

Home health aides share love of sports and patient care

In any given conversation, both Tommy Joe and Gina Yamsuan are likely to bring up sports. They're avid fans of all the local teams – Warriors, Giants, Niners – and more. The couple met and started dating when they were both working

forward to seeing us. They are so appreciative.”

Tommy and Gina both say they can't imagine not working together. “It's great doing the same job,” says Tommy.

“We can share our days, good or bad.”



Gina and Tommy immediately connected with Martin over their shared love of sports.

as home health aides (HHAs) at another hospice agency and found that their passion for sports was matched by their enthusiasm for their work.

Gina, who joined Mission Hospice more than 10 years ago, has been in health care most of her career; she loves having her own schedule and the flexibility that hospice offers. Tommy came to this work after a career in real estate. He switched careers after his mom became ill in 2000 and received hospice care. He became Mission Hospice's first male HHA about six months after Gina joined the team.

The two of them, like all of our HHAs, travel throughout the Peninsula and South Bay to provide personal care to patients – bathing, hair care, dressing, transferring (helping patients move), and more. Tommy says he always thinks about what kind of care he would want if he were in the patient's situation. “I like to picture myself in their shoes.”

“We always look forward to coming to work,” says Gina. “We actually help people. We make them happy, and they look

“Tommy and Gina are very devoted to their patients and attuned to their needs,” says Hospice Clinical Manager Sue Kensill. “They truly get to know the families they visit, and they go the extra mile to provide patients comfort and dignity.”

Home health aides typically see patients two to three times per week. In addition to providing personal care for people, they teach their primary caregivers how to safely manage transfers, bathing, catheter maintenance, and more. “Doing this work,” says Gina, “we get really close with the family members too. They are so grateful for what we're doing.”

Since last September, Tommy and Gina have been visiting 91-year-old Martin in Menlo Park. Although Martin and his wife Priscilla were initially reluctant to have anyone in their home, they quickly hit it

off with their Mission Hospice team – especially Tommy and Gina. Martin, as it turns out, is a former Golden Glove boxer with connections throughout professional sports and sports memorabilia throughout the house. “He knows everybody –

“Mission Hospice has been a godsend....it helps me, and it gives Martin the stimulation of having someone else visit. I now see that hospice is about living life better – with help!”

– Martin's wife Priscilla

all the players and coaches,” says Tommy. “Our conversations about the week's games are a highlight for both of us. I have met a lot of clients, but Martin is very special.”



Meet Marvic Munoz, LVN

Grew up: Angeles City, Pampanga Philippines – with my seven brothers

Joined Mission Hospice: 2015

What led me to Mission Hospice:

To grow as a nurse and as an individual through hospice work.

Mission Hospice in three words:

Beacon, Inspiration, and Vocation

Favorite food: Italian and Mexican

Favorite music: modern Christian music and inspirational songs

Hobbies: Singing, organizing charities and decorating for parties, like making balloon arches and photo backdrops. (Marvic makes amazing decorations for our staff and community events!)

Little known fact: I love anime, and am currently obsessed with Demon Slayer.

Favorite movies: “Dangerous Minds” and “The Ultimate Gift”

Something most people don’t know about me: When I was a teenager in the Philippines, I used to watch Sunset Beach and put captions on to further learn the English language.

On my bucket list: To finish setting up my charity (Dagohoy and Inday Foundation) in the Philippines – and to go skydiving!

Gina and Tommy... *continued from front*

Martin’s wife Priscilla is grateful for the support the team offers. “Mission Hospice has been a godsend – it’s taken a weight off of me. Our nurse, Tommy and Gina, and our volunteers all visit every week. It helps me, and it gives Martin the stimulation of having someone else visit. I now see that hospice is about living life better – with help!”

Both Tommy and Gina love the connections they are able to make with people like Martin and Priscilla. “I can tell by the photos in the house what their interests are,” says Tommy. He remembers one patient who was slow to warm up to him, but when they started discussing the patient’s classic Thunderbird, they bonded over their love of cars. “We love to listen to the patients’ and families’ stories,” says Tommy. “It’s not work for us – we love it.”

Together, Tommy and Gina make quite a team. Their positivity radiates as they finish each other’s sentences. And they are always looking for special ways to bring joy to patients. One man was “grumpy” until Tommy started bringing him his favorite frozen drink, which he couldn’t get in his care facility.

“People say we’re the highlight of their day,” says Tommy. “They don’t realize it makes our day too. It’s a little perk we get – to see their joy.” 🍌

Celebrating 45 years of service to our community!

In February, friends of Mission Hospice gathered at the Peninsula Golf & Country Club in San Mateo to celebrate the nonprofit’s history and future – and to honor Dr. Robert Roe and Kerns Fine Jewelry for their contributions to the organization.



