

# Compassionate Connections

## Grieving During COVID

The past few months have been a struggle for all of us as we've had to define and then adjust to our new normal of social distancing and being safer at home. Everyone's experience has been different, and as we've adapted, we have also grieved the loss of our normal life. We are grieving the loss of physical connection with family and friends, grieving the loss of rites of passage and celebrations, grieving the loss of employment and so much more. Even though our world is starting to reopen, and we are reestablishing those physical connections, the grief may remain.

COVID-19 has also made grieving the loss of a loved one especially hard. Normally, we are able to say goodbye in person by visiting them, holding their hand and celebrating their life with family and friends at a funeral or memorial service. None of that has been possible, making this particular grieving process so hard.

When we are grieving, we need to give ourselves permission to set the expectations lower than we regularly do! Grief symptoms include lack of motivation, lack of concentration, memory issues, sleep and appetite changes, somatic complaints (headache, muscle aches and tensions), and a myriad of emotions.

Grief can also cause us to experience depression and anxiety symptoms. The good news is this is all temporary, and although there is no quick fix, if you allow yourself to feel, experience and process all the feelings and thoughts you will actually work through it quicker. If you try to stifle or ignore your feelings or bury them, you will have more problems later as those feelings and thoughts will eventually make themselves known. Grief is a maddening experience but can also be positive as we discover things about ourselves and the world around us.

Do not allow yourself to feel isolated or as if you are the only one going through this pain. We realize this is easier said than done during a pandemic, but there's no time like the present to embrace FaceTime and Zoom! There is an army of people around you who care and are ready to support you! Reach out to your family, your friends, clergy, church community, civic clubs and groups, and neighbors!

When we connect with people, it naturally lifts our spirits and helps us think of those outside ourselves. You don't have to tell everyone your grief story, but connections with other people is important to our healing and overall well-being!

If you feel like you need additional support or resources, our Bereavement Team is always here for you. You can reach us at 410-822-6681 or [bdemattia@talbothospice.org](mailto:bdemattia@talbothospice.org).

### TIPS & IDEAS FOR GRIEVING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

Take time to go outside every day, even if it is just to get the mail.

Drink water.

Get enough sleep.

Limit time listening and watching the news.

Connect with at least one person a day; via phone call, text message or video call.

Eat healthy.

Stick to your routine.

Give yourself permission to experience any emotions you are feeling that day.

It's OK to Not be OK!

Try to find something good in every day.

Write down one thing you want to accomplish for the day.

Journal.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sheila Monahan, President  
C. Lee Gordon, Vice President  
Steve Burleson, Treasurer  
Diane Rohman, Secretary

Jack Batty  
Childrene R. Brooks  
Rev. Kevin M. Cross  
Susie Dillon  
Ludwig Eglseider, MD  
Michael Fisher, MD  
Liz Freedlander  
Peter Gallagher  
Richard Granville  
Courtney Clark Pastrick  
Steve Slack  
Elizabeth W. Todd, MS  
Albert L. Smith, *Director Emeritus*

## EXECUTIVE TEAM

Molly Kirsch, BSN, RN  
*Clinical Director*  
Mary Jane Meintzer, RN, CHPN  
*Quality Improvement Coordinator & Compliance Officer*  
Amy Stitcher  
*Director of Finance*

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

Ginni Blackiston  
*Palliative Care & Volunteer Coordinator*  
Traci Corbin  
*Accounting & HR Benefits Coordinator*  
Mia Cranford  
*Director of Development*  
Becky DeMattia, LCSW-C  
*Bereavement Coordinator*  
Kara L. Hope, BSN, RN  
*Clinical Director, Hospice House*  
Megan Ryan  
*Pathways & Volunteer Coordinator*  
Robert Sanchez, MD  
*Medical Director*  
Lisa Rizia, RN  
*Intake & Home Care Manager*  
Denise Ziegler  
*Office Manager*

## From The Outgoing Board President



As I write this, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has dominated our Eastern Shore scene for several months and produced serious challenges to all medical institutions, including our Talbot Hospice. Our Leadership Team has faced many decisions affecting the lives of our patients and staff and addressed them successfully by implementing measures dictated by the state of Maryland. The required changes of inpatient visitation, working remotely, and difficulty in obtaining Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) have presented daily difficulties. Throughout all these

challenges, our devoted, competent staff has maintained their dedicated care and support of our patients and their families and have carried out our mission in exemplary fashion.

