



Catskill Area  
**HOSPICE**  
and Palliative Care

# Connections

The Newsletter of Catskill Area Hospice and Palliative Care

“Mickey Mouse had *see story on page 3*  
never been so proud!”



**25**  
1983 – 2008



Catskill Area  
**HOSPICE**  
and Palliative Care



*Mission Statement:*  
Making Life Easier for patients and families facing serious illness or end of life by providing choices, dignity and compassionate care.

*Vision Statement*  
To provide, by emphasizing accessibility and using innovation, excellence in End-of-Life and Palliative Care that is recognized and valued by patients, their families, our employees and the community.

## Connections

Vol. 20, No. 2 Summer 2008

Layout and Design by:  
GrafIQa Creative Services

Editor: Bob Escher

Connections strives to express the Hospice philosophy, share news about the organization, and keep us connected with our many friends and supporters.

Connections is made possible by a generous grant from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation.

Catskill Area Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc., is a member agency of the Sidney United Way.



# Message from the President and CEO

It is a privilege to write this letter as the Acting President and CEO of Catskill Area Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc. This appointment came upon the recent retirement of Lesley Deleski. Lesley had served in this capacity since 1990. Under her leadership for the past 18 years we have grown to be one of the largest hospice organizations in the State of New York. Her commitment to fully meeting the needs of our patients and their families has contributed to the wonderful reputation that we have earned amongst our communities. On behalf of our staff and volunteers I wish the very best to her in all her future endeavors.

In moving forward, we will continue to value the unconditional acceptance of our patients' situations, treating them and each other with utmost respect. We are fortunate to be caring for more families today than we ever have and are continuing to expand our services to even more who want and need us.

I assure you that we are confidently facing a bright future, rigorously attending to our strategic plan of improving services, engaging employees and community members to help "Make Life Easier" for people facing serious illnesses.

It goes without saying that everyone is feeling the pains of gas prices and the state of our economy. As a non-profit, we too are feeling it on a day-to-day basis. Providing hospice care to 3,100 square miles of rural territory has hit us hard. A small example is our gas mileage expense has risen to \$37,000 per month.

As a community, you have always been very generous in supporting our hospice mission and I thank you for that. I am confident that you will continue to help us be of maximum benefit to our patients, families and children.

Sincerely,

*Lola J. Rathbone*



**Lola Rathbone**

Acting President/CEO and Vice President of Clinical Operations



# Against All Odds

*A heartfelt story of goodbye, thank you*

By Michael Hanft

Five years ago I came to work for Catskill Area Hospice as a twenty-three-year-old with the dual mentality of being scared to death to do this type of work but that it was worth it because I was going to provide so much to people as they neared the twilight of their lives. Within a few weeks my nerves settled as I was introduced to the greatest group of co-workers any young man could have asked for. While they all made me feel extremely comfortable, one wise soul provided some sorely need perspective. "Our patients will give you more than you will ever give

them," she claimed. I have never forgotten that. I hope I never will.

Two years ago, I was approached by the Volunteer Department to cut the grass for one of our "Choices" patients. I did not ask what the circumstances were. Being a Hospice volunteer on the side it is not always my business or responsibility to know everything about a patient. In this case all I needed to know was the patient's name, where the house was, and which flowers not to mow

over. What I learned upon meeting the patient was that she was young, approximately 30 years of age. For four months I cut the grass, said goodbye, and never gave it much thought as to whether or not I would see her again.

Six months ago I was approached about what was universally considered to be a difficult case. Hospice was about to admit a 32-year-old woman with two children and a diagnosis of lung cancer. There were questions raised about continuing treatment,

living situation, child-care, and, of course, who would care for this patient. Upon meeting her the following day, I had one of those moments in life when you are sure you know someone but cannot remember how or why. I

World in Orlando for about a week. "I always wanted to take my kids. I think now is as good a time as any," she told me on a warm afternoon. I wanted this to happen for her.

