Join Us for our 40th Anniversary!

IN CELEBRATION OF OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY, the Blue Diamond Celebration presented by Huntington Bank will bring together all our friends, business partners and ambassadors in the community for an elegant, fun-filled evening of dinner, drinks, auctions and much more.

We will be honoring:

Keith A. Ashmus – Dame Cicely Saunders Blue Diamond Award
Dame Cicely Saunders founded the modern hospice movement. With similar vision, activism and spirit of mission, Keith Ashmus has been a strong advocate for hospice for more than 40 years. Keith gained national recognition in 1982 for establishing the Hospice Lawyer Volunteer Program to bring free legal services to seriously ill patients. Whether assisting a patient with his will at the bedside or advising the Board of Directors in the strategic planning process, Keith is still an active, loyal and beloved volunteer at Hospice of the Western Reserve.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Foundation – Blue Diamond Philanthropy Award
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Foundation has made an indelible impact on healthcare in Cleveland, and especially on Hospice of the Western Reserve. At every milestone, the Foundation generously supported HWR’s ambitious vision – from the groundbreaking of the first Hospice House in Northeast Ohio, to the establishment of a bereavement center that welcomes all who are grieving, to construction of the state-of-the-art Ames Family Hospice House. The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Foundation has made it possible for HWR to provide a home-away-from-home, compassionate end-of-life care and healing grief support for many.

Mark your calendars and be sure to join us for this very special 40th anniversary celebration! More details will be announced soon at hospicewr.org/40years.
As we celebrate our 40th Anniversary, we look back with wonder at the visionaries who came before us. Founded in 1978 as Cancer Family Service in Lake County, Ohio, we are proud of our organization’s historic roots as one of the pioneers of the hospice movement in the U.S.

It was the passion and resolve of a handful of people from our community – people not unlike each of you – who came together, marshalled their resources and laid the groundwork for what would grow into today’s Hospice of the Western Reserve.

We dedicate our 40th Anniversary – and this issue of Journey – to you, those who believe in us and have so faithfully supported our mission through the years. Stated quite simply, with the trend toward declining reimbursements and other financial pressures inherent in today’s healthcare environment, we could not exist in our current form without you. So many of the unique services we provide that set us apart from other hospice organizations are not reimbursed by insurance.

A few of these services are highlighted in this issue.

Yes, working in the hospice field can certainly be physically and emotionally demanding at times. But to each of us, it is a privilege. You see, underlying everything we do is our belief in upholding the dignity of each human life. What we do is make sure people live fully up until the moment they die.

We appreciate your ongoing support, and we encourage you to celebrate our 40th Anniversary with us as our partner in care.

With gratitude,

Bill Finn
President and Chief Executive Officer
Providing Patients with Moments to Remember

Several years ago, Jim and Suzanne Plescia took the vacation of a lifetime. The couple traveled to Italy and visited Godrano, a small Sicilian village, where Jim’s father had been born. They met several of Jim’s Italian relatives for the first time and were touched to be warmly welcomed into the family fold!

When Jim developed a serious illness, he was no longer able to travel. However, Hospice of the Western Reserve was still able to arrange a “return trip” to the village of Godrano through Flight to Remember and the magic of drone technology.

Offered in conjunction with the Flight to Remember Foundation, the program allows hospice patients to virtually visit a place meaningful to them. The Foundation works with an international network to engage a local drone pilot and coordinate all the logistics. The HWR volunteer team produces a DVD and customizes it with special music selected by the hospice patient. Viewing the DVD allows patients to escape from the realities of their medical condition by “visiting” a place that holds special meaning and joy for them.

“Hospice of the Western Reserve goes above and beyond what you would expect a hospice organization to do,” said Suzanne. “When Jim said he would really like to return to Sicily one more time and visit the village where his father was born, they made it happen! We provided the addresses of Jim’s father and relatives. He flew the drone right over their homes! It was incredible. Just incredible!”

Flight to Remember is just one element of HWR’s larger Moments to Remember program, which focuses on helping hospice patients achieve their dreams. Each year, hundreds of Moments to Remember are created to fulfill the special wishes of our patients. The experiences are as unique as each person, ranging from cooking lessons with a chef to a trip to the Cleveland Botanical Garden.

We are grateful for the generosity of our friends in the community for making Moments to Remember possible. Thank you for allowing us to “dream big” and enhance the lives of those we serve in special ways. We couldn’t do it without you!

If you would like to help a patient experience a Moment to Remember by supporting this program, contact Racheal Seibert at (216) 383-3736 or rseibert@hospicewr.org.

Hospice of the Western Reserve and Helderberg Hospice Receive 2018 Global Partnership Award

Global Partners in Care has presented Hospice of the Western Reserve and Helderberg Hospice in Somerset West, South Africa, with the 2018 Global Partnership Award.

The award recognizes the two “sister hospices” for their enduring partnership, collaboration and community outreach and provides a $500 donation to the international hospice partner.

Global Partners in Care, which began as the Foundation for Hospices in Sub-Saharan Africa, supports the development of partnerships between U.S. organizations and hospice and palliative care providers located in low-resource settings, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa.

