

2009

Photography, Film, Essay & Poetry Awards



First Place Winner/Adult Category

*NHPCO is proud to showcase the winning entries of the 2009 Photography, Film and Writing Contest—
a wonderful testament to the talent and creativity of so many members around the country.*

**National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization**



Photography Contest — 1st Place (Tie) — Young People Category



Alayna's Little Hands Playing with Life

Roger Wyan, Hinds Hospice, Merced, CA



Anissa

Roger Wyan, Hinds Hospice, Merced, CA

Photography Contest — 1st Place — Adult Category



Milton and Sue

Jon R. Hand, The Center for Hospice & Palliative Care, Cheektowaga, NY

Photography Contest — 1st Place — Nature/Abstract Category



Infinity

Jonathan Goatcher, Heart of Hospice, Hood River, OR

Photography Contest – Young People Category



Honorable Mention:

Comforting Paws

Erin Brideson

Hospice & Palliative Care of Cabarras Co.
Kannapolis, NC

2nd Place:

Young People

Rena Hawkins

Village Hospice
Lee's Summit, MO



Honorable Mention:

Camp Safe Haven Release Balloons

Jenni Williams

Haven Hospice
Gainesville, FL

Photography Contest – Adult Category



2nd Place:

Mr. M with Portrait

Paula Church

Family Hospice and Palliative Care
Pittsburgh, PA



Honorable Mention:

Jenika and Nana

Cheri Johnson

Pine Tree Hospice
Dover-Foxcroft, ME



Honorable Mention:

Vows Eternal

Dennis Wolterding

Mercy Hospice & Palliative Care
Myrtle Beach, SC

Photography Contest – Nature/Abstract Category

2nd Place:

Reflection

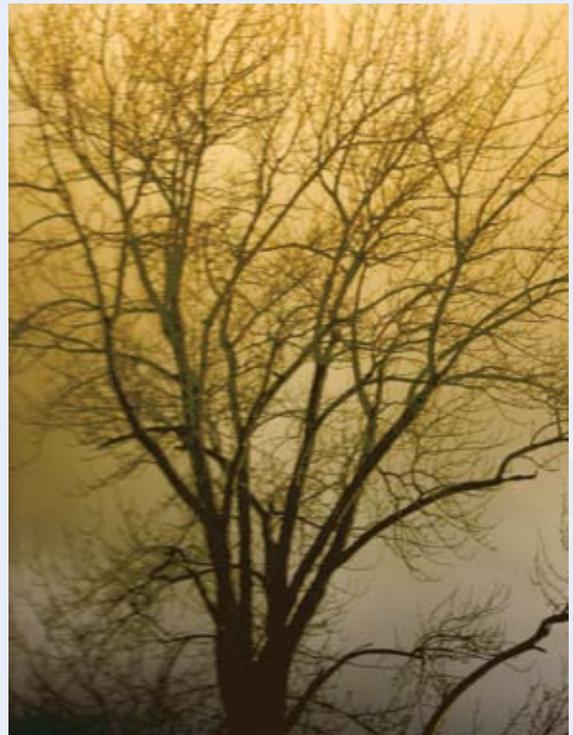
Marilyn H. Peck
Gulfside Regional Hospice
New Port Richey, FL



Honorable Mention:

Stepping Stones

Jared Porter
Alive Hospice
Nashville, TN



Honorable Mention:

Legacy

Angela Lee
Group Health Continuing Care
Seattle, WA

Film Contest

This year's film contest focused on films created to educate hospice and palliative care professionals and volunteers, as well as other professionals who care for patients and families at the end of life. The judges were impressed by the number of excellent films using staff, patients, and families to share important lessons about quality end-of-life care.

1st Place (Tie)



Soldier's Stories at Life's End

Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island

Providence, RI

Filmmakers: G Media & Associates

and



Graceful Passages: The Hospice Journals

The Center for Hospice & Palliative Care

Cheektowaga, NY

Filmmakers: Jon R. Hand, Anton Video Film

2nd Place: 2-Part Series:

Hospice: Navigating the Final Journey and
Hospice, Families and Care Facilities: A Life-Giving Partnership

Ministry Home Care

Wausau, WI

Filmmaker: Marx Creative under the direction of Liz Sheahan

Honorable Mention:

Tender Healing: A Sibling's Journey through Grief

The Children's Hospital

Aurora, CO

Filmmaker: Denver Film & Digital

Honorable Mention:

Hospice Volunteers: In Their Own Words

Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester

White Plains, NY

Filmmaker: Tom Warren

Essays



1st Place:

Still There

Ruth Hogan

Lifetime Care Hospice of Rochester
Rochester, NY

Each year that I have visited our sister Hospice, I have left part of my heart in Zululand. This year, part of me is still there.....

