

journeys

winter 2021

Covid Challenges Continue, while

Hope is on the Horizon



Karen Lewis receives the Covid vaccine.



Jamie Stouffer receives Covid vaccine.

2021 offers hope for change for everyone in our community, including hospice and palliative care staff after nearly a year of living and working with Covid. One of the biggest promises for an eventual return to pre-Covid days is the beginning of release of the Covid vaccines.

At first, hospice staff wasn't sure when they would be offered the vaccine.

"15-20% of our patients have Covid in addition to their terminal illness," reports Iria Nishimura, executive director of Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care (WVH). "We continue to use universal precautions and have plenty of PPE to protect everyone, including our staff." PPE includes gowns, gloves, masks, and face shields.

Fortunately, help in accessing the vaccine came quickly from a community partner. "Santiam Hospital reached out to us, even before it was announced that we were in the 1a priority group," says Iria. "That's how great Santiam was to us."

The first staff got vaccinated right before the new year. Active volunteers have also been offered the vaccine.

Lauren Benjamin, of Santiam Hospital, says it was natural for the hospital to reach out to the non-profit hospice.

"Being a non-profit, community-based hospital, Santiam was committed from the start to reaching out to those at-risk health care workers, especially hospice, that needed an avenue for the Covid vaccine," says Lauren, the Marketing, PR, & Physician Recruitment Coordinator at Santiam.

Soon, other partners, like Salem Health and Willamette Valley Medical Center, started making the vaccine available, too.

Having the vaccine available to staff doesn't reduce all of the Covid challenges that WVH staff and volunteers face. "Vaccinations take 6 weeks to be immune with the two shots," says Iria. "We are still in the middle of it."

"Even when we are fully vaccinated, we are still required to test our staff for Covid twice a week," says Iria. Driving to the office from their usual service area - anywhere in the mid-valley - to be tested up to twice a week reduces staff's available time to see patients. "That takes them away from the patient care. It's an additional piece that limits our capabilities as to how many patients our staff can serve," explains Iria. In fact, because of extra demands on our staff, WVH had to temporarily decrease admissions for a period of time.

Facing Covid at work and home over the past year has been demanding for staff. They miss providing hospice care the way they used to. "We can't hold a hand or spend an extended time

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Covid Hope on the Horizon

Continued from page 1

in close proximity," Iria reports. Families have been concerned about how the extra Covid precautions would affect their hospice experience, too, but hospice staff work hard to provide the personalized care that the community has come to expect.

"One family was worried about how hospice would feel during the Covid pandemic," Iria says. "They were worried about all the PPE and it feeling less personal, wondering if they were safe, if they could get infected." Recently, the same family let us know that they were impressed that all the PPE and Covid precautions didn't interfere with the care they received. They were touched by the interactions they had and found the hospice experience meaningful.

"There is light at the end of the tunnel," says Iria. "We just can't let our guard down yet."



Melissa Lindley receiving her 2nd dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Barb Farmer Wins Spirit Mountain Helping Hands Award

Each year, Spirit Mountain Community Fund (SMCF) recognizes non-profit professionals that show dedication, commitment, and leadership in their profession. To recognize these individuals, SMCF offers an annual Yeʔlan Lima award. Yeʔlan Lima is a Chinuk Wawa phrase meaning "Helping Hand." This year's award-winning management professional is our very own Barb Farmer.



Clinical Manager Barb Farmer with "Helping Hand" award.

Barb is a registered nurse and has been a clinical manager at Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care since 2013. With 30 years of experience, Barb is a well-known hospice expert.

"We are so incredibly grateful for Willamette Valley Hospice and the much-needed services they provide in our communities. We're so delighted to recognize Barb for her hard work, dedication and leadership," said Michael Cherry, Executive Director of the Spirit Mountain Community Fund recently of Barb's award.

The awards committee was moved by Barb's efforts during the challenging past year. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Barb immediately implemented safety measures to protect patients, families, and staff. As she saw employee fatigue worsen as we were taking care of more patients dying with Covid-19, she purchased a massage chair for staff to use when they came into the office.

In September, during the area fires, Barb personally called all staff who potentially could be impacted. During the evacuations of patients and some staff, Barb facilitated the coordination of patient care, even in their temporary locations.

"I am humbled to receive the award. None of us are able to do what we do without everyone in our WVH family. It takes all of us working as a team to provide the hospice and end of life care and services we do. I am truly honored and proud to walk alongside all of my colleagues on this path," Barb replied.