As we end our fiscal year on June 30, 2020, we can be proud of the way Talbot Hospice continues to contribute to our community. The twelve beds in our Hospice House have been consistently near capacity, and along with caring for our hospice patients in residential, nursing home, and assisted living facilities, our average daily census has reached new highs. We are proud of the awards we have won during the past year, but the most cherished awards have been the kind words of appreciation from our patients and their families for the care they have received from Talbot Hospice.

The state of Talbot Hospice is excellent. Due to the support of our donors and diligent use of our gifts, our financial reserves are strong and can carry us through challenging periods like those we are experiencing with COVID-19. We have a Board of Directors who is actively preparing us for the changing landscape in medical services that we anticipate in the near future. These include potential hospice competition, different payment schedules from Medicare, and continued staffing needs. By continuing to focus on the needs of our Talbot County family, we feel confident that we will meet these challenges successfully.

Finally, as my two years as Board President comes to an end, I am deeply grateful to all those I have worked with to further our mission of providing "hope, compassionate support and services to all members of our community facing end-of-life issues." This includes our fantastic cadre of volunteers who donate time and talent to a myriad of activities, including patient care, cooking meals, transportation, gardening, the We Honor Veterans program, and much more. In addition, I feel blessed to have gotten to know so many of our generous donors who are so critical to maintaining our policy that no one will be denied our services because of inability to pay.

I am delighted Sheila Monahan has accepted the position of Board President beginning July 1, 2020. Sheila has been a longtime volunteer and board member and is passionately committed to the Talbot Hospice Mission. She brings a wealth of knowledge to her new role, and I look forward to her leadership as we address the challenges ahead.

With gratitude,



*Steve Slack, Outgoing Board President*

---

## A FEW THANK YOUs!

We are so grateful to everyone who has lifted the spirits of our patients and staff during this pandemic!

Gifts of meals, flowers and other cheer from our board members, donors, volunteers, local businesses and community partners have kept us smiling over the past months as we have worked through COVID's challenges. We can't thank you enough!



We have also received several grants that have allowed us to care for our staff and patients during this pandemic:

**A \$5,000 grant from the Mid-Shore Community Foundation and a \$2,000 grant from the Margaret B. Ferree Fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation allowed us to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as additional laptops and software to ease our transition to working remotely.** "We are grateful to both the Mid-Shore foundation and Ferree Fund for stepping up during a difficult crisis to help Talbot Hospice maintain the highest level of service to our patients while we transitioned seamlessly to working remotely," said Mia Cranford, Director of Development.

**Margaret B. Ferree Fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation also gave Talbot Hospice a \$15,000 gift to upgrade our Electronic Medical Record System (EMR)** to improve documentation and coordination of patient care. "We are very appreciative of the generous donation from the Ferree Fund that afforded Talbot Hospice the ability to provide our staff with a functional and innovative EMR for years to come," said Mary Jane Meintzer, Quality Improvement Coordinator & Compliance Officer.

## Program Update: Hospice House

The Hospice House Staff is working hard during the COVID crisis to keep our patients comfortable and safe. Due to COVID-19, we have not had volunteers in the building since March 16th, and we miss them terribly. Without them, the staff has taken on many additional responsibilities normally performed by our volunteers such as cleaning, front desk duties and cooking meals.

Visitation is also extremely limited at this time, so our staff is also ensuring that every patient receives extra one-on-one time. We are also facilitating FaceTime and Zoom calls with family as much as possible.

For Easter and Mother's Day, the Talbot County Garden Club delivered beautiful flower arrangements for our patients. Early during the pandemic, we also facilitated a few patient visits by permitting family members to come and sit outside the window of their family member's room, and this was treasured by all. We have been fortunate to receive patient and staff meals from our board, our volunteers and the community on a regular basis which has helped during this difficult time.

