



## Hospice Volunteering: Being Present to Our Patients

By Susan Harrison Wolffis

Sue Barberini McShannock always wanted to volunteer.

"God willing," she says, her plan was to give back to the Muskegon community where she grew up, just as soon as she retired from her job with the City of Norton Shores. She knew exactly where she'd give her time: Harbor Hospice. "When I saw how wonderful Hospice is, that's where my heart was," she says. "I knew that's what I was going to do."

That promise has taken her straight into the lives of Nila and Howard Noble, a couple who make their home at Chestnut Fields, a retirement living community in Muskegon. Once a week, McShannock visits the Nobles — who have been married for 69 years — at their place, talking, getting to know them, spreading the gospel of kindness and care that is such a crucial part of Harbor Hospice's mission.



Nila and Howard Noble with Sue Barberini McShannock

McShannock has also taken her turn at other volunteer opportunities at Hospice: stuffing envelopes, delivering cookies, giving hand massages, working the front desk, even filling the bird feeders at the Poppen Hospice Residence. But visiting the Nobles "feeds the soul" like nothing else. And yet, it is such a simple concept. For two hours a week, McShannock listens to the Nobles' stories. She asks questions about their lives. She looks at pictures with them.

*A listening ear,  
a compassionate heart  
and a little bit of time*

Emmy Cerniglia with Julie VanderMeulen

She is there, just for them: a visitor.

"I often get remarks from people who say it must be awfully hard doing this," McShannock says, "but it's not."

Truth be told, it is a blessing, says Julie VanderMeulen of Twin Lake, a Hospice volunteer who visits Emmy Cerniglia at home for as long as four hours at a time, sometimes more — providing respite for her family.

To be part of a family's life during a time of hospice care provides "a unique relationship," VanderMeulen says, one that "grows with time." A retired nurse with a social work degree, VanderMeulen has volunteered at Hospice for almost three years — and she says she has gained more than she could ever give in return to the Cerniglia family, whom she describes as "loving," "large" and "so appreciative."

"I have been inspired by them. I have been blessed," VanderMeulen says. "This is a wonderful part of my life."

If she's heard it once — the feeding of one volunteer's soul, the blessing of another — Paula Poel, the volunteer coordinator for Hospice, has heard it 100 times over. That's how many volunteers she works with at a time, people of all ages and talents who take advantage of the training offered. "Our volunteers tell us they get more out of it than the patients," Poel says, "but then we attract caring, compassionate people."

Some, like Lynne Cavazos of Pentwater, volunteer because their own lives have been touched by Harbor Hospice. Both of her parents were in hospice care in Hart, so volunteering is very personal. A retired science teacher and administrator, Cavazos lived out of state for most of her career. She knew volunteering was a perfect way



Tom Dillingham with Lynne Cavazos

to get to know the people of her hometown again — and to give back in a most precious way. Three times a week, she spends a half-hour or so visiting with Tom Dillingham at Cherry Blossom, a home for the aged in Hart. Dillingham, whose wife died last year, is a family friend.

"I try to be there for him during his ups and downs, whatever he needs, being whatever kind of support I can," Cavazos says.

That's the gift brought by Harbor Hospice volunteers, says Trish Hindman, the administrator at Cherry Blossom. "The biggest thing is (Cavazos) is a visitor... someone who came just to see him... a friend," Hindman says "It's really uplifting."

Deb Howe, the medical supervisor at Chestnut Fields, couldn't agree more. "The people look forward to seeing the volunteers," Howe says. "It's an important part of their days."

So what does it take to be someone who visits hospice patients, whether they're at home or in a residence?

Both Hindman and Howe say: a listening ear, a compassionate heart and a little bit of time committed to someone else.

It's not that difficult, Cavazos says. "Sometimes, all you have to do is hold somebody's hand," she says, "and be there."

# 32 Years of Caring

Your Journey. Your Terms. Our Expertise.



Mary Anne Gorman  
Executive Director

## Director's Column

When I'm asked what I like to do in my spare time, reading a good book is at the top of the list. Having read and enjoyed prior works of Dr. Atul Gawande, surgeon and author, I was eager to see what his latest book, *Being Mortal* had to teach me. I was not disappointed.

