

A PUBLICATION OF
WESTERN RESERVE CARE SOLUTIONS

WINTER 2023-24

ALBERT LOWAN

I LOVE You.
Keep Flying high!

Pam's 15

HELEN LOWNE

SUE GEORGE

We love a
Aunt K

In Memoriam
Richard

Sudy
Paskura

In memory of
Frank Tokorn

EMMA
GRACE

For Scott Knowles
LOVIN' x1

memory
leen Kuhn

In Loving
memory
Jim Beam

Chipika

**Gratitude is when memory is stored in the heart
and not in the mind.**

- Lionel Hampton
20th Century Jazz Musician

Purpose

A PUBLICATION OF
WESTERN RESERVE CARE SOLUTIONS

WINTER 2023-24

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 3

OUR MISSION

Hospice of the Western Reserve provides palliative and end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio. In celebration of the individual worth of each life, we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care, and support effective grieving.



at



Purpose is produced by the Marketing Communications team at Western Reserve Care Solutions. To contact the team, or request the digital edition, please send an email to communication@hospicewr.org.

800.707.8922 | hospicewr.org



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The chilly temperatures remind us of the seasonal changes that we enjoy in Northern Ohio. The end of the year brings that special time when we gather with family and friends and give thanks for the other abundant gifts in our lives. It is a time of gratitude.

This year I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to celebrate my 40th year as a hospice professional. I began as a hospice volunteer in 1979, and my formal employment commenced in 1983. This predated the enactment of the Medicare hospice law, and hospice was a relatively unfamiliar concept to most people. We had a census of 12 patients, and much of our work was done by volunteers on a shoestring budget. Over these 40 years, we have seen programs like Western Reserve Care Solutions (WRCS) set the standard for quality, best practices, service, excellence, and compassion. We have cared for countless patients and family members at crucial moments in their lives. We have been blessed with their trust, and their generous contributions of time and financial support helps us advance our mission.

The team members of WRCS are some of the finest and best caregivers in the nation, and our programs and services are second to none. It is our strident belief that everyone deserves extraordinary care throughout their illness. This drives us to make sure the next patient and family needing care are honored and comforted.

I give thanks and gratitude to our team members, our volunteers, our donors, and our community for supporting our mission for 45 years. Humbly, I know that I am part of a team creating the ideal experience for the last chapter of life, and they will comfort me when it is my time. Until that moment arrives, I celebrate our calling, and extend an invitation for you to explore our services and find a way to actively contribute to advancing our mission.

Bill Finn
President and Chief Executive Officer



Meet Ashlyn Joy

After welcoming their fourth child, Ashlyn Joy, the Elswicks were professionals when it came to juggling babies and the flow of a full, yet chaotic lifestyle.

Their celebration quickly turned into denial when they noticed that at six months of age, Ashlyn was not developing at a normal rate. At the age of seven, their hopes for her to walk and lead a normal life were dashed and by the age of 19, Ashlyn no longer moved or responded to the environment around her. For years, Ashlyn received the most advanced medical testing available while her fragile body deteriorated. Eventually, the family turned to Hospice of the Western Reserve (HWR).

"We always viewed hospice as the end and never wanted to take that path," says Ashlyn's mother Kelli. "Now we know that Ashlyn and our entire family needed her hospice team for support, reassurance and comfort."

The HWR care team was able to provide care for both Ashlyn and her family during this unimaginable time. "The nurse and social worker became part of our family and were always supportive as we made very difficult decisions," reflects Kelli.

Please consider donating to the Pediatric Hospice and Palliative Care Program at Hospice of the Western Reserve. Your gift will help fund the \$600,000 that it takes to care for the children served by this program each year.

Visit hospicewr.org/donate or call 855.475.0245.

Moments to Remember

We understand the significance of each day and take every opportunity to create meaningful moments for our patients and their loved ones. Our Moments to Remember program focuses on enhancing the quality of life for our patients by giving them the opportunity to see a special request or wish come true. It could be as simple as providing a cookie from a favorite childhood bakery or as intimate as hosting a great-granddaughter's baby shower at one of our inpatient care units.

Fulfilling hundreds of moments to remember each year is just one of our many life enrichment programs put on by our staff and volunteers. It is our goal to have these moments foster a sense of fulfillment and help individuals and families make the most of their time together.

We are grateful for the generous support from individual donors, foundations and the community that allow us to provide these invaluable memories at no cost to the patient.



Jennifer Martnick, AGNP-C, ACHPN

*Team Leader,
Western Reserve Navigator*

What is the difference between palliative care and hospice care?

Palliative care is specialized care for patients living with a serious illness. The focus of this care is on providing relief from the symptoms and the stress of a serious illness. The goal is to improve the quality of life for both the patient and the family. Like hospice, non-hospice community-based palliative care is provided wherever the patient calls home. Palliative care is comfort care with or without curative intent. Palliative care will provide comfort and support at your home with your physician overseeing your care. Through our team, we can address caregiver support, access to community resources, symptom management, goals of care discussions and completion of advance directives.

