

A Medical Maestro: Dr. Howard Lee, MD

There aren't many board-certified oncologists who are also members of the American Guild of Organists. But Medical Director Howard Lee finds that his two passions fit together perfectly. "Medicine and music are so similar – there is a personal side to both, where you need to be able to both lead and follow," he says. "Each of them is like a dance."

A New York native, Howard began learning piano at the age of five, taking up conducting in college while majoring in chemistry as an undergraduate at Harvard, and studying organ while he attended Columbia Medical School.

In addition to his leadership role at Mission Hospice, he has previously volunteered his time as organist at St. Timothy's Episcopal in Mountain View, and subsequently worked in various professional capacities as organist, piano accompanist, and choir

director for several local churches. With a broad smile, he is quick to add that (together with his wife, an oncologist at Stanford – and a violinist) he is also a happy parent of an energetic toddler.

Howard was inspired by physician and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer, who was also an accomplished organist and musicologist. Schweitzer wrote that medicine is both science and art – the art of one person interacting with another.

Like his role model, Howard is passionate about helping those in need. He has volunteered on medical trips to rural and impoverished areas of Brazil, Guatemala, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. He worked with his brother, also a physician, to care for tsunami victims in Sri Lanka; most recently, he travelled to Outer Mongolia to provide home hospice care for patients.

...continued on page 2



Our Medical Director Howard Lee, MD, ready to perform.

Mission Hospice care team lets Julie Hoffman be a sister again

Julie Hoffman is probably as knowledgeable as anyone about caring for a mentally ill loved one. Her brother, Ed, now 61, was diagnosed with schizophrenia as a teenager, when she was 8.



Ed and Julie Hoffman enjoying a visit to Disneyland together.

Her parents helped found the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and she served as a resource on mental health issues throughout her career in California state government. She also is a former member of the San Mateo County Mental Health Board.

But when Ed was diagnosed with terminal chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) last year, she was at a loss about finding appropriate help.

"It's not easy to find care for mental health patients who are terminally ill and are oxygen dependent," she said during a recent interview.

She credits Mission Hospice & Home Care social worker Meechal Hall with arranging placement for Ed in a nursing facility in Moss Beach, where he receives regular visits from Hall and other hospice staff, including nurse Manny Ong, and spiritual counselor Rev. Don Mulford.

Ed, who spent most of his adult life in a state mental facility in Napa, was admitted to the Mission Hospice program, but later improved enough to be discharged into the Transitions program (see sidebar on page 3), before being readmitted recently to hospice care.

...continued on page 3

Volunteers: more than the heart of our work

Dwight Wilson, CEO



We often say that volunteers are the heart of our work. Day in and day out, our direct care volunteers visit patients in their homes and in hospitals, working alongside our professional staff to support patients and families.

Our volunteers are also the right hand of Mission Hospice & Home Care, serving on our Board of Directors, helping things run smoothly in our office, and so much more.

I think the soul of Mission Hospice is represented by those who have stepped up to form our Hospice House Committee, and who are working hard to find a site (and raise funds) to make our long-time dream a reality.

Volunteers are also the backbone of Mission Hospice, organizing events that build community and raise funds. Our friends in the Peninsula Italian American Social Club organized a spectacular "Night of Fun" fundraiser in March, netting a record-breaking \$46,000+ to support patient care.

For the 18th year in a row, our Auxiliary volunteers hosted an elegant Bridge Day and Luncheon, also benefitting our patients. And they are already working on their next big feat: the Fall Gala on October 17. Be sure to save the date for this always-fun event!

I invite you to consider joining this amazing group of individuals who, together, embody Mission Hospice, and allow us to care for patients in the best way possible.

You can learn more about this at one of our next volunteer informational meetings on Tuesday, June 9. We'll be holding one session at noon and another at 5:30pm, so you can choose the one that fits your schedule.

To learn more, or to RSVP, contact Hank Nourse, Director of Volunteer Services, at 650.554.1000 or hnourse@missionhospice.org. —DW

Hospice House Campaign Update

We are continuing the search for a peaceful, accessible location for our hospice house.