## “This never would have happened without Hospice”

chalked it up to old age (I am currently 28). She introduced herself as Aaron Fritzer and immediately I asked if she used to live in another apartment in town where I formerly cut the grass. When she confirmed my suspicion we both had the feeling of the light bulb going off over our heads.

Aaron explained to myself and to her hospice nurse Kathy Zahar that she still had hope her cancer could be cured. She was young, had two children (Tiffany, age 12 and Kyle, age 3), and had fought her whole life for what she wanted. Aaron not only was unfortunate to be afflicted with cancer at an early age, but also was born with Cerebral Palsy. Many people think that those who suffer from this disease cannot go to mainstream schools, hold down jobs, or even have children. If that is the case then Aaron did not get the memo because she did all of those things, and very well. She was a lucky person in many ways — mostly because she had a wonderful family. Her mother Glenda allowed Aaron to be independent, but always provided a maternal instinct when she needed help, acting as a surrogate mother to Aaron's children, and as the greatest friend anyone could have asked for.

After several months Aaron knew that time might be getting a little short and made a request. She wanted me to contact the Hope Foundation to allow her and her family to travel to Disney

Something reminded me that we had a family go to Disney before, but I wasn't sure of the details. After speaking with our staff, I was informed that through the generosity of others, we had the resources for two families to go to Disney this year. One of the families had to cancel and would not be going (what are the odds of that!); still there were certain criteria that they would have to meet. The criteria was met and Aaron Fritzer would become the first living Hospice patient to benefit from this rare opportunity.

In just over three weeks the trip was planned and Aaron and her family were on their way. With the help of her family she endured the June heat of Florida, taking in the sights, and even ventured onto a few rides. Mickey Mouse had never been so proud. Unfortunately, Aaron's health declined dramatically while in Florida. She easily could have died there, but Aaron wanted to be home. An early exit was a must, Aaron's dream trip now over.

My story is forced to be written in the past tense. Aaron died two weeks after arriving home from Florida. While in Fox Hospital I apologized to her mother Glenda for Aaron's failing health and the need to return early from Disney World. Glenda was as

much a mother to me as she was to Aaron with her response. "Why are you apologizing? We got everything out of this that we could have wanted. This never would have happened without Hospice," she comforted me. Due to the complicated nature of Aaron's illness, it was a difficult process for all of us who loved and cared about her. We witnessed a young woman who wanted to live but was forced to accept a different path. She personified a strength and courage that is rarely seen in this world: a woman who lived life being told "you can't" nonverbally told each of us "I have" and "It's ok."

It's been two weeks since she died and I still do not understand where her strength came from. Maybe it came from a family who loved her more than life itself. Maybe it came from a life lived trying to disprove all of the



stereotypes she was saddled with. Or maybe it came from contentment that some feel knowing they actually lived. My final thought regarding Aaron brings me back to my lesson learned from five years ago. She gave me more than I ever gave her. She always will. Thank you Aaron.

*Michael Hanft, MSW is a Hospice Social Worker*



2008 Epicurean Festival Food Tasting and Auction Committee



## Epicurean Festival Raises Record \$63,000 for Hospice Families and Children

The Catskill Area Hospice and Palliative Care Auxiliary Epicurean Committee did it again. Held on April 6th, The Ninth Annual Epicurean Festival, Food Tasting and Auction raised over \$63,000 to directly benefit local hospice families and children. This was made possible, in part, by our Lead Sponsors: A.O. Fox Hospital, Benson Agency Real Estate, Buttermilk Farms, Eastman Associates, Inc., Dr. & Mrs. Bryan S. Evanczyk, Gregory Plumbing and Heating, Information Systems Division, Inc (ISD), Liquor Depot, Northern Catskill Cancer Center/Fox Cancer Care Center, Otsego Automotive/Country Club Chevrolet, The Shipping Room, Thetford's Auto Center, and VSH Contracting.

