



The Journey

Care and Support for Patients and Families Dealing with Terminal Illness Volume 19 Issue 1 • Spring 2026

"We are not put on this earth for ourselves, but are placed here for each other. If you are always there for others, then in time of need, someone will be there for you."

- Jeff Warner

Holding Space

BY CHRISTINA KUSH, HOSPICE OF SPOKANE RN

We care for people in their final days and often refer to them as "terminally ill", "the dying", and, as time passes, they are labeled "unresponsive" or "imminent". Hospice clients have been identified with a life limiting illness and usually have coexisting diagnoses that have shaped their past treatment, the medicine they take, and the way their disease will progress. Optimal hospice care is, therefore, valuable and essential in promoting comfort, dignity, support and to especially focus on the person rather than their illness.



At times, there can be stumbling blocks such as our own personal ideas about dying and fears we may consciously or unconsciously harbor about illness and suffering. Curiosity about the person and the important things they want us to know or have shared enables us to focus on the individual and to accept them where they are. Peaceful acceptance is something we strive to impart.

Learning about a person's history, family, and culture brings a depth and color to their life and helps us to provide the most compassionate and personal care. Often, we aren't able or allowed to learn these things about people, but we know that everyone is important for just being on this earth. As Dame Cicely Saunders said, "You matter because you are you, and you matter to the last moment of your life. We will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die".

Every dedicated hospice worker is open to learning about the person's life stories and personal goals as they face this journey. We work collaboratively with the client and their family to ease their suffering because amidst the suffering, sadness, and fear, there is joy and

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Dear Friends,

Every day, Hospice of Spokane has the honor of walking alongside patients and families through some of life's most meaningful and vulnerable moments. In those moments compassion, presence, and dignity matter. It is your generosity that makes these moments possible.

Hospice is not just about care, it is about relationships, dignity, and honoring life's final chapter. Hospice of Spokane

continues to focus on serving our community with compassion, dignity, and the very best end-of-life care possible.

On behalf of everyone at Hospice of Spokane, thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with us. You are truly our partners in carrying out our mission of providing excellent end-of-life care.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "April Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

April Hansen, MBA, BSN, RN, WCC
Chief Executive Officer
Hospice of Spokane
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Thank You to our Donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors and community partners who invest in Hospice of Spokane and help sustain our mission. Your support means the world to us, and we are deeply appreciative of your contributions.

To view the full list of donors who supported Hospice of Spokane from July 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, please visit our website:

www.hospiceofspokane.org

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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.

The Gift of Quilting



Quilting is an art that has been practiced for years, often cherished by the recipient, new or as a family heirloom. And while new styles and techniques have emerged over the years, the appreciation and comfort the quilt provides has remained true and steady.

If you have had a loved one cared for by Hospice of Spokane, you may recall a beautiful handmade quilt that was draped across their bed at the Hospice House, or if served at home or in a facility, a gifted quilt that was left by a care team member. These quilts are meant to provide comfort, warmth, and happiness to those going through their final chapter of life.

Hospice of Spokane is fortunate enough to have the support of local, independent quilters and quilting guilds that regularly donate quilts. While these

Continued from front cover.

laughter. But in order to guide and facilitate this, it's helpful to not only manage symptoms, but to bring peaceful regard to the bedside.

Holding a gentle peace and a quiet presence requires mindfulness. We must create space and not focus on their situation, the ravages of their disease, their inability to eat or to stay awake. I've found it is imperative to be perceptively aware that the person's lips have kissed the lips and cheeks of those they love, their fingers and hands have made

quilters will most likely never meet the recipients of the quilts, the hard work, love, compassion, and care to detail that goes into each piece is clear.

One of the groups that regularly supports and donates handmade quilts to Hospice of Spokane, is Valley Assembly of God Quilters. When speaking with Marsha Van Wagoner, who recently took on a lead role in this quilters group, she expressed her love and appreciation for her group that gathers weekly and has been around for thirty years! The Valley Assembly of God Quilters group currently supports five different organizations throughout the year with quilt donations, but their support within the community increases around the holidays.

Each quilt represents more than just craftsmanship or a blanket, it reflects a quiet act of kindness extended to someone that is a part of their community. In

life's most tender moments, these quilts become more than fabric, they become a source of comfort, dignity, and connection. Hospice of Spokane is deeply grateful for the generosity of groups like the Valley Assembly of God Quilters, whose dedication ensures that every patient is wrapped not only in warmth, but in compassion during their final journey.

