

Purpose

A PUBLICATION OF
WESTERN RESERVE CARE SOLUTIONS

SUMMER 2023

HOW PEOPLE DIE REMAINS IN THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO LIVE ON.

- DAME CICELY SAUNDERS

OUR MISSION

Hospice of the Western Reserve provides palliative and end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio.

In celebration of the individual worth of each life, we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care, and support effective grieving.



at



Purpose is produced by the Marketing Communications team at Hospice of the Western Reserve. To contact the team, or request the digital edition, please send an email to communication@hospicewr.org.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Certified Staff: A Commitment to Excellence	3
Above and Beyond	5
Weathering the Weather	6
An Occupational Opportunity	7
Tending to the Mind, Body and Spirit	9
Warm Welcomes	11
Life's Treasures Ties Communities Together	12
A Spark of Good Works in Medina	12
Corporate Sponsor has Roots in Community	13
Meet Kyle Godhard	15

A LETTER FROM BILL FINN



Purpose is defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionary as the intention, aim, or function of something, and what something is supposed to achieve. This new publication is a reflection of our purpose. Among these pages, you will find features of our exceptional colleagues, patients, and families, and how they illustrate our purpose at Hospice of the Western Reserve.

We are a mission-driven organization. It takes an individual sense of purpose from each of our paid and volunteer staff to fulfill our mission. Individually, they have all helped to build a culture of compassion and service. And collectively, with a shared sense of purpose, we become an extraordinary team for our patients and families. We are proud to work with some of the most generous people in Northern Ohio.

As we elevate and celebrate our team members, we reflect on the quiet service and humility they embody. We are all teachers; our actions and our words are the outward manifestation of our purpose. Our paid and volunteer staff are not seeking accolades. Their heads are down, their hands are busy, their hearts are dedicated to our mission and purpose.

This is the first edition of this publication. It will serve to recognize and celebrate team member contributions and how they collectively help us to achieve our mission. We will hear how a culture of caring and purpose paints the tapestry of so many patients and families, and coloring our own life's journeys with beautiful richness.

Your sense of purpose also makes our work possible. Thank you for your support of our agency, and we are eager to share many more of these unique and remarkable stories with you in the time to come.

Your Family. Our Purpose. **Together.**

Bill Finn
President and Chief Executive Officer



Certified Staff: A Commitment to Excellence



Tonya Kuhl, RN

In the last ten years, there has been a dramatic rise in for-profit hospice care across the United States. As venture capitalists seek to profit off the most vulnerable patients in healthcare, families need to know who to trust in caring for their loved one. A key indicator in agencies who put patients above profits lies in the expertise of their staff.

Hospice of the Western Reserve takes pride in their efforts to ensure that eligible staff receive hospice certifications in their field. This commitment to excellence is engrained into our company culture and is reflected in our reputation among caregivers and providers. This year, 12 clinical staff members were nominated for awards in their field, including RNs, HNAs, APRNs, and LPNs.

Tonya Kuhl, RN, was selected to receive the CHPN of the Year award, and Nicole Stephens, HNA, was selected to receive the CHPNA of the Year award. This March, they were recognized at the Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association's annual assembly in Montreal, Canada.



Nicole Stephens, HNA via video conference at the annual assembly.

Both Nikki and Tonya received enthusiastic support from their peers. Nikki is a CHPNA on the Mentor Alt East team and has been employed with HWR for 10 years. Her attention to detail in helping patients look and feel their best does not go unrecognized by families and loved ones. Staff and visitors know when Nikki has been with a patient, because they look beautiful and are cared for from head to toe. Comfort is her main priority, and she was the first HNA on her team to volunteer to see COVID positive patients in the early days of the pandemic. Her grace and kindness made the world of a difference in such painful and uncertain times.

"Often, Nikki was the last person many of our patients saw, and I cannot think of a better person to have a final gaze upon before leaving this reality," writes Patrick Plunkett, Spiritual Care Coordinator for the Mentor Alt East team.

