

The Journey

Care and Support for Patients and Families Dealing with Terminal Illness Volume 15 Issue 2 • Summer 2022

She could never
go back and
make some of the
details pretty.
All she could do
was move forward
and make the
whole beautiful.”
—Terri St. Cloud

Dr. Bering Comes Full Circle with Hospice of Spokane

We recently had the opportunity to sit down for lunch with Dr. Stacie Bering. Dr. Bering has been a longtime community physician. She spent the first 20 years as a very successful Obstetrician and the last 20 years in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. “I’ve come full circle,” said Dr. Bering. “I may be one of the few Hospice and Palliative Care Physicians who have had the unique perspective that I have had.”



Dr. Stacie Bering

Dr. Bering is currently a Hospice patient, on service for Multiple Sclerosis. She was working as an on-call physician for Hospice of Spokane just days before she was admitted onto service.

Dr. Bering has been involved with Hospice of Spokane on a part-time basis since 2005 when she began taking calls as our Associate Medical Director. Over the years, she has been actively involved in a variety of ways. She has been willing to meet any need that came up. “I’m not sure what we would have done without Stacie,” said Gina Drummond, CEO. “She has played such an active part in shaping who we have become.”

Dr. Bering reminisced about her path to medicine. She started out with a degree in Political Science and found that managing political campaigns at the time were positions that usually favored men. She became more and more interested in medicine and decided to change course. Once she was finished with her medical education and fellowship training, she made her way to Spokane. She and Dr. Pam Silverstein had a thriving OB/GYN practice here for many years.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

An Unwavering Mission



Gina Drummond, RN, MSN
Chief Executive Officer

As we reflect on the 45 years of our existence, there have been many changes. Our mission, however, and our commitment to this mission have been unwavering. We continue to embrace our role as a model for excellence in end-of-life care. We continue to affirm life and intend to neither hasten nor prolong death. We honor the dignity of every person we serve and strive always to alleviate suffering. We provide comprehensive care and educate the community

about hospice and end-of-life issues. We

offer bereavement counseling services and support. We embrace all cultures and maintain client-centered multidisciplinary care. We remain faithful to this mission. Our founders, who developed our mission, remain faithful to us.

We are reminded that we stand on the shoulders of the fine men and women who worked hard to establish an organization that no one knew anything about. At the time, most people had never heard of hospice. They typically didn't even know how to pronounce the word.

There have been many accomplishments we can feel good about, such as providing the option of in-patient care through the Hospice House, providing pediatric palliative care, purchasing our administrative building, and having an increased focus in our northern counties.

We are grateful for a dedicated Board of Trustees who are committed to making decisions based on what's best for our community while ensuring financial stability. We are also grateful to our team of staff and volunteers who continue to show up every day and be present for the patients and families we serve.

We couldn't have experienced our success without the support of our community members or the hard work that was done long before we came to play our part. It is good to be part of this extended family that makes up Hospice of Spokane. This family includes each of you. Much thanks for all you have done to make us all we can be.

THE JOURNEY is a publication of Hospice of Spokane, located in Spokane, Washington. Hospice of Spokane is northeast Washington's only nonprofit, community-based hospice, providing care and support to people nearing the end of life, their families and the grieving. Patient-centered care is provided by interdisciplinary teams comprised of physicians, nurses, social workers, nurse aides, volunteers, chaplains, bereavement counselors and other professionals.

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Paws for Comfort Program Brings Solace and Smiles

As a social worker, Trina Poppens has spent the last 30 years serving Hospice of Spokane patients and their families. Our social workers support patients socially and emotionally



Left to Right: Dave McDougall, Trina Poppens and Greg Renner

through their end-of-life journey, as well as support to families. Helping to manage emotions, provide comfort, and find resolution are all components of their work. Trina's desire to help patients and families cope with these issues led to the idea of Hospice of Spokane's "Paws for Comfort" program. "I had heard of the benefits that come from pet visitation, and I knew our patients and families could really benefit from it," said Trina.

In 2002, Trina reached out to Greg Renner who, at the time, was involved with the pet visitation program at Sacred Heart Hospital. Together, they began researching the topic and developed policies and procedures to ensure the safety of patients, pets, and their handlers. They were joined by a committee of diverse members who invested their time and expertise to creating a successful program. One such member was Debbie Wing, who offered workshops and provided training and evaluation for pet partners. As Debbie explained, "there is a skills test to demonstrate the pet's good manners and an aptitude test to see how the pet responds in certain scenarios." Once training is completed and a successful evaluation has been performed, the

Pet Partner Team can be registered and is then ready to go on visits.