Hospice is comfort care without curative intent; the patient no longer has curative options or has chosen not to pursue treatment because the side effects outweigh the benefits.

Who is eligible for palliative care?

Anyone who has an advanced serious illness and a community/facility based physician. Once a referral is called in, Western Reserve Care Solutions will seek an order from this physician to promote collaboration. Referrals can come from anyone including the patient themselves.

Where can I receive palliative care?

Services are provided in patient homes, nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, group homes and most any other home location. We are also able to provide virtual visits.



Why is the Navigator program different from other palliative care programs?

The Western Reserve Navigator Palliative care program follows guidelines developed by the National Consensus Project. Our team consists of advance practice registered nurses (APRN), social workers (SW), service coordinators, volunteers and a registered nurse (RN). We come to you wherever you call home. Our volunteers can assist with many services but typically provide monthly phone calls, in-person companionship and respite for caregivers. We offer 24/7 availability for questions or changes in condition. Visits will occur, on average, every six to 12 weeks. While Medicare and Medicaid cover most costs, some insurances may require a copay or do not cover some of the costs of the palliative care program.

What can I expect when receiving palliative care?

You can expect visits from clinicians who listen to your needs and offer ongoing education and support in a non-judgmental manner. The professionals visit our patients are honest and present for visits. We will discuss steps to address needs with our patients and their family to allow choice in the plan of care.



Getting Involved: *Extraordinary* Acts of Service

In the fall of 2022, Carol Kelleher and her four siblings began searching for hospice care for their mother and after visiting Ames Family Hospice House (AFHH) they decided that it was the best choice. "It was beautiful with all of the Fall colors," says Carol. "It felt peaceful."

After placing her mother in our care, a friend of Carol's, who was a retired hospice nurse herself, came to visit the family. "She was so impressed with the nursing staff, she toured the building and came back to us and told it was the most impressive hospice she's ever seen," says Carol. After Carol's mother passed away at AFHH in October 2022, she wanted to give back to the organization that has so greatly impacted her friends and family.

When reflecting on her time spent at AFHH, Carol recalls, "Every nurse and staff member spoke to us at a level that we understood and felt comfortable with." Two weeks after her mother passed away, Carol decided that Western Reserve Care Solutions was an organization where she wanted to donate her time.

In May of this year, Carol began her WRCS Volunteer journey by assisting with Fit Testing, a government requirement for healthcare workers to be properly fitted with N95 masks to help prevent exposure to diseases like tuberculosis and COVID-19. Although she has no medical background, Carol took on the challenge and was trained to perform Fit Tests for our staff and volunteers. Training includes reviewing extensive materials, completing the standard 12-hour training required of all WRCS volunteers and shadowing Joan Ibbett, Employee Health Nurse. Today, Carol works hand in hand with Joan and conducts the actual testing of new hires, which can be a lengthy process.

Eventually, Carol hopes to work directly with patients in hospice care. "I have seen firsthand how volunteers can make an impact when you are at your most vulnerable," says Carol. "I want to be that person."

Hospice of the Western Reserve is grateful for a generous donation from the Solon Community Church. We are honored to continue their legacy through our grief support groups and Healing Arts program.



IN THE COMMUNITY

At Western Reserve Care Solutions, we firmly believe that our roots in the community are the very essence of our mission. We understand that true impact is born from genuine connection and involvement. That is why we care deeply about being an active and integral part of every community we serve!



Rolling Thunder

The local chapter of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. presented Stein Hospice with a "Chair of Honor" during a moving ceremony this past Fall. Accepting the chair on behalf of Stein Hospice were Bob Plona, Director, Inpatient Services and Facilities, Mike Marsh, Clinical Director, Nate Gradisher, Provider Relations Manager, and several other members of Stein Hospice staff. The chair is on display near the entrance of The Sam and Rose Stein Hospice Care Center.

Rolling Thunder is a nonprofit organization devoted to publicizing POW-MIA issues and supporting American Veterans from all wars. Rolling Thunder has chosen to present a Chair of Honor at all of Western Reserve Care Solutions' inpatient units, and Stein was the fourth to receive this distinguished recognition. "Our sites were chosen as we have a strong presence in the veteran community and serve a large (and growing) number of Veterans," says Nate Gradisher, who chairs our Peaceful & Proud Veterans Committee.



"We are proud to be recognized by and collaborate with Rolling Thunder to honor those who served and those who cannot be with us," says Nate. "Rolling Thunder is a wonderful organization that has gone above and beyond to raise awareness for those who have not returned from serving our nation."





