

NHPCO's

20  
17

*Creative Arts Contest*

**Impactful Relationships:**  
The Interactions of  
Hospice and Palliative Care

National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization



NHPCO's

20  
17

## Impactful Relationships:

The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

Creative Arts Contest

### First Place

#### "Glenn Rocks"

Submitted by Liz Kopling,  
Director of Marketing &  
Communications  
Agrace Hospice & Palliative  
Care, Madison, WI



### Second Place

#### "Let's Just Make Art Together"

Submitted by Anne Williams and Lucy Cobos  
Care Dimensions, Danvers, MA



### Honorable Mention

#### "James Cook and Jennifer Aniston Poster"

Submitted by Daphne Massaro  
Ohio Living Home Health & Hospice,  
Fairlawn, OH

Category:  
Photography

National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization



NHPCO's



## Impactful Relationships: The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

### Creative Arts Contest



First Place

### "Initial Visit"

Submitted by  
Bette Birnbaum  
Hospice of the  
East Bay, Pleasant  
Hill, CA

The nurse says,  
I will walk with you  
through a land you do not yet know.  
I will ease your pain  
and help you breathe easy.  
I will bind up your wounds  
and be for you and the ones you love  
a source of truth and succor,  
a fount of compassion and confidence.

The hospice aide says,  
I will be for you  
like a mother eagle guarding her nest.  
When you hunger,  
I will provide food.  
When you thirst,  
I will provide drink.  
I will dignify you,  
smoothing your hair,  
softening your skin,  
and anointing you with fragrant oil.

The social worker says,  
I will protect you as you journey  
and keep you safe from all harm.  
I will be for you  
a sentry at your head and a guard at your tail,  
With a strong hand and an outstretched arm  
I will remove all obstacles in your way  
and lift your precious beloveds  
whenever they fall.

The chaplain says,  
I will be an ear for your prayers  
and a cradle for your comfort.  
I will be with you  
in the valley of deepest darkness,  
a friend in green pastures and beside still  
waters.  
I will share your overflowing cup  
and together,  
we will sip of your  
deepest sorrows and greatest joys.

The patient says,  
Hineini,  
Here I am,  
the beggar at the gate,  
lame, mute,  
my soiled rags  
frayed and flapping in the hot wind.  
With fear and trembling  
I commit myself into your hands.

Teach me to number my days and shape a heart  
of wisdom  
as you read me like a sacred scroll,  
lauding and praising  
glorifying and exalting  
my Name.

Category:  
Poetry

National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization



20  
17

## Impactful Relationships: The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

### Creative Arts Contest

#### Second Place

#### "Rosemary"

Author: Gary Blackmore, Submitted by Dale Willis, Hospice Compassus, Columbia, MO