Tonya Kuhl has been with HWR since 2014, and her colleagues recognize her as driven, determined, and always smiling. She started her career as a medical/surgical secretary, then worked her way up as a clinical assistant, then an L.P.N., then an R.N., and now she holds her B.S.N. Tonya has been instrumental in key transitions at HWR, including the launch of the Care Solutions Center's after-hours operations, as well as the Stein acquisition. Her passion for the mission and philosophy of end-of-life care is contagious, and she is often relied upon for her expertise and her problem-solving skills.

"Whether it is dealing with a complicated clinical case or a complicated psychosocial dynamic, Tonya does not hesitate to step in and provide the best possible care and experience for all involved," says Jamie Scott, Team Leader for the Westlake Alt team.

Hospice of the Western Reserve extends its sincerest congratulations and gratitude to Nikki and Tonya. Their commitment and compassion leave an extraordinary impact on the families we serve. We are proud to have had them represent us abroad in Montreal!

We would also like to recognize ten additional employees who were nominated by their colleagues:

- Leahanna Puccini, RN
- Kari Dubsy, RN
- Kevin Reynolds, HNA
- Mary Jane King, RN
- Renee Mayekar, RN
- Linda Burkholder, RN
- Karalee Bolog, HNA
- Dianna Leitch, LPN
- Jennifer Martnick, APRN
- Kristen Zimbardi, APRN

Above and *Beyond*



Earth, air, and water. The clinical care teams at Stein Hospice are familiar with the elements in their efforts to reach patients. During the winter months when Lake Erie freezes over, the agency gets creative in caring for patients on the Ohio islands.

When the ferry closes for the winter, Stein's nurses fasten their seatbelts and prepare for takeoff. It takes an eight-minute propeller plane ride to get to Kelleys Island, where brothers Andy and Jim Stein are ready to welcome visitors with coffee and good company.



Opposite Page: Tonya Harris, R.N., and Nick Dorsey, Annual Fund and Special Events Manager for Stein Hospice, visit with Andy on Kelley's Island

Left: Passenger plane to Kelleys Island

Bottom: Aerial view of Kelleys Island

The Stein brothers (no family relation to the Stein Hospice name) were born in Chagrin Falls. Their father, Donnie, is originally from Stow, and after living in Southern California for 14 years, the family moved back to the Northern Ohio region in 1994.

Andy spent time working all over California, though his family much prefers the slower-paced Midwest life on the islands of Lake Erie. He has a wealth of remarkable stories, including lighting a grocery store with his car lights after an earthquake, as well as a treasure trove of rock 'n roll t-shirts and concert memories.

Andy has Marfan Syndrome, which causes cardiovascular and skeletal complications. After exhausting bouts of tests and operations, he chose to enter comfort care on his own terms. Stein Hospice has provided Andy with the choices he wants at the end of his life, which means a great deal to him, Jim, and their father, Donnie.

Jim and Andy's mother passed away in 2022. During her illness, the family was unaware hospice was an option. In finding Stein Hospice, Jim says he has found comfort in knowing he has knowledgeable people at hand to give him direction in caring for his brother.

The journey itself is never an obstacle for Stein Hospice. Whether it's by ferry, plane, or automobile, Stein is dedicated to reaching neighbors who need care. This determination helps realize the Stein hospice mission to celebrate the worth of each life, while also being welcomed into the homes of extraordinary families like Andy, Jim, and Donnie.





Weathering the Weather

"Our agency has taken a good step by going virtual," says Julia. "The sentiment is, 'if you don't have to physically go out, then don't.' But I can't bring myself to sit at home while our nurses go out. My ability to help is what matters."

The state of Ohio has a Snow Emergency Classification System for "preservation of the public peace," according to the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness. The county sheriff has the authority to designate a level 1, 2, or 3 snow emergency to protect motorists. Healthcare workers, especially nurses, still must see their patients despite what the weather is doing. Staying off the roads when it is unnecessary to drive helps mitigate the danger people like Kathy and Julia may face during their visits.

"And we had so much fun," says Julia. "We got to share laughs and jokes. Kathy has the best laugh. She's a very loving woman and has helped me out quite a bit. She's a beautiful person."

