

Compassionate Connections



HANDLING GRIEF AS A MAN – AND FINDING ONE’S WAY AFTER THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE

- Sheila Feldman Buckmaster

The bereavement support group has wound down after about an hour and a half, with folks talking in small groups or milling around the table with homemade cookies and muffins, provided by the participants. Jack baked the bran walnut raisin muffins just the way he did when his wife was alive. The top of the muffins have been abundantly sprinkled with sugar. Jack would slice the top off for his wife, Diane, who liked the sweetness; he would eat the bottom half. Jack shares a muffin in this fashion with one of the women.

The only male member of the day’s 12-person-strong support group, Jack also participates in a weekly men’s-only meeting, where he is part of a very special brotherhood. I want to talk to Jack about this, but first, he tells me, he wants to talk with some of the women in the group that just broke up. The men in his support group, I have come to learn, encourage female company. The idea is that the companionship that’s been lost should be replaced, even at a much more casual level. It is a start.

Ten minutes later, Jack and I are talking about the men’s group.

“We are like soldiers who have been in a foxhole. We have developed a love that is hard to explain,” Jack says, cutting to the chase. He credits the men’s group with aiming him toward light at the end of the tunnel when he couldn’t, he says, even see the tunnel.

After Diane died suddenly of a heart attack, Jack was lost. After days in a haze of sadness and inactivity, he found himself looking for help. A friend suggested a Hospice-led bereavement support group—even though Diane hadn’t died while under Hospice care. (Bereavement support is available to anyone at all who wants this help.) Jack called the number he was given and got to speak to Lindy Barton, Talbot Hospice Bereavement Coordinator and Social Worker. She leads



support groups at the Talbot Hospice office in Easton. Her wisdom and kindness are profoundly healing.

“Grief exposes people to a different state of being and vulnerability,” says Lindy. In the group, the participants deeply support each other. “They are in a place of feeling safe to share concerns, emotions, and thoughts. They learn that it is okay to give themselves permission to grieve and that each of them will grieve in his own way, in his own time frame.”

“We five guys share our souls,” Jack says.

Lindy also shares book recommendations with the group.

“The green book, *Understanding Your Grief* by Alan D. Wolfelt, PH.D., she suggested was the eighth I’d read that touched on the subject of grieving,” Jack tells me. Finally, a chord was struck. Lindy had hit a home run.

“What I learned in the very first sentence,” Jack continues, “is that grief is a process of adjusting. Yes, I’d had 54 years with my wife, and then she was gone.” The book reinforced that the loved one who is gone is honored when the one left behind resolves to take care of himself or herself. Jack has marked up the margins of the book with his comments and, here and there, a smiley face. Serving as the book’s bookmark: a photograph of his wife.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

Where has the year gone? We're already getting back into the holiday season again, which can be a challenging time of year for many in our community. Talbot Hospice has many programs in place to provide support for those grieving the loss of a loved one; in this issue, you will have the opportunity to read about our Men's Grief Group and the strength that they are able to draw from each other to be able to take the next steps to live a full life again.

This issue will update you on an event that has become a cherished local holiday tradition over the last 37 years - the Festival of Trees. This year Festival of Trees is part of a larger event called Winter Festival that will encompass five events that kick off on October 15th with Pump it Up for Hospice and end with our Holiday House Tours on December 4th. Our local communities have gone through so much over the past two years, so we felt responsible for making this year's events the best yet. Mark your calendar so you won't miss any wonderful events over Thanksgiving weekend.

We have dedicated a special section of our newsletter to remind you about our four core programs: hospice care, palliative care, pathways and bereavement and how they could be a great support to you or a loved one who is living with a life-limiting illness. Take a few minutes to read the article Did you Know? So that you will "Know Us Before You Need Us" and make the call that will bring the help you need today.

As always, we are only a phone call away and always ready to answer your questions.

Warmly,

Christopher Chekouras
 Executive Director

P.S. We look forward to seeing you at all five of our upcoming Winter Festival events!

“We are more than classmates,” Jack offers. “We have developed nearly brother-like relationships while we help each other recover from loss.”

They encourage each other to take action—to fill their time with things that will gratify, such as spending time with family.

“The group participants learn that if the grief process is delayed, it is more difficult to discover hope and joy again,” Lindy adds. “I have appreciated watching participants come to the understanding that it is okay to accept that life will never be as they once knew. We talk a lot about reconciliation and transitioning.” Lindy underscores, “The grief never fully goes away but it can be changed.” However, she says, “As long as you can mourn, then you can dance again.”