In the meantime, our Campaign Steering Committee is meeting with groups and leaders throughout the community to explain the need for a hospice house in San Mateo County.

If you or your organization would like to host an informational presentation about the hospice house, please contact Campaign Director Marsha Eddleman at meddleman@missionhospice.org or 650.554.1000 ext. 162.

Upcoming events

New Volunteer Informational Meetings

Tuesday, June 9, 2015, noon-1pm or 5:30-6:30pm

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

Interested in volunteering with our patients? Here's your chance to find out more and sign up for our July training sessions. To sign up, contact our Volunteer Coordinator Hank Nourse at 650.554.1000 or hnourse@missionhospice.org.

New Volunteer Training Sessions

Saturdays (June 20 and 27, July 11 and 18) from 10am-3pm and

Thursdays (July 9 and 16) from 6-8pm

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

Our sessions will prepare you for being a Direct Care volunteer. To sign up, contact Hank Nourse at 650.554.1000 or hnourse@missionhospice.org.

Bereavement Support Group

Tuesdays from 6-7:30pm, or **1st and 3rd Saturdays**, 10-11:30am

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

Open to all members of the community on a drop-in basis. We also offer a Spanish speaking support group at St. Anthony's Church in Menlo Park from 6-7:30pm on Wednesdays. For more information, please call 650.554.1000.



Auxiliary Fall Gala: Costume Ball!

Saturday, October 17, 2015, 6pm

Peninsula Golf & Country Club, San Mateo

Save the date for an evening of dinner, dancing, and fun!

Howard Lee, MD ...continued from front

After working more than a decade in county health systems for the underserved – including as a public health officer and oncologist – Howard became board-certified in hospice and palliative medicine, fields he feels are a natural fit with oncology. He is drawn to Mission Hospice's model of interdisciplinary, quality care, and is proud to be Medical Director. In addition, he is on adjunct faculty at Stanford as Clinical Assistant Professor in Oncology, and is dedicated to integrating palliative medicine with the care of his cancer patients.

"I have always been interested in serving patients beyond a clinic or hospital setting," he says. "I am so fortunate to be able to care for patients at a crucial point in their lives, and to help assuage their fears and concerns."

"All of our experiences are interconnected," he continues. Howard is delighted when he has the opportunity to play music for a patient who has a piano in their home. "Music is a unique way to connect to someone's soul."

"One of the things I really enjoy about hospice care," he says, "is that all the experience you have comes to bear, including music. All the things that I am interested in have brought me to this point, so I can do my best to serve my patients." 🐾

Raising glasses - and raising funds

The seventh annual "Night of Fun," hosted by the Peninsula Italian American Social Club, was a truly fun evening that broke all fundraising records! Huge thanks to Club President Bert Salvato and his wife Janice, and to auctioneer Dan Capodanno and his wife Stephanie. Thanks as well to the amazing event planning



committee – Stefano and Elena Quilici, Pat and Mavis Dianda, Angelo and Angie Fanucchi, John and Roberta Bernat, Pietro Quilici, Lois Giannoni, Paolo and Grace Quilici, Mauro Quilici, and Jerry and Karol Podesta.

Photos by Frances Freyberg Blackburn. Find more photos from the "Night of Fun" and from our Bridge Day and Luncheon on our website at www.MissionHospice.org/photo-gallery, and on our Facebook page, www.Facebook.com/missionhospice.

Transitions

Our Transitions program is designed specifically for patients who are between hospice and advanced care programs, or who aren't physically or emotionally ready for hospice. Our continuum of care allows patients (and their families) to remain with the same support team even if they move between programs.

When Ed Hoffman's health improved enough under Mission Hospice & Home Care that he no longer met the physical requirements for hospice, he entered Transitions.

"Transitions was invaluable because we were still linked with Mission Hospice," said Ed's sister, Julie. "Then, when it was time to put Ed back in hospice care, that door was open."

