



# The Journey

Care and Support for Patients and Families Dealing with Terminal Illness Volume 17 Issue 1 • Winter 2024

Life doesn't get  
easier or more  
forgiving, we  
get stronger and  
more resilient.

—Steve Maraboli

## Our Beloved Dr. Novan



Dr. George Novan

Dr. George Novan is a well-known physician in the local healthcare system and medical education programs in our area, pioneering the growth of our medical campus here in Spokane, WA. Hospice of Spokane has been honored and fortunate to have Dr. Novan on our Board of Trustees since 2016. His priceless contribution to the board includes his expertise as an infectious disease physician, which helped guide our staff and facilities through the pandemic.

As a man who has spent his life serving others in medicine and education, Dr. Novan came from humble beginnings, restarting his life several times before the age of 18. George Novan was born in 1947 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (now the Slovak Republic). After World War II, the country was under Soviet control. Dr. Novan's parents fled the country, escaping across the border with smuggled passports, leaving behind everything. His mother and father settled in Paris, France, restarting their lives near family. Years later, the French government gave non-citizens the choice of going back to their homeland or leaving for another country. If they decided to return to their native soil, Dr. Novan's father would have been imprisoned by the communists, so the only option was to relocate someplace new. Australia was taking anyone with a college degree, so that is where they went, becoming Australian citizens and calling a small suburb in Sydney home until Dr. Novan turned 13.

Longing to be near family and unable to return to any country under the Soviet Iron Curtain, where most of their family resided, the Novan's packed up once more, moving to the United States and settling in Glendale, CA, where Dr. Novan's aunt and uncle lived. It was in Glendale where Dr. Novan finished junior high and high school.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# The Importance of Community Partnerships



**Gina Drummond, RN, MSN**  
Chief Executive Officer

Patients often tell us how much they appreciate the efficiencies of our organization. They appreciate having a Nurse come to them to address their physical needs and manage symptoms. They appreciate the bathing assistance that our Certified Nursing Assistants provide and they appreciate all the ways our Social Workers help them obtain resources and prepare for the next step in their journey. Our Chaplains address spiritual issues. The patient need not be religious to have spiritual distress

and our Chaplains are experts at helping our patients achieve a level of peace and awareness of what their lives have meant and how they've made a difference. Our Bereavement Counselors are experts at ushering loved ones through their grief journey.

Patients and families are often very impressed that medications are delivered to them, in their home and that the needed medical equipment arrives and is set up without any fanfare whatsoever. Education by our providers of medication and durable medical equipment is important, and the providers of this education, care deeply that the information they've shared has been received and understood. Our partners are part of our team. We couldn't provide the best care possible to our patients and families without them. We don't need to own the pharmacy or durable medical equipment company for them to treat us as if we did. They are truly our team members and care as much about the well being of our patients as we do, and this is essential to the care and well-being of our patients. Our partners include each of you, representing every facet of our community. Our community members have supported us through good times and bad. We have been through some challenges together and we will never lose site of how much you mean to us.

*"Our partners are part of our team. We couldn't provide the best care possible to our patients and families without them."*

*-Gina Drummond*

THE JOURNEY is a publication of Hospice of Spokane, located in Spokane, Washington. Hospice of Spokane is northeast Washington's longstanding 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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## DR. BRIAN SEPPI, MEDICAL DIRECTOR

# Paying it Forward

As the Medical Director of Hospice of Spokane, one of my duties is to educate the public and medical providers on the benefits of hospice care.



*Dr. Brian Seppi*

There are two parts to medical education: medical school, which constitutes four years of education that all physicians undertake, and medical residency. Medical residency is the training a physician undergoes after medical school to specialize in a specific field, such as family medicine or surgery. It is surprising that neither medical school nor residency programs require any training in hospice care. There is so much time spent on treating and curing illnesses, and no time allotted for learning how to provide comfort for those at the end of their lives, when cure is no longer a possibility. Since we will all, at some point, die, it seems logical that hospice and end-of-life care should be considered integral to medical education.

I'm pleased to report that in Spokane, the two largest residency programs recognize the benefit of educating their residents about hospice care. Both the Family Medicine and Internal Medicine residency programs encourage their residents to spend time with Hospice of Spokane to learn about hospice and end-of-life care.

The time spent with Hospice of Spokane is very valuable. It provides our physicians in training with a foundation in hospice care and exposure to patients at the end of life.

A resident's main interaction with death and dying occurs in the hospital when a patient is taken off life support or when they are called upon to perform CPR on a patient in cardiac arrest. A death under these circumstances is usually traumatic in contrast to a peaceful death with family and loved ones by the patient's side in a hospice setting.

Residents who have knowledge of hospice services are more empathetic when it comes to dealing with their patients. They understand the importance of not only treating the disease, but also accommodating the emotional, spiritual, and psychosocial needs of patients and their families. This education broadens their perspectives and exposes them to a more holistic form of care that is not just focused on curing disease but promoting overall comfort and dignity during the last phase of life, influencing how they approach medicine in their future practices.

They are exposed to the hospice model of working in an interdisciplinary team, including doctors, nurses, social workers, and chaplains. This team-based approach enhances collaboration and coordination that is valuable across many medical disciplines.

At Hospice of Spokane, we understand that educating medical providers is a critical part of our mission. While learning how to treat diseases is important, it's equally crucial to realize that care does not cease when a cure is no longer attainable. Incorporating hospice education into a resident's training is the best way to guarantee high-quality end-of-life care for future generations.