Julia notes that the Lakewood Home Care team is known for having an acuity to the people they serve. They recognize the complex psychosocial issues that many of their patients experience, especially when they are faced with other factors like poverty and addiction. The team is unique, but they are dedicated to showing dignity, respect, and love in the work they do.

"We all want to be there for one another," says Julia. "Even if it's something simple like driving."

After Julia Wasilewski, MSW, started the engine to her Ford Explorer, she snapped a selfie with her colleague, Cathleen Arndt, RN, to send to their team leader. Lisa Carrigan Tomm (RN BSN CHPN CHPCA), then sent the photo to the marketing and communications team to share to social media. As Julia and Kathy made their way through the ongoing blizzard, messages of support poured in through Facebook.

On Dec. 23, 2022, a winter storm hit Northeast Ohio with snowfall reaching up to 5 inches and windchills creeping down to -55 degrees. While most people sheltered in place, clinical staff at Hospice of the Western Reserve still had patients to see. Julia is a native of Michigan and has been driving through their winters since she was 16 years old. She puts her skills and her four-wheel drive to good use, offering help to nurses and nursing assistants in times just like these.



An Occupational Opportunity

Volunteers at Hospice of the Western Reserve come from varying walks of life. Some are walking through retirement, some are walking through empty nesting, and others are walking through their education. Joe Mastrangelo is a volunteer and end-of-life doula for HWR, and he came to the agency as a Doctorate Student at Cleveland State University.

Joe has a bachelor's degree in Health Sciences and has recently graduated with his doctorate in occupational therapy. His capstone project measured the impact of occupational therapy in hospice care. Every week, he works with Hospice of the Western Reserve in a variety of areas, such as working with nursing assistants at David Simpson Hospice House or working as an end-of-life doula. Much of his work leading up to June involved hardline research for his capstone project.

Occupational therapy is the therapeutic use of everyday activities to enhance participation in daily life. Joe's research will help improve overall caregiving, particularly with diseases like dementia. One example is implementing assistive devices for activities like showering, sitting down, and standing up.

"Occupational therapy isn't explored in hospice," he says. "I want to identify those gaps in practice to help promote the quality of life, health, and wellness of hospice patients."

Joe was connected to HWR after a presentation in one of his classes. HWR Education Coordinator Daniel Pilarski gave a presentation on hospice care, and the information ignited Joe's longtime interest in working with people who are dying. He then went through HWR's volunteer training and became an end-of-life doula in February, where he now helps patients with life reviews and legacy building.

Joe's hard work, dedication, and unique insight has been a valuable asset to the HWR team. Ultimately, his research will advocate and educate people on the role of occupational therapy in hospice care. His strong sense of purpose drives him to empower people to be themselves.

"Just because you have a disability or a disease doesn't make you a burden," he says. "You are a person with needs. Just like everyone else."

Tending to the Mind Body and Spirit

Darcia L. Simpson, Ph.D., CT., walks a remarkable path. Her journey has led her to an accounting career, a Master of Divinity, a doctorate degree in education, and several research and educational opportunities. Now, as a Spiritual Care Coordinator for Hospice of the Western Reserve, she brings a wealth of insight not just to her patients, but to the entire agency.

Spiritual Care Coordinators at HWR assess the spiritual needs of hospice patients and families. They provide spiritual consultation and link the patient and family with appropriate community clergy if desired. Coordinators like Darcia are an integral part of the hospice transdisciplinary team, providing companionship and guidance at a critical juncture.

The road to HWR took many turns, but Darcia's drive and determination illustrates her work as a true calling. She was born and raised in Cleveland and graduated from Regina High School. Afterwards, she earned her accounting degree from Miami University of Ohio.



"We don't have to speak about a particular religion," she says. "But we certainly can if you want to. Disease can impact your sense of purpose, but I work with patients to assign meaning and purpose during this difficult time."

She worked as a corporate accountant in Washington D.C. for several years, until she followed her heart to Tulsa, Oklahoma, earning a Master of Divinity from Oral Roberts University. She threw herself into Clinical Pastoral Education, completing an internship in Oklahoma, followed by a residency and a fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic.