Drawing on his own experience with patients and his father who had a tumor of the spine, Dr. Gawande describes his personal and professional struggle to accept that patients cannot always be cured and in coming to terms with his inability to 'fix' all problems. His stories bring to light the value and reward to both health providers and their patients that stems from a focus on comfort and quality of life in the time remaining.

While I've seen many improvements over the years with the growth of palliative care and hospice, the reality is that often patients are not getting the help needed to make the transition from aggressive treatment of their disease to care focused on comfort and quality of life. Too often the default favors treatments over care, longevity of life over quality of life, and, in the elderly, patient safety over their independence and autonomy.

As Dr. Gawande suggests, hospice caregivers inquire "How would you define a good quality of life" and rather than asking "What's the matter?" we ask "What matters to you?" It's amazing how that starting point helps both patient and our hospice team clarify what the goals of their care will be.

At Harbor Hospice we also train our staff to listen, listen, and listen. We start with what the patient's understanding is of their situation and move from there. Their goals become our goals... whether it's to die at home surrounded by family; to be kept comfortable; or to reach a milestone such as an anniversary or the birth of a grandchild. We join together with them as their hope is transformed by coming to terms with being mortal.

In addition to being a wonderful physician, Dr. Gawande is a great writer. I'm confident that you'll agree and be surprised to find a book on this topic to be a 'page turner' and one that brings into focus important considerations for how we care for the frail elderly and those with life limiting illnesses.

## 2015 Women of Accomplishment

Mary Anne Gorman, Harbor Hospice executive director, was honored on March 28th by the Greater Muskegon Woman's Club with a 2015 Women of Accomplishment award.

"She is a tireless advocate for women and children. Her work to establish Camp Courage, a free camp for children grieving the loss of a loved one, is typical of Mary Anne's passion for helping others. She has hosted receptions for new women executives in the community and encourages women to support each other in numerous ways. Mary Anne has been a mentor and invaluable sounding board for many, and we are proud that her dedication and passion are being recognized with the Women of Accomplishment award. She deserves this award, and we couldn't be happier."

Lisa Tyler, Vice President Community Impact, and co-nominator with Christine Robere, President and CEO United Way of the Lakeshore



Amanda Morse was just 14 years old when her dad died. She was too young, too tender. Too alone.

She was surrounded by people who loved her — her mom, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, family friends. But she was a kid, struggling with life, faced with the harsh reality of the death of a parent. "Being the age I was, I guess I was in denial," she remembers.

Her father, Jim Morse Jr., died of brain cancer at the age of 42 after months of surgery and treatment, hospitalizations, recoveries and setbacks. Even today — now that Amanda Morse is 29 — the memories are difficult to relive at times; the emotions always close to the surface. "It's definitely harder without him," she says.

But there was a welcome source of solace and understanding for Morse all those years ago: Camp Courage, a grief camp for children who have lost a loved one — a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or guardian, an aunt or uncle.

For so many of the kids who make their way to Camp Courage, like Morse and her younger brothers and sisters, the experience is nothing less than life-changing. At Camp Courage, they get to be kids. They play. They swim. They go fishing. They hike. They gather around a campfire at night and tell stories. For three days, they hang out at Pioneer Trails on Big Blue Lake — one of the

most beautiful inland lakes and camps in Muskegon County.

They remember how to be happy. Ask anyone — there is powerful healing in that.

And when the time is right, they talk. The kids talk with each other about the losses in their lives. They talk one-on-one with adults, there to listen, there for them. They talk spontaneously, and they talk — and listen — during special activities designed to address how to handle their grief.

"That was the best part," Morse remembers. "It was nice getting to know the other kids. I was surrounded by kids just like me." She pauses; there is more to say. "You know," Morse adds. "Knowing you're not the only one."

Stephanie Weesies, who will direct the camp this year, says Camp Courage gives children the chance "to bring their grief out in the open."

And yet, ask someone like Morse what camp was like, she remembers horseback riding, canoe trips and campfires, too. "I mean, it was fun," she says.