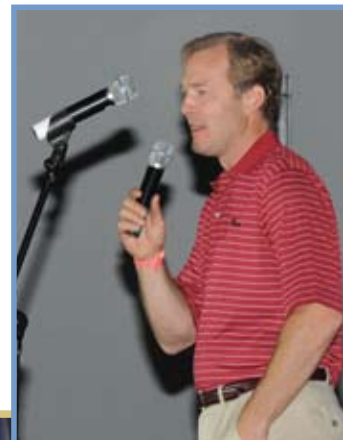
Everyone attending thoroughly enjoyed sampling the delicious food provided by over 25 local restaurants, caterers and educational food programs. The auction items, many and varied this year, were enthusiastically bid on and our raffle giving winners \$1,000 worth of groceries, helped us reach this grand total. Musical entertainment was provided by Big Fish Combo and lovely table arrangements were donated by A Rose is a Rose of Cherry Valley. A wonderful afternoon was enjoyed by our 300 guests. We wish to thank our Lead Sponsors, Benefactors, Patrons, supporters, advertisers, everyone who attended and The Otesaga Hotel, for their participation. Support of this worthy cause is truly appreciated.

# The Charity Event of the Summer

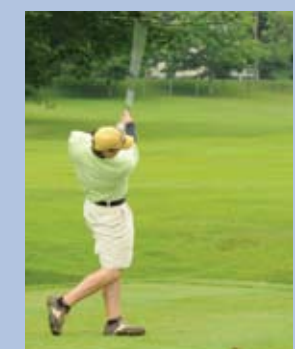
**Bigger ... and Better!**



**Top Row (left to right):** ESPN's Linda Cohn and Neil Everett gave an epic performance as event Emcee's; Presenting Sponsor NBT Bank guests enjoys an up close and personal photograph with REO; **2nd Row:** Karine, Stephanie and Derik Rich with celebrities on 1st Tee; Jamie Reynolds of NBT Bank gets the crowd ready for REO; **3rd Row:** Tournament Sponsor Energy East Foundation golf teams pictured with their ESPN playing partners John Anderson and John Buccigross; Party! attendees "Can't Fight This Feeling Anymore!" as they rock with REO; **Bottom Row:** ESPN's John Buccigross with long time hospice friend and family member Paul "Chopper" Clune; Mark May and John Anderson with hospice friend Paul Karabinis; Shannon Delker, Lee Catella, Michelle Eastman and Kiki Foreman enjoy a moment at the Party!; REO's Kevin Cronin "Takes it on the Road" in Cooperstown;



**Tournament Sponsors**  
Energy East Foundation  
Jett Industries



Derik Rich, son of the late Walter Rich hits the ceremonial tee shot of the Walter Rich Memorial Hospice Celebrity Golf Classic

## Major Sponsors

Adirondack Combustion; John Bertuzzi; Bettiol Fuel Services; Citi Smith Barney – Matthew J. Sohns; Fenimore Asset Management; Fidelis Care New York; Mold-a-Matic Corporation; NBT Bank ; New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance Company; Karine, Stephanie & Derik Rich; Security; Mutual Life Insurance Company

## Participating Sponsors

Andrew M. Blum; Astrocom Electronics; Bassett Healthcare; Boston Private Bank and Trust; CAD Designs; Citigroup – Dave House ; Covidien; The Daily Star; Eastman Associates; Eggleston Foundation; Ferguson Enterprises; First Choice Cleaners; Flagpole Nissan; Mike German; Hinman, Howard & Kattell; Hospice Pharmacia; Michael and Beth Ann Hutcherson; Koester Associates; Keystone Associates; The M&T Charitable Foundation; Medical Coaches, Inc.; New York Business Development Corporation; Northern Eagle Beverages NYW&S Railway; Taylor, Colicchio & Silverman; Lester A. Sittler, Esq.; Wachovia – Bill Weldon; Walter Rich Charitable Foundation

## Hospice Celebrity Party!



## Presenting Sponsor

NBT Bank

## Corporate Sponsors

MVP Health Care; Venture Sales Group

## Participating Sponsors

Central New York Radio Group; Coca-Cola; Huff Ice Cream; Ken's; Lettis Auction Service; Mexican Original; New York Central Mutual; Northern Eagle Beverages; Sugar Foods; Time Warner Cable Media Sales; U.S. Foodservice; WKTV

