

## Tuck and Trooper: Dedicated volunteer duo visited hundreds of patients together

One of our most loyal Direct Care Volunteers was also one of the most intuitive. For the past several years, he connected with patients without speaking a word. Always sweet and quiet, sometimes he knew that all someone needed was a gentle paw of reassurance.

Trooper, a golden retriever and trained therapy dog, was the constant companion of Direct Care Volunteer Tuck Geerds. They visited hundreds of patients together, including veterans at the Palo Alto and Menlo Park VA and, since 2012, hospice patients.

Tuck had a long career in special education, which she says prepared her well to talk to people in all situations. "It was an advantage for me," she says. "I learned how to communicate with people who don't communicate in the ways we do. Some of our patients have had long conversations with Trooper."

Tuck explains that they let the patient determine the nature of each visit. Sometimes they would walk the dog together, or the patient might throw a Frisbee. Some patients liked to groom him. "Anything that let them connect with Trooper," Tuck says.

One of Tuck's favorite ways to facilitate that connection was to read a special book she wrote about Trooper. Written in his voice and filled with photos, the book tells stories of his life from the day Tuck adopted him as a puppy in 2005.



*Trooper, dressed in his volunteer vest, ready to offer love to everyone he met.*

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## Auxiliary aims to make 2018 Fall Gala, *Diamonds & Denim*, the best yet



*Auxiliary volunteers, including (L to R) Vibeke Gade, Carole Flaherty, Board Member Sheila Young, Ann Nolan, Annual Giving and Events Manager Cathy McDermott, Judith Elaine Van, and Yolanda Crosby (in front) have been planning this year's Fall Gala since the day after last year's successful event!*

Once a month, the Mission Hospice office is filled with refreshments and an extra boost of energy when our Auxiliary volunteers come in for their monthly meeting. This group is dedicated to putting on fun community events that raise funds to support Mission Hospice. They enjoy a lot of laughs while they work hard for a serious purpose.

Right now, they are gearing up for their biggest event ever – the Fall Gala on September 29, *Diamonds & Denim*, featuring the popular soul dance band Pride & Joy.

"We're so excited about this year's gala – it really is a celebration of community," says First Vice President Yolanda Crosby. "Our goal is to have 400 attendees all out there dancing!"

The Auxiliary has been working for months to plan the evening. They've lined up a professional auctioneer and some great auction items, including a cruise through Croatia and Greece, a week in a restored Italian farmhouse, and other unique experiences and collectibles. Thanks to sponsorships from organizations and individuals throughout the community, the Auxiliary is hoping to meet their goal of raising a record \$300,000, which will support our hospice house campaign.

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## Leading with heart

Dwight Wilson, CEO



Last month our nonprofit was honored as one of the Bay Area's Top Workplaces, recognition of the special culture here at Mission Hospice & Home Care. We now have more than 200 people working for our agency – a big increase from the 25 we had when I first joined in 2008. I am proud of each one of them, and grateful that they value what we have created together.

Just as we honor and respect our patients' wishes, we honor our employees with teamwork, autonomy, and flexibility. By empowering one another, we can provide the best environment for our staff and volunteers, and the best care possible for our patients.

Over the past year, we asked our staff to identify the core values we share at Mission Hospice. This is helpful not only to make sure we're aligned around what's most important – but also that new employees and volunteers understand and can contribute to our culture as our organization grows.

It's no surprise to me that our core values focus on what it is we offer patients: **Heart, Presence, Courage, Partnership, and Joy**. These same values reflect how we treat each other, on our clinical teams, administrative teams, and on our Board, Auxiliary, and other volunteer teams.

At Mission Hospice, we often talk about how we "lead with heart," meaning that decisions that reflect true affection for patients, families, and each other are usually the right ones.

In a world where many hospice providers are focused on profits, I'm proud to be part of an organization committed to people – our staff and volunteers, our donors, our community partners, and most of all, our patients and families. – DW

A promotional graphic for the Mission Hospice Auxiliary Fall Gala. The background is a dark blue denim texture with scattered white diamonds. The text is in various colors and fonts, including gold, white, and blue. It includes the event title, date, time, location, and ticket price.

