



MISSION
HOSPICE

The Caring Line

IT'S ABOUT LIFE

April, 2009

Children and parents cope with dying loved one

When Suzanne Montgomery's mother, Margene Snyder, came to visit from Chicago last December, the Montgomery household – which includes five children – never expected she would die in their home in February.

“We didn't know if our children should be exposed to all of this,” recalled Suzanne of her mother's death. “But it turned out that this was the right place for her to pass away.”

“Cece,” as she was known to her grandchildren, developed bronchitis shortly before she was to return home. Although she had been diagnosed earlier with lung cancer, she'd been given a 50-50 chance of surviving another five years. But the doctor who saw her for the bronchitis said she had only a few weeks and recommended Mission Hospice.

“Hospice means that someone is dying, so it's hard to accept,” Suzanne admitted, adding that her doctor told her most people don't enter hospice until 48 hours before death. She knew that was way too short a time to receive the most from hospice care.

Social worker Karrie Kaiser met with Suzanne for an assessment and Susan Freyberg, RN, became the case manager. The hospice staff also suggested that Chaplain Linda Siddall pay a visit to help explain the situation to the family children.

“Linda sat with all the kids for 1½ hours, listened to them and answered all their questions,” said Suzanne. “My 10-year-old son was scared because he thought his grandma would look like zombie.



“Last week, my grandma died. I thought it would be scary but it was nice because she didn't gasp for air. She just let go because everyone that she loved was around her. And after she died, we covered her with flowers. And our nurse was so nice – the one that came in the day.” Gracie Montgomery, age 7.

Linda explained that she might look different, but she wouldn't be a zombie.”

Suzanne said all of the children took part in caring for Cece. “My 13-year-old stepchildren fought to be with her. My 7-year-old was proud to help her take her shower,” she recalled. “The children came together in a way that I really didn't expect. The kids would go out and pick flowers for her and they weren't afraid. Even our little dog Tulip learned to stay off the bed and where to sit.”

continued on page 2

Inside The Caring Line

- From the CEO's Desk Page 2
- Calendar of Events Page 2
- Staff Profile - Frances Freyberg Page 3
- Andersen Honored for 25 Years of Volunteer Service Page 4



Calendar of Events

- Bereavement Support Group**
 Every **Wednesday 6 to 7:30 p.m.**, Mission Hospice offices 1900 O'Farrell St., Suite 200 San Mateo.
 Open to all members of the community.
 For more information, please call (650) 554-1000.
- Caring for the Dying Seminars**
Part 1: "What Every Caregiver Should Know," Saturday, May 16, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Part 2: Compassionate Practices, Saturday, June 20, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. \$10 per person per session.
 These programs also will be repeated in the fall. For reservations and locations, please contact the Rev. Linda Siddall, Mission Hospice chaplain and director of community outreach, at (650) 554-1000 or LSiddall@missionhospice.org
- Soul Stroll for Health Walk**
 For the fourth year, Mission Hospice will host an information table at the Soul Stroll for Health, **Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**, along the bay front path in San Mateo's Coyote Point Park. The event will include free health screenings and other information, children's activities and continental breakfast and lunch. For more information, visit the African-American Community Health Advisory Committee's Web site at www.aachac.org
- Silicon Valley Open Studio Benefit**
 Photography by Frances Freyberg, Mission Hospice Director of Development, **Saturday, May 16, and Sunday, May 17, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.** 753 Partridge Ave., Menlo Park. Photos from Freyberg's travels to more than 45 countries will be displayed for sale. More information on her photography and the event is available at www.francesfreyberg.com.

Check Out Our Updated Website

The Mission Hospice Website at www.missionhospice.org has been revised and updated. It features an inviting and colorful new design with photos of recent events, patients and their families, volunteers and staff.

Other features include:

- updated calendar of events, including volunteer training, community seminars and benefit activities
- user-friendly navigation system
- comprehensive information on Mission Hospice programs and services, including downloadable versions of all brochures, recent newsletters and the annual report

From the CEO's Desk

It's been a very fruitful first quarter for Mission Hospice. We now serve an average of 45 patients per day, which speaks for the confidence that physicians, discharge planners and individuals in the community have in our services. Our staff continues to be responsive to the needs of our dying patients and their families. I cannot thank them enough.