For Information about 2009 Sponsorship Opportunities, contact Bob Escher at (607) 432-6773



My Mom and Dad, Betty and Larry Wood have lived together with my husband Ed and me since 2000. Owning their own home had become too much for them to handle. Although they needed some assisted living, they were still able to lead independent lives. However, over the next few years' things began to change. First Dad had to give up driving, and then Mom felt she couldn't do it either. By 2006, their health began to deteriorate. Mom has many chronic health issues, such as congestive heart failure, diabetes, and hypertension. Dad was legally blind due to macular degeneration and glaucoma. He also couldn't hear well; couldn't get around very well, and ended up falling frequently.

Although Ed and I are retired, by the summer of 2007, caring 24/7 for two loved ones in their 90's was beginning to take its toll on us. During several of my parents many doctor visits, Dr. Eckel kept suggesting that I call Hospice. She was sure they could help us. Finally, in September, I called Hospice on a Monday morning. Monday afternoon Julie and Pat came to interview us, and tell us what the Hospice Program could do for us. We had no idea all the wonderful things that were available for Mom & Dad. In fact, we had never heard of the Palliative Care Program. Like so many others, we thought Hospice was only for terminal cancer patients.

*“The smiles on their faces are like a ray of sunshine when they walk into our home.”*

By Jacqueline Guntert

# SCHOHARIE COUNTY Angels

On Tuesday morning we already had help from a delightful LPN named Tammy. Medications also arrived via FedEx. Before we knew it, we had had all necessary equipment and supplies that made things easier for us.

However, in no time at all we settled into a very comfortable routine. Monday through Friday we had wonderful help from Tammy, then Shirley, and Star. They have not only helped with bathing, dressing, and light housework; they have provided wonderful companionship for my parents. Someone to talk to, help write in a diary, read from the Bible, sit on the deck, and many hugs. During this time, Ed and I could get out of the house if we wished to walk the dog, go downtown for a hot chocolate or whatever.

Once a week, Julie our RN came to visit Mom and Dad to check on their status and communicates with Dr. Eckel and the hospice team with updates. Mom and Dad enjoyed being home and not having to go to the doctor's office for routine

matters. Julie is the eyes and ears for their doctor. Anytime I have a concern Monday -Friday I can call her. Evenings and weekends there is always a nurse on call to talk to and guide us through whatever we need.

Pat, our social worker comes every other week to check on the well being of all of us. She visits with my parents, and encourages Ed and me to get out and have

more time together. She even arranged for a Hospice volunteer named Brenda to come and visit Mom every Saturday. Mom really looks forward to those visits.

Although I have been referring to Mom and Dad in this article; my Dad passed away in January, 2008, at the age of 97. Once again Hospice was there to help us through this difficult time. Even though it was the middle of the night, the nurse calmly talked to me, and offered suggestions for us to try. The next morning I could hear Tammy singing "Amazing Grace" to Dad while she bathed him. Although he wasn't conscious, I'm sure he heard every word.

Dad passed away that afternoon. Ed called Hospice to let them know. Julie came back and stayed quite a while. She helped tell Mom that Dad had passed, called the funeral home, and most importantly, offered hugs. During the following week we received phone calls and visits from the Hospice Team, all checking in to see how we were doing.

I am happy to say we continue to have Hospice for Mom. She recently caught cold and became quite ill. She was having a lot of trouble breathing. Julie offered some immediate suggestions, and consulted with Dr. Eckel. Again Mom was able to stay home. After some medication changes, she is on the road to recovery.

In closing, I cannot say enough about all the wonderful Hospice staff, and the services you provide. I know they all love their jobs. The smiles on their faces are like a ray of sunshine when they walk into our home. The hugs are terrific too. Never have I met such a compassionate group of people. They always know what to say and do. Because of hospice, my parents have been able to remain in our home where they are comfortable, and with their help be cared for with love, compassion, and dignity. We are truly blessed to have hospice in our lives. We will never forget them. They truly are Schoharie County angels.