I am going out with the nurses on their daily, often dangerous, visits to hungry families and not having food parcels to alleviate their hunger.

I'm there with the patients coping with terminal illness and doing their best to survive in very grim conditions.

I'm walking with the children who are fortunate enough to be enrolled in school on their 10 km trek to class, having had no breakfast and will spend the day with no hope of food.

I close my eyes and see the pink sweater of the 5 year old girl who is being raped.

I picture the Gumede children, 15 of them, living in squalor, having the food given to them by Hospice stolen by their uncle. And I can see the eight Harley students and two teachers burying mounds of garbage that had accumulated. I see the happy faces of the children when a garden is planted that will yield much needed food, especially the eleven fruit trees planted and named for the eleven family members buried there.

I am once again sitting in Siphewe's house, eating the delicious traditional dinner she has prepared for the American visitors. This is the house she gathered materials for and built in two days. The Harley gang put gutters on her house and dug a trench so rain water has a path to her garden.

I am with the Caregivers as they lead support groups in the bush communities. I can hear the beautiful harmonious singing of the Zulu women, offering joyful praises in honor of our visit. I smile, remembering the lesson on the proper use of the condom, using a "wooden willy" as a model. I see the laughter on the faces of the people as they participate in a game of "fruit salad"...all cares and worries forgotten for a brief time. I see the appreciation on parents' faces as we bring out much needed clothing for their children as they wait patiently for items to be given to them.

I see the pride on the faces of three patients as they display the fruits of their talents...a beautifully detailed bedspread, a woven chair, and a well-made metal shelf. I smile again as I picture Carol holding a child (with no diaper) on her lap and the "puddle" under her chair after the child answered nature's call.

I am in the lovely garden at the Empangeni Hospice office as the entire staff, board members and volunteers gather for a ceremony of remembrance for five beloved co-workers. The saddest one is Pume, a beautiful 22-year-old Caregiver, who last year beamed as she wore the prayer shawl we gave her. She refused ARV's and instead, sought the aid of the 'Inyanga" a tribal medicine person. Knowing that the ARV's are successful, the tribal belief was the way she chose. She died in his doorway, leaving a two year old child.

I am being followed by several small children at an orphanage. The woman who founded this organization describes these children as the "lucky ones". Although the living conditions are at a bare minimum, the children are cared for, fed, clothed, educated and safe. They participate in raising chickens and tending a large garden. The lollipops we gave were a huge success and produced smiles all around.

I am sitting in the left front passenger seat of our rented car as Erma bravely takes on the task of driving on the left side of the road with the steering wheel on the right side of the car. I am officially known as the "front seat driver" reminding Erma to stay to the left, mind the traffic lights, and be careful not to hit cattle and goats in the road!

I am at the house of Rose, one of our patients. She has taken off with her 13-year-old child and her infant, leaving behind a 2, 8, and 10-year-old. As we are asking her neighbor where she might have gone, the 2-year-old tells the Hospice nurse, "I am hungry" Tears blur my vision as Utsav, a former teen volunteer with Lifetime Care and now entering his junior year at the University of Pittsburg, goes into his backpack and gives the child a pack of Oreos. I don't know if Rose ever came back. I wonder if that 2-year-old is still hungry.

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We are sitting in the Range Rover, taking a bush drive at the Thula Thula game reserve. Off to our right, an elephant comes racing towards us. As we yell to the driver, he laughs, telling us there is no need to worry. We are being greeted by “Mabula” an 18-year-old bull elephant. He puts on quite a show for us, bowing, walking around our vehicle, breaking off a huge tree branch. Our driver thinks he must have been a circus clown in a previous life. He leads a herd of 15 to drink and play in a small pond. I am in my glory, watching these magnificent, gentle creatures. The Masai believe that the elephant is the only animal with a soul. I agree.

I have a vision in my mind of a 13-year-old boy hanging by his neck in his house. We were told that shortly before our visit, he was raped on his way to school. His shame led him to take his life.

Last year, I was impressed by the way the Zulu people accepted our gifts, whether it was a kazoo, a lollipop or a beanie baby. They place one hand over the other, making a cup. I learned this year that any gift they are given is considered so precious, that two hands are needed to accept it. I like that.