I want to thank Stefano Quilici and the committee for hosting the successful First Annual Night of Fun at the Peninsula Italian American Social Club on March 27th. More than 300 people came to enjoy good food and good company, and helped net \$25,000 for Mission Hospice's Transitions program in the process.

I also want to thank the Sobrato Family Foundation for providing us with a two-year challenge grant for more than \$51,000. Diane Ford, the Executive Director of the Sobrato Family Foundation, personally came to present us with the first check and congratulate us on the quality of our work. They have been long time supporters of Mission Hospice.

Carol Gray and Marian Soss were honored Feb. 8 at our 30 year anniversary celebration, an event that drew more than 200 people. Marian was given our Lotus Award and Carol received a Special Recognition from Mission Hospice. We were thrilled to see so many familiar and new faces at the celebration. We will host a similar event next year at about the same time.

We are very excited about our new Director of Development, Frances Freyberg (see Profile on Page 3). She will be reaching out to many of you in the coming months, and I am sure that when you meet her, you will be equally excited.

I also would like to welcome the new volunteers who completed their training in February. We now have more than 60 volunteers who provide a very special service to our patients and their families in both our hospice and Transitions programs.

Finally, mark your calendars now for the upcoming Oktoberfest event, taking place Friday, Oct. 9 at the Foster City Recreation Center. Look for more details closer to the event.

Thank you, as always, for your support of Mission Hospice.

Children and parents cope with dying loved one (continued from page 1)

The Monday before she died, Cece wanted to go outside, so Suzanne and her handyman helped get her down the stairs and outside for a wheelchair stroll in the yard.

"It was perfect," said Suzanne, "but I wondered if it was the right thing to do considering how sick she was. When Susan (Freyberg) arrived, she said 'No, it was absolutely the right thing. This was probably her last burst of energy.' We did it because it felt right."
 Suzanne and daughter Gracie slept with Cece Tuesday night.

"In a weird way, I felt like a midwife," said Suzanne. "It's like you're helping with a transition."

As time went on, Suzanne noticed that every wrinkle in her mother's face disappeared.

"She looked like she was 40 instead of 80," Suzanne said. "I told her, 'You're doing such a beautiful job of letting go.' I think it was because of all the support we had that she was able to relax like that. After she died, Linda (Siddall) came and gave a blessing and all the kids were there. It was a sad time, but it was a magical time, a life-affirming time."



Dwight Wilson
 Chief Executive Officer

Staff Profile

Frances Freyberg - Director of Development



Frances Freyberg - The Nutshell

Career

- Travel writer/photographer, 2008
- Public relations and corporate communications, Sun Microsystems, Inc. 2000-2007
- Marketing communications consultant, 2004-2007

Education

- Education: Brown University, BS in Biology

Personal

- Personal: Born and raised in Menlo Park, CA. Enjoys travel, photography and hiking

Frances Freyberg recently joined Mission Hospice as Director of Development. She is responsible for reaching out to current donors as well as cultivating new donors, grant opportunities and corporate funding sources.

She explained that the job also includes increasing community awareness of the organization through effective communications and special events such as Light Up a Life and the Auxiliary's Oktoberfest and Bridge Day.

"I believe public relations and donor relations share many common goals," she said. "They're both about building strong relationships."

Freyberg comes to Mission Hospice from the corporate world and a variety of volunteer non-profit responsibilities. She currently volunteers as the public relations lead for Nuru International, a new organization pioneering holistic, sustainable solutions to end extreme poverty in partnership with the poor. As a biology student at Brown University, she and other students started