*Jacqueline Guntert is the daughter of the late Larry and Betty Wood. Since writing this article, Jacqueline's Mother, Betty Wood passed away*



*Thank you*

*To Tom and Erna, along with Laurie, and to all of you that supported this event in remembering Joe.*

Help make someone's life easier

Be a Friend.

Become a Hospice Volunteer



For more information on our Hospice Volunteer Program, please call:

**Kathy Stedman, Volunteer Coordinator**  
**(607) 432-5525**

## Helping Hospice Families for Generations to Come

You can assure the future of hospice in our community by making a provision in your will. Your bequest will serve as a timeless legacy for you or your family and provide support to thousands of individuals and families for generations to come. For more information, call Huemac Garcia, Director of Development at 607-432-6773.

## Community Events Update

Many community groups or individuals have created fundraisers to support the efforts of our hospice program. Their efforts are meaningful and essential to the continuity of our services in Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie Counties. We'd like to thank the following groups, their sponsors and volunteers who helped with these special events. If your company or group is interested in fundraising for hospice, please contact our Development Office at 607-432-6773. If your event is not listed below, please let us know and we will publish it in our next issue.

- \$3,644 - Private Drawers 2008 Calendar proceeds
- \$5,500 - Sterling Insurance Company "CHUBB Golf Tournament"
- \$2,900 - Summit Sno Riders 13th Annual Poker Run
- \$9,300 - Goodyear Lake 13th Annual Polar Bear Jump
- \$984 - 2007 Leatherstocking R/C Buzzards Giantscale Flying Fundraiser
- \$150 - Oneonta Country Club Women's Golf Association "Babe Zaharias Beat the Pro Day"
- \$23.36 - 2007 Wilbur Allen's Farm Pumpkin Sales

## Everybody Wins at the New "Thrift Shop & Boutique"

Looking for an excellent deal on clothing or other boutique items? Looking for a meaningful purpose for your closet/house full of goodies? Looking for an opportunity to volunteer in a fun way? All are ways to help local hospice families and children. Look no further!

Now open, the Catskill Area Hospice & Palliative Care Thrift Shop & Boutique was conceived by Auxiliary President Bernadette Cannon. The hard work and dedication of Bernadette and many others has allowed this dream to become a very successful reality.



The Thrift Shop & Boutique is located at 269 Main Street in Oneonta and is open Tuesday - Saturday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. For information, please call 607-432-5335.

## Walk for Hospice An Amazing Rainbow Connection ...

In a wonderful success, over 350 participated in the inaugural "Walk for Hospice" on May 10th in Oneonta, Walton and Cobleskill. Walkers showed their loyalty by helping raise money to support those on their hospice journey. They were also given a yellow balloon in which they wrote personal messages to their loved ones and during the song "Angels Among Us" released them to the sky.

Out of nowhere, as the balloons drifted toward the sun, this magical "Circular Rainbow" appeared and completely surrounded the sun.

To all of you who helped make this happen - walkers, sponsors, donors, volunteers and to our loved ones in the sky, thank you for making this one of the truly breathtaking experiences of a lifetime.



For 2009 "Walk for Hospice" information, contact Bob Escher at 607.432.6773 or email at bob.escher@cahpc.org.

## Complementary Therapies that Help

### Conference & Workshop

October 18, 2008

8:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Otesaga Resort Hotel, Cooperstown

For more information,  
contact Sue Ebert at (518) 234-7611

Sponsored by



Catskill Area  
HOSPICE  
and Palliative Care



**HOSPICE**  
*25th Anniversary*  
**GALA**

*Celebrating 25 Years of Making Life Easier*

*Please Join Us!*

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2008**  
HUNT COLLEGE UNION, SUNY ONEONTA

*For more information and to be sure to receive an invitation,  
visit our website at [www.cahpc.org](http://www.cahpc.org).*

**Catskill Area  
Hospice and  
Palliative  
Care Offices**

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For more information on our programs,  
services and events, visit our website

**[www.cahpc.org](http://www.cahpc.org)**