MILLS-PENINSULA MEDICAL CENTER PRESENTS  
THE MISSION HOSPICE AUXILIARY FALL GALA

# Diamonds & Denim

Dancing to Pride & Joy  
Dinner, wine, and no-host bar | Live and silent auctions

**Saturday, September 29, 2018 | 6pm**  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Foster City  
**Tickets \$150**

Funds raised support our Hospice House Campaign  
MissionHospice.org/fallgala | 650.554.1000

## Upcoming events

### Drop-in Grief Support Groups

Every week in San Mateo and Half Moon Bay

Our drop-in bereavement support groups are **free** and open to all. For details, check [MissionHospice.org](http://MissionHospice.org) or call 650.554.1000.

### Take Charge! Advance Care Planning Workshops

Wednesdays, August 22 + 29 • 1-3:30pm

Thursdays, October 25 + November 1 • 1-3:30pm

Little House, 800 Middle Avenue, Menlo Park

**Free**; RSVP to 650.272.5045 or [littlehouse@penvol.org](mailto:littlehouse@penvol.org).

Tuesdays, October 2 + 19 • 6:30-8:30pm

Coastside Adult Day Health Center, 925 Main Street, Half Moon Bay

**Free**; RSVP to 650.726.5067 x210 or [siracusa.cadhc@gmail.com](mailto:siracusa.cadhc@gmail.com)

Details at [MissionHospice.org/TakeCharge](http://MissionHospice.org/TakeCharge).

### Movies@Mission Hospice

Thursday, August 23 • 6:30pm • **States of Grace**

Thursday, September 27 • 6:30pm • **End Game**

Thursday, October 11 • 6:30pm • **Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter**

Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo

Join us for our 2018 series of films about how we live and die – with popcorn and discussion. **Free**. Register at [MissionHospice.Eventbrite.com](http://MissionHospice.Eventbrite.com).

### New Volunteer Informational Meetings

Tuesday, September 18 • noon-1pm or 5:30-6:30pm

Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo

Find out all about volunteering with Mission Hospice. **No RSVP needed**. Questions? Contact Craig Schroeder at 650.532.2323 or [cschroeder@MissionHospice.org](mailto:cschroeder@MissionHospice.org).

### Writing Through Loss Support Group

Wednesdays, September 5 – October 24 • 6:30-8:30pm

Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo

This **free** eight-week group is for adults grieving the loss of a loved one. Facilitated by Isabel Stenzel, LCSW, and Adelaide Nye. No writing experience necessary. To sign up, contact Isabel at 650.532.2338 or [istenzel@MissionHospice.org](mailto:istenzel@MissionHospice.org).

### Genovese Night Celebrating Columbus Day

Saturday, October 6 • 6pm

Peninsula Italian American Social Club, San Mateo

A lively dinner-dance benefitting Mission Hospice, including a Queen Isabella pageant and dancing to live music. **Tickets \$65**, available at 650.343.7981.

### Take Charge Seminar & Film Series

Wednesdays, October 10, 17, 24, and 31 • 3-5pm

Channing House Auditorium, 850 Webster Street, Palo Alto

This **free**, four-part series explores what dying well means in today's world. Details and registration at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](http://MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

### Stories That Heal: Weekend Writing Workshop

Saturday, November 3 + Sunday, November 4 • 9:30am-4:30pm

Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo

Learn how to tell your story of life and loss in this small-group writing workshop with author Ann Randolph. **Fee \$320**; register at [MissionHospice.Eventbrite.com](http://MissionHospice.Eventbrite.com)

For details on all of our events, visit [www.MissionHospice.org](http://www.MissionHospice.org).

## Auxiliary ...continued from front

The gala is one of two major fundraising events the Auxiliary plans each year. Their annual Bridge Day and Luncheon is a quieter affair – but just as filled with community participation.



Planning these and other events, of course, takes a significant amount of volunteer-power, and the Auxiliary is seeking new members. President Vibeke Gade says, “We’re looking for people who are well-connected in the community, like to fundraise and plan events, and want to do something meaningful.”