"Tulsa looks much different from Cleveland and Washington D.C.," says Darcia. "I thought to myself, 'How can I minister to people whose backgrounds are so different from mine?' But when you're scared, you're scared. In those circumstances, all our differences go out the window. We are only left with each other's humanity."

After completing her studies, Darcia settled back into her hometown of Cleveland. She has been with HWR for over 20 years, and in that time, she earned her Ph.D. from Cleveland State University. In addition to providing comfort and spiritual care to her patients, she also teaches the next generation of medical students, guiding them on the importance of human values in medicine.

Each patient at HWR has the option to receive spiritual care. Darcia and her transdisciplinary team strongly encourage families to take advantage of this option, even if they do not consider themselves religious or spiritual.

She is dedicated to her patients' needs and treats their fears and concerns just like any healthcare professional would treat a physical symptom. This practice reinforces HWR's dedication to person-centered care by tending to the mind, body, and spirit.

"We don't have to speak about a particular religion," she says. "But we certainly can if you want to. Disease can impact your sense of purpose, but I work with patients to assign meaning and purpose during this difficult time."

At HWR, Darcia brings people together. She sees herself as a lifelong learner and frequently praises her mentors and colleagues. She values being part of a team and lends her coworkers a listening ear in difficult times. She is a strong advocate for Advance Care Planning and encourages people to have conversations with loved ones about their wants and wishes in a medical emergency. Always looking ahead, one of her goals is to reach younger generations with insight on Advance Directives.

"This work is a calling," says Dr. Simpson. "It is who I am and what I've become. It allowed me to realize I am comfortable with suffering and grief. I don't run away from it. Just like the fireman who doesn't run away from the fire."



Life's Treasures Ties Communities Together

Life's Treasures Thrift Shop has a boutique charm that exceeds all expectations of resale stores. Walking into the shop feels like walking into a department store, as each item is carefully curated for display and resale. When leaving the store, shoppers feel good about their purchase, knowing that it served a purpose to their community. All revenue generated by Life's Treasures benefits the programs of Hospice of the Western Reserve.

Nestled steps away from Medina's historic Public Square, Life's Treasures sits among other small businesses that help color in this tight-knit community. Yet even with its small-town size, Life's Treasures helps fuel funds for the premiere hospice agency in Northern Ohio.

When making a purchase at Life's Treasures, a swipe of a debit card can help send a grieving child to a summer camp. Revenue can help fund a Moment to Remember, a specialized program helping patients and families create a cherished memory together. Gently used items can bring wagging tails into homes and inpatient units, especially in Medina where HWR's pet therapy program has a thriving presence.

What makes Life's Treasures extraordinary is not just the beautiful displays of quality items. It's the volunteers who believe in the mission of Hospice of the Western Reserve, and who dedicate their time to building a sense of community within the store, in Medina, and throughout Northern Ohio. Without this sense of service, Life's Treasures' power of giving would not be possible.

Life's Treasures is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you are interested in volunteering for Life's Treasures, please email volunteer@hospicewr.org, visit hospicewr.org/volunteer, or call **216.255.9090**.



Warm Welcomes

When visitors come to any of Hospice of the Western Reserve's inpatient units, the first face they often see when coming through the doors is a volunteer receptionist. That face can greet a range of emotions, including grief, confusion, shock, and despair. As HWR's mission is to enhance comfort, volunteers are prepared to offer comfort to all who are touched by end-of-life care. This mission strongly resonates with Janet Eames, one of HWR's longest serving volunteers with a tenure of 26 years.

Janet's journey to HWR was led by one of her fellow teachers at Bellflower School in Mentor. Her colleague was thoroughly enjoying her volunteer experience, and Janet was curious and compassionate enough to try it out for herself. Since then, she has volunteered at the reception desk for David Simpson Hospice House, greeting visitors, medical personnel, and funeral home staff as they check in to the facility.

"I not only enjoy what I do," says Janet, "I also enjoy serving a purpose. I go home feeling glad that I helped someone."

Her calm and sweet disposition provides the comfort that so many visitors need when walking through the facility doors. When asked about how she manages difficult days, Janet explains how she always starts her shift with the right attitude. She understands the swells of emotion that loved ones often experience during end-of-life care.