Adjustment during the COVID-19 crisis has been challenging, but our staff continues to ensure all of our patients receive exemplary care. We recently recognized their tremendous efforts during National Nurses Week and National Certified Nursing Assistants Week.

We are so thankful that things have started to reopen, and we have been able to start welcoming visitors back to Hospice House on a limited basis - a small sign that things are starting to get back to normal!

*Kara L. Hope, BSN, RN  
Clinical Director, Hospice House*



*In May and June, Talbot Hospice celebrated our Nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) with meals, "drive-through" appreciation events and more. Our nursing team has gone above and beyond to ensure that our patients and their families receive the very best care during this pandemic. We could not do it without them!*

## PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CALENDARS!

COVID-19 health and safety guidelines have required us to make some changes to our calendar of events. Please take note below!

### MEMORIAL WALK

Our Annual Memorial Walk has "gone virtual" and is rescheduled for the weekend of September 25 - 27.

### GUTHRIE SOCIETY PARTY

Postponed until Fall 2021.

### WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY

Postponed until June 2021



## Program Update: Palliative Care

Like other Hospice programs, COVID-19 has forced us to make adaptations in how we ensure that each and every one of our patients is receiving excellent care. Despite the challenges, we were, and still are, able to welcome more patients to our home-based palliative care program.

We recently welcomed Stefanie DeFiglia, CRNP, to our Palliative Care team, and she and her fellow Palliative Care nurses have continued to see patients and coordinate care with their physicians. Home visits have continued both in-person and virtually depending on the wishes of the patient and their family.

Our entire team is looking forward to resuming our regular routine and welcoming back our volunteers as soon as we are able. We are tremendously grateful for the hard work of our nurses and the support of the community as we continue to care for our patients during these strange times.

Ginni Blackiston, LPN, CDP  
Palliative Care Coordinator



*Palliative Care is one of the four primary initiatives of Talbot Hospice and provides specialized medical care for individuals dealing with a chronic or progressing illness with symptoms that affect their quality of life. Palliative care focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness. Those that receive palliative care are still able to continue curative treatment options, and our palliative care team works in consult with primary care physicians and specialists and provides care wherever the patient calls home.*

*Pathways is one of the four primary initiatives of Talbot Hospice. It is a pre-hospice, non-medical volunteer program of supporting services for anyone diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. It is available to those who may still be seeking life-extending, curative or palliative treatment, or those who wish to discontinue treatment, but are not ready for hospice care. Our trained volunteers provide companionship, caregiver respite and transportation for patients living at home or in a healthcare facility. Thanks to our generous donors, Pathways services are free.*

## Program Update: Pathways

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has put our Pathways program on hold until volunteers are safely able to resume patient visits. We hope that day is soon!

While not able to see our patients in person, our staff is doing regular check-ins by phone and staying connected with caregivers and offering whatever virtual support and assistance we can.

In addition to the staff, many of our volunteers have also stayed in touch with their patients by phone, FaceTime and Zoom.

We are doing whatever we can to maintain the bond between our patients and Talbot Hospice, so we can seamlessly transition back into our normal operations soon!

Megan Ryan  
Pathways Coordinator



## Program Update: Bereavement

Bereavement programming has gone virtual following the cancellation of our in-person support groups and counseling sessions. The past few months have been challenging, but we have embraced technology and social media to stay connected to our clients.

We ran a five-session "Coping with COVID" Facebook Live series focused on the many forms of grief experienced during this pandemic. Our most popular session was targeted to graduating seniors and helping them process the loss of so many rites of passage. We also focused on supporting caregivers and also the importance of the mind-body connection in keeping up our mental health. These Live sessions were very successful and have more than 4,000 views! You may view these videos on our Facebook page and website!

We have also offered a weekly virtual Bereavement Yoga class and have also restarted our support groups via Zoom. We are hosting virtual one-on-one bereavement counseling sessions and hope that we can start seeing clients in person very soon!

