

# the HOSPICE family & Palliative Care

CHARLOTTE REGION

## A Sacred Place

When driving up the long, sloping driveway, it's very apparent that Levine & Dickson Hospice House (LDHH) is an attractive place. A craftsman-style building with meticulous landscaping, it has a welcoming entrance and a friendly feel. Take even one step inside and the warm vibes continue. Natural light is maximized, the furniture is comfortable, and you'll feel like you're at home. All of these components are important, of course, but that's not what makes this place special. You know what does?

### *The stories.*

Spend just 24 hours at LDHH and you will walk away a changed person. Your heart may be slightly broken but you will be in awe of the extraordinary care that you will witness from every single person who works there. If you stayed for a week, you'd probably want to volunteer and help out forever. Because this is what you'd see.

Modesto, a man from Honduras, will be admitted because a social worker will tearfully champion his need for acute care. He has no insurance, very few immediate family members in town, and no one to act as his caregiver as he battles a very painful type of cancer. He will be given

a room on the weekend of his birthday, and the LDHH chapel will be turned into a party room as his extended family arrives to help him celebrate the last birthday he'll ever have.



**Modesto with Evalia Graham. She sang him home.**

A few days later, Modesto will insist on changing into the only suit he owns to have his picture taken by a photographer shooting portraits in the hospice house. While he changes, his nurses will discuss possible ways to help him communicate with his children back in Honduras. His care team has tried to get a plane ticket to help him get home, but they know he probably couldn't survive the flight in his condition.

He's been using

donated phone cards, but now they will discuss the possibility of Skype.

On the day of his death, one of the cooks at LDHH, who has been acting as his interpreter, will offer to come to Modesto's room and sing songs to him in Spanish. She will think she has forgotten the lyrics, but as they come back to her, he will join his weak voice with hers and together, the words will flow from their lips. Modesto will die hours later. She will have sung him home.

*(continued on page 6)*

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# A Founding Vision



**Peter A. Brunnick, CPA  
 President & CEO**

On March 19, HPCCR held its annual meeting at beautiful Southminster retirement community in south Charlotte. In addition to our current and past board members, a few special guests were in attendance including Kevin Davis, Zack Thomas, and the Reverend Hunt Williams – community volunteers who were among the founders of this organization we now know as Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region.

On March 8 of this year, we celebrated our 34<sup>th</sup> birthday and it's been a remarkable journey. What began as a dream of our founders in the spring of 1977 has now become an integral part of the fabric of our healthcare community. We have not only enhanced healthcare through excellence in palliative medicine and hospice care, but we have blazed new trails in end-of-life care. We owe a debt of gratitude to our founders who had the vision to take (what was then) a new concept in healthcare and make it a reality. Thirty-four years later, the impact HPCCR has had within the community is extraordinary. The numbers speak for themselves:

- 32,000 – hospice patients served by HPCCR since our inception in 1978.
- 15,000 – palliative care patients served by HPCCR since the creation of our palliative care program in 2002.
- 2,516 – new hospice patients admitted under our care in 2011.
- 605 – hospice patients currently served by HPCCR on a daily basis.
- 686 – palliative care patients currently served by HPCCR on a daily basis.
- 32,198 – hours donated by our 496 volunteers last year.
- 440 – staff members who deliver on the mission of HPCCR.
  - 1 – the percentile in which HPCCR ranks nationally among hospice providers – in size and patients served.
  - 8 – counties now served by HPCCR, including Mecklenburg, Gaston, Union, Catawba, Cabarrus, Iredell, Cleveland, and Lincoln.
- 104 – children and teens who attended our Chameleon's Journey weekend/overnight grief camp in October 2011.
- 10 – additional beds granted by the State of North Carolina for HPCCR to build in Mecklenburg County, bringing our total to 26 beds (16 at Levine & Dickson Hospice House and ten to be built in south Charlotte this year).
- 75 – new positions added at HPCCR in the past year, contributing to local job growth and economic recovery.
- 7 – new hospice and palliative care physicians hired in the past year to keep up with the growing demand for our services.

Vision is a unique quality that leaders must possess in order to generate success. As we commemorate our 34<sup>th</sup> birthday, we celebrate the unusual discernment and foresight of our founders – leaders who realized all those years ago that comfort and peace at end of life is something we all deserve.

On behalf of HPCCR, I would like to thank you for being a part of this vision that continues today. With your support, HPCCR will celebrate many more birthdays and will offer the gift of hospice to patients, families, and communities for years to come.

# HPCCR Welcomes Joaquin Soria



**Joaquin Soria, our new VP & Chief Financial Officer.**

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region is pleased to announce Joaquin Soria has been hired as Vice President & Chief Financial Officer for the organization. In his new position, Joaquin will serve as a member of the organization's Senior Leadership Team and is responsible for leading key areas including all financial services and non-clinical operations.