In April 2003, Hospice of Spokane accepted its first Pet Partner Team, Skip Partridge and his golden retrievers Dagwood and Darby. Our first referral for the program was a 15-year-old boy. His illness was leaving him weak and unable to move his body like other kids his age. He was missing a lot of school, feeling lonely and alienated. Skip and Dagwood were the first to come and visit the boy. Dagwood was eager to get to know the teen and the two became fast friends. So much so, that a painting was done by Andrea Moore titled, "A Day at the Park" to commemorate the special bond the two of them shared. This was the beginning of a very successful program that, over the years, has brought much joy to many patients, family members, and staff.

The benefits to pet visitation can include reducing anxiety, helping people reminisce, encouraging people to talk about their feelings, helping people talk about grief, providing socialization opportunities with other people because of a common interest in the dog, and providing isolated people an opportunity for touch/snuggling which



"A Day at the Park" by Andrea Moore

Volunteer Services Manager Dave McDougall Retires

After nearly 29 years of dedicated service with Hospice of Spokane, Dave McDougall will retire this August. Dave's faith, strong work ethic, self-determination, and compassion for others have laid the foundation for his outstanding career.

As a child growing up with eight siblings in Butte, Montana, Dave learned early on how to find his place in this world through hard work and determination. His success in running cross-country and track is just one example.

Dave excelled at running in high school and was awarded a scholarship to the University of Montana to participate on their cross-country and track teams. He set many personal running records throughout high school and college and felt fortunate to have belonged to five championship teams. Years later, Dave was inducted into Butte's Sports Hall of Fame.

After several years of working in a variety of social work positions and earning his Master of Social Work, Dave was hired as a social worker for Hospice of Spokane in 1993. When asked what led him to want to work in end-of-life care, Dave recalled two meaningful moments in his life.

In 1991-92, Dave's grandmother was receiving hospice services in her home in Montana. He recalls the wonderful care and compassion that his grandmother received. In comparison, Dave reflected on a time while working at Kootenai Medical Center, where an elderly gentleman was brought in from a nursing home to the emergency room as "full code" because he didn't have a plan of care. "This is when the lightbulb came on for me," said Dave. "I wanted to help people be better prepared for their end of life and to help them experience a peaceful death."

At the time when Dave was hired at Hospice of Spokane, cell phones were not yet in use. "I had to carry change in my pocket and when my pager went



Dave McDougall with his wife, Sharon and two sons, Caleb (left) and Jared.

off, I would need to go to the nearest pay phone and call the office." Many of Dave's first clients were AIDS patients or children. He found meaning in his work and appreciated the opportunity to work with children and their families. He would find needed resources for them and help them navigate the emotions and trauma that come with losing someone close to them.

In 2009, Dave was offered the position of Volunteer Services Manager and has cherished this role for the past 12 years. "I have thoroughly enjoyed working with our volunteers. I often wonder if they fully realize the immense value they bring to clients and their families. Whether they are serving at our Hospice House, helping in a client's home, or helping here in the office or at a community event, we honestly could not do what we do without them." Dave specifically shared his gratitude for Volunteer Coordinator Cheri Johnson for their work together over the past nine years. "Cheri has brought not only her skills, but her great sense of humor and fun to our team. There are so many wonderful people in this organization; it has been such an inspiring and rewarding experience."

"Dave is truly a good person," said Matt Kinder, Director of Social Services. "When I think of someone described as having a 'hospice heart,'

Dave is one who embodies that description. He is kind, patient, empathetic, compassionate, and wants to serve others. He truly cares."

Dave was part of the team that was instrumental in creating Camp Chmepa, our grief support camp for youth, and was a consistent presence at camp serving kids who experienced the death of someone close to them. His commitment to carrying out the mission of hospice has always been evident. Dave has touched the lives of so many clients, families, volunteers and colleagues. His laughter, kindness and presence will be greatly missed.

Dave is a family man and cherishes his time with his wife, Sharon, of 27 years and their two sons, Caleb and Jared. "Being a parent has been a great

joy in my life," Dave said. He has been a scout leader for years and still volunteers with them to this day. Dave has routinely worked with his scouts to secure retired flags and prepare the presentation of the stars for our patients who are Veterans.

While Dave will no longer have a daily presence with us, we hope that one day he will return as one of our very own cherished volunteers. In the meantime, Dave plans to either drive a school bus or a paratransit van, at least until both of his sons graduate from college.