Honoring Our Heroes: Caring for Our Veterans

Caring for our Veterans is a sacred duty that honors the sacrifices and dedication of those who have served our nation. These brave individuals, who once donned uniforms to protect our freedoms, now depend on our support and gratitude. Providing end-of-life care for those who have served in our Armed Forces requires sensitivity, understanding and respect, and Hospice of the Western Reserve has developed a dedicated program called Peaceful & Proud to meet the special needs of Veterans.

At HWR, we offer specialized services to support these individuals by encouraging them to share their stories, access music and art therapies, assist with benefits and host both private and public Veteran Recognitions. Hospice patients can be matched with Veteran volunteers who have had similar experiences and understand the special care that is needed for Veterans. HWR's Peaceful and Proud program has helped over 10,500 Veterans throughout its 16-year history and has led more than 1,500 Veteran Recognition Ceremonies.

Our agency renewed as a Level 5 Partner with We Honor Veterans, a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. We Honor Veterans promotes services designed for Veterans in hospice and palliative care, and Level 5 is the highest designation a partner agency can attain. This achievement demonstrates our dedication to serve those who have served us, and we are proud to lead this effort in Northern Ohio.

By providing Veterans with the care and attention they deserve, we not only improve their quality of life but also demonstrate our commitment to the values they defended. We understand that Veterans face unique challenges, and our staff and volunteers are trained to help manage post-traumatic stress and other psychosocial service-related issues such as remorse, regret, anxiety, and substance abuse.

Caring for Veterans is an act of gratitude, a tribute to their service, and a commitment to our shared values. It ensures that their final days are marked by the same honor and respect they displayed while serving our country.

Striving for Excellence:

Sheila Thomas, Social Worker
Western Reserve Navigator

"I know that we're making a difference in the lives of everyone we care for."



Western Reserve Care Solutions understands the importance of providing exceptional care. Those who have the option to earn a certification are encouraged to do so. Additional training and certification benefits both the staff and the patients and families we service by promoting professional growth and a high standard of care. Sheila Thomas started working at WRCS ten years ago as a medical social worker on the Navigator Palliative Care team and has worked in over five different counties in our service area. An expert in cross county travel, Shelia enjoys helping newly hired social workers navigate the demands of providing care for such an expansive service area. Sheila came to WRCS with a rich background working for Cuyahoga County in child welfare/protection systems.

Sheila is a licensed social worker and with the support of Daniel Pilarski, Education Coordinator, earned her ACHP-SW (Advanced Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Social Worker) credential with the National Association of Social Workers. "I know it's important to have the specialized skills necessary for working in this field, says Shelia. "It also helps with career growth and opens the door to additional learning opportunities." She further expresses that during her time at WRCS, she has grown spiritually, emotionally and psychologically. Shelia recognizes the value of supporting her team so that everyone can be successful and continue to serve patients and families. "Throughout my ten years with this organization, I've met some of the most caring, dedicated, hardworking individuals that I've ever had the pleasure of working with," says Shelia.

Shelia is proud to be a part of an exceptional team, and underscores how their support has helped her to provide better care for patients and families. "I'm so proud of my teammates," says Shelia. "I know that we're making a difference in the lives of everyone we care for."



Shining *Bright* in the Spotlight



In the Spring of 2021, ten years after her sister passed away, Jane Zebris saw that Western Reserve Care Solutions was looking for volunteers. She decided that this was her sign to explore volunteer options for the very same organization that cared for her sister in her final days. Although there are a variety of ways to volunteer with WRCS, Jane felt drawn to the end-of-life doula (EOLD) service and in July of 2021, she completed the training. "My experience has been such a blessing to me," reflects Jane. "I have so many precious stories and moments."

As an EOLD, Jane sees compassion in every facet of hospice care. "I have had incredibly moving moments with families and their loved ones," says Jane. "It's really cemented in my thoughts that this is the way the experience should be." Jane finds that family members are uncertain and struggle with ways to express their emotions and they appreciate the comfort that she can bring. She finds ways to meet the family where they are, like having them tell stories of their loved ones, sing or join them in prayer.

Serving as an EOLD is just one of the ways that Jane volunteers with WRCS. She and other volunteers decorate the Medina Hospice Inpatient Unit for Christmas. She supports Moments to Remember, runs errands for patients, makes phone calls and cards for patients, respite visits, shifts at Life's Treasures Thrift Shop and represents the agency at WAKR Summit Senior Events.

In August, Jane was recognized for these efforts with a LeadingAge Ohio Spotlight Award. This award recognizes an outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution through an innovative program or service that has positively impacted aging services. "I felt so honored to be nominated, there are so many wonderful and deserving volunteers at WRCS," says Jane. "I am grateful that I can make a difference in someone's life." Jane was one of six individuals chosen this year and was nominated with the support of WRCS staff, her fellow volunteers, and a family previously in our care, who wrote a letter on her behalf. "Jane is a true gift to the volunteer team," notes Jamie Glomb, WRCS Volunteer Services Manager. "I know how much the families and clinical teams appreciate all that she does."