Prior to joining Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, Joaquin held the position of Vice President of Finance at a global manufacturer of hi-tech dental equipment. He also has an extensive background in the automotive industry, working for DaimlerChrysler for 13 years in various capacities.

*"We are very excited to have someone with Joaquin's broad experience joining our team,"* states Pete Brunnick, Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region President & CEO. *"The current healthcare environment is very challenging and Joaquin has the right skill set to help us navigate through these difficult times."*

A native of Mexico, Joaquin received his Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City, and his MBA in Accounting from the University of Phoenix. He is fluent in both Spanish and German.

## Our Newest Additions to the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region elected new officers and board members at its annual meeting on March 19. Keith G. Butler, Senior Vice President Tax at Duke Energy, was elected Board Chair. Other members of the Executive Committee are Michael A. McNamara, Treasurer; Carter D. Meiselman, Secretary; Patricia M. Crull, Vice Chair at Large; Ralph R. McMillan, Vice Chair at Large; and Suzanne G. Bledsoe, Past Chair.

The Board also welcomed four new members: Sonya S. Barnes, CEO and Founder of Harris & Barnes, Inc.; Carlos B. Jorge, MD, Partner, Ballantyne Medical Associates; Lisa L. Muse, Retired Mortgage Banker; and Todd D. Wiebusch, CEO of CHMG Capital, LLC.

Deep appreciation is offered to our three retiring board members: Jean A. Brinkmann, A. Michael Burnett, and Eric H. Winter, MD.



**Keith Butler**



**Sonya Barnes**



**Carlos Jorge**



**Lisa Muse**



**Todd Wiebusch**

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# HPCCR – Officially a Best Place to Work

At Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, we take special care to support our employees. That's why we were extremely proud to be chosen by the *Charlotte Business Journal* as one of the best places to work for 2011.

The purpose of this award is to recognize companies in Charlotte that engage and champion their employees and offer an outstanding work environment. An independent and confidential online survey is sent to all employees of the nominated companies. After surveys are completed, analytical tools are then used to rank the top organizations for each category of small, medium, and large-sized companies (which is based on number of employees).

Last August, HPCCR was pleased to have an employee survey completion rate of 64%. Then in October, we found out that we were ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among the top ten

companies in the Large Business category. We are extremely honored to be placed alongside such notable companies as Time Warner Cable, Continental Tire, KPMG, and OrthoCarolina.

President and CEO Pete Brunnick accepted the award on behalf of HPCCR. *"Our employees are certainly our best resource and I'm pleased to know they feel valued. We are all proud of this acknowledgement because we place such a high priority on our employees' satisfaction and overall well-being. Employees who are supported and cared for go to much greater lengths to provide exceptional care for their patients and families."*

Many thanks to the *Charlotte Business Journal* for this opportunity and to all HPCCR employees for making your voices heard!

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## The Greatest Thing I Know



**Peggy Deese hopes to educate others about hospice care.**

It's not the natural order of life for a parent to lose a child. And it's especially not natural to lose both of your children *and* your husband, all within eight years. All to cancer.

But that is Peggy Deese's story. And while she has had more than her fair share of heartbreak in the past ten years, she is remarkably resilient and optimistic. What's more, she wants to help others by educating them about hospice. So she's sharing her story and her resources with the organization that has made such a deep impact in her life – Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region.

Peggy's husband had already been diagnosed with prostate cancer when her son, Joseph, noticed a lump on the back of his neck. A 46-year old avid runner with no previous health problems, he didn't visit a doctor until it was too late. And then found out it was melanoma. After two surgeries and various treatments, the doctors told Joseph that they had run out of options.

Peggy had read a magazine article about hospice care and persuaded her son to call HPCCR. It was, by far, the best decision the family made. Joseph was under care for about six months. *"I can't tell you how good they were to us,"* Peggy remembers. *"Whenever we called them, they were always right there."*

Seventeen months later, Peggy's husband, Joe, was losing his battle with prostate cancer. Once again, HPCCR was there to support Joe and his family. *"It's the greatest thing I know in a time of need,"* Peggy shares. *"They're not strangers – they're friends who know what to do in every situation. They are so gentle and so kind."*

Three years ago, a rare form of lung cancer took Peggy's daughter, Jan. Jan did not have hospice care, but Peggy was more prepared because of her past experiences with HPCCR. And she wants others to be prepared when a loved one nears the end of life. Including HPCCR in her will is Peggy's way of helping future parents and spouses who find themselves in situations like hers. It's her way of making sense of the heartbreak.