I see Lynn’s complete joy when she learned that our check of \$20,000 had been deposited in the local bank. She told Erma that she did the payroll with “a light heart” and the Caregivers clapped to know there were funds to cover their pay! It must have added to her joy when Harley arrived with an additional \$5000!

I close my eyes and I can feel the hugs we receive upon our arrival and departure. We are told we bring so much more than financial support, vitamins, TB masks, dressings, gloves, band-aids, clothing, toys and soccer balls. Our mere presence, our emotional support, our care and concern, our appreciation for all they do for their patients and the 600-800 “yard kids” lift them up and give them hope and strength to do the impossible on a daily basis.

I can feel the love the staff has for the patients and the beautiful children. I know the appreciation the patients have for the food and clothing they are given, the support, care and concern shown by Lynn, the manager, the nurses, the Caregivers, and the volunteers.

I can see Zululand. I can smell Zululand. Part of me is still there.

Essays

2nd Place:

On Being Together

Arlen R. Stauffer, MD

Southeast Volusia Care Center
Halifax Health – Hospice of Volusia/Flagler
Port Orange, FL

All healthcare workers serve their patients by trying to help them heal, to help them through transitions across life's challenges. Some of us also serve our patients and their families by being there for them in their darkest hours. It's a service of presence.

The team at Halifax Health – Hospice of Volusia/Flagler was able to be a part of some very special moments recently. We had the privilege of serving...

HE and SHE were both elderly, and both ended up admitted to an area hospital that previous week; both were seriously ill...terminal. They were one of those couples who were just never apart in many, many years, and they were desperate to see each other in the hospital but could not because of their serious illnesses and hospital rules. They decided that it was time for both of them to be admitted to Hospice of Volusia/Flagler, and He prayed that He could just see his wife again and hold her hand before they died. He hoped they would go together...

Phone calls were made, an extra bed was rented and moved into Room 12 at our Southeast Volusia Care Center, and the two of them were transported from the hospital to our Care Center on Saturday afternoon. With the beds close together in the middle of Room 12, they laid side by side, holding hands. They stayed fairly comfortable, and they were happy and quite content.

She died peacefully the next morning as He held her hand, and He and the family were very grateful for how we were able to accommodate them. Rather than being consumed by grief, He was grateful, and He thanked the Care Center team on Sunday morning for allowing the two of them to have those last few hours together.

On Monday morning, as I began making patient rounds at the Care Center, He told me, "I am ready now."

The next issue they faced was that He very much wanted to be

able to attend her funeral. He was so weak and had so much pain, it was felt that He was too ill to be able to be transported to a church or an area funeral home for that service.

It was time to be innovative. This was all about this man, his dying wish, his deceased wife, and their family...the Care Center team had to find a way.

More phone calls were made, everyone cooperated, and the decision was made to bring the funeral here to the Care Center and to figure out a way for him to be there as much as possible.

Thursday afternoon, with the help of nearly everyone working and volunteering at this Care Center, as well as the kind folks from Dudley Funeral Home, She was brought here, to the Southeast Volusia Care Center. He had us withhold some of his pain medicine this particular morning so that He could be as alert as possible that afternoon. About 20 minutes before the rest of the family and guests were expected to arrive, the staff pushed his bed down the hall to the Chapel. Even though the cancer pain in his back was quite severe, He had them elevate the head of the bed so that He and She could be close, side by side. He said good-bye to her (here on Earth), and his bed was pulled back to the side of the Chapel as the other attendees arrived.

After the brief service, He stayed for several more minutes so that He could speak with each of the family members and friends who were there, almost as though He was saying good-bye to them also.

He was completely worn out. The staff wheeled him back down to Room 12, and He was able to rest. He took some pain medication then. Later that day, that same Thursday afternoon, He told me again that He just wished that He could now join his wife. He had made similar comments to his family also, and they followed me into the hallway as I left his room.

"Doctor, how long do you think He has yet?"

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The son added, "I am trying to decide if I should fly back home to work a few days...or not."

"Well," I said, trying to be as realistic as possible, "He's still eating a little, so it could actually be a week or two, but we really just don't know."

They shrugged, almost disappointed.

"But you know," I added, "sometimes when a couple is so very close (like they were), things happen that we cannot explain, almost like something inside them changes in times like these, and death may come much sooner than we'd predict. So, we'll just take it a day at a time for now..."