Volunteers like Jane are the driving force behind the work that we do, often working quietly in the background, yet leaving an indelible mark on the lives they touch. In a world where collaboration and community matter more than ever, volunteers remind us that the power to make an impact resides within each of us.

Staff Stories

About 1,000 Western Reserve Care Solutions employees and hundreds of volunteers live and work side-by-side in the same neighborhoods with our patients and families. Together, we have cared for more than 145,000 Northern Ohioans since our inception. Throughout its 45-year history, WRCS has received numerous honors awarded to the agency and staff recognizing outstanding achievements in health and medicine.

Today, WRCS has almost 300 employees who have been at the organization for over ten years and nearly 115 employees who have returned. Long-serving employees' unwavering commitment not only inspires their colleagues but also fosters a sense of belonging and a shared history that strengthens the foundation of our organization. From support teams to caregivers, each member of WRCS is an indispensable role in providing comfort, dignity and support to the individuals and families in our care.



Laurie Mason, LISW-S, ACHP-SW, Bereavement Coordinator
Employee Since 2002

Laurie Mason started as a bereavement coordinator with the Lorain County Office and has remained in that position for the last 21 years. Prior to working at Western Reserve Care Solutions, she was a therapist at a mental health agency, working with adults, children, married couples and families. Working so closely with children and families in turmoil, Laurie faced formidable challenges in her role and decided it was time to embark on a new path. "My early days at WRCS were all about learning and orientation," says Laurie. "I was seeing clients within the first couple of weeks after starting my position." In her first few years at WRCS, Laurie was in a dual role as a bereavement coordinator/grief therapist, where she would counsel families of patients and serve as a grief therapist for the bereaved in the community. In just over two decades at the organization, Laurie has covered nearly every office within our service area and has navigated many challenging situations. "I worked with the community of Chardon after the school shooting," recalls Laurie. "A couple approached me asking if I could explain to their first grader what happened, and I'll never forget it." In the weeks that followed, Laurie and her fellow bereavement coordinators worked with individuals in the Chardon area to help them understand and process the experience. Today, Laurie continues to work at WRCS because she sees the impact of an organization that cares deeply about both the community and its employees. "I've stayed here because I enjoy the work and the flexibility I have in my role," says Laurie. "It's allowed me to balance my family and professional life, and it's made a huge difference for me personally."



Leona Levine, Team Leader, Lakeshore East
Employee Since 1993

When Leona started her career as home care nurse at Western Reserve Care Solutions 30 years ago, the agency operated a little differently. "There were no computers, cell phones or pagers," recalls Leona. "There was no GPS, so the red map books were our best friends!" In the decades that followed, she has had a front row seat to the innovation of the agency, including her own professional development. Leona began as registered nurse, moved into various leadership positions, and transitioned into her current role where she oversees a primary care team of 18 individuals. "I enjoy all of the people I get to work with," says Leona. "I believe in WRCS's mission and values, and I know my team feels the same way." This past December Leona graduated with her bachelor's degree with the support of WRCS's tuition reimbursement program. She sees how these programs impact employees and the care they provide. Through tuition reimbursement programs and quarterly certification opportunities, WRCS invests in professional development vital to a thriving and forward-thinking organization. "We have a good, longstanding reputation and a majority of our clinical staff have hospice and palliative care certifications," says Leona. "We strive for integrity and excellence in care, and that's what sets us apart."



Jennifer Palmer, Team Leader, Pediatrics
Employee Since 2003

In nursing school, Jennifer Palmer was required to pick a field to specialize in and began her journey in pediatrics. She joined the Western Reserve Care Solutions team from a previous role at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital where she helped open a floor that was geared towards chronic care patients who needed extended stay at the hospital. During her orientation at WRCS, Jennifer remembers feeling that this is the type of workplace environment that everyone always dreams. "I thought it was too good to be true," recalls Jennifer. "But years later, our team really is like family." Jennifer reflects on how much support she received in her role from the very start, and the lengths to which the entire staff helped her feel comfortable and confident in providing care for our pediatric patients. As the agency began to evolve and grow, a leadership position became available, and Jen utilized this opportunity to demonstrate her skills. "In 2011, I also took on the team leader role for the Go Where Needed (GWN) Team and was in that role for nine years," says Jen. After 20 years at WRCS, Jennifer still feels that the support of a phenomenal team has made all the difference. "I have a boss who is supportive and open to my ideas," says Jennifer. "She has become a mentor to me and helped me become the professional I am today." There have been some challenging moments in the past 20 years, Jennifer shares that there hasn't been a single moment where she regrets leaving a hospital setting and coming to work for WRCS. "I am grateful for each and every patient that I've had the opportunity to provide care, and I'm thankful for those that I've been able to work with along the way."