# Taste of Life 2024 Fundraising Gala

Hospice of Spokane's annual fundraising gala, Taste of Life, was held on Friday, February 23rd at the Historic Davenport Hotel. This year, we celebrated community partnerships emphasizing the importance of our partnering organizations, such as Sixth Avenue Medical Pharmacy and Bellevue Healthcare, our volunteers, donors, and sponsors, our medical professionals, employees, and everyone who contributes to the efforts of our mission.

At the event, over 300 community partners gathered to support Hospice of Spokane. The attendees made the rounds to sip on libations from 16 local purveyors, enjoyed hors d'oeuvres prepared by the Davenport Hotel, and listened to live music from the talented Zonky Jazz Band.



This year we added a fun new element to our fundraising portion of the program, Battle of the Bottle! The unique bottle of wine up for grabs was a double magnum of Barrister Winery's 2019 Cabernet Franc. This bottle is 1 of 25 bottles produced and has never been offered for sale! The battle to win the bottle was fun and engaging for the whole room. After several minutes, the bidding came down to a handful of people in the room. Cheers and laughter continued to erupt as bid numbers battled back and forth, eventually declaring victory was bidder 119! It was a huge success and a fun time had by all.

Our fundraising gala gives Hospice of Spokane an opportunity to reconnect with our supporters and donors. It is a way for us to celebrate our success, plans for the future, and the relationships that have been made over the years with our community partners. We would like to thank everyone who attended this year's event. The support and generosity shown by all who attended is greatly appreciated.



# 2024 Taste of Life

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## Interested in volunteering?

Hospice of Spokane was founded by a group of dedicated volunteers in 1977 and has served our community for more than 45 years. Volunteers still form the backbone of our organization. They help in many ways, including in clients' homes, senior living facilities, in our office, or out in the community.

Volunteer activities may include, but are not limited to, companionship and conversation with a client, grocery shopping or other errands, meal preparation, light housekeeping or yard work, playing an instrument or singing, helping with mailings or other office tasks, or helping at fundraising events or other community events where Hospice of Spokane has a presence.

If you would like more information about becoming a volunteer, please contact the **Volunteer Department at Hospice of Spokane, 509-456-0438.**

*Continued from front page*

After graduation, he attended University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) where he earned his bachelor's degree in Zoology and his medical degree. During this time, he also became a US citizen.

Dr. Novan spent his residency at University of California, Irvine (UCI) and completed his fellowship for Infectious Disease at the UCI Medical Center. Following his fellowship, Dr. Novan met his wife, Chyrl, an ICU nurse. From 1978-1990, Dr. Novan and Chyrl lived in Orange County, CA, had two children, with a medical career that included private practice, serving as faculty at UCI and being Director of Internal Medicine Residency Program at one of UCI's affiliate hospitals.

In 1990, while reading a medical journal, Chyrl saw a job posting for the Internal Medicine Residency Program Director at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane, WA. With the hopes of leaving Southern California for a smaller, slower paced city, Dr. Novan travelled to Spokane, applied for the position, interviewed, and received a job offer within two weeks.

Since Spokane's internal residency program was affiliated with the University of Washington School of Medicine, part of the initial application process was to be interviewed by the UW's Department of Medicine chairman. During that interview, the chairman asked if Dr. Novan would like to have UW medical students train with his residents in Spokane. He jumped at the chance, which led to him becoming UW's Internal Medicine Clerkship Coordinator for Spokane.

WSU and UW School of Medicine worked together to establish a first-year medical school program as part of UW's multistate regional medical school training. Dr. Novan was asked to be the Associate Director of that program at WSU Spokane. As WSU grew and realized the state would benefit from having two independent

medical schools in the state, it broke away from UW and created the Elson S. Floyd WSU College of Medicine. Dr. Novan was part of that creation process and continued there in both teaching and administrative roles until retiring in 2018.

Since retiring, Dr. Novan still enjoys being a guest lecturer at the WSU Spokane Medical School for first year medical students and when the weather is warmer, you may find him at his cabin in North Idaho, kayaking around the lake or playing with his dog down by the water. He also takes pleasure in spending time with his family and grandkids.

Dr. Novan would also like to continue his travels, visiting the places he once called home. His trip back to the Slovak Republic last year allowed him to visit the hospital where he was born, his first home and reconnect with long lost relatives. Dr. Novan is enjoying a slower pace in his retirement. He continues to read various medical publications and enjoys tinkering with computers; activities that use his hands and challenge his brain.

While working at Sacred Heart, Dr. Novan met Johnny Cox, a founder of Hospice of Spokane, who was working as an ethicist for the hospital. The two quickly became great friends and this relationship is what ultimately steered Dr. Novan to serve on the Board of Trustees for Hospice of Spokane. Dr. Novan thoroughly enjoys working with nonprofits and says being a board member for Hospice of Spokane "has been a joy to be a part of. The board has some wonderful members; very bright, concerned, and altruistic people, full of great ideas." As we move into 2024, Dr. Novan enters his final year on the Hospice of Spokane Board.

We have treasured our time with Dr. Novan and his time with us has had tremendous impact. He is beloved in our organization and community. We are blessed to have had this time with him.

# Thank You!

*This list includes contributions made to Hospice of Spokane from July 1 to December 31, 2023.  
We try hard to list each name correctly; if corrections are needed, please call our  
Development Team at 509-456-0438 or email [info@hospiceofspokane.org](mailto:info@hospiceofspokane.org).*

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