



VISITING NURSE SERVICE &
HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK, INC.

HOSPICE HOUSE 15th ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT

Commemorative Journal

March 24, 2019





VISITING NURSE SERVICE & HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK, INC.

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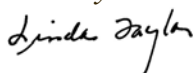
Dear Friends,

We are excited to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Hospice House with you and share our joy as we recognize and acknowledge all who made this milestone possible. Building the warm and welcoming Hospice House was a labor of love by so many dedicated people that began long before the groundbreaking at our East Northport site. It began with a commitment to caring for our community by so many who had the foresight to complete the certification process that credentialed Home Health and Hospice programs, laid a broader groundwork that underlies services provided by competent professional staff and volunteers at VNSHS today.

It is an impossible task to recognize all who contributed over many years to the growth and development of the culture of caring that exists at VNSHS and is integral to our history even before the time the agency added certification as a hospice provider in 1989. Honorees were selected not only to acknowledge their unique individual contributions through their valued work with VNSHS in a variety of capacities, but also as representative of the many more unnamed individuals whose loyal service we know was significant and instrumental to bringing us here today. In addition to sharing brief vignettes about each honoree, we also recognize committed staff and volunteers who not only were part of opening the Hospice House in 2004 but continue working at the Hospice House as dedicated staff and volunteers today.

Thank you to all for sharing our celebration today with help from Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks whose music of the 20's and 30's demonstrates and appreciates from yet another perspective that our future is grounded in our past. Thanks to our honorees for supporting this event, to our staff and volunteers past and present for what they do every day as we care for each other and thank you our generous donors who supplement Hospice House income that enables us to keep our doors open round the clock 365 days a year. Hospice House has been there for us for 15 years during which time we welcomed over 4,500 families and it is there for all of us today. With your support it will continue to be the oasis that it has become - a place that brings comfort and peace and hopefully time for sharing old and making new memories for families to treasure into their future.

Sincerely,



*Linda Taylor
Chief Executive Officer*



*Robert P. Cogliati
President, Board of Trustees*

*We are proud to acknowledge and honor
the following individuals for their
unique contributions to VNSHS:*

Marilyn Cunniff

Kathleen Genova

Douglas Duval

Ralph Lambert

David Fuchs

Katherine "Cissy" Moffatt

In Memoriam

Joan Holcomb

Jay Walsh

*Please join us to acknowledge and congratulate
the following employees and volunteers
who opened Hospice House in 2004
and continue to actively staff the House today:*

Birjis Akhund, Medical Director

Mark Bigelow, Pastoral Care

Sally Economou, Volunteer

Marge Huber, Volunteer

Fred Knechtel, Volunteer

Charlotte Koons, Volunteer

Mary Lally, Volunteer

Sharon McGrory-Buckley, Social Work Manager

Verona Murray, Hospice Aide

Hospice House 15th Anniversary Honorees



Marilyn Cunniff

When Mr. Cunniff and I moved to Huntington in 1956, we built a home that would eventually accommodate our five children. It was a very happy time and Lloyd Harbor was the perfect place to raise a family. My association with Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk and my friendship with Linda Taylor have been among the most rewarding experiences I have enjoyed during these years. It was a pleasure to work with a small group of directors who shared an interest in the quality of nursing care in our community. In particular, Mr. Cunniff and I were so pleased to be a part of the creation of the Hospice

House and to know that it is so well regarded by the many families who have benefited from its extraordinary care.

Marilyn served as VNSHS Board of Trustees President from 1980-1982 and again from 1986-1988.



Douglas Duval

Douglas Duval spent much of his adult life living in East Northport with his wife Irene and their children and commuting on the LIRR to his job as a banker on Wall Street. It was a wonderful time.

When Irene became ill in 2008, the family was introduced to Hospice House. “Our gratitude goes to Dr. Patricia Matos for her introduction to Hospice House. The experience was one of respect, care, and compassion which culminated in lasting positive memories.”

Douglas continues to show his thanks and gratitude by bringing staff and volunteers fruit baskets every holiday season. “They mean so much to me, it’s the least I can do.”

Hospice House 15th Anniversary Honorees



David Fuchs

David Fuchs was born and raised in Queens, NY. He attended Brooklyn Preparatory High School before receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English from Yale University and a Master of Arts in English from the University of Rochester, afterward serving two years in the United States Army. In 1953 David landed a job in the mailroom at CBS Broadcasting and retired 35 years later as Senior Vice President of Corporate and Broadcast Affairs.