Jaimee Fannin, LPN
Employee Since 2003

When Jaimee started her career at Stein Hospice 20 years ago, it was a smaller hospice that was quickly growing. "It was fun to watch the company grow," says Jaimee. Starting out as a state-tested nursing assistant (STNA), Jaimee received the training and accreditation to transition into a licensed practical nurse (LPN) role in 2005. She has worked in several disciplines within Stein, including the continuous care team and the scheduling department, where she would become the supervisor. During her tenure, Jaimee started supervising STNAs and triage, but it's her day-to-day connections with patients and families that has made a longstanding impact on her career. "I enjoy helping patients and families with whatever is most important to them at the time," says Jaimee. "And I love working with my team!" In the last two decades, Jaimee has seen the organization grow and evolve and knows the significance of quality care. "I can still remember some of the patients and families from 20 years ago," recalls Jaimee. "They are the reason we come back every day."



Levon Skully, Information Systems Team Leader
Employee Since 1996

In 1996, Levon began his career at Western Reserve Care Solutions in the finance office tracking mileage logs as a contracted, temporary position. What was intended to be a week-long position, shaped up to be a 27-year career. "This was my first permanent job out of college," says Levon. "I was doing contract jobs, so I knew what was out there and knew WRCS was where I wanted to work." In his first days at WRCS, it felt like a small business. Over time, Levon transitioned from his role in the finance office to a role in data systems. This path led him to his current role, where he oversees Information Systems Education, Projects, and Software Development. "I've stayed for our mission and for my coworkers," says Levon. "We have a great team, and everyone works well together." Two of Levon's grandparents were in hospice care at WRCS and he has seen firsthand how every team works together to take away the stress and uncertainty that is often associated with end-of-life care. His personal experiences have shaped his immense respect for both clinical and support staff members and knows what it looks like when hospice care is done correctly. "I am always impressed by the growth that I have witnessed during my time here," says Levon. "I'm eager to see where we go in the future!"



Turning Ten:

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Warehouse Sale

In May of 2013, Hospice of the Western Reserve hosted a volunteer meeting to brainstorm new and innovative ways to raise funds and awareness for the agency. In the back of the room sat volunteer Linda Perlic. As the meeting wrapped up, a staff member approached Linda and asked if she was up for the job of spearheading this new event. Linda accepted the task and set out to research other nonprofits that have successfully hosted sales, and talked with the manager at HWR's thrift store. The first sale would be hosted in September 2013 and Linda, armed with information and a vision, started to gather inventory with just one other volunteer. Together, they would personally go to prospective donor's homes to view items that were up for consideration. Eventually, the pair gathered enough items to fill the small annex and executed a successful first sale. Over the years, the core group of volunteers leading these efforts slowly expanded and now includes 14 dedicated individuals. The sale, which is hosted quarterly, now spans across two large warehouse spaces at HWR Headquarters. Anyone interested in donating for the sale can call **216.255.9090** to start the process, which has now been streamlined by Linda and her fellow volunteers. The team is always looking for new volunteers to join them on sale day to act as a crucial part of making the sale successful by ensuring patrons have a wonderful buying experience. Learn more at hospicewr.org/warehouse.

2024 Warehouse Sale Dates

**Saturday, March 2 and
Sunday, March 3**

**Saturday, May 18 and
Sunday, May 19**

**Saturday, September 14
and Sunday, September 15**

**Saturday, December 7 and
Sunday, December 8**

**Saturdays
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Sundays
12:00 – 4:00 p.m.**



Hospice Care

Financial Considerations

Understanding Medicare/Medicaid is like deciphering a crucial piece of the healthcare puzzle. As you navigate the complex world of medical coverage, Medicare/Medicaid stands as a vital program designed to provide essential health benefits for millions of Americans.

This multifaceted system can seem daunting at first glance, but grasping the ins and outs is essential for securing the healthcare support you or a family member may need. Medicare/Medicaid encompasses various parts that address different aspects of care. Health and hospice care services are paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, most commercial insurances and privately by the patient/family. Once a diagnosis is given and a patient is determined eligible for hospice care, the hospice benefit can be selected. The hospice benefit pays for all medical care, medications and appropriate treatments that will provide comfort and alleviate symptoms related to the diagnosis.

The most important step you can take for yourself and your family in any financial situation is to plan ahead. We urge families to consider their future by completing their advance directives to make their healthcare wishes known, but we also encourage patients to consider establishing a Power of

Attorney (POA). Different and separate from a Healthcare Power of Attorney in your advance directives, a POA can step in to make financial and legal decisions for you should you be unable to speak for yourself. Western Reserve Care Solutions has volunteer attorneys available to provide more information at no cost to you. Additionally, our **Courage in Conversation** publication is a resource where you will find all the forms and prompts you need to initiate these conversations.

Beyond the technicalities, understanding Medicare/Medicaid will empower you and your loved ones to make sound healthcare decisions. Whether you're approaching Medicare/Medicaid age or helping a family member navigate the system, knowledge is the key to unlocking its benefits. WRCS has a financial resource advocate who is dedicated to providing this information to northern Ohio families.

