

Mission House volunteers make hospice houses unique and special

If you were to visit our hospice houses, you'd find the many volunteers who share their time and talents to make each home more comfortable, welcoming, and special for our patients and their families.

On Tuesdays, you might hear **Jim Wells** playing his hammered dulcimer in the living room or the courtyard at Mission House in San Mateo. He taught himself to play this unusual instrument



Volunteer Jim Wells, an accomplished musician, plays and sings for patients and families at Mission House for several hours each week.

almost 30 years ago, and now performs at weddings, celebrations of life, and renaissance fairs, as well as with a dulcimer orchestra he helped form.

After Jim's mom had "a terrific experience" with hospice care in Washington, Jim was inspired to enroll in our direct care volunteer training. He now plays at patients' bedsides, sharing music and stories. "Music has an incredible power," he says. "The vibrations of an acoustic instrument are so much more potent than a recording."

In addition to playing traditional Irish/Celtic music, standards, and show tunes, Jim takes requests. He recently learned some new tunes for a patient who was a fan of the Beatles.

He finds that playing in the common areas of the house helps family members relax. Jim fondly remembers an afternoon when a visiting family member asked if he could join him in music. The man turned out to be an amazing jazz pianist, and the two of them created a spontaneous half-hour concert for everyone in the house.

"That's what happens at the house – these emotional encounters that can be so positive. I feel lucky that I have a place that I can go and play. I am the lucky one."

Volunteer **Paul Horak** says that, as a future physician training at Stanford University School of Medicine, he felt he had a responsibility to experience end of life through hospice patients – so he fit volunteer training into his busy school schedule. "I knew when I first went to the office that these were people I wanted to learn from," he remembers.

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John Dabney finds gratitude is the key to resilience

John Dabney's San Carlos home is filled with life. Jazz plays on the radio; fresh flowers fill his living room. He is eager to talk about music, his ever-growing rock and mineral collection, and the news of the day.

John has always lived life on his own terms, even as those terms have changed. Once an adventure traveler, active rockhound, and music festival devotee, John, 86, is now confined to a wheelchair by his diabetes. But he still has a healthy appetite for life and learning.

"One of the keys to aging is acceptance of the things you can't do any more. You just have to let go. Beyond acceptance comes forgiveness, and gratitude," says John. "I'm grateful every morning for the blessings I have. And I have many."

A former social worker, John knows gratitude is an important part of resilience. He spent his career working with people with mental illness, counseling children and families, and developing a program to assess seniors with depression and dementia.

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Committed to doing things that bring him joy, John travelled to Seattle for a performance and behind-the-scenes tour of "Swan Lake."

Preparing for our future

Lisa Deal, CEO



Mission Hospice was founded in 1979 with a commitment to providing exceptional end-of-life care for our community. In the 40 years since, healthcare has changed dramatically – in both the way it is provided and the way it's paid for. These changes mean that what made our first 40 years successful is not enough to take us through the coming decade and beyond.

Community-based, nonprofit hospices like ours are at particular risk from growing for-profit competition, healthcare consolidation, and decreased reimbursement. In order to remain financially sustainable in today's healthcare environment, we must make programmatic and organizational changes while remaining focused on our core mission.

President John Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

Looking to the future, our Board of Directors and leadership team explored many options and made the difficult decision to close our pre-hospice home health care program for homebound patients with skilled needs. We will continue to offer palliative care services for patients in the last year of life who are not ready for hospice through our Transitions program and geriatric primary care practice, led by Dr. Shelley Salpeter. This change is not easy, and I'm grateful for the support and dedication of our clinical team, administrative staff, and volunteers.

I am excited to announce that we are also forming a strategic partnership with other like-minded organizations, to help sustain local, nonprofit, and community-based hospice care throughout California. Together with Hospice of Santa Cruz County and The Elizabeth Hospice, we are founding the California Hospice Network.

By working together to share best practices and payor contracting, we'll be better positioned to adapt to the changing healthcare landscape, while continuing to operate as distinct and independent organizations. Our day-to-day clinical and community services will remain the same, we will each keep our own name and logo, and we will continue to rely on local philanthropy to support our programs.

People sometimes ask what makes hospices like ours different from our for-profit competitors. For one, thanks to community support, nonprofit hospices can provide charitable care for patients who need it. We also offer a broader array of services that are not reimbursed, including community grief support, education, complementary therapies, intern and volunteer opportunities, transitional care, and more.