**For information about planned giving, please contact our Development Department at 704.335.3557.**

# Soup on Sunday Was a Delicious Success



**WSOC Sports Anchor Tiffany Wright, CPCC Culinary Arts Student Mary Asher, HPCCR Board Member Lisa Muse, and WSOC Evening News Anchor Blair Miller**

*Superlicious* – it’s a word we invented that means a super event that is also delicious. And indeed, our Soup on Sunday event was just that! It was a record-breaking year for the annual event as 791 guests (yep, we counted ‘em!) feasted on a smorgasbord of delectable liquid creations.

Participating Charlotte-area restaurants (and one in Gastonia!) showcased 35 different styles of soup. Suffice it to say that no one left disappointed!

We are literally “bowled over” by the support of our dedicated sponsors, participating restaurants, culinary schools, vendors, loyal volunteers, and of course, our event host – Central Piedmont Community College.

Soup on Sunday was so much fun, we can’t wait to do it all again next year. (Save the date: **Sunday, January 27, 2013.**) By attending the event, you are supporting hospice care in your own community. And because we continue to serve over 1,200 patients each day, with your commitment, we can provide outstanding care to all of them.

## The Gift of Volunteering

*“Remember some times when you felt the wind blow. When you felt more aware and alive, especially free. When you have lived deeply, and when you have found yourself full of abandon or totally open.”*

And so began one of the first exercises in our most recent volunteer training, *Breath*. What better way to refocus, to become present with ourselves, to take time for a deep, full breath. To just be. When someone we know or love is ill, it is easy to “do” for them – to run errands, clean up the house, cook lunch. But what happens when we run out of things to do?

Earlynn Bartley, Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County Volunteer Manager and Chaplain, helped our volunteers answer that question. She taught them about the simple power of being present – for themselves and for someone else. Breathing deeply and channeling peaceful thoughts and pleasant memories is a technique that not only helps us to refocus our own lives but benefits our hospice patients as well. What a gift to just be with someone, to hold their hand, to match our breath with theirs, to relax. What a gift for both patient and volunteer.

Volunteer Elsie Painter would agree. She most recently spent eight months visiting a patient, rolling a ball



**Judy Stallings, Maureen Tull, Earlynne Bartley and Normand Levasseur at a volunteer training session.**

back and forth, stroking her hair, and gently rubbing her hands. Even though the patient was, for the most part, unable to communicate, Elsie saw her eyes brighten during the visits. Their most meaningful times were spent simply taking in the community holiday decorations or reading by the Christmas tree. Elsie’s philosophy:

*“We should do for those who are ahead of us, until our day gets here. I’ve rubbed a lot of hands and arms and shoulders. That’s what I would want someone to do for me. One thing that hospice has taught me is that there are so many caring people.”*

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

(continued from page 1)

## Special events

Visit [hpccr.org](http://hpccr.org) for detailed information about each event as the date draws near, or contact Manager of Special Events Nancy Cole at 704.335.4312 or [colen@hpccr.org](mailto:colen@hpccr.org).

Proceeds from our events benefit the programs and services of HPCCR, including grief care and support, pediatric care, and exceptional care for anyone who needs it, regardless of age, diagnosis, or ability to pay.

### Run the Rail 5K

Saturday, June 2

### Lake Norman Hospice Regatta

Friday - Sunday, June 8 - 10

### Pedal The Park

Monday, September 3

### Hit the Brixx 10k Run/5K

#### Run-Walk

Saturday, September 15

### Taste of Birkdale

Saturday, September 29

### Lowery Memorial Golf Tournament

Monday, October 8

### Empty Bowl

Tuesday, October 9

### Plaza Midwood Chantilly Chili Cook-off

Saturday, October 13

### Driven by Grace Bike Show

Saturday, October 13



**Kathleen and her husband both received care at LDHH**

And there will be more. That same week, Kathleen will be admitted and given a room next to her husband. Already a hospice patient, her husband has been her primary caregiver in their home, but has been found on the floor, unconscious and unresponsive from a fall, when the care team comes for a visit. Since she is bedbound, Kathleen cannot help. Her husband will be moved from the hospital to LDHH, where he will die peacefully with his wife at his side. Kathleen will remain at LDHH, lovingly cared for by her nurses, aides, and social worker. And she will try to make sense of a sudden new world that does not include her beloved partner.

Down the hall, more ceremonies will take place. This time because Ann, a 45-year old mother, is dying from lung cancer. She has been aggressively fighting the cancer because she does not want to leave her two children – 18 and 12 – parentless. You see, her husband passed away not too long ago due to complications from surgery and Ann can't bear the thought of making her children go through this pain again. But by the time she is admitted to LDHH, they will know her time is limited. So they will have her son's Eagle Scout ceremony in her room that day so that she can witness his outstanding accomplishment. And later that evening, they will have a baptism for her sister's baby. Because Ann is the godmother.