they had ask me just to sit with her –  
-that's all I was required to do –  
-I was this Angel Volunteer –  
-just be there with her –  
-her time would soon be through  
Parkside Manor – room number 104  
I had a name without a face - -  
- I was to be an Angel for a few hours –  
just try and occupy some space - -  
it sounded simple enough - -  
but I couldn't help but wonder why –  
- - why is there no family with her –  
-when she's just about to die  
"Rosemary is my favorite" - -  
the nurse said in a quivering tone –  
"I'm so glad you're here with her now -  
-she won't be so all alone"  
her eyes were fixed on Rosemary  
"she's been here a long time" –  
the young nurse said –  
"I'll be here all day" –  
- - - she knew what lied ahead  
she sleeps so peacefully - -  
- - her frail body still - beneath the quilt - -  
- a stuffed monkey watching over her –  
I wondered – was he feeling any guilt  
there's nothing we can do – I feel like telling  
him  
- - he and I watch – as her breathing labors - -  
-I'm sure she was a very lovely lady – -  
-a fine Mother, Daughter and neighbor  
a calendar on the wall - -  
- makes me realize  
that our life is broken into stages  
- - and "oh" how fast –  
- - - we seem to turn the pages  
a blank screen on a television –  
- - Rosemary's reflection is what I see –  
- - I wondered - when she passes - -  
- that image - - "will I still be able to see" –  
the hum of the oxygen is constant –  
- supplying air for her to breathe –  
- - like being in your mother's womb –  
- - - until it is time to leave  
Rosemary will soon embark on a new life –  
-no machines needed to keep her alive  
-a place called Heaven is near –  
-where life in never ending – and  
- all God's creatures forever thrive  
patients meander up and down the hall –  
- - going about their everyday routine - -  
suddenly I grasp - what a normal thing dying  
is - -  
- - - in life's ongoing theme  
Rosemary will pass away - -  
- her room will not be vacant long - -  
- someone new will swiftly take her place –  
the nurses seem so strong  
dying is just a normal part of life  
- - there's nothing we should fear  
- embrace every day as if it's your last  
hold tight - to those you love so dear  
a Crossword Puzzle passes my time  
- as I wait for her to drift away  
I fill each box with a letter –  
- and I can't help but think  
what if each square - resembles a certain day  
.I hope Rosemary completed her puzzle –  
- didn't leave any empty blanks –  
got to do everything that she wanted  
- - and received all her proper thanks  
as the sun comes up –  
- and it is nearly time for me to go  
-my Angel duty nearly complete –  
-I pause - as I head towards the open door - -  
I touch her lightly and say my "good bye"  
- I'll never see Rosemary again –  
- - I hope I was a good Angel for her  
- - for me – a blessed lesson it had been - -  
the monkey's "button eyes" follow me - -  
as I turn to leave the room  
-as if to say "thank you" – "have a good life" -  
-the real Angel will be here soon





## Impactful Relationships: The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

Creative Arts Contest

### Honorable Mention

#### **“Fingerprints in Time”**

Submitted by Bethany Fopma, Aseracare Hospice, Sioux Falls, SD

These hands are etched with lines that tell a story,

Hands that hold 91 years of memories.

These are strong hands; hands that have lovingly clung to the hand of his bride for 65 years.

These are tender hands; hands that cradled three infant daughters and wiped away tears.

These are determined hands; hands that have labored over sunflower fields and corralled cattle with authority.

These are skilled hands; hands that have guided his children through 4-H projects, and have folded together fervently in a prayer of provision for his family.

These hands tell a story-

Hands that are etched with 91 years of life's joys and struggles.

These hands have navigated the wheel of a 1956 Buick while maneuvering through the twists and turns of life.

These hands have cheered on the Minnesota Vikings in seasons of good and bad.

These hands have cheered on his family while sitting in the front-row bleacher of life.

These hands have warmly enveloped the hands of new-found friends from Iceland.

These hands have served our country in Korea and fiercely defended and protected his family.

These hands tell a story.

These are the hands of a farmer,

A father,

A husband,

A friend.

Category:  
**Poetry**

National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization





## Impactful Relationships: The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

### Creative Arts Contest



First Place

### “Old Blue Eyes”

Submitted by  
Fred Grewe  
Providence Home  
Health and Hospice,  
Medford, OR

As I sat weeping next to Sam’s just deceased body, what I missed most was the playful glint behind those beautiful blue Irish eyes. They truly were the window to his kind and gentle soul.

He had been a strapping young lad from Wisconsin camping in the Grand Tetons when Nancy and her family arrived for their vacation. Sam and Nancy hit it off straight away and, in fact, Sam followed Nancy’s family back to Utah. He simply showed up on her doorstep and never left. That was sixty-seven years ago and part of the story Alzheimer’s had erased from Sam’s memory bank.

Also gone was a lifetime of working for the forestry service, raising two loving sons, untold hours fishing, and traveling the country with Nancy in their little camper. Bedbound for the last several years of his life, as his body ever-so-slowly diminished so did a lifetime of memories and even an awareness of who he was.

What did not diminish, however, was that playful kindness in those deep blue eyes. Always present to the moment, Sam loved to laugh and tease. After months of visits and simple conversations Sam could vaguely remember my face but not who I was or why I was there. Most of the time I simply told Sam his own life story. It all started naturally enough. On one of my first visits, those blue eyes looked like a deer’s caught by headlights as Sam told me he couldn’t remember who he was or why he was still here. So I just started to remind him. As I told him his own life story, those blue eyes began to water and relax. When I told him he was a good man and had lived a good life he smiled. That mischievous Irish grin captured my heart.

