

## Volunteers offer companionship and presence for patients and families

Direct Care Volunteers are integral to Mission Hospice care teams, bringing compassion and companionship to our patients. Each of our volunteers offers – and receives – something different as part of his or her volunteer journey.

**It is an extraordinary privilege to volunteer with Mission Hospice. To be present, to be mindful, to bring comfort and support, to listen to a life story and bear witness to a journey – what an honor to share these sacred spaces.**

– Patricia Matthews, Direct Care Volunteer

As Volunteer Director Hank Nourse says, “Being a hospice volunteer is really about developing relationships with patients. It’s about offering what you can, and about being present.”

**It gives me joy to spend time with a person who is willing to share their life experiences. I’m getting more than I’m giving – I’m seeing life through their eyes.**

– Ida Young, Direct Care Volunteer

Our Direct Care Volunteers provide a range of support, including:

- Companionship and social support for patients – sharing music or a poem, talking sports, or helping compile life reviews
- Respite and logistical help for family members
- Sitting vigil with patients who are at the end of life

We invite you to volunteer, and share in this experience. To prepare you for visiting patients, you’ll receive 20 hours of free training, as well as continuing education and mentoring from your peers and our staff. We will never ask you to do anything that takes you out of your physical or emotional comfort zone.



Marianne Brannon (with Beijing) and Don Conkling (with Sophie) offer support and companionship for our patients and families.



Mission Hospice Volunteers (from left) Lyne Soucy, Kathryn Nourse, and Jennifer Enders.

We welcome bilingual volunteers and those with talents in music, massage, or Healing Touch. We also welcome those who’d like to volunteer with their pets, together offering companionship and comfort to patients. We’ll train you, and certify your pet.

**Sharing time with people and their families touches my soul and feeds my heart. Volunteering with Mission Hospice helps me get beyond myself, and relieve the stress and demanding hours of the corporate world.**

– Ellen Baker, Direct Care Volunteer

As a Mission Hospice volunteer, you will become an important part of our community – and it just might change your life in ways you can’t imagine. 🐾

**Helping patients and their families in small ways offers them a source of support at a very vulnerable and difficult time. I am always humbled by their gratitude when it is I who receive the blessing of connecting with those from whom I have learned so much.**

– Judy Karlsen, Direct Care Volunteer

**Interested?** To find out more and meet other volunteers, join us at one of our upcoming New Volunteer Information Meetings on June 7. Details are inside.

**Questions?** Contact Volunteer Coordinator Craig Schroeder at 650.532.2323 or [cschroeder@MissionHospice.org](mailto:cschroeder@MissionHospice.org).

## A farewell to the soul of Mission Hospice

Dwight Wilson, CEO



Almost exactly 20 years ago, Rev. Linda Siddall joined Mission Hospice as a Spiritual Care Volunteer. Not long after, she became our Assistant Chaplain, and then Director of Spiritual Care.

Since 1996, Linda has served as a mentor, spiritual leader, and the soul of Mission Hospice. She has accompanied so many patients and families through their journeys. And as our organization has grown, Linda always reminds us why we are here, and what our care means to those we serve.



This month, the Mission Hospice family is seeing off our beloved Rev. Linda as she retires and returns to her family in the Midwest. In her honor, we have invited internationally-acclaimed teacher and spiritual leader Frank Ostaseki to spend the day with our staff.

Linda will be truly missed, and her essence will always be with us. As we look to the future, I am so pleased to welcome to the Mission Hospice family the 18 wonderful graduates of our latest training session for Direct Care Volunteers. This diverse, multilingual group includes professionals in accounting, law, and software development, along with a nurse, a nursing student, and an Air Force veteran.

Volunteers of all kinds have always been at the heart of our care, and some big-hearted volunteers have produced several fun events recently to support our patients. The Mission Hospice Auxiliary raised funds to support our patients with their 19<sup>th</sup> annual Bridge Day and Luncheon, and they are planning another amazing Fall Gala on October 1. And a special thanks to our friends at the Peninsula Italian American Social Club, who hosted a festive dinner and dance benefit last month for more than 300 attendees.

We invite everyone to join us next month as we host some film screenings and community conversations throughout the County (details to the right). I hope to see you there. — DW



### Hospice House Campaign Update

We've raised \$3.8 million toward our \$6 million campaign goal, and are continuing to solicit leadership gifts from groups and individuals.