For more than six years, the free service has provided emotional support, practical assistance, and care management. We recently added nursing evaluation and consultation to the service to ensure that patients are matched with the program and clinical support that best meet their needs.

Julie and Ed Hoffman ...continued from front

Julie said her brother is a "compliant" patient in that he takes the medication that helps control his schizophrenia. Consequently, people sometimes wonder why a man who can feed and dress himself needs to be in a nursing home. However, Ed is reluctant to discuss how he feels, so staff has to be especially vigilant about his condition. Julie remembers Ed telling a doctor once that he didn't know why his sister had brought him in, though he was speaking through lips that were blue from lack of oxygen.

"It's especially important for caregivers to be attuned to the needs of patients who won't voluntarily communicate pain or anxiety," said Meechal, adding that the mentally ill present special challenges in end-of-life care. The demand for services for older people with mental health issues is expected to grow disproportionately to the general population, according to NAMI, due to the Baby Boomers' higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorders, along with decreasing social stigma (resulting in increased diagnosis) and the increased life span of people with serious mental illness.

For the Hoffmans, the issue is far more personal. Having Mission Hospice working with them has improved the quality of life of both siblings.

"Because of the support that Ed and I get from Mission Hospice, for once in my life, I feel like I can relax, and be me... I can be a sister again." 🐣

"Because of the support that Ed and I get from Mission Hospice, for once in my life, I feel like I can relax, and be me... I can be a sister again."

– Julie Hoffman

Mission Hospice & Home Care serves patients and families in the San Mateo County area with quality care and compassionate end-of-life support. Founded in 1979, we are a local, independent nonprofit that 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 the process of bereavement. www.MissionHospice.org • 650.554.1000

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

**INSIDE: Howard Lee, our Medical Maestro
Letting Julie Hoffman be a sister again
Photos from the Night of Fun**



Writing Through Loss

Our eight-week "Writing Through Loss" support group helps those who are grieving express themselves. Two participants in last fall's group were gracious enough to share their work.

Can What's Broken Be Repaired?

The English language has some serious limitations when it comes to the notion of healing. Often we describe our tragedy, our deep losses, our suffering as "being broken" and, being a fix-it sort of people, we really want this broken stuff repaired as soon as possible.

Shortly after my father's fatal stroke, and 17 months after my mother's death, I was left to hurriedly dismantle the home they had died in and my heart would break ten times each day. But somehow it would manage to recover- if just enough to break again later.

Was it repairing itself in between breakings? Or did I have it wrong? Could this pain - which I believe to be the pain of my heart broken into pieces - actually be growing pains? Could this pain be more; an effect from my heart growing larger to hold this new form of love we call grief?

Am I "breaking" because it's the only way to expand my capacity for life?

And if so, if this really is a new capacity for holding life and love, then even though it all feels so very broken, what exactly is there to be repaired? What would a repair job even look like in this context? Is there a clamp or a plug or a glue or a fastener? Does it take one hundred pins like mending a broken spine? Would it require a time machine?

I can see in my occasional moments of lucidity that there isn't really anything to be repaired, because life can never really be broken. But this stretching of my heart is sometimes more than I know how to bear.

- Jeff

Untitled

I had a thought today,
that I can't believe,
there will be no new memories.

and even as I say it
I know it isn't true.

Sure there will be no new memories
of trips to Starbucks
and going to the beach.

I feel sad about that.

But there are new memories,
moments,
when I know you are there with me.

like today
when the bubbles unexpectedly burst
from the dish soap bottle when I set it
down,
somehow I know that is you.

I watch them in awe, as they linger,
suspended in the air
and it's you,
I know it's you.

and tonight, the movie that I chose to
watch,
there, on the wall, in the scene,
a picture of a mama and a baby
elephant -
what are the chances

in that moment, right next to me
is my Soul Collage card,
a mama and a baby elephant -
the card that represents my
relationship
with you.

I know that is a message from you
somehow.

and when I am in the grocery store and
my attention is drawn to the lady bugs
on the wrapping for the flowers at
Trader Joe's -
I feel like that is you.

That is my mom
saying hello.

- Tammy