are going through a special time in their lives and volunteers have to meet them wherever they are. They don't need advice or lecturing. They just need someone to be there."

Compassion and a nonjudgmental attitude are important qualities for volunteers. Flexibility is important, too. "Our patients' conditions can quickly change," O'Connor says, "so volunteers may have to reschedule a visit on short notice."

In addition to regular patient visits, several volunteers bring a special gift to patients; certified therapy dogs (see page 5). "The dogs are good because sometimes our patients just want to pet an animal and not have to engage with a person. It's comforting," O'Connor says.

If this combination—demanding, yet enriching—appeals to you, please contact Karin O'Connor at 503-988-5336, x232, or [koconnor@housecallproviders.org](mailto:koconnor@housecallproviders.org).

You too can bring some light to someone from the outside world.