Jack shares that the men’s group has moments of lightheartedness interlaced with the sadness that comes with devastating loss. The darkness certainly can overwhelm. Jack tells of learning that one of his

cohorts was in such a black place that he was contemplating suicide. Jack listened. He asked questions. He gave support, love, and the assurance that he was there for him. His friend pulled through.

In the end, as Lindy explains, the men’s bereavement group is a collection of individuals moving toward a new normal. “Their communication with each other is heartwarmingly realistic as they express their concerns, hopes, dreams, and fears while learning that what they are going through is sometimes normal during periods of sorrow.

Weaving throughout many of the men’s discussions is the concept of mindfulness—“of being in the moment,” as Lindy explains it, offering that the best way to be in the moment is to “be kind, patient, trusting, accepting.” Certainly a good way to move through the healing process.

For more information about Talbot Hospice’s various bereavement support groups, call Lindy Barton or Jody Gunn at 410-822-6681 (116).

BECOME A HOSPICE VOLUNTEER!

REGISTER NOW FOR A FALL TRAINING!

When you become a Talbot Hospice volunteer, you join a wonderful group of dedicated individuals who support patients and families in our care. Talbot Hospice volunteers are the most important and visible providers of our supportive services. Our volunteers have many diverse gifts that they contribute in their own way, and we welcome your skills and talents!

Things volunteers do:

Cook meals for patients at Hospice House, provide respite for caregivers, play music, staff the front reception desk, take patients to doctor appointments, shop for groceries, arrange flowers, maintain our lovely meditation gardens, serve as an End-of-Life Doula when death is imminent, serve as a companion to patients just by holding a hand, reading a book or taking a ride

If you have a desire to be a volunteer at Talbot Hospice we will try to find a way to incorporate your interests and talents! To learn more and to register for an upcoming volunteer training session, contact Megan Murray at mmurray@talbothospice.org.





Winter Festival 2022

Friends of Hospice and Talbot Hospice are excited to announce that they are collaborating to present Winter Festival 2022 to the Mid-Shore Community.

For the first time, the event will be co-chaired by a representative from both Friends of Hospice and Talbot Hospice. The 2022 Chairs are John Horner, Vice President of the Board for Friends of Hospice and Mia Cranford, Talbot Hospice Development Director. Together with the planning committee, they have chosen to present "Winter Festival 2022" to better reflect the multiple events that take place during the Festival. The Festival of Trees will continue to be a marquee event at the Tidewater Inn and will be part of a series of five events beginning in October.

Pump It Up For Hospice Returns!

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15TH
DOWNTOWN EASTON**

Kick-up your heels and join us for the triumphant return of the Drag Race! Men from across the mid-shore will "pump it up for Hospice" while racing down Harrison Street in downtown Easton in their favorite pair of high heels. The 2022 event is co-chaired by veteran "draggers," Joe Petro and Mark Potter, and is sure to be a must-see event of the fall! Members of the community are invited to watch the race, and more importantly, contribute in the name of their favorite contestant - it is a Hospice fundraiser after all!



2015 Drag Racers

Santa Fun Run 5K

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER, 15TH
EASTON**

Runners and walkers welcome for this timed 5K fun run! Get the family, the neighborhood, or the kids' sports team together for some cardio and quality time.



Sponsor the Winter Festival!

A Winter Festival 2022 Sponsorship is a great opportunity for local and regional businesses and organizations. Sponsorships include tickets and promotional benefits for all five of the Winter Festival events. Questions? Please contact Mia Cranford at mcranford@tabothospice.org.

Winter Festival 2022

The Festival of Trees

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH -
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH
THE TIDEWATER INN**

PREVIEW PARTY, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH



"Joy Around the World" is this year's theme for Festival of Trees, the marquee event of Winter Festival 2022. Experience fifty beautifully decorated trees sponsored by individuals and local businesses. In addition, fifty decorated trees ranging in size from 12" to 36" will be for sale. Throughout the festival holiday entertainment will be performed by local artists, groups and musicians along with the sale of fun gifts. The Festival is open from 10am - 8pm , Saturday - Monday and from 10am - 6pm on Tuesday.



Carols by Candlelight

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH, 4-7PM
DOWNTOWN EASTON**

This magical free holiday event for all families in Talbot County will take place on Saturday, Nov 26th, 2022 in front of the Waterfowl Building on Harrison Street from 4-7pm. The celebration kicks off with a visit from Santa and a festival "Holiday Marketplace" with local vendors and food trucks from 4-5pm. Choral groups and musicians will perform all of your holiday favorites from 5-7pm. All spectators will receive a complimentary candle and holiday treats. Twinkling holiday accessories will be sold by Santa's elves to help celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season.