At WRCS, you can contact a financial resource advocate to make sure you understand what your responsibilities are regarding payment (**216.383.2222, ext. 2290**) or visit our website at **hospicewr.org** to explore financial assistance and additional Medicare/Medicaid resources.

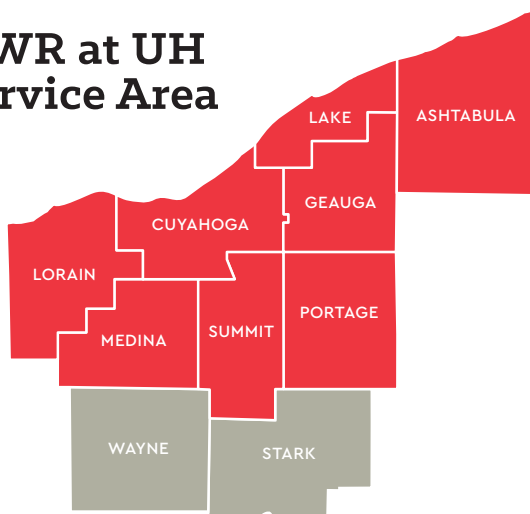


at



In 2019, Hospice of the Western Reserve (HWR) entered a joint venture with University Hospitals (UH) to provide UH patients with the highest-quality hospice services. The joint venture builds on the strengths of both organizations to provide a continuum of individualized care and services for both patients and their families. HWR at UH provides consistent clinical staff at most UH hospitals to improve patient throughput, through discharges to hospice. We offer direct admission to our inpatient units from any location within the hospital to manage patients that are symptomatic and meet the criteria for hospice. HWR at UH also provides bereavement support through Western Reserve Grief Services, where bereavement support is offered to families and loved ones of patients for a minimum of 13 months after the death of a loved one. Bereavement support is also provided for families of UH patients who are not in hospice, but whose loved ones died in the hospital post-extubation and need support.

HWR at UH Service Area



Quality Scores

| | NATIONAL | JV 4 STAR |
|---------------|----------|--------------|
| COMMUNICATION | 81 | 82 |
| TIMELY HELP | 77 | 78 |
| RESPECT | 90 | 91 |
| SPIRITUAL | 90 | 89 |
| PAIN/SYMPTOMS | 75 | 77 |
| TRAINING | 75 | 74 |
| RATING | 81 | 82 |
| RECOMMEND? | 84 | 87 |

Medicare's Care Compare website provides a tool that patients and caregivers can use to make informed healthcare decisions based on data such as cost, quality of care, the volume of services and caregiver feedback, including the willingness to recommend a hospice. Data reported August 2023.

In August 2021, HWR hired Abigail Beach as the Director of Health System Partnerships to help enhance the relationship with University Hospitals. As a previous employee of UH, Abigail has an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of hospital administration and can navigate the challenges that hospitals often face. In her role, she has helped to build relationships with acute and post-acute providers to remove barriers to access to hospice care, as well as earlier identification of patients needing hospice care. All these efforts will ultimately increase patients' average length of stay on hospice providing them with the highest quality of care at the end of their life.

Born out of a shared vision and a mutual commitment to excellence, this partnership exemplifies the lasting impact that this partnership can have on the community. With synergy at its core, the collaboration brought together unparalleled expertise and resources, and we look forward to continuing this partnership.



The Deeper Work of Hospice

You may have heard of the term “doula” when referred to how expectant parents plan for their child to enter the world. But you may not have heard of the term with “End-of-life” in front of it.

End-of-life doulas or EOLDs, provide non-medical, holistic support and comfort to patients and their families. This may include education and guidance as well as emotional, spiritual, or practical care. These individuals help build rapport with the patient and family/caregiver, enhance patient comfort, focus on ideal care and support and provide a peaceful and non-judgmental presence.

Lisa Gallagher, Director of Education and Engagement, shared that the deeper work of hospice has always been a priority and a focus as paid and volunteer staff strive to provide ideal care. It has also been a significant focus of Lisa's work at HWR. Lisa has facilitated in-services for staff, assisted with the innovation and creation of Hospice of the Western Reserve's EOLD service and continues to support the doulas and staff. Today, HWR's volunteer end-of-life doulas have flourished into one of the largest EOLD teams serving a hospice organization. With

Lisa's direction, HWR began the process to train the team to implement this impactful service.