Yes, the stories are what make Levine & Dickson Hospice House unique. But without the staff members, there would be no stories. Every single person at Levine & Dickson Hospice House goes to tremendous lengths to comfort the patients and their loved ones. Every touch of a patient resonates with love. Every word is spoken with compassion. LDHH staff members jump through hoops every day to do something special for the individuals under their charge. And they will do whatever it takes to honor the last requests of their patients. From the simple to the complicated.

They will hold the hand of the wife losing her husband. They will sing songs in a man's native language to comfort him as he slips away. And they will turn the water therapy room at LDHH into a sanctuary for the baptism of a dying woman's godchild.

Levine & Dickson Hospice House is a sacred place. And the people who work there are angels among us.

## Help Us Go Green!

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# Maybe It's the Final Page. Maybe Not.

Exaggerations can make a good story great. The bigger the fish, the better the story, right? Well, not many people could top the tall tale that Lenora Moore has. Because you know what? Every bit of her story is absolutely true.

Lenora has been fighting advanced ovarian cancer since 1995. Yes, you read that right. This battle recently entered its 17<sup>th</sup> year. But quite honestly, the cancer is not the real story. It's just a backdrop for her tale of unwavering and awe-inspiring faith. Even though she has been plagued with the aforementioned ovarian cancer, a collapsed lung, an internal and external thrombosis in her jugular vein, a mass in her pancreas, multiple surgeries and hospitalizations, and the deaths of her husband and mother, she has never once asked "Why me?" She has never questioned God, bitterly bemoaned her fate, or turned her back on her faith. Quite the contrary: it has made her faith even stronger.



Lenora has been under the care of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region since 2009 when she stopped seeking treatment for her cancer. She wanted to focus on her priorities – enjoying her family and her faith. But just last year she took on a major project. She decided that she wanted to share her story with the world.

HPCCR turned to Cullen Ferguson, former television anchor and current HPCCR volunteer, for assistance. Over the course of many months, Cullen helped Lenora capture her story, which they called *Surviving in the Shadow of Death*. HPCCR helped Lenora find a publisher, Jeff McGunegle, owner of publishing firm InteGREATity, who in turn helped find generous partners to design the cover and print copies for families and friends.

But that's not where this story ends. Jeff McGunegle sent a copy of Lenora's book to Michelle Obama. And Mrs. Obama responded by sending a personal note (on official White House stationery, no less!) to Lenora, wishing her perseverance in her fight and solace through the love of friends and family.

This very well may be the final page of Lenora's story. But if so, what an amazing acknowledgement of a life led with courage, trust, and unquestionable faith. A life that has inspired even the First Lady of the United States.

Yes, Lenora has a story that practically transcends belief. But isn't that the point? In the end, your beliefs are what hold you together when you think you have nothing left. Lenora's beliefs have kept her going through a grueling 17-year battle with cancer. And, as a result, her tale keeps getting taller and taller. No exaggerations required.

## Michelle Obama's letter:

*Lenora,*

*I understand that you are going through a difficult time right now, and I want you to know that my thoughts are with you as you confront this challenge.*

*Each of us can draw on the power of hope, perseverance, and faith to overcome many of life's trials. As you continue your fight, I hope you will find strength and comfort in the love of your family and friends.*

*Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michelle Obama*

## Read more stories on our blog, *Hospice Matters*.

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# A Legendary Addition at Lake Norman

If you grew up or live in the Lake Norman area, the name Dr. Bill Williams is probably familiar to you. That's because back in 1978, Dr. Williams founded the Davidson Clinic, an office of physicians that has cared for residents from Huntersville to Statesville and all areas in between. He was also the first Chief Medical Officer for Carolinas HealthCare Systems. Throughout his life-long career, he has positively impacted the way North Carolinians receive medical care. And just last year he stepped into yet another new role. That of hospice physician.

Last September, the Hospice & Palliative Care Lake Norman (HPCLN) office was thrilled to welcome Dr. Williams as the newest member of the team. Now he not only serves our Lake Norman patients and community, he also periodically cares for patients at our Levine & Dickson Hospice House. *"We simply adore Dr. Williams,"* says Nicole Wolfe, HPCLN Regional Director. *"Our patients are so charmed by his warm and caring attitude that they don't even realize what amazing expertise they are receiving at the same time. He has been a crucial addition to our team."*

Dr. Williams has a sincere passion for what he calls "patient-centered" care. This type of care focuses on the wishes of the patient, and is one of the foundations of hospice care. *"But the truth is, this kind of care is most appropriate for any time,"* he says, *"not just end of life."*



**Dr. Williams (r) meets with HPCCR CEO Pete Brunnick**

In that way, Dr. Williams believes that the principles of hospice care – care that focuses on the medical, social, and spiritual support of the patient – should be the standard to which all healthcare systems are held. *"As physicians, we should treat patients the way we would want to be treated or the way we would want our family to be treated. It's just that simple."*

A simple approach with a far-reaching impact. It's just what the doctor ordered.

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