David first encountered Visiting Nurse Service when his wife Audrey became ill and required their services. In his words “The nurses came to our home to take care of my late wife during the final weeks of her life. It is hard for me to express my gratitude for the comfort they gave to both of us during those trying days. You have to be there to fully realize the sheer humanity of it... it is a debt I can never repay.” VNSHS was honored to have him serve as President of the Board of Directors from 1994-1997.

David has been a Huntington resident for over 60 years, where he continues to live with his wife Betsy. He is the proud father of four children, nine grandchildren and one great grandchild.



Kathleen Genova

Kathy Genova began her career at Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk nearly 25 years ago as a registered nurse for the home care program. Kathy became interested in the hospice program and soon after started caring for hospice patients in their home. She excelled as a hospice nurse and was promoted to manager, ultimately becoming Director of Hospice Operations for Hospice, until her retirement in December 2018. Kathy was an integral part of the hospice team and through her ability to lead with trust, kindness and support, she helped shape the hospice program.

After having her three children, Kathy discovered the joys and benefits of practicing yoga, and has dedicated herself to the practice through teaching the art and science of yoga over the past 11 years.

“It has been a wonderful journey with VNSHS, and I am forever grateful to have served our community in so many ways. There are 2 ways to spread the light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflect it. Thank you for this honor.”

Hospice House 15th Anniversary Honorees



Cissy Moffatt

Katherine “Cissy” Moffatt has been a member of the VNSHS Board of Trustees for nearly 35 years, 6 of those as President of the Board, and is currently Honorary Chairperson. A retired nursery school teacher, Ms. Moffatt is a longtime Huntington resident and is actively involved in community outreach. She is President, and volunteer, at the Community Thrift Shop in Huntington, as well as a longtime hospice volunteer. Ms. Moffatt has received honors for the important role she has played in the community, but none as memorable as being recognized by the Home Care Association of New York State as Trustee of the Year in 1998. An avid golfer, she grew up on the

grounds of Bethpage State Park and learned to play at the age of 5. When she’s not at the Thrift Shop, playing golf or volunteering, Ms. Moffatt spends her free time with her family, which includes two daughters and four grandchildren.



Ralph Lambert

Ralph Lambert began working in the construction industry as a young man alongside his father and grandfather and quickly discovered a passion for it that still guides him today. He worked as a laborer, while putting himself through college at Suffolk County Community College and then Hofstra University.

In 1992, Ralph founded Axis Construction with the support of a carefully selected team of experienced project managers and supervisors. With their combined wealth of knowledge of the construction industry, Axis Construction was able to transform from a small business, operating out of the family kitchen, into the successful construction firm that it is today. Under Ralph’s diligent guidance, perseverance, and hard work, Axis Construction has become a recognized name in such major fields as healthcare, higher education, commercial and industrial construction.

Grateful for the success he and Axis Construction have achieved, Ralph feels a duty to pay it forward and is committed to giving back to the community. Ralph has become a large supporter of many local charities and organizations, including being a Trustee Emeritus Board Member of the Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk, an Associate Trustee at Northwell Health System, a Founder of the Joe Namath Family Foundation, and a supporter of Molloy College. Ralph is also a proud graduate of the Energia Program. Still inspired to do more, Ralph founded the Lambert Family Foundation alongside his wife, Nicole, and together with their six children they continue to raise funds and create awareness for many local causes.

Hospice House 15th Anniversary Honorees



Joan Holcomb - In Memoriam

Joan was a longtime VNSHS board member and served as president from 1982-1984 and a staunch advocate of establishing its hospice program. She had a lifelong commitment to causes benefiting the communities she lived in.

She grew up in New York City and Syracuse, and graduated from Syracuse University in 1952. As a young woman, she was director of public relations for the Community Chest of Rochester and Monroe County, which encompassed most of that area's charitable organizations. Later she headed the fledgling Columbia County Council on the Arts, during an exciting period of growth in its performing arts program.

After the family moved to Long Island in 1977, Joan was not only active on the VNSHS board, but also as a trustee of the Heckscher Museum and a board member of the St. Johnland Nursing Center.