For more information, contact Development and Campaign Director Marsha Eddleman at meddleman@missionhospice.org or 650.532.2550.

## Upcoming events

### Drop-in Grief Support Groups

**Tuesdays** from 6-7:30pm, led by Roby Newman, LCSW  
Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo  
**1st and 3rd Saturdays**, 10-11:30am, led by Tracie Pyers, MSW  
Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo  
**2nd and 4th Thursdays**, 4-5:30pm, led by Bethany Berkowitz, RN, BSN and Dawn Fitzpatrick, LCSW (from Coastside Adult Day Health), 925 Main Street, Half Moon Bay  
**En Español: Miércoles en la noche**, 6-7:30pm, Dirigido por la Maestra en Trabajo Social Sara Martinez  
Redwood City Fair Oaks Community Center, 2600 Middlefield Road, Redwood City  
For details and to confirm the schedule, visit [MissionHospice.org](http://MissionHospice.org) or call 650.554.1000.

### New Volunteer Informational Meetings

**Tuesday, June 7, 2016** - 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).

### New Volunteer Training Sessions

**Saturdays** (June 18 and 25, July 9 and 16) from 10am-3pm and  
**Thursdays** (July 7 and 14) from 6-8pm  
Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo  
These training sessions will prepare you for being a Direct Care Volunteer. To sign up or learn more, contact Volunteer Coordinator Craig Schroeder at 650.532.2323.

### Being Mortal: A film and community discussion

**Friday, June 17, 2016** - 6:30pm • Trinity Church, 330 Ravenswood, Menlo Park  
**Friday, June 24, 2016** - 6:30pm • Senior Coastsiders, 925 Main St., Half Moon Bay  
If you thought you were dying, what would matter most? Join us for a screening of the PBS film "Being Mortal," followed by a conversation about how to identify and communicate your own wishes. **Free!** Register at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](http://MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

### Auxiliary Fall Gala

**Saturday, October 1, 2016 • San Mateo**  
Save the date for our big celebration – an evening of dinner, dancing, and fun.

## We can help your group learn about and plan for end-of-life care

The medical professionals at Mission Hospice are committed to helping people learn how to ensure that they and their loved ones get the end-of-life care they want and deserve.

Our outreach nurses and other experts would be glad to talk to your group – large or small – about anything related to planning for end-of-life, including:

- Advance healthcare directives and the POLST
- What hospice care means
- Medicare benefits for home care and hospice

To learn more, contact our Outreach Nurses at 650.554.1000 or [outreach@missionhospice.org](mailto:outreach@missionhospice.org).

## Listening with cultural humility: MK Nelson

Martha Kay (MK) Nelson is well aware of the stereotypes of her profession, and she is happy to dispel them. "People often have the perception that clergy are holier than thou, that we have some level of elevated morality. It's just not true." Laughing, she confesses her fondness for Irish whiskey.

But MK is passionate about her work to help people find connection, meaning, and purpose in their lives. Raised Presbyterian, she has since explored many other traditions, especially Buddhism. She is a graduate of the University of Montana in her beloved Missoula (BA, Creative Writing) and of Harvard Divinity School (MTS, Master of Theological Studies, World Religions).

"I've been blessed with an easy faith – a life-long sense that there is something bigger than us to which we can connect... something that guides us and relates with us," MK says. "That's all I know." As she puts it, "I am a free agent... free agent of the Spirit." It's a trait she finds particularly helpful in hospice, where chaplains are called to meet patients and families right where there are, regardless of any belief system they may – or may not – hold.

Articulate and curious, MK takes a broad approach to spiritual care, leading with listening and what she calls "cultural

humility." With nearly ten years of experience, she joined Mission Hospice in 2014 as a Spiritual Counselor. MK was recently appointed the successor to Rev. Linda Siddall, who will soon be retiring as our Director of Spiritual Care.

"Hospice chaplains need to be unafraid, so that we can meet people with openness, humility, and curiosity. It's about really seeing the other person. And it's ok to ask questions." MK, known for her broad smile, is great at asking questions – and listening deeply to the answers.