Holiday House Tours

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 1-4PM
EASTON, MD**

Enjoy four lovely Oxford homes decorated in holiday splendor by Jamie Merida of Bountiful. These homes will open to visitors for tours from 1pm to 4pm on Sunday, December 4th. Tickets are \$35/person and will be for sale online in mid-October.

GET TO KNOW OUR PROGRAMS

Did you know that Talbot Hospice is more than just hospice care? Please review information about all of our programs and who they benefit, so you can know us before you, or a loved one, needs us!

WHAT IS HOSPICE CARE?

Hospice care is a specialized type of care for patients with life-limiting illness and their families. **Hospice is not a place.** It is a model of medical care that focuses on how you live with a life-limiting illness. Talbot Hospice accomplishes this with a team consisting of doctors, nurses, home care aides, chaplains, social workers, and volunteers, with the patient and family at the center of the plan. Hospice care centers on the patient and family rather than the disease; the focus is to improve the quality of life.

Can Hospice Help?

As yourself these six questions to ask:

- Has the person you're concerned about visited the emergency room or hospital more than once in the past 6 months?
- Has this person made more than one late-night or weekend call to the doctor?
- Is this person ever too sick to keep doctors' appointments?
- Has this person stopped improving with medical treatments?
- Has this person suffered from one or more complications? (For example, pneumonia, weight loss, or skin ulcers?)
- Does this person need help to bathe, dress or eat?

More Information:

Main Phone: 410-822-6681

24 Hour Access Line: 410-822-2724

WHAT IS PATHWAYS?

Pathways is a pre-hospice, non-medical volunteer program of supportive services for Talbot County residents diagnosed with a life-limiting illness.

Who can benefit?

The program is open to anyone with a long-term chronic condition, including:

- congestive heart failure
- COPD
- cancer
- ALS
- kidney disease
- dementia
- Parkinson's

Participants in the Pathways program can still be seeking life-extending, curative or palliative treatment. It is also available to those who wish to discontinue treatment but are not ready for hospice care.

Pathways is also a great option for respite support for caregivers.

More Information:

Megan Murray

mmurray@talbothospice.org

WHAT ARE BEREAVEMENT SERVICES?

Talbot Bereavement Services offers personalized grief support to individuals, children, and families.

Our services are offered without charge and are open to the public regardless of county of residence, and whether or not your loved one was served by Talbot Hospice.

Services offered include individual and family counseling, support groups, community workshops and program and our Talbot Kids Grief Camp.

More Information: 410-822-6681, ext. 116 or info@talbothospice.org.

WHAT IS PALLIATIVE CARE?

Talbot Palliative Care helps patients and their loved ones understand their medical condition and provides support for the emotional and spiritual stress of a serious illness. The program offers advocacy, caregiver coaching and support, end-of-life education, and assistance identifying helpful community resources for patients, caregivers and families.

Who Can Benefit?

- Patients with Cancer, CHF, COPD, renal failure, Alzheimer's, and other chronic conditions.
- Patients with a serious illness AND one or more of the following:
 - Frequent ER visits or hospitalizations.
 - Uncontrolled physical or emotional symptoms.
 - Difficulty with accessing office-based care.
 - Uncertainty about goals of care and/or caregiver distress.

Talbot Palliative Care works with a patient's existing health care team and is also available to patients who are continuing curative treatment for their condition.

2022 TALBOT KIDS GRIEF CAMP

On August 12th and 13th, Talbot Hospice hosted its Talbot Kids Grief Camp at Evergreen Cove in Easton for children and youth who have experienced the loss of someone close to them. We were blessed with one of the most beautiful days of summer to bring these children together to process their grief and loss through music, arts and crafts, small groups and team building. Thank you to our donors who make this program available at no costs to participants!





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Winter Festival 2022

*Talbot Hospice and Friends of Hospice look forward
to welcoming you to Winter Festival 2022!
We love being part of your holiday traditions!*



*Joy Around
the World*

The Drag Race: Pump it Up for Hospice
Saturday, October 15th

Santa 5K and Fun Run
Saturday, November 19th

The Festival of Trees
Saturday, November 26th - Tuesday, November 29th
Preview Party on Friday, November 25th

Carols by Candlelight
Saturday, November 26th

Holiday House Tours
Sunday, December 4th