Joan passed away in 2014 and is survived by her husband Charles, of Huntington, three daughters and eight grandchildren.



Jay Walsh - In Memoriam

The Hospice House was a true labor of love for Jay. His first wife Peggy was a VNSHS in-home hospice patient, and not long after her death Jay started volunteering at VNSHS. The dream of an independent Hospice House came from that experience. For years, whenever his wife Pat and he travelled they would find out if there was a hospice facility in the area and go visit. Over these years they gathered a notebook full of suggestions, thoughts and ideas for the ideal Hospice House. When the dream began to take shape at VNSHS board meetings, Jay had recently retired from his law practice. He redirected his focus and volunteered countless hours working through the challenging legal maze required to build the first free-standing Hospice House in New

York State. There were no regulations, codes or policies to follow, but Jay forged his own path, never taking "no" for an answer, and eventually persevered and the dream became a reality.

After his children and grandchildren, the Hospice House was by far Jay's proudest accomplishment. It brought Jay great joy to make hard times in life a little easier for others and surely the Hospice House has done that for thousands of families.

Jay served as VNSHS Board of Trustees President from 2001-2004.

Staff and Volunteers



Birjis Akhund, MD - Medical Director

It has been my pleasure, and a transformative educational experience being a member of the VNSHS hospice program. When I joined VNSHS as Medical Director many years ago, it gave me the humbling yet rewarding experience of seeing another side of health care, when mainstream medicine exhausted its meaningful application and patients and families were looking for a refuge of palliative and comfort care. It taught me that care does not end in the corridors of hospitals and doctor's offices. There are times, not recognized often enough, where one must use one's

knowledge to alleviate suffering in all its aspects. I was now allowed to reassure many of my patients that I would continue to care for them and assist in their medical management as needed. I also realized that we physicians had a lot to learn and much to appreciate from the all-encompassing care that the nursing, social, psycho-social and volunteer services provided our patients. During weekly rounds much of the discussion centers on the stories and anecdotes, old and new, that the patients and their families relate to the VNSHS team. This is what epitomizes the objective of palliate programs, alleviate suffering and spend precious time in what we all seek - comfort, companionship, and the warmth of a helping hand.



Mark Bigelow - Pastoral Care

Hospice House provides what many of us wish for in our final days—a peaceful, home-like, safe place for our families and ourselves. One of my favorite places in the house is the sunroom, where I sit with families and talk about some of the most important times in their lives. The house is truly made a home by the loving staff that provide such a high standard of care for our patients.

As the Pastoral Care Coordinator, I visit patients who request spiritual care, but have no faith home. It is truly a house of prayer for people of all faiths and I am proud to be associated with it and the entire VNSHS hospice program.

Staff and Volunteers



Sally Economou - Volunteer

Thursday afternoon is one of my favorite times of the week. It is the afternoon that I volunteer at Hospice House, with the beautiful memorial garden and the warm entrance are so lovely and inviting.

I never know what the afternoon will bring. It can be anything from answering the phone, sharing with a family, making a meal or sitting with a patient so they know they are not alone. Each experience is a treasure and a blessing.

The warmth and caring of every single person who is part of Hospice House has shown me the true meaning of hospice care.



Marge Huber - Volunteer

Fifteen years ago, I was looking for a volunteer position and had explored a few options, but nothing appealed to me. I was explaining my frustration to Rajen Naidoo, MD who was one of the orthopedic surgeons where I worked. He was on the Board of Trustees for VNSHS at the time and told me about the volunteer program, and that they were starting a class later that month. The classes were a great introduction to the organization, and it took only one class and I was hooked.

I learned so much and made lasting friendships from my group. But nothing compares to what I have gotten in return from being a volunteer at Hospice House. Whether it is sitting quietly with a patient, lending an ear to a visitor, making sure the kitchen is neat or just watering plants, I always get so much more in return than I feel I give.

Staff and Volunteers



Fred Knechtel - Volunteer

Sometime in March of 1992, I was reading the St. Paul's Lutheran Church bulletin and saw a request for hospice volunteers at VNSHS. It was something that caught my heart. I took the 7-week training and was cleared for duty. I had no idea what I was in for. My first patient was a gentleman that lived some distance away, and as I approached his home, I proceeded to get anxious. I asked God to clear my mind of my "stuff" and help me to be there for him. It worked. I had a wonderful relationship with him, and his wife, for about a year. He was concerned for his wife, so they moved to Georgia to be near her family. After he passed away, my wife Barbara and I went to Savannah for a weekend visit at his wife's request. I will always remember them. I have learned a lot from all the patients I had the privilege to visit.