Since her Camp Courage days, Morse has graduated from high school, taken art classes in college — and in one of those it was meant-to-be twists in life — gone to work for Harbor Hospice as a certified nurse aide. She works at the Poppen Hospice Residence, a job she describes as "amazing." "I've never loved working anywhere as much as I love working there," she says.



"It made a difference for me,"  
MORSE SAYS.  
"Camp Courage made a difference in my life."



friends

Courage to admit it hurts

When asked if her early experience — her dad's death, her time at Camp Courage — influenced her choice of careers, she says: "It had to."



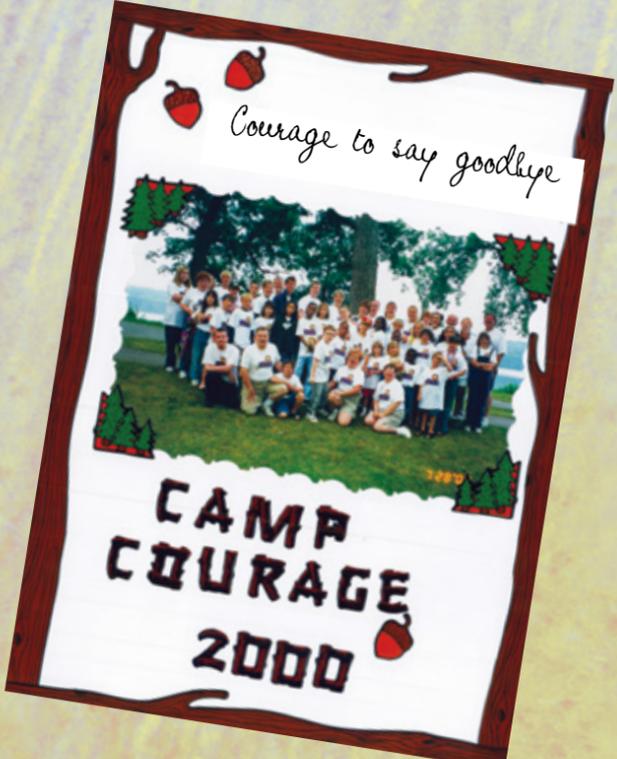
Amanda—15 years later

Since it first opened its doors in 1994, Camp Courage has hosted 620 campers, all between the ages of 6 and 12. They've lowered the age by a couple years since Morse participated.

Among the camp's many strengths is the one-on-one grief counseling offered by social workers, chaplains, trained volunteers and counselors. "That was really great," Morse says. "I remember what it was like, getting the chance to talk, just me, to an adult about everything."

Camp Courage 2015 is scheduled June 26 through June 28. Application deadline is May 28. Any child who has experienced the death of a loved one is eligible to attend. Thanks to the generosity of donors and special grants, only a \$10 registration fee is required.

"It made a difference for me," Morse says. "Camp Courage made a difference in my life."



## Caring for the Caregiver

Wednesday May 13, 6pm

Please join us at Salon 22 Spa in Ludington for a relaxing, stress free evening of massages and mini-manicures. Wine, cheese and desserts will be offered. Free for anyone in a caregiver role. Space is limited – call 231.845.5060 to register.

## The New Normal

Mondays, 3pm

Growing in Grief, "Ways to Embrace the New Normal" support group meets regularly every Monday at 3pm in Muskegon.

## Common Ground

Wednesdays, 4pm

Common Ground, a NEW men's support group for men who have experienced the loss of someone special, will meet on **Wednesdays from April 1 – June 10 at 4pm.** Common Ground is a non-threatening series dedicated to helping men walk through their grief while renewing confidence and supporting others. *You are not alone.*

Interested in support groups? Please call 231.728.3442 or 800.497.9559 or email [info@HarborHospiceMI.org](mailto:info@HarborHospiceMI.org) today for more details.

## Harbor Hospice Achieves Level IV

We are proud to announce achieving the highest partnership level in the *We Honor Veterans* National Program. Designed to improve the end of life care of veterans in hospice across the country, the program was instituted locally at Harbor Hospice in 2011. "Our staff is specially trained to recognize the unique needs of our Veterans who are facing a life-limiting illness, particularly where those needs relate to their military service" says Laurie Hickman, clinical manager. "We are also able to offer support to their families and assistance with locating resources and benefits in the VA system and to support them in their grief after the death of their loved one."