The bottom line is that while ALL hospices provide federally-mandated quality care, nonprofit hospices like ours provide **exceptional** care, driven and supported by our own community. This exceptional care is why Helen Lagen and Mac Nash founded Mission Hospice as San Mateo County's first nonprofit hospice.

With these changes, we are deepening our commitment to patients and families in our community, and look to continue this legacy for the next 40 years. 🐾

Upcoming events

Unless otherwise noted, all events are at Mission Hospice & Home Care, 1670 South Amphlett, Suite 300, San Mateo

Movies@Mission Hospice

Thursday, June 27 • 6:30-8:30pm • Prison Terminal

Thursday, July 25 • 6:30-8:30pm • End of Life

Thursday, August 22 • 6:30-8:30pm • Lessons for the Living

Thursday, September 26 • 6:30-8:30pm • After the End

Thursday, October 10 • 6:30-8:30pm • Solace – Wisdom of the Dying

Thursday, November 14 • 6:30-8:30pm • Go In Peace!

Our series of films, with popcorn and discussion, about how we live and die.

Free. Tickets at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

Coastside movie: Solace – Wisdom of the Dying

Tuesday, July 16 • 6:30-8:30pm

Senior Coastsideers, 925 Main Street, Half Moon Bay

Join us for movie night on the coastside, with popcorn and discussion. **Free.**

Tickets at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

Mindful Caregiver Training

Saturday, July 20 + Sunday, July 21 • 9am-5pm

This workshop will teach family and professional caregivers contemplative practices and practical skills to care for themselves and others. Led by experts from Zen Hospice Project and Mission Hospice. CEUs available.

\$350; \$250 for family caregivers. Register at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

Take Charge! Advance care planning workshops

Mondays, August 5 + 12 • 6:30-8:30pm

Coastside Adult Day Health Center, 925 Main St., Half Moon Bay

Wednesdays, September 18 + 25 • 1-3pm

Seniors At Home, 200 Channing Avenue, Palo Alto

Learn more about advance care planning and the steps you can take to help get the care you want, based on what matters most to you. **Free.**

Register at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

Suicide Loss Support Group

Thursday evenings, August 14–October 2 • 6-7:30pm

Supports those who have lost a loved one to suicide. **Free.** For details and to register, contact Isabel at istenzel@MissionHospice.org or 650.931.8236.

Stories That Heal: Weekend writing workshop

Saturday, September 7 + Sunday, September 8 • 9am-4pm

Learn how to tell your story in this small-group writing workshop with author Ann Randolph. **\$320.** Register at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

An (inappropriate) evening with Ann Randolph

Saturday, September 7 • 7-9pm

"Inappropriate in All the Right Ways," a funny, provocative (and R-rated) one-woman show. **\$20.** Tickets at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](https://www.MissionHospice.eventbrite.com).

Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group

Monday mornings, September 9–October 28 • 10:30am-noon

San Bruno Senior Center, 1555 Crystal Springs Road, San Bruno

Supports those grieving the loss of a partner. **Free.** For details and to register, contact Isabel at istenzel@MissionHospice.org or 650.931.8236.

New volunteer informational meetings

Tuesday, September 17 • noon-1pm or 5:30-6:30pm

Find out all about volunteering with Mission Hospice. No RSVP needed. For details, contact Craig at cshroeder@MissionHospice.org or 650.532.2323.

Fall Gala: **Diamonds & Denim** MUSIC BY PRIDE & JOY

SAVE THE DATE • Saturday, October 5

Sponsorships are now available! Details at [MissionHospice.org/fallgala](https://www.MissionHospice.org/fallgala).

For details and more events, visit www.MissionHospice.org.

Hospice House volunteers ...continued from front

By volunteering at Mission House Woodside on Sunday mornings, Paul says he's learned from the staff and been rewarded in ways he couldn't have imagined. "You get to know patients and their families, and to hear their life stories. I am so grateful that I get to be in people's lives in this way."

He's also really enjoyed being part of the Mission Hospice team. "As someone in my mid-20s, I get to interact with volunteers of all ages. My friendships with other volunteers have enriched my life and energized me."

Paul also felt that it was important for his fellow medical students to learn more about hospice care. "We are told to be present with the patient, but we don't get practical training or coaching in that," he says. With support from one of his professors, Paul launched a popular seminar series about end-of-life issues, including a field trip to the house, an experience he says was "life-changing" for the future physicians.

"Volunteering has helped me realize I have a passion and interest in end-of-life issues," Paul says. "And I know that my time at Mission House will make me a better doctor."

Both of our hospice houses are typically filled with beautiful flower arrangements, the handiwork of volunteer **Linda Murphy**.