The family stayed by his bedside for most of the evening as He rested. He was peaceful as they said good-bye and left the Care Center. He remained peaceful and comfortable during the night and into the morning hours.

At 6:15 AM, He suddenly became a bit sweaty and short of breath. We gave him some additional medicine that seemed to make him more comfortable again, but then his heart rate became faster and irregular.

His family was called, and they returned to the Care Center. By that time, he had become unconscious. They sat at his bedside that day, and they let him know that everything was OK with them...it was OK for him to go now.

He died quietly and peacefully that evening in Room 12, just five days after She had left him in this same room, and just one day after this determined man sat up through her funeral service and spoke with each of his friends and family members who were there.

HE and SHE were together again.

Essays

Honorable Mention:

Hospice Heroes

Audery Drozdowski

Delaware Hospice
Wilmington, DE

When we hear the word hero we often think of the superheroes of our childhood. You know the ones: blue tights and red cape, big letter S on the chest or perhaps the one with red and blue, head-to-toe tights who can spray webs from his wrists, or the bat looking outfit all black and serious. These superheroes are able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, catch the villain with web-slinging preciseness, or catch the bad guy using gadgetry. Well, we at Delaware Hospice, Inc. have our own heroes.

The Hospice Hero does not wear a cape, the Hospice Hero does not have fancy costumes and these heroes are not able to leap tall buildings, fly faster than a speeding bullet or sling webs to capture the villains that they see. Nonetheless, they are heroes. Everyday they face the villainy of disease.

Hospice Heroes are volunteers. Often these individuals still work a full or part-time job and have families of their own to tend to, but they unselfishly give of their time and talent to help those with terminal illness. Many of the individuals who volunteer their personal time to help are retirees. They are a special breed of hero who has a lifetime of experience to share. Delaware Hospice volunteers help ease some of the calamity felt by the families that Delaware Hospice serves in many ways. Some mow lawns, others perform hairdressing magic, and then there are those who play a mean game of checkers. This list is by no means limited to those three things. Our volunteers are heroes because they relieve the burden of the illness for each person and family they contact.

Hospice Heroes are certified nursing assistants. These individuals, while not able to travel faster than a speeding bullet, are quick and precise in the care they give. They provide caring empathy with each patient and the patient's family. They teach families how to give good physical care to their loved ones. These Hospice Heroes make sure that the family and patient are comfortable with their care and they provide a needed ear to listen.

Hospice Heroes are chaplains. Hospice chaplains don't always

wear the big letter "S" on their chests signifying their hero status. These heroes offer emotional and spiritual comfort to those with illness that will take their life someday. Chaplains also offer this to the patient's families and friends who they are able to meet. Chaplains are able to open a spiritual door for patients and families to walk through, if they so choose.

Hospice Heroes are social workers. Social workers don't always use the gadgets that our favorite fantasy heroes use, but they do have their own set of tools: compassion, empathy, advocacy, knowledge, and self-determination. These heroes offer choices to patients and their families and support them in those choices – even if they feel the choice is not the best. They allow the patient and family the ability to live the last days as they wish without the confusion of judgment.

Hospice Heroes are bereavement counselors. These awesome individuals work with patients and families to accept what is to come or to help the families work through the mad maze of grief. They always have smiles, offer compassionate and active listening, sometimes offer their tears when no one sees and always always make themselves available!

Hospice Heroes are nurses. Nurses are the heroes who are viewed as angels by their patients and families. They are the ones who are sent to alleviate pain and discomfort. They educate patients and families about their illness to take the some of the mystery away and make room for more realistic expectations. They have an arsenal of gadgets at their disposal to make the last days most comfortable for all concerned. Among this arsenal is a caring heart to hear the patient, loving hands to hold, and kind words to ease the transitions throughout the illness.

Hospice Heroes are the Team Leaders. These individuals make sure that the other heroes are aware of the latest and most up to date care options for patients and families. Team Leaders are the guiding force behind the other hospice heroes. They manage to make miracles happen every day.