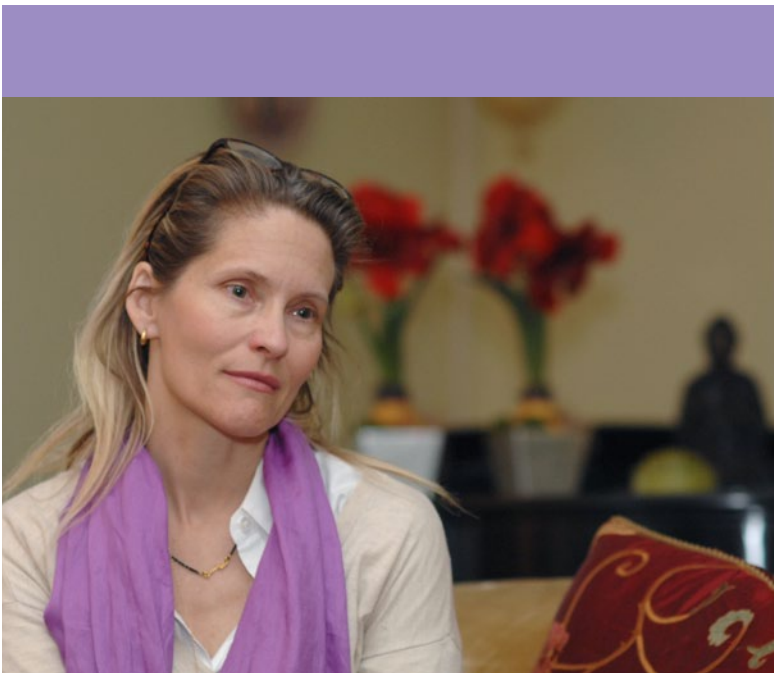
the Brown chapter of Project HEALTH to engage students in community health issues.

She spent 2008 as a travel writer and photographer completing an around the world trip to more than 40 countries across five continents. That was after working in various corporate communications programs at Sun Microsystems.

"I'm excited to meet the many donors and volunteers who have generously given to Mission Hospice over the past 30 years," she said. "It is through their support that we can offer compassionate care and comfort to end-of-life patients and their families, regardless of their resources."

She became familiar with hospice work through her mother, Susan, a registered nurse and case manager at Mission Hospice.

"It's a privilege to be a part of the Mission Hospice team, and I look forward to making a lasting impact on the San Mateo County community through my work," she said.



Suzanne Montgomery

Photo by Scott Buschman

Kids and Grief

- A key to supporting children who are in the home of a dying person is to be honest with them. Answer questions in gentle and age-appropriate ways.
- Take a child's concerns seriously. The child may need to be reassured about issues such as ghosts, pain and the likelihood of themselves or other family members dying.
- Share the tender moments and the grief with children, showing that dying and grieving are normal.
- Allow them to be with the dying only if they are comfortable with the situation.
- Avoid projecting your own fears onto the children. Kids usually are more curious, stronger and more resilient than we think.
- Let children know that the way people die in the movies, on TV and in video games is not the way they die in hospice care.
- Don't be surprised if children talk about dying one minute and move on to what's happening in their lives the next.
- Encourage children to participate in rituals around the bed, such as joining in prayer, playing music, reading a poem, or sharing a story about the one who is dying.
- Remember that children often know what their limits are. We adults can respect that.

Rev. Linda Siddall



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Andersen honored for 25 years of volunteer service

Mission Hospice's longest-serving volunteer, Juanita Andersen, was honored during a special staff dinner in April recognizing her 25 years of hands-on volunteer service to patients and their families.

"I like being personally involved with patients," she said during an interview. "In a way, you become part of their families. You come into their lives and their homes, and you're there to help them. There's a lot of honesty that flows between the patient and the volunteer. It's a nice feeling to be trusted to take care of them."

Andersen has cared for more than a hundred patients, experiencing both challenging and rewarding times. She's taken patients shopping, talked with them about dying, and simply been there to listen or give a hug when needed. One of her favorite memories is of regularly walking "Fluffy," a patient's cat, around the courtyard of a senior living facility.

"You do bond fast with your patients – and their pets," she said.

Andersen learned about Mission Hospice from a bulletin board at San Francisco State University, where she majored in psychology and minored in gerontology after she and husband Stanley raised their two children. She became a teacher and is currently an exercise instructor at two retirement homes and a senior center for South San Francisco Adult Education.

Several life experiences drew her to hospice work. As a child during WWII, she lived with her grandmother, who was caring for her elderly mother. She witnessed firsthand the benefits of homecare. Later, she watched two friends die from cancer.



Juanita Andersen

"I didn't like how they were cared for in the hospital," she said recalling the lack of alternatives at the time. She has watched Mission Hospice grow from its volunteer roots to a Medicare-certified hospice serving San Mateo County and nearby communities.

Andersen believes in "staying a small organization in how we care about our patients." She's also excited about the spring class of Mission Hospice volunteers. She says they "always bring new energy to the group." Volunteer coordinator Hank Nourse said Mission Hospice's 60 volunteers continue to be the heart and soul of the program.