"Sometimes, people just need a good listener to navigate what they need," she says. "I try to always be as helpful and kind as possible."

HWR volunteers are beyond an extra set of hands; they are essential and celebrated members of the team. There are plenty of opportunities covering a wide range of interests. If you or someone you know is looking to serve a purpose like Janet's, please email volunteer@hospicewr.org, visit hospicewr.org/volunteer or call **216.255.9090**.



A Spark of Good Works in Medina

SPARK Medina is a new nonprofit dedicated to connecting youth and families with meaningful and local service-learning opportunities. The organization recently donated over 400 items to support young visitors at the HMC Hospice of Medina County Inpatient Unit. The items include books, games, and snack items for children as they spend time with their loved ones residing at the facility.

The gifts were a result of a birthday celebration for Hannah Magrum, a Medina resident who wanted to honor her mom, Janet Bartter Kott. The items were collected at a birthday celebration conducted by SPARK Medina.

Hospice visits can be difficult, especially for children, and such thoughtful hospitality makes a remarkable difference. Hospice of the Western Reserve is grateful for this gracious contribution.

Corporate Sponsor has *Roots* in Community

There is power in Cleveland-based companies coming together to support a common cause. Hospice of the Western Reserve is fortunate to have **Oswald Companies** as a corporate sponsor for the 2023 Walk to Remember, an annual fundraiser supporting HWR programs. The funds raised by the Walk to Remember benefit programs not often covered by Medicare, including pediatric hospice, specialized support for veterans, art and music therapy, and comprehensive bereavement support.



"Through their programs and services, Hospice of the Western Reserve encourages stronger bonds and relationships," says Christina Schmitz, Chief Marketing Officer of Oswald Companies. "We want to connect with those human experiences. With whatever life throws at you and whatever you're going through – we want to be that positive support."

Oswald Companies is employee-owned, so inclusion is also built into the company's culture. Schmitz notes that there is opportunity for employee-owners to gather support for the causes they care about, so philanthropic and service-based events are held throughout the year. Their mission of caring for the needs of their clients and employees' during times of uncertainty is closely aligned with HWR's mission of caring for patients and families.

"The Walk to Remember is a celebration of the lives that we've lost but also a reminder of the beauty that remains," says Schmitz. "Supporting this event allows for future generations to have a world of comfort around them when they face their own grief. That's why we show up to walk."

Both Hospice of the Western Reserve and Oswald Companies look forward to the June 11th event, which for 12 years, has served as a positive and beautiful act of remembrance for attendees. For more information on contributing to the Walk to Remember, visit hospicewr.org/wtr or call **216.298.0245**.

**2023 WALK
TO REMEMBER**



**SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 2023
CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO
[HOSPICEWR.ORG/WTR](https://hospicewr.org/wtr)**

For the last three years, Oswald Companies has been the Presenting sponsor of the event at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, allowing for family and friends of all ages to honor the memories of their loved ones. Commitment to the community is a cultural pillar at Oswald. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had the organization thinking of creative alternatives on how to show support for a cause familiar to many of their staff. An outdoor event in the summertime sun seemed like an ideal way to show support for a fellow purpose-driven organization.

Meet Kyle Godhard



Meet the new face to greet the new faces at HWR! Kyle Godhard is the Director of Human Resources and has been with the agency since November of 2022. In conjunction with the VP of HR, he leads the Human Resources department in recruiting and hiring new staff, employee relations and support functions, change management, and so much more.

Kyle comes to the agency with over 12 years of experience in human resources. He graduated from Kent State University in 2009 and received his master's in human resources and labor relations from Cleveland State University. HWR recently restructured its human resources department, and Kyle is most looking forward to continuing to align the department with the overall strategy of the agency and to support all employees at a high level.

"I am really blown away by the collaboration at Hospice of the Western Reserve," says Kyle. "It's such a supportive environment and I've learned something new every day."

Kyle is a Northeast Ohio native and lives in Westlake. He has two daughters, ages four and two. Outside of HWR, you can find him fishing or enjoying Cleveland Sports. **Welcome, Kyle!**