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Hospice Heroes are the people who answer the phones with kind, gentle voices no matter how many phone calls from upset patients or their families they have received. They are the people who manage to keep the patient charts in order no matter how the other heroes may have left them. Hospice Heroes are those who work night and day to keep our computer and phone systems up and running so that nothing is lost and information is to the minute current. Hospice Heroes are those who manage the managers. They make sure that those miracles occur. Hospice Heroes are those who sit on the Board of Trustees and those who gather funding for all that is needed to make hospice beneficial to patient and family care. Hospice Heroes are those who keep the facility and grounds absolutely beautiful and thereby transfer a sense of well-being for all who enter the Hospice Center. Hospice Heroes are those

who prepare and serve well-balanced, delicious meals to our patients while they are in the Hospice Center. Our doctors and advanced practice nurses are heroes who write the orders to relieve suffering, provide an open ear, and offer gentle reassuring to all their patients and their families.

Hospice Heroes are many. They are interlocked and work together to make sure that patients and their families are well taken care of during a most difficult time in life. Hospice Heroes throw the doors open to the next step in this journey we call life. No, they don't have fancy super hero suits, they don't have any special super hero powers or super hero sidekicks, but they still fight the villainy of disease, the heartbreak of loss, and the depression of grief in many fantastical ways.

Poetry**1st Place:***The Lives Wink Out***Suzanne Cikowsik**

Hospice Partners of the Central Coast
San Luis Obispo, CA

The lives wink out
 one by one,
 With a breath, and a breath not taken.
 Some pass
 with a graceful synchronicity
 of body and spirit.
 Some – oh great sadness -
 turn their faces to the wall
 until their bodies can no longer
 sustain their spirits.

And we are the witnesses
 who remember and retell the stories
 We are the comforters
 of those who journey on
 and those left to live with unspeakable anguish.

So
 We must nurture and protect each other
 Drawing one another into the circle
 of strength and consolation
 that allows us to “work within the fire”
 without being consumed.

Poetry

2nd Place (Tie):

A Picture of the Man

Lilli-ann Buffin

Mount Carmel Hospice
Columbus, OH

On the bedside table
is a picture of the man
tan and stylish,
dark sunlight and vitality.

In the bed inches away
lies the man
eyes closed against the light,
against the pain,
the terrible pain.

He responds to our questions
the mind yet quick and alert:
“Yes,” the nausea is gone,
but the pain, oh the pain...
Medicine brings relief,
but then the thirst,
the terrible thirst...

Hours later, another call—
The man is vomiting thick, dark emesis.
We arrive at the scene.
The vomiting continues
at first a dribble from his mouth
then, greater, wetter volume.
Clots fill and then slip from his nostrils.

We stand at bedside,
in assembly line fashion
moving the basins,
the wet cloths,
the dark towels.
We search for the means to comfort him.
Each episode leaves the man weaker.
He lurches forward;
we hold him up.
Bloody emesis pours from his mouth,
from the nose.
His eyes are still closed,
but his heart is wide open:

“Thank you for coming,” says he.
“Thank you for staying.”
“Thank you for helping me.”

His body becomes too weak to go on,
but the spirit is still strong, still gracious—
a glimmer of sunlight and vitality.
“This is some day we’re having, isn’t it?” says he.

After five hours of this
the man vomits one last time.
We tend to him.
We wipe his skin.
We empty the basins.
A stethoscope on his heart tell us
his final moments have arrived.

A devoted partner takes the seat beside him now.
Beside the man.
Beside the photo of sunlight and vitality.
This loving partner holds the hand of the man
who once attempted to swim the English Channel.
Fever and illness overtook the man that day.
He touched the boat.
They brought him in.
The contest was abandoned, unfinished.

This day a life partner, a best friend
Becomes a sorrow-filled cheerleader—
“Swim for the other side,” says he.
“Swim for the other side.”
The man does.
This time he makes it.

It really was some day, that day—
the day we watched vitality dissolve into sunlight
as the swimmer reached the shore.

“Thank you for coming,” said he.

Poetry

2nd Place (Tie):

Saying Goodbye

Nancy Bodily

Yolo Hospice
Davis, CA

It wasn't so much the whisper
"you're doing it all by yourself"
as she ran behind my bike
holding on loosely

or how she sensed the precise moment
I didn't need her for balance
so she let go

It wasn't the blue of the sky
how it magnified tassle-ripe fields
green on green on blue possibilities

the way my hair floated
in a gentle, downhill coast
bike basket bursting
with happy endings

It wasn't even the dead metal sound
a hospital bed made in our living room

Her weary daffodil eyes blossoming yellow
hands pregnant with fluid
IV-soaked smile

It was the world

how it called and called
a wondrous refrain
to hang upside down on the bars

play kickball with the boys
clutch faraway stories of adventure
close enough to forget
those rows and rows of fresh cut alfalfa