Over the months Sam taught me so much about living in the present moment. That’s all we really have anyway. With him, the present was all there was. He taught me how lost we can get when we forget who we are, when we forget our story—and how important it is to have good friends and loved ones to remind us. He also taught me about emotional investing. Because of the love he had deposited into others throughout his ninety-plus years of living, he earned great dividends and was able to benefit from those investments when it was needed. His memory bank may have been depleted, but his emotional and relational accounts continued to thrive.

The night before he died, Nancy and their daughter-in-law Joyce were up caring for him and got no sleep. The next afternoon, Nancy had just lain down to get some rest in the next room. She told me she really didn’t sleep—she called it being in a “twilight zone”—when she saw a golden luminous ball suddenly appear on the door of the bedroom. She was thinking, “Is that Sam’s spirit?” when Lynn came in to tell her that Sam had just passed away.

Was that luminous golden ball that manifested on Nancy’s bedroom door Sam’s spirit as she believes? Was it the divine spark that animated the playful glint behind his beautiful blue eyes? I don’t know. But what I do know is that my own life has been incredibly enriched by simply spending hours with a good man, basking in the glow of his love with and for Nancy, and having the distinct privilege of re-telling this kind man with the beautiful blue eyes the story he actually lived.





## Creative Arts Contest

### Impactful Relationships:

## The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

### Second Place

### **"I Am Definitely the Fortunate One"**

Author: Jan Phillips, Hospice Aide, Hospice of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA

"What would ever possess you to want to do a job like this?" I really don't remember how I answered Mary's question that day, or, if I did at all! I have thought of that question many, many times. What exactly would possess a person to want to be a hospice aide? I have to agree, it certainly doesn't sound like a very glamorous job by any means. But there is so much more to it than most people realize.

Anthony was getting weaker every time I visited him. As I helped Anthony walk to his recliner his steps became slower. He became short of breath and needed to rest. His shower was finished and it had exhausted him terribly. Now, he rested comfortably in his recliner, positioned by the window "to keep an eye on things." As I bent down to remove the gait belt from around his waist, he looked directly in my eyes and patted my arm. "Thanks so much! I feel like a new person," he said. If only Mary could have heard that, I thought. That might have answered her question.

Helen wasn't much older than me. I so enjoyed seeing her each week. She was a proud wife, mother and grandmother. Even on a not-so-good day, she baked chocolate chip cookies and sent them off to her twin granddaughters. After her bath I would set her hair, creating a beauty shop atmosphere. I enjoyed doing her hair and nails and listening to her tell of her grandchildren's accomplishments and her hopes for their future. Her face would light up and her eyes danced with pride as she spoke. Helen once told me, "You provide the very thing that makes the biggest difference and it gets the least recognition." All women love pampering, looking pretty and a

little "girl time." If only Mary could have been sitting in our little beauty shop. That might have given her a little insight.

Last week, I helped James with his shower. Dementia had taken his short term memory. James was still able to perform most of his care but needed constant cueing. I stood off to the side, behind him, watching as he looked in the mirror and combed his gray, thinning hair. Suddenly, I could see what James was seeing in the mirror. I saw a handsome young man, full of energy, with his whole life ahead of him. With one hand, James combed a full head of thick, curly dark hair and with the other hand he pressed a perfect wave across the top of his head. He took a bottle of Old Spice down from the shelf and poured a bit into his hands. He rubbed them together and patted them on his face and neck. Standing up straight and tall, he adjusted his collar and looked in the mirror. He turned his head from side to side, sizing up the handsome man he saw looking back at him. A broad smile of satisfaction crossed his face. James was ready for the Saturday night dance with his girl! For that brief moment, dementia had no hold on James. Oh, I wish Mary would have been standing beside me looking in that mirror too!