A vibrant component of the *We Honor Veterans* program at Harbor Hospice is the Veteran Pinning ceremonies that recognize and thank individual veterans for their service to our country. Hospice volunteers, including area veterans, have pinned 196 veteran patients. Paula Poel, volunteer coordinator, arranges the pinning ceremonies and has witnessed firsthand the gratitude of the veterans and their families. She says "It's so important that we acknowledge the service of these brave men and women...for some it's literally the first time they've been thanked. *We Honor Veterans* ensures that we are treating our veteran patients with the dignity that they deserve".



WE HONOR VETERANS

## Interested in Volunteering for Harbor Hospice?

Volunteers are an essential part of the Harbor Hospice team. Our volunteers provide companionship to people living with a serious illness and help their caregivers in a variety of ways. In the office, volunteer help is used with welcome and reception duties, filing, fund raising, community outreach and in other operational areas.

- FALL VOLUNTEER
- Basic Orientation – Monday, October 19, 9:30am-4:00pm
- Patient Care Training – Thursday, November 5, 9:00am-3:00pm

(you must have completed the basic orientation to attend patient care training)

There are several steps prior to basic orientation so please contact us for more information at 231.728.3442 or 800.497.9559, email [info@HarborHospiceMI.org](mailto:info@HarborHospiceMI.org) or visit our website at [HarborHospiceMI.org](http://HarborHospiceMI.org)



Gina Garton, RN with her grandmother Joyce Forbes, Volunteer

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## Ride to Remember 05|23|15



## Camp Courage 06|26-28|15



## Harbor Hospice Regatta 06|27|15



## 2015 Calendar of Events

For information on any of these upcoming events call **800.497.9559** or email [info@HarborHospiceMI.org](mailto:info@HarborHospiceMI.org)

### Caring for the Caregiver – Wednesday May 13, 6pm

Salon 22 Spa in Ludington. Please join us for a relaxing, stress free evening of massages and mini-manicures. Wine, cheese and desserts will be offered. Free for anyone in a caregiver role. Space is limited – call or email to register.

### Ride To Remember – Saturday, May 23; Ride starts at 11am

Please join us and our sponsors for this family-friendly bike ride during Fruitport Old Fashioned Days. This beautiful 15-mile bike ride around Spring Lake starts at Fruitport High School and ends at Pamona Park, with proceeds to benefit the Poppen Hospice Residence, a program of Harbor Hospice. Contact us or the or the Fruitport Chiropractic Center at 231.865.6545.

### Hospice Run – Saturday, June 6; Registration 11am

Calling all bikers! This poker run begins at Hot Rod Harley Davidson and ends at the Fruitport Eagles with a silent auction and dinner. Proceeds from this event benefit Harbor Hospice. Contact us or Randy Stapel 231.206.5956.

### Camp Courage – June 26–28 at Pioneer Trails, Big Blue Lake, Muskegon County

Registration for this free camp for children ages 6–12 who are mourning the loss of someone close is open now until May 28. Mourning is a very difficult process, especially for a child. Camp Courage shows children they are not alone and that it's okay to feel sad. Planned activities help the children recall and preserve memories in a safe and secure environment.

### Running for Camp Courage – Mercy Health Seaway Run – Saturday, June 27; Registration 7am

Join us for the 34th annual Mercy Health Seaway Run and collect pledges to benefit the Harbor Hospice Camp Courage program. There is something for everyone – Community Walk, 5K, 15K and Lake Michigan Half Marathon.

### Harbor Hospice Regatta – Saturday, June 27; Registration 11am

Going into its eighth year, this event features racing for big boats. Join us for a fun and relaxing afternoon at the Muskegon Yacht Club for a silent auction and picnic from 12–5:30pm.

### West Michigan Cancer Awareness Musical – November

Community choir, faith and awareness! Come join the staff of Harbor Hospice, other local health partners, and the members of Christ Temple Apostolic Faith Church in an evening designed to increase awareness of cancer and the life changing effect it has on our community.

For further information on upcoming events, please visit our website at:

[HarborHospiceMI.org](http://HarborHospiceMI.org)