*"Thank you, lord,
for letting us do
what we love and use
it to bless others"*

-Marsha Van Wagoner

intricate works of art, shaped their households, tinkered, designed, sewn, written, held, caressed. Their minds have been full of thoughts, dreams, plans, goals, love, resentment, sadness. And now we value the life they lived, the roads they've traveled, rocky, similar, or worlds apart from our own, because their lives are a testament to their individuality and value. We earnestly strive to be a quiet, affirming presence in the face of grief, joy, love, tears, peace.

Taste of Life 2026

On Friday, February 27th, 2026, we gathered at the Historic Davenport Hotel for our annual fundraising gala, Taste of Life. The evening was filled with sips, bites, laughter, meaningful conversations, and generous support. It was truly a night of connection, gratitude, and enchantment.

This year, 11 purveyors poured wine, beer or cider, the Zonky Jazz Band added to the enchanted evening as our live musical guests and the night was packed with fundraising activities and opportunities. The audience was led through the scheduled program by our emcee and KXLY's Good Morning Northwest anchor, Robyn Nance, who was accompanied by Matt Backs, Elite Auction, during the paddle raise, live auction and the Battle of the Bottle activity.

Each year, our pre-recorded program shines a light on a unique aspect of Hospice of Spokane that sets us apart from other providers in our region. This year, we chose to focus on our commitment to caring for patients wherever they call home. One family's story beautifully illustrated this mission, highlighting that we are the only hospice provider in Eastern Washington serving the northern rural communities of Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille



counties. Through this story we introduced Blayne, the son of a patient that we were able to care for in his rural home.

Blayne's father, Everett, lived in his rural home for 50 years and couldn't think of a better place to spend his final days. Everett is remembered by the love he had for his family and for the community he called home for most of his life. Having access to hospice care in his rural community allowed him to spend his remaining days surrounded by the people he loved the most, in the place he cherished the most.

We also introduced Dian, the spouse of Laurence, who was a beloved physician in the Spokane area throughout his career. When Laurence needed more specialized care, he moved into a facility that also offers independent senior living, where Dian eventually followed. Because Hospice of Spokane is able to care for patients in facilities, they could continue to spend their days together and Dian could be an essential part of Laurence's daily care.

Providing care for patients and their families, where they feel most comfortable, during one of life's most difficult moments is at the heart of what we do. Honoring each individual's autonomy and wishes is deeply important to us.





Events like Taste of Life make it possible for Hospice of Spokane to continue this compassionate work and carry out our mission. We are incredibly grateful to our sponsors, attendees, volunteers, employees, and the many community members whose generosity and support sustain us year after year.

We truly couldn't do it without you.

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Grief in Springtime

BY ERIN KENT, HOSPICE OF SPOKANE BEREAVEMENT COUNSELOR



Many of us are beginning to notice the signs of spring approaching. The sun is coming up earlier, the days are longer, and the daffodils and tulips are beginning to unfold. Signs of new life are all around us. And when we're grieving the death of someone who means so much to us, all of this "new life" can feel like a painful reminder of who we're missing. The planet itself can feel like an enemy. The sorrow and loss we're experiencing internally may not align with the greening happening around us.

If this season feels heavier for you, it doesn't mean you are doing grief "wrong." Many people who are grieving report that seasonal shifts can intensify feelings of loss. While this can feel confusing in a season associated with growth and renewal, it reflects the reality that our internal experiences don't always match what is happening in the world around us.

One of my favorite quotes by grief expert Alan Wolfelt is, "death ends a life; it doesn't end a relationship." This doesn't mean the relationship stays the same.

The lack of their physical presence is a constant reminder of that. And if we don't hold beliefs about life continuing after death, we can focus on connection with the parts of our loved one that continue in us, such as our memories or DNA. Finding ways to honor your loved one and foster a sense of connection can be especially helpful.