Megan was a very beautiful girl, dark eyes and long black hair, and only 26 years old. Her dreams and future plans were rearranged by her cancer diagnosis. Everything was changing. Megan tried so hard to remain strong and "resilient" as she called it. She knew her deteriorating condition was bringing sadness for her family as the Christmas holiday approached. Despite her best efforts, she became weaker and needed more

help. On one of my visits to see her, Megan asked me to comb her long, beautiful hair. I told her she looked like a Christmas angel. She laughed as she looked at her choice of clothing for the day. "Do they wear sweats and a t-shirt?" I assured her I thought they did, that angels look beautiful in anything they choose to wear. The last day I saw Megan I was glad she was so peaceful and not in pain. I sat next to her and gently applied lotion to her soft skin. She was so tired. Knowing she could still hear me, I told her she would always be my Christmas angel.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and looked at me. With a soft whisper she said, "thank you," and closed her eyes again. Megan died a few hours later. On earth we cried, but heaven rejoiced. They welcomed their newest Christmas angel. Oh, how I wish Mary could have known Megan. She would have been touched by this angel, too!

It's difficult to put into words exactly why I feel so privileged to have a job as a hospice aide. We develop a unique connection with our patients. We share their excitement over new great grandbabies and listen because they still have something to say. We guide an unsure step, lighten situations with humor and reassure a confused mind. Hospice aides feel the incredible warmth of hugs from frail arms and see the unspoken words of gratitude in grateful eyes. We get teary-eyed when patients promise to watch over us from heaven and our hearts ache when they die.

Being a hospice aide has so many rewards. I receive so much more than I could ever possibly give...I am definitely the fortunate one.





## Impactful Relationships: The Interactions of Hospice and Palliative Care

### Creative Arts Contest

#### Honorable Mention

#### “Tulips of Love”

Author: Anne Chida, Submitted by Yael Klein, Unity Hospice of Greater St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

I fell in love with hospice the first time I went to visit a patient.

It was actually my very first hospice patient. I was a young social worker, and had just started this job, so I was admittedly a little nervous as I walked up the steps to visit this elderly patient.

I walked into the door. When I got there, the house was already filled with friends and family. They all loved this man. I thought to myself, what can I possibly offer him that he's not already getting? What do I possibly have to offer him?

Suddenly, among all the noise and people, the patient motioned to me. He was a tiny man, in a huge bed. He pointed to the floor and said, “Look over there. Can you bring me the plastic bag on the ground?” I hurried to bring him the brown paper bag. I looked inside: It was full of tulip bulbs.

He then whispered to me, while everyone else was talking amongst themselves: “I want you to go outside and plant those tulip bulbs. Plant them all along the edge of my sidewalk, so that next spring, when I'm not here, my wife will remember that I love her.”

So, I went outside with a little shovel and planted each one of those bulbs. Sure enough, the next spring, I drove by his house. The entire sidewalk of the house was filled with beautiful tulip blossoms, which—I'm sure—brought a tremendous amount of comfort and peace to his wife.

And as a hospice social worker, planting flowers is not the first thing you think about when you think about our job description. And in truth, much of what we do on a day-to-day basis involves more routine tasks: finding a caregiver for a patient when his or her family members work full time, figuring out how to get food in the patient's fridge on a regular basis,

helping a patient apply for Medicaid or health insurance. Other times it's trying to expedite visas for family members from foreign countries who want to see their relative during their last days. Of course, we can also counsel our patients and their caregivers, when necessary, during what is a very emotional and vulnerable time for them.

We are the ones to facilitate what would otherwise be awkward family meetings and sessions so patients can communicate their wishes and requests to their family members properly. Difficult topics may include treatment decisions, advanced directives and do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders.

During my years as a hospice social worker, bereavement coordinator and (after I went to seminary) a chaplain, I've experienced hospice from various different lenses. There are so many ways hospice has enriched me.

But it was that day – my first day on the job – that I found out that sometimes you will make an impact by doing something so little, so out-of-the-box...and it will mean so much to them.

While we will happily help organize “last wishes” for our patients, plan burial arrangements, or send a loved one's body to the home country after the passing, we will also be delighted to attend to the little things that truly make a difference to our patients...like simply planting a row of tulips on our patient's front yard.