I continue to volunteer at Hospice House on Sunday mornings where I may prepare a light meal, answer the phone, sit with a patient at their bedside, perhaps hold their hand or offer a family member a hug. Whatever I am asked to do. I have been blessed so much more than I give. I thank my wife Barbara for her love and support.

When I look back I see how my friends at hospice helped me grow, I see God's hand and Angels at work.

I am only a small part of what all the volunteers and staff do every day.



Charlotte Koons - Volunteer

A Volunteer Reflects

Has it been fifteen years
That I've been one of the volunteers?
On Friday afternoons from one to four
At this desk facing the front door
Oh yes! There are tasks galore:
- Comforting grieving visitors
- Answering the phone when it rings
- Helping Bonnie; Helping Joan
- Doing simple kitchen things
- Feeding the cat outside, by the side door
- Keeping a calm and gracious demeanor

These are just some of the things we do,
Respecting the mission of Hospice House
And the Visiting Nurse Service of Suffolk too!

Staff and Volunteers



Mary Lally - Volunteer

In 2002, shortly after my mother died, I applied to VNSHS to become a hospice volunteer. It was too soon, and I was asked to come back in a year. Sometime later, as fate would have it, I ran into the volunteer coordinator at the grocery store, and that was fifteen years ago.

It is a privilege to be a part of Hospice House. I thank Jay Walsh for all he did to build an oasis for those stepping to the hands of God and Linda Taylor, and all those who work every day to keep the oasis open for anyone who knocks. Hospice House is special. It was born that way.

In my fifteen years I have met astronauts, TV stars, rich people, and paupers. Believers and non-believers. They all found comfort in a place called Hospice House. Thank you for keeping me this long.



Sharon McGrory-Buckley - Social Work Manager

It has been such a privilege to work at Hospice House since the day it opened. The past 15 years went by in what seems to be a minute. It has been a challenging and incredible experience for me and I am so thankful for the stories that my patients and families have shared with me. I am honored each day that, at such an intimate time, they have allowed me to accompany them as they approach end of life. This work can take its toll. I am often asked "how can you and the staff do this everyday"? I say that we are trained but most of all we are truly a team at Hospice House. Everyone who works at Hospice House wants to be there. We support each other, cry and laugh together as we care for our dying patients. We do this together with the support of the entire team at VNSHS.

Staff and Volunteers



Verona Murray - Hospice Aide

I joined the hospice team 16 years ago when the Hospice House had just started to be built. A friend encouraged me to apply for a position at Hospice House, she said it would be a great place to work. The day after the house opened, I started, and fell in love with the job. After 15 years, I am still in love with my job. Fred Knechtel, a hospice volunteer and part time maintenance worker at Hospice House, and I were reminiscing about our journey, the countless stories, our highs and lows, and all the wonderful memories we shared. It is amazing.

On my interview with Linda Taylor, she asked me “why hospice?”. My answer was, it’s more than a paycheck, it must be a calling, and I still feel the same way.

My greatest thanks are to Linda Taylor, who stood strong and is the glue that keeps us together. Her legacy for this great vision. Thanks to all my coworkers who make my job pleasant. I am so honored to be a part of this wonderful organization. I am blessed.



Hospice brings with it a special philosophy that validates quality of life in an atmosphere of comfort and support for individuals facing life threatening illness - whether for days or months or however long that might be. The Hospice House augments hospice care at home, especially when needed for special attention to pain control and symptom management throughout the dying process. It also provides for brief in-patient stays that offer respite to families of most hospice patients being cared for in their own homes. Please know you are welcome to visit the Hospice House any time to see for yourself what a resource it is to us all.

NAMING OPPORTUNITY – for 15 years VNSHS Hospice House has been known as just that – Hospice House! In appreciation for a Major Gift of One Million Dollars we would like to personalize the Hospice House name to recognize that yet to be named donor. Linda Taylor or Susan Bruder welcome your inquiry to explore. Thank you for your consideration!





VISITING NURSE SERVICE &
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