Auxiliary members are passionate about the patient care that their events support. Second Vice President Ann Nolan explains, “Mission Hospice provides a critical service for our community – something my family experienced firsthand. Being part of the Auxiliary, I can help ensure that this kind of care is available for all who need it.” 🐾

### Mission Hospice Auxiliary invites new members!

**The Mission Hospice Auxiliary welcomes new members to help** organize special events and raise funds to support Mission Hospice patients and families.

The Auxiliary meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 10am in the Mission Hospice office in San Mateo. Members are happy to offer you a ride!

**Come to a meeting, or contact us to find out more:**

Call Ann at 650.678.5351, or email Cathy at [cmcdermott@MissionHospice.org](mailto:cmcdermott@MissionHospice.org).



### Meet Medical Social Worker Monique Lunsford, MSW, MEd

**Joined Mission Hospice:**

In 2009 – as an intern

**How I came to hospice work:**

When my 42-year-old brother died unexpectedly from liver disease, our grieving family had to make difficult end-of-life decisions for him (an unmarried father of two, with no advance directive). I want to use my personal experience to offer an empathetic, supportive, and calm presence to patients and families.

**Passions:** Being around water and nature, watching professional sports, and supporting my son’s sporting endeavors

**Little known fact:** I love “The Young and the Restless,” especially Nick Newman!



### Tuck and Trooper ...continued from front

The golden seemed to intuit what each person needed. “He knew where the area of concern was,” she says. He would sometimes just sit in front of a patient in a wheelchair, with his paws resting on the person’s feet.

When Trooper was diagnosed with cancer in 2016, it barely slowed down his volunteer work. Tuck knew that it was important for both of them to keep up their volunteering, and she found it helpful to share Trooper’s prognosis with the patients they visited.

She also said she learned from her hospice patients how to care for her dog in his illness. “I didn’t push him,” she says. “I listened to him. If he didn’t want to do something, that’s ok. I took it on his time.”

After he stopped receiving treatment in fall 2017, Trooper’s fur thinned and he lost weight – but his tail kept wagging, and they continued their visits until the following March, when they said goodbye to their patients.

Trooper passed away in April 2018, just days after his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, with Tuck by his side.

“There is no doubt that Trooper loved his work,” she says. “He made friends wherever he went, and I know he provided a lot of loving comfort.”

“It wasn’t work for him. He gave all the love.” 🐾

**Mission Hospice & Home Care** serves patients and families in the San Mateo and Santa Clara County area with quality, compassionate end-of-life care and education. Founded in 1979, our local, independent nonprofit has provided thousands of patients and their families with physical, emotional, and spiritual support throughout the journey from a life-threatening diagnosis through death and bereavement. [www.MissionHospice.org](http://www.MissionHospice.org) • 650.554.1000

**Board of Directors**

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To add or remove your name from our mailing list, please call 650.554.1000.

**INSIDE: Pet therapy dog visited hundreds of patients  
Auxiliary planning best-ever Fall Gala for September 29  
Meet Medical Social Worker Monique Lunsford**



## Renovations complete, Woodside Hospice House to open this fall

Renovations at the Woodside Hospice House are complete, and we are nearly ready to open our doors to patients and families. Recently, local clinicians, community partners, and campaign

donors had a chance to tour the house and learn more about the care we can provide to patients and families.

Thanks to generous grants

from Sequoia Healthcare District and Stanford Health Care, we have raised \$1.6 million toward our campaign, and we continue to seek gifts for the additional \$2.4 million needed for renovation and startup expenses, as well as charitable care for families in need. 🏠



*Woodside  
Hospice House  
Campaign*



*(L to R) Mission Hospice Board Chair Dr. Steve Weller, CEO Dwight Wilson, Chief Clinical Officer Lisa Deal, Stanford Health Care President and CEO David Entwistle, and Administrative Director Timothy Seay-Morrison – along with other clinicians and community members – recently toured our new hospice house, set to open this fall.*

To arrange a tour of the house or learn more about our hospice house campaign, contact Marsha Eddleman at 650.532.2550.

To find out more about whether our Mission Houses are right for your family, visit [www.MissionHospice.org](http://www.MissionHospice.org) or call our clinical outreach team at 650.554.1000.