Becky DeMattia, LCSW-C  
Bereavement Coordinator

*The Talbot Hospice Bereavement Center offers individual and family consultation as well as a number of support groups that meet on a regular basis.*

*Our services are offered without charge and there is no requirement for your loved one to have been a hospice patient. We offer our bereavement services to anyone, regardless of county of residence. Talking with others who are experienced with loss and grief can be helpful.*

## Volunteer News

We miss our volunteers! The past few months without them has reminded us of how much they do for our patients and support day-to-day operations at the Hospice House.

Volunteer services in all of our programs have been suspended since March 16th due to COVID-19, however many of our Pathways and Hospice volunteers have continued to stay in touch with their patients and families by phone as much as they can. We also had to cancel our Spring Volunteer Training.

Social distancing rules forced us to postpone our Annual Spring Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. Instead, we celebrated National Volunteer Week (April 18th - 25th) with Facebook Live events and gift card giveaways to local Talbot County Businesses.

While we haven't been able to see our wonderful volunteers, they are close to our hearts and we so look forward to welcoming them back!

Ginni Blackiston & Megan Ryan  
Volunteer Coordinators

## Saying Goodbye

*This Spring, we said farewell to our **Marketing and Communications Director, Caron James**, who has moved on to a new opportunity. We thank her for her years of dedicated service to Talbot Hospice and wish her the very best in her new adventure!*



# *Festival of Trees Update*

Talbot Hospice is grateful to Friends of Hospice, which is a separate non-profit organization, created specifically to raise money for Talbot Hospice through their annual event, the Festival of Trees. The Festival of Trees is in its 35th year, and they are celebrating:

*The Red, The White and The Blue: A celebration of an American Christmas. A year that reflects the best of the American spirit.*

Due to COVID-19, Friends of Hospice has made some changes to the traditional way the Festival has been celebrated in the past. The Festival of Trees will NOT take place in the Gold Room of the Tidewater Inn this year. The 35th Anniversary of the Festival of Trees will be celebrated with An All American Crystal Ball Non-Event in November.

In addition to the Non-Event, there will be other ways to support the Festival of Trees this year, including tree sponsorships, poinsettia sale, Hospice 5K Santa Run and more. Look for more details coming soon on all of the 2020 Festival of Trees events at [festival-of-trees.org](http://festival-of-trees.org).

## **CARES Act Promotes Giving!**

The recently passed CARES Act gives more incentives to individuals and corporations to support non-profit organizations:

- If you itemize your taxes, there is now no limit to the amount of deductions you can take for contributions
- If you do not itemize, you can now take a deduction for up to \$300 for charitable contributions made in 2020
- The corporate annual cash gift limit has been raised from 10% to 25% of corporate taxable income

As always, please consult your tax professional.

To make a gift, return the enclosed envelope or donate online. Questions? Contact Mia Cranford, Director of Development, at [mcranford@talbothospice.org](mailto:mcranford@talbothospice.org) or 410-822-6681 x15 .



586 Cynwood Drive  
Easton, MD 21601-3805

410-822-6681

[talbothospice.org](http://talbothospice.org)

@talbothospice

NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
EASTON, MD  
PERMIT NO 280

Talbot Hospice  
**MEMORIAL** *Goes Virtual!*  
*Walk*

Presenting Sponsor



**Friday, September 25 to Sunday, September 27**

We encourage you to walk or run whatever distance you choose with friends and family in memory of a loved one. We are challenging the Mid-Shore to walk one million steps collectively over the weekend. One mile is 2,000 steps, so lace up your sneakers to help us reach our goal.

**Adults \$25 | Students \$10 | Children 12 & under free.**  
Registration includes t-shirt, race bib and other gifts.

**Register at [TalbotHospice.org/events](http://TalbotHospice.org/events)**

Questions? Contact Laura Richeson  
410-822-6681, [lricheson@talbothospice.org](mailto:lricheson@talbothospice.org)

*Proceeds benefit Talbot Hospice patients and their families.*

***Talbot Hospice offers hope, compassionate support and services to all members of our community facing end-of-life issues. We provide patient and family care, community education and advocacy while respecting both curative and palliative treatment choices.***