She is definitely not afraid. Almost three years ago, on her 39th birthday, MK took monastic vows in both Buddhism and Christianity, embarking on a project she called "urban love monk: a year of receiving what's given." For one full year, she followed the rhythm of those vows inside the life she already had: slowing down, praying five times a day, writing, listening, being. She was supported in her spiritual practice by an Indiegogo fundraising campaign.

"It's amazing what happens when you leap," she says. "It was a huge luxury and gift to take that restorative time. The experience now infuses my work at Mission Hospice, deepening my ability to be with patients." MK is writing a book about her monastic year.



*Spiritual Counselor MK Nelson*

And she's continued her thoughtful, intentional life, spending her free time with family and friends (including three-year old twin goddaughters), reading, and hiking – especially to the views at the top of San Mateo's Sugarloaf Mountain, one of her favorite places.

"In hospice, every one of our patients has a story," she says. "We are witnessing people at their most vulnerable. It is important to take time to acknowledge the intensity of that, and the sacrality of the work." 🍌

*MK's blog is [urbanlovemonk.blogspot.com](http://urbanlovemonk.blogspot.com).*

## *Italian American Club raises fun and funds*



*The eighth annual "Night of Fun" hosted by the Peninsula Italian American Social Club raised nearly \$60,000 for Mission Hospice. Many thanks to Club President Bert Salvato and his wife Janice, auctioneer San Mateo Police Chief Susan Manheimer, and the 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.*

**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 more than ten thousand 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](http://www.MissionHospice.org) • 650.554.1000

**Board of Directors**

Judy DiPaolo  
*Chair*

Dr. Stephen Weller  
*Vice Chair*

Kevin Gilmore  
*Co-Treasurer*

Michael Teutschel  
*Co-Treasurer*

Debbie Goodin  
*Secretary*

Sally Bergman

Andrea Bolts

Dr. Karen Chee

Mary Chigos

Steve Fick

Jane Lennon

Danette Magilligan

Dr. Robert Roe

Sheila Young

**Honorary  
Lifetime Member**  
Adella Harris

**Auxiliary Co-Presidents**

Ann Nolan

Marilyn Porto

 [facebook.com/missionhospice](http://facebook.com/missionhospice)

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

**INSIDE: Volunteers offer companionship and presence**  
**Listening with cultural humility: MK Nelson**  
**Photos from the “Night of Fun” fundraiser**



## Experiencing Grief: My Story of Loss and Love

*By Suzannah M. Stason, L.Ac.*

Grief is not easy. For each of us it is, will be, and must be different. My beloved partner Suzanne Friedman was 45 years old when she died after three days of hospice care and four years of lung cancer.

Suzanne touched many people with her humor, generosity, and undying commitment to service. She gave the most amazing gifts, ones I am still uncovering as I continue forward in my life without her. My grief journey so far has been surprising, difficult and powerful.

In my grief, first came confusion. For a long time, grief felt like being in a vast, turbulent ocean in a small rickety boat with no oars. I felt lost and uneasy. And as soon as I started to think I had found a way, something to hold onto, the winds would shift or my boat would fill with water again.

Then, as time progressed sadness came in. I have never known such sadness before. A huge part of my grief journey has been to learn how to feel this much emotion. Emotions are like powerful waves in a huge ocean. At first, my little dingy was overwhelmed, but in time and with

help from grief counseling, friends and meditation practice, I learned how to work with them, feel them and let them pass. I have learned to cry, to wail at times, to be silent, and to share.

And with time, the element of transformation came in and continues now today. This is not to say I don't feel sad or confused at times, but I can now look at my grief as an incredible journey that has beckoned me to open my heart and to find my strength. My heart aches still, but I can feel it growing stronger too. I no longer feel so

vulnerable. I have fixed up my boat and learned to put up my sails. I have found a course and let both my loss and love be my captains and my guides. I have learned to keep going, to be gentle with myself, and to follow my heart on this path of grief. 🍂

*Suzannah Stason is a licensed acupuncturist in San Francisco. Her wife, Suzanne Friedman, was our hospice patient; she passed away on March 3, 2014. Suzannah shared a longer version of this story at our Fall 2015 “Light Up A Life” remembrance ceremony. The full speech is at [MissionHospice.org/grief/loss-and-love](http://MissionHospice.org/grief/loss-and-love).*



*Suzanne (L, with Pico) and Suzannah (R, with Kuma) on their wedding day in 2011, with Doshin Nelson Roshi.*