Clockwise from top left: 2024 Lotus Award winner Dr. Robert L. Roe (center) with his family; Mission Hospice Senior VP for South Bay Dolores Miller with By the Bay Health CEO Skelly Wingard; past and present board members Jeff Gerard, Sally Bergman, Bob Roe, James Hine, Kate Jamentz, and John Draper.



Bereavement team helps people through all kinds of grief

by Christine Kovach, LCSW, Bereavement Services Manager

I have worked in grief support for many years, and I can say with certainty that the grieving process is different for each person and each loss. The one constant is that grief always takes time. Our grief support team helps families and loved ones through this process for many months in a variety of ways so that everyone can find the kind of help they need.

and to support the entire range of grief. We offer short-term individualized grief counseling for the loved ones of our patients, as well as a wide range of grief support groups, workshops, and other special offerings open to the community.

We do this all with our small but mighty team of three staff (I am joined by Bereavement Coordinators Delaney

means offering different modalities of support – whether it is in-person or online, and whether based on group discussion, individual counseling, physical movement, or creative and expressive arts.

Our bereavement program is expansive, ambitious, and inclusive. Not everybody wants grief counseling. Not everybody wants to be in a traditional support group. Some people benefit from a creative arts or writing process. Others are soothed by somatic care. We're always thinking about new ways to help people heal.

Recent and upcoming programs – many supported by grants from Sandhya's Touch – include workshops on Drumming for Grief, Art for Healing, SoulCollage®, Writing Through Loss, and sound healing, which uses vibrations from gongs and singing bowls to help participants regulate their breathing. The imagery and metaphor in these workshops can help people to allow for embodied engagement with grief and to work with grief expression in a symbolic way. None of these workshops require any experience – just a willingness to explore with a creative process.

Community funding and partnerships allow us to reach people in new ways. For example, the San Bruno Community Foundation sponsors an in-person grief support group at the San Bruno Senior Center. We have a partnership with the senior center Avenidas in Palo Alto to create a public *ofrenda* (altar) and some unique programs for *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). In December, we partner with Compassionate Friends to cohost the Worldwide Candle Lighting, bringing light into the darkness of grief. For several years, our Spiritual Counselor Rachel Rosenberg has led a memorial service at the Pacifica Senior

...continued on back page



Our bereavement staff members (from left, Delaney Woo, Kate Nitze, and Christine Kovach) work with our trained and dedicated bereavement volunteers to provide a range of grief support.

Grief is impacted by so many different factors. Some people – for example, those whose loved one is in hospice care – may have had time to prepare themselves for a death. Others experience a sudden, surprising loss. Grief can be especially intense for people with a limited support system, who have had multiple losses or other big stressors, or who have experienced a recent traumatic death.

At Mission Hospice, we are committed to going above and beyond what Medicare requires for grief support –

Woo, LCSW, and Kate Nitze, MSW) and a cadre of dedicated volunteers, including counseling associates and student interns, retired therapists, social workers, and nurses, and other trained bereavement volunteers. I am inspired daily by their commitment and creativity. Working with this team is magic – I'm in the wonderful position of saying "YES, let's do it."

It is our goal to care for people throughout our community, regardless of how or why they need grief support after the death of a loved one. This also

PENINSULA OFFICE 66 Bovet Road, Suite 100, San Mateo, CA 94402
SOUTH BAY OFFICE 688 Willow St., Suite A-2, San Jose, CA 95125
www.MissionHospice.org • 650.554.1000 • 408.554.2434

Mission Hospice & Home Care serves patients and families in the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay with personalized, compassionate end-of-life care and education. Founded in 1979, our local, independent nonprofit has supported thousands of patients and their families through illness and bereavement. Donations from the community support our exceptional care and educational programs, and help us serve people regardless of their medical coverage or ability to pay.

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INSIDE: Home health aides share love of sports and patient care Team supports people through all kinds of grief Photos from our 45th anniversary celebration



Bereavement support ... continued from page 3

Center. And of course, Mission Hospice holds our annual public memorial service, Season of Remembrance, in May.

There is a lot to grieve in the world right now, and these programs let us bring people together to acknowledge our own personal grief and provide an outlet for the collective grief we're all holding.

Grief often doesn't go away completely, but rather changes in intensity over time – and everyone needs different support at different times. Some people are ready to talk about it right after their loss; others are ready at the anniversary of the death. Sometimes a death throws people into financial

challenges or into the work of managing an estate, and they can't begin to think about their broken hearts right away.

What I love about Mission Hospice is that our whole team is committed to offering a range of support so that no matter what your circumstances or experience, when you are ready – we are here for you. 🐰

For information about upcoming support groups and workshops, videos of past programs, and other support for those who are grieving, visit MissionHospice.org/grief.



Mission Hospice offers our community a range of ways to express grief, including drumming workshops, annual memorial and candle lighting services, and SoulCollage® – along with our many drop-in and specialized support groups.