Here are some ideas for remembering and fostering connection in the springtime:

- Create a memorial space in your garden, yard or even on a porch or balcony by using containers for plants. Choose a spot that feels safe for you to spend some time. You might consider adding a chair or bench so the space feels more inviting for you.
- Plant flowers, herbs, or plants that remind you of your loved one, or simply choose ones that bring you comfort. Tending to them over time can become a gentle, ongoing ritual of connection.
- Consider decorating the space with painted rocks or create a garden stone using meaningful items like shells or colored stones that remind you of your loved one.
- Begin a small project or hobby that feels manageable. Spring can be a natural entry point for starting something new, even while carrying your grief.

- Give packets of seeds to family, friends or possibly strangers and invite them to plant something in your loved one's memory.
- Engage in small acts of kindness in honor of your loved one, such as helping a neighbor, leaving a small gift for someone, or tending to a shared space.
- Visit and care for their gravesite or memorial space, if that feels meaningful. Bringing flowers, cleaning the area, or simply being there can be a way of feeling you're still able to care for them.
- If being outdoors is difficult, consider indoor options such as getting a house plant, lighting a memorial candle (battery-operated candles can also be an option), or creating a small space in your home with pictures or mementos where you can pause and remember your person.

These are just a few ways to mourn and connect. Feel free to modify any of these or even create some of your own. Grief and the world around you may not feel aligned right now, but it won't always feel this way. Grief changes as surely as the seasons do. If you would like additional ideas or resources for grief support, please don't hesitate to contact Hospice of Spokane's Bereavement Department. We are always happy to provide additional support.

The Facts About Hospice Care

All too often, we hear people say they wish they had received hospice care sooner. For many, they didn't know how much Hospice of Spokane could help or they had incorrect information about when and how to access hospice care. Some of the most misunderstood facts include:

Hospice is Not Just for Cancer Patients

FACT: Hospice care is for anyone with a life-limiting illness, regardless of the diagnosis. Many of our patients suffer from heart disease, neuromuscular illness, dementia, as well as cancer.

If Someone Becomes a Hospice Patient, Death is Not the Only Outcome

FACT: Hospice care helps people find meaning and purpose in their lives. Hospice of Spokane encourages a high quality of life so patients can live as fully as possible. Support for the family and effective symptom management for the patient, help everyone savor each moment together. In fact, some people feel better after having hospice care and may no longer have a 6 month or less prognosis.

It is Not too Early for Hospice if the Person Feels Good or Doesn't Have Pain

FACT: The best time to begin hospice care is before the pain and the discomfort begin. An early referral gives the person and their family time to get to know their hospice team and receive support while planning for the future. A six-month prognosis and desire for comfort care without curative and life-prolonging treatment should be all a person needs to receive a referral for hospice services.

Hospice Care Doesn't Mean Leaving Your Home

FACT: Hospice services are provided in the person's home, wherever "home" may be. Family homes, nursing homes, and retirement facilities are just some of the places our patients reside.

Hospice is Not Just for the Terminally Ill Family Member

FACT: Hospice care is unique because it is so comprehensive. In addition to patient-focused care, hospice supports the family and loved ones before, during and following death. We relieve families'

stress and anxiety through education and counseling. Respite care is also available for family/friends who need an occasional break.

Your Physician Becomes Part of the Hospice Team

FACT: We work closely with you and your physician to develop an individualized care plan. Our staff physician is also available if a patient doesn't have a physician or if a provider home visit is needed.

All Hospice Care is Not the Same

FACT: The quality of hospice care can vary dramatically due to expertise and philosophy. Beyond traditional hospice care, some hospices such as ours, also offer special services to enhance people's end-of-life experiences, such as visits from our Paws for Comfort teams or Reiki practitioners.

Hospice Care is Fully Covered by Most Health Plans

FACT: Hospice is one of the most comprehensive, affordable healthcare services available. Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurances cover hospice services. Visits to the home, medications, supplies, equipment and pain-reducing treatments are usually covered.

Hospice of Spokane encourages a high quality of life so patients can live as fully as possible. Support for the family and effective symptom management for the patient, help everyone savor each moment together.

Hospice is Not Just for the Final Days of Life

FACT: One of the most frequent comments we hear from patients is, "I wish we had called you sooner." Patients and families are often surprised by the breadth of physical, emotional and spiritual care they receive from hospice services. With hospice support, families find they are more able to enjoy every day they have together. People with a six-month prognosis and who seek palliative (comfort) care without curative and life-prolonging treatments are eligible for hospice services.



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