Barb has a true passion to make certain every patient and family receives high-quality, end of life care. We know we are fortunate to have Barb at Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care, and it's meaningful to have our community recognize it, too.

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Journeys is a publication of Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care, a non-profit agency, serving our friends and neighbors in the communities of Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Benton, Linn and parts of Clackamas Counties.

Our Mission

We are a community owned, not-for-profit organization providing innovative, personalized, and compassionate care to patients and families facing serious illness.

Co-editors

Melissa Lindley
 Theresa Hart

Donors Will Give Tokarski Home a Facelift this Spring

Thanks to our generous #GivingTuesday donors, the Edward F. Tokarski Home will receive much needed repairs to the exterior siding, and new exterior paint to keep the siding in good repair for years to come.

Twenty-five donors banded together for this international day of giving right after Thanksgiving, raising \$1,995 toward this important project to keep the home for hospice patients in good repair.

The Tokarski Home is a specialized adult foster home for Willamette Valley Hospice patients that need a place to call home in their last weeks of life. A sliding-fee scale is available for those unable to pay the full cost.

One donor, Steve Foote, reached out with a unique way to help. After the death of his wife, Linda, just a few months ago, Steve had been thinking of ways he could give back to the hospice agency and discussed them with his son, Derek. "We were just so astounded by the help we got," says Steve. "We weren't aware of how it worked or how well it worked."

Steve has worked at Wilco since 1990 and thought about the employee discount he has available. "Paint is expensive," Steve says. "I talked to my son and we discussed how we could make an impact." Even without knowing the size of the building, he immediately decided he could buy the



Steve and Linda on a hike.

paint with his employee discount and donate it to the Tokarski Home.

"I know hospice probably had fundraisers planned this past year that you haven't been able to do because of Covid," Steve told a staff member. Linda was a giving person during her life, even arranging for the donation of some of her sewing supplies before she died. Steve sees giving back as a way to honor Linda. In fact, Steve hopes to have a sale of her craft and sewing supplies this summer to benefit Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care.



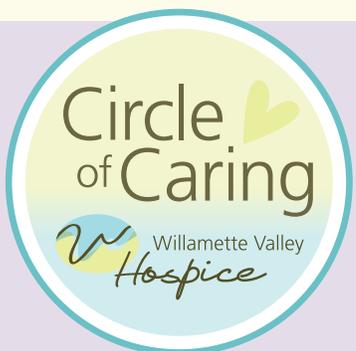
Edward F. Tokarski Home

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Monthly Givers

Every gift, every month helps hospice patients and their families.

See wvh.org/news for a list of our generous community donors.

To join, simply complete the enclosed envelope and mail it back or join online by visiting wvh.org/donate.



A Word From the Board



In November 2019, I had the honor of calling about a dozen people to thank them for their donations to Willamette Valley Hospice & Palliative Care. Without exception they were gracious, and most expressed gratitude for the care provided even though none of them knew me personally.

I closed the conversations by asking them if they had any questions about our current operations or plans for growth. None of them did.

That was before Covid and the Canyon fires.

It is difficult to express my gratitude and the gratitude of the Board for what happened next. In the beginning months of 2020, no one knew how wrenchingly difficult the upcoming year would be. As the magnitude of the pandemic became apparent, donors throughout the community responded with

home sewn protective apparel and increased financial donations more generously than we could have ever expected.

The support of our legacy donors and new donors from the community during this unprecedented time means two things to me. Donors appreciate what our care and expertise has meant to them and their families in the past and want to contribute to its continuation. I want to also interpret their donations in our time of need as a sign that they trust us to go forward in a time of uncertainty when all is not known and decisions must be taken with the best information available at the time.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the staff has gone over and above constantly during this year. I consider that a donation of the soul to be honored perhaps more than we can know.

I have a few daffodils coming up in my yard, and I am cautiously optimistic that we will survive this awful time. If we can, it will be, to paraphrase the Beatles, "with a little help from our friends."

Music Therapy Wish List

The music therapists have had additional needs due to the Covid pandemic. Cleaning strings more often causes the strings on their instruments to break down quickly. The therapists are not always allowed into care facilities when there are active Covid cases, so are often making personalized CDs for their patients or providing care via video visit. You can help our music therapists by purchasing items from their wish list.



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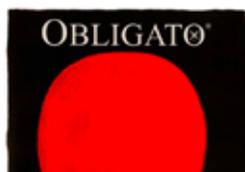
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