As a former nurse at Rainbow Babies and Children, Lori Scotese had a remarkable road to HWR. In 1995, Lori's mother fell ill. The family began exploring options and found themselves at the newly opened David Simpson Hospice House, where Lori's mother became one of the first patients. “We were a rowdy family, but the staff was incredible,” recalls Lori. “Compared to other medical models, she was very comfortable, and we could be present as a family.” Lori remembers small moments during their time at the hospice house where the family could take in beautiful sunsets overlooking the lake, gather and be involved in their mother's care. “The day my mother passed, there was an incredible rainbow over the building,” says Lori. “I'll never forget that experience.” A year later, Lori started volunteering for HWR, and six years later, she became paid staff. Tina Thonnings, Lori's co-facilitator, joined the HWR team in 2015, bringing with her a rich background in service-focused work. Having served most recently as a coordinator of volunteers for a hospice in

Columbus, Ohio, Tina was no stranger to the impact that staff and volunteers can have on patients and families. "Lori and I are like two parts of a whole," says Tina. "We work together to continue to make this service excellent."

Today, Lori, Tina and their coworkers oversee 100 active volunteer end-of-life doulas. These volunteers have completed a robust training, which includes 12 hours of general hospice education and an additional 16 hours of specific training for this service. Additionally, doulas meet monthly and attend quarterly continuing education trainings. Both Lori and Tina possess a unique set of talents and expertise that they bring to every training. Lori is a member of the National Association of End-of-Life Doulas and is certified in cultivating compassionate presence and cultural diversity in end-of life care, to name a few. Tina holds a Master of Social Service Administration and is a reiki master. "We believe our collective backgrounds are vital to supporting volunteers," says Lori. "The training of our doulas is truly grounded in education and experience."

Volunteer end-of-life doulas can serve in a variety of roles, from making phone calls to sitting bedside. They provide specific services including a life review, which captures and documents an individual's treasured stories, life lessons and special accomplishments; legacy work, which helps a person leave a lasting piece of themselves behind to be remembered; vigil planning to assist a patient and their family by creating a sacred space in which to honor, empower, provide a sense of confidence in this part of the journey; and vigil presence, which stresses the importance of time, silence, personal connection and attention. EOLDs serve in all patient care settings, many times late into the night and even overnight if the need is identified. Families often share that they value and appreciate the care and support as much as their loved one does on their final journey. EOLDs are trained to understand that

this service is available to every hospice patient and each experience can be profoundly unique. "To be able to capture stories and fulfill these wishes are a wonderful gift", says Lori. "We don't focus on a task list; we focus on what is on the patient's agenda."

In essence, these volunteers are a source of solace and guidance, ensuring that the end of one's life is full of compassion, meaning, and a sense of peace, both for the individual and their loved ones.

Rich Ostendorf, End-of-Life Doula since 2019

Growing up in Chicago, Rich Ostendorf had always wanted to become a priest. On his days off during the school year at the seminary for the Archdiocese of Chicago, Rich would visit the hospital as the student chaplain. Through this experience, he realized the impact of spending time with patients and their families, which sometimes meant simply quietly sitting with them, so they knew they were not alone. When he decided to take a different road, he left the seminary and set his sights on medical school. In his third year, he attended a conference featuring renowned hospice and palliative care pioneer, Elizabeth Kubler Ross, who spoke about dignified and compassionate care for the terminally ill. In talking with her after the meeting she connected Rich to an opportunity to study at Saint Christopher's Hospice in England, which is widely considered the founder of modern hospice philosophy and care. Rich spent a month at St. Christopher's learning innovative ways of delivering end of life care.

When Rich began his career in emergency medicine as director of a New Jersey's hospital's emergency department, he hoped to bring a different approach to how families could be helped when facing the death of a family member. "Many times, staff were very uneasy sitting down with the family of someone who had just passed," says Rich. "I wanted to make sure people would hang in there with them."

"Deeper Work..." continued

In the early 1980's Rich transferred to a local Cleveland hospital, where he met the medical director of HWR. Through various training conferences and programs, they stayed connected and when Rich began considering his plans for retirement in 2013, he knew he wanted to volunteer with HWR. "I had taken many courses and programs dealing with death to be a hospice physician, but I really wanted to spend more time with the patients and their families," says Rich. "So, I decided to be a Spiritual Care Volunteer with HWR." As an end-of-life doula, Rich can connect with those families and patients, and in 2019, he became one of the first individuals to receive the EOLD training. "Everyone experiences the end-of-life process differently," says Rich. "It's my job to be there for both the patient and their family as they go through this journey."