"Dave will always be part of our Hospice family" states Gina Drummond, CEO, "He has had a tremendous influence on our organization and the care that we provide. He is beloved by all who know him."

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Several of our Paws for Comfort Teams (August 2020)

they may not otherwise have.

Hospice of Spokane is believed to be the first Hospice to offer in-home pet partner visits in the country. Over the years, we have had more than 30 Paws for Comfort teams. While the majority have been dogs, we have had a horse, a donkey and a couple of cats. Currently, we have 12 registered teams.

We are grateful to Trina and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring the program to fruition and to all our Paws for Comfort teams who have brought joy, comfort and smiles to those they have visited.

Do I Really Need a Will?

KAREN SAYRE, (retired)
SAYRE, SAYRE & FOSSUM

There are many good reasons to use a will to transfer assets upon your death. First, and most importantly, it allows you to be certain that those who you want to inherit your estate will

receive it. Next, with proper planning, a married couple can pass two million dollars or more in assets to their beneficiaries, tax free. Donations to charitable organizations can be included in a distribution plan for your assets.

For young parents, arrangements can be made to designate a guardian for minor children who can access assets for their care and education. Wills can also include specific provisions to permit assets to be set aside for beneficiaries with special needs and disabilities while still protecting their ability to maintain eligibility for benefits under state and federal programs.

Continued from front page

When Dr. Bering noticed she was losing the sensation in her fingers, she knew it was time to leave Obstetrics. It was around this time that she became more and more interested in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. “I was watching the Bill Moyers special edition on TV, which was all about Hospice and Palliative Medicine. I also had a friend who was facing terminal illness at the time, and I decided to go through Hospice of Spokane’s volunteer training to better prepare myself to help.” Being the life-long learner that Dr. Bering is, she pursued Board Certification in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. She started the Palliative Care Service at Deaconess Hospital and served there for around five years. She then took a position at Kootenai Hospital as their Palliative Care Physician and served there for another five years, all the while serving at Hospice of Spokane on an on-call basis.

Gina fondly shares, “We have been so lucky to have Dr. Bering with us over these many years. She is an inspiration. I look to her as a wonderful mentor to women in leadership. She never gives up, keeps learning, and stays open to what she will experience next.”

When asked about what the surprises have been for her in this journey, Dr. Bering had this to say: “I’ve always told patients that hospice would be there for them day or night and would attend to their every need. I know how very true that statement is now. Everything I said about Hospice was true in spades.” She also encouraged patients and families to consider hospice sooner rather than later. “It provides an opportunity for them to help you have the best quality of life possible for as long as that’s possible.”

Dr. Bering’s hope for the future is that Palliative Care will receive better reimbursement and more support from legislators and insurers. She is quick to point out that anyone facing life-threatening or life-limiting illness can ask for a Palliative Care referral in the hospital. In doing so, it will increase the likelihood of their symptoms being adequately managed, not to mention the support that their families will receive. Dr. Bering’s husband of 38 years, Jeffry Finer, and their two grown children couldn’t agree more.

“Stay open,” encourages Dr. Bering, “and keep learning.” What solid advice from an incredible mentor, friend, and community builder.

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If you die intestate (without a will), your estate will pass under state law. If you are married and the bulk of your estate is comprised of community property, your spouse will inherit most of all of your estate. If, on the other hand, you die with a significant amount of separate property that you wish to convey to others, your desires may be thwarted by the effect of state law.

Additionally, if you die and leave property, cash or insurance proceeds to children or heirs under the age of 18 years, without advanced planning in a

will, they will be able to obtain their inheritance in a lump sum on their 18th birthday. Depending on the size of the inheritance and their maturity level, this may not be a good idea. A will could provide for incremental distributions over time while still allowing the assets to be available for the beneficiary’s maintenance, education, support and health needs. To determine what arrangement is best for you and your specific circumstances, always seek the advice of competent legal counsel who are experienced in estate and disability planning.

Thank You!

*This list includes contributions made to Hospice of Spokane from January 1 to June 30, 2022.
We try hard to list each name correctly; if corrections are needed, please call our
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TASTE OF LIFE

*will have a new
location in 2023!*

It is with great pleasure to announce that Taste of Life 2023 will be held at the **Historic Davenport Hotel** on Friday, February 24, 2023 from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

We have had many great and memorable years with Taste of Life at The Spokane Club venue. It is hard to say good-bye, but we have outgrown the space and are looking forward to making new memories at the Historic Davenport.

Please mark your calendars for February 24, 2023 and plan to join us for this new and exciting experience in support of Hospice of Spokane and the patients and families we serve.