The rooms and common areas of both hospice houses are always filled with fresh flowers, thanks to volunteer Linda Murphy.

A busy real estate agent, Linda started as a direct care volunteer, but then found that her work schedule made it hard to visit patients. She discovered the perfect solution when she tapped into her passion for flower arranging, and volunteered to be our liaison with the nonprofit Random Acts of Flowers, which prepared and delivered donated bouquets.

When that organization closed its doors, they connected Linda with the staff at the Trader Joe's at Hillsdale. The store now donates discarded flowers to Mission Hospice every week.

Linda picks these up on Wednesday mornings and, in her garage, sorts through the material to select what's usable and match it with

the available vases. In the afternoon, she delivers to the San Mateo and Woodside houses an arrangement for each patient. "I always try to do one big bouquet for the center table or the mantle," she says, emphasizing the importance of keeping the common areas beautiful for family members and staff.

Linda has been creating and delivering bouquets to the hospice houses for about two years. "It works out really well, both for me and for the patients," she says, "and it makes me feel good to do it."

Volunteer **Phil Georgy** is proof that volunteering can be a positive life force. A former travel agent, Phil had volunteered for many years with the Red Cross and other community service organizations.



Volunteer Phil Georgy (at right, with patient Richard Gee), says that his wheelchair makes it easier for patients to share their own feelings.

After caring for his own mother during her last nine months of life, he was inspired to go back to school to study healthcare.

But before he could finish his training, a serious illness landed him in the hospital. Phil then spent a year in a nursing facility. When he was discharged last fall, still in a wheelchair, a friend suggested that volunteering could help him heal. He now visits patients at Mission House San Mateo every week, while he continues to attend classes as well as his own medical appointments.

Phil says that having been a long-time patient helps him empathize with the patients and families. "Even though I'm in a chair and I'm a patient myself, I have a lot to offer."

When patients see him in the chair, "it's a cue for them to be open about their own feelings and experience," Phil explains. He says it can be easier for patients to talk about their feelings and their fears with someone who's not a family member.

"Even though I'm still fighting my illness, I'm determined to give back to the community. Volunteering at the house is very rewarding for me. It's putting love into action." 🍂

1670 South Amphlett Boulevard, Suite 300, San Mateo, CA 94402
www.MissionHospice.org • 650.554.1000

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 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: Mission House volunteers make hospice houses special
 John Dabney finds gratitude is the key to resilience
 From our CEO: Preparing for our future**



John Dabney ...continued from front

It was through his job that John met his future wife Jane, when they both worked at San Mateo County Mental Health Services. “She had an interesting rock on her desk, and I asked her about it – that’s how we got started,” he says. “Janie loved me, and I think she made me a better man.” The two enjoyed many adventurous trips together in their 42 years of marriage before Jane passed away in 2007 under the care of Mission Hospice.

When John entered our Transitions program several years ago, one of the first people he met was social worker Tracie Pyers. They have since formed a strong bond and enjoy discussing a wide range of topics, including their shared vocation.

With her support, and his positive attitude and good humor, John has continued to pursue his many interests.

A member of two mineral societies, John continues to add to his collection of rocks and crystals from around the world.

He follows musicians from all genres, especially bluegrass, traditional jazz, Fado, and rebetica (urban Greek jazz). Although

he can no longer attend his beloved bluegrass festivals, he livestreams concerts and keeps up with a network of friends who share his love of music.

In fact, John’s intellectual curiosity and generous spirit have earned him a network of friends, neighbors, and family members who visit, help with errands, and share conversation. He meets regularly for lunch with former colleagues.

“Getting older is an adventure,” says John. “I’ve done a lot of adventure travel, including taking a safari near Kilimanjaro to prospect for gem crystals of Tanzanite. I’m now learning as much as I did on some of those travels, in a very different way. I’m learning about diseases and treatments that I never wanted to know about,” he laughs. “I have learned a lot about mindfulness.”

Tracie credits John’s open mind and gratitude with his ability to adapt to the challenges posed by his disease. “John is one of the most resilient people I’ve met in my many years of this work,” says Tracie. “He’s such a life force. He is thriving in this chapter of his life.” 🐾

Seeking volunteers who love to plan events

Do you love to plan a good party? The Mission Hospice Auxiliary wants you!



As a volunteer with the award-winning Auxiliary, you’ll help organize and host two annual fundraisers: the Fall Gala and the bridge tournament.

These fun events raise hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to support patients and families right here in our community.

Interested? Contact Cathy at cmcdermott@MissionHospice.org or 650.532.2562.