Roz Frabotta, End-of-Life Doula since 2019

When Roz Frabotta's brother passed away without hospice care 25 years ago, her family was left feeling uncertain on how to navigate the dying process that unfolded in front of them. Five years later, her father was admitted to the hospital and the family decided to enroll him in hospice on the recommendation of the physician. "We were pretty clueless about hospice," says Roz. "The whole experience was so different than I thought, and we didn't feel as lost." Although her father was briefly in our care, Roz remembers the staff being available and helpful. They explained what was happening and what to expect, so it wasn't frightening or confusing like my brother's death had been. When her mother fell ill a few years later, the family quickly knew that they wanted her end-of-life care to be at David Simpson Hospice House. "It was an immediate yes," says Roz. Even before Roz retired as an elementary teacher, she knew she wanted to volunteer at HWR. When a HWR volunteer spoke at her church to share volunteer opportunities, Roz reflected positively on her own memories of her mother's time at David Simpson Hospice House and remembered the love, care and support she and her

sisters received. After such transformative journey with loss, Roz understands the importance of thoughtful end-of-life care and support. "When my mother passed, I felt calm and supported, it was so different from the experiences I had with my father and particularly my brother," reflects Roz. "I know there is a lot of value in this work, and I want to be helpful for other people." As an EOLD, Roz supports families and patients by helping them to better understand the entire process through insight, comfort and providing a peaceful environment. "I want to create a positive memory so that the patient feels supported and so do the loved ones they are leaving behind," says Roz. "We're not the last breath type of service and if people are open to it, it can be a beautiful experience."

Jim Gallagher, End-of-Life Doula Since 2023

Jim's journey to become an end-of-life doula came from a long path of personal growth. At the age of seven, Jim's father passed away suddenly. "He went to work one day and never came home," says Jim. In the early 1960's, Jim's family, like many others didn't fully understand how to navigate death and dying. It was decided that a funeral was not a place for children to be and Jim, along with his other siblings, were told that his father had simply gone to sleep. Jim subsequently spent the next few decades navigating the trauma from his father's death. He had trouble sleeping and didn't attend anyone's funeral. "I hated the whole idea of the thing," recalls Jim. "In my 40s, I had counseling and was able to get more accustomed to mortality." Over the years, Jim has known several people who have been through hospice and was aware of the impact HWR had within in the community. Both he and his wife decided to volunteer. As a newer EOLD, Jim has worked alongside one patient and his family, and he is already feeling the significance of this service. "It's been calming, to tell you the truth," says Jim. "I feel at peace being within the proximity of these patients, and I hope I can pass that sense of comfort on." Before he started his journey as an



"It's not just a service that we offer, it's very deep work we are doing," says Melissa. "We support, but we also educate and model how to walk through the end of life."

HWR volunteer, Jim did his research and encourages others to do the same. He connected with a friend who serves as an EOLD in North Carolina and asked questions to gather insight. "My life path has taken me here," says Jim. "Open your horizons, learn as much as you can, be still, and if it's what you're meant to do, you'll know."

Melissa Zietlow, End-of-Life Doula Since 2021

Melissa was no stranger to hospice care when she started volunteering for HWR in 2020. She and her husband cared for her mother-in-law in their home before admitting her to HMC Hospice of Medina County. "It was such a blessing to our family," says Melissa. "They provided such good care, and she was able to have a peaceful passing." Melissa, who also volunteers as a community chaplain, has a good understanding of what exceptional hospice care can provide patients and families. After her grandmother passed away, she applied to be a volunteer with HWR. Prior to applying, Melissa did extensive research to learn more about hospice

care and came across other EOLD training programs across the country, "I was thrilled when I heard that HWR offered this training," says Melissa. "I took the training not once, but twice, because it was so well done." Having successfully homeschooled three children through graduation (and with one teenager still in school), Melissa now has more time to give back. Even with her own personal experience, Melissa appreciates that EOLD training is available to any volunteer and staff, regardless of discipline. "I'm proud to volunteer for HWR, but especially because we offer this service," says Melissa. "I think every hospice system or organization should have an EOLD service to deeper the level of care and support." Her passion for the work stems from her deep respect for serving the community of people who find themselves struggling. "It's not just a service that we offer, it's very deep work we are doing," says Melissa. "We support, but we also educate and model how to walk through the end of life."



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Welcome, Kelsey Adams!



In August 2023, Kelsey Adams started her role as Communications Manager and comes to Hospice of the Western Reserve with over ten years of nonprofit experience.

"My uncle was recently in the care of HMC Hospice of Medina County, and our entire family had a phenomenal experience," says Kelsey. "When this opportunity came up, I knew it was the right place for me."

Kelsey is a graduate of Ohio University with a degree in organizational communication and always knew that her heart was in nonprofit work. She brings an eclectic background to HWR, having worked at the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, the Alzheimer's Association and most recently, Engage! Cleveland, a small nonprofit dedicated to retaining young talent in the area. As a Cleveland native, Kelsey is an advocate of local, mission-driven organizations that have a profound impact on the community. "So many people are aware of HWR, but don't fully understand how comprehensive the care is," says Kelsey. "We are doing amazing work and my goal is to make sure everyone knows about it."

Kelsey lives in North Olmsted with her husband and 100 pound labradoodle, Atticus. Outside of HWR, she is an active German-folk dancer, competing both locally and nationally, enjoys spending time with her family and two young nieces, and recently started learning to play the guitar. You can connect with her at **216.538.7621** or **kadams@hospicewr.org**.