“Hospice of the Western Reserve has shown what a tremendous impact one partnership can have in the delivery of palliative care. The long-term commitment they have made to Helderberg has made a lasting effect on the patients and families needing palliative care,” said Mark Murray, President and CEO of Global Partners in Care.

If you would like to help a patient experience a Moment to Remember by supporting this program, contact Racheal Seibert at (216) 383-3736 or rseibert@hospicewr.org.
A Taste of Paris Comes to Medina

Friends and business leaders in the Medina community gathered to celebrate the arrival of spring by enjoying the tastes, sights and sounds of Paris, the City of Lights! Medina in the Springtime, Parisian Nights, presented by Huntington Bank, was held at The Blue Heron Brewery and Event Center. The fundraiser benefited HMC Hospice of Medina County.

As guests arrived for cocktail hour, they strolled down a festive Parisian street, complete with a stunning ice sculpture of the Eiffel Tower, two juggling mimes from Wizbang!, a caricature artist and live music from strolling violinist Mary Beth Ions.

Volunteer Ron DeMeza Honored for Serving Fellow Veterans

Hospice of the Western Reserve volunteer Ron DeMeza has received the 2019 Heroes for Andy Award from The Andy Nowacki Foundation. Ron is a U.S. Army Veteran who served in combat in Vietnam from 1970–1972. Over the past two years, he has dedicated his volunteer service to conducting Veterans Recognition Ceremonies to honor fellow veterans who are hospice patients as part of HWR’s Peaceful and Proud veterans’ program.

The Heroes for Andy Award, now in its 14th year, is presented annually to recognize individuals who exemplify service to others in Northeast Ohio. Marine Lance Cpl. Andrew “Ace” W. Nowacki, lost his life in 2005 while protecting a convoy during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The family established The Andy Nowacki Foundation in his memory. Each year, the Foundation honors Heroes for Andy, “individuals who act above and beyond the call of duty, and in so doing, give definition to patriotism and elevate all of us.”

Ron has dedicated his volunteer service to honoring veteran patients during their last days or months of life. Many of these requests are for veterans who are actively dying. Other times, the veterans are bedridden and have lost their capacity to care for themselves. Surprisingly, many have never spoken of their combat or military experiences with their families. Sons and daughters, grandchildren and spouses might be hearing their loved ones’ stories for the first time. It is Ron who creates the presence and provides the respect, the space and the willingness to listen when veterans are acknowledged for their service during the private ceremonies. This role requires a unique courage.

To be among those who “go above and beyond the call of duty to elevate others” is right where Ron DeMeza belongs, according to the Volunteer Service Managers who are privileged to work with him. We are grateful to Ron not only for his service to the country, but also for his continued dedication to honoring service men and women during a tender time of life. Thank you, Ron.
The Ballroom evoked a charming French marketplace. Following opening remarks from President and CEO Bill Finn, guests enjoyed an elegant dinner. A dance troupe from Inlet Dance Theatre, one of the region’s most exciting professional contemporary dance companies, captivated the audience with their imaginative performance of a piece called “Ascension.” Attendees bid on a variety of Silent Auction prizes donated by generous local businesses.

A highlight of the evening was a testimonial provided by Michael Sandridge, Vice President of Food Service Operations at Sandridge Food Corporation. Michael spoke of the compassionate care HMC Hospice of Medina County provided to his mother and entire family.

“During the final two weeks of my mother’s life, hospice was there for us. We were so fortunate to have the kind of people who knew what to do to make her comfortable. We didn’t need to worry about a thing and there’s a family of four. The support they provided was awesome,” he said.

All proceeds from the event will be used to support the patients and families of HMC Hospice of Medina County and to provide community services in Medina County. We are grateful to everyone for their support!
Join us for a Special 40th Anniversary Celebration of Life!

2019 WALK TO REMEMBER

Walk to Remember, presented by Huntington Bank and Medical Mutual of Ohio, will be held at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo on Sunday, June 9. Registration opens at 7:30 a.m. and the walk begins at 9:15 a.m. The event benefits Hospice of the Western Reserve and is open to anyone wishing to celebrate the memory of a loved one. Registration includes all-day admission to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and RainForest and fun for the whole family!

“This year, as we celebrate our 40th Anniversary, we’re especially excited to welcome some special guests: Gail Sykes, CEO, and Dianne Waddington, Social Worker, from Helderberg Hospice, our sister hospice in South Africa,” said Racheal Seibert, Chief Development Officer. “I know everyone will join me in giving them a big Cleveland welcome!”

Walk to Remember allows HWR to provide special programs that are not reimbursed by insurance such as children’s grief support camps, art and music therapy, pediatric hospice care, and grief services for schools. These services simply would not be possible without support from our friends in the community!

A variety of family entertainment is planned, including team photos, raffles, crafts for kids, face painting, live music and more. Registration is $25 for adults and $12 for children under age 12. A special family rate is also available. Register your team online today at hospicewr.org/WTR, or contact Monica Cowans at 216.383.3714, or mcowans@hospicewr.org.

Returning this year are Comfort Buddies (trade name, Warmies by Intelex). For each $100 raised by a team or individual beyond the registration fee, a lavender-scented Comfort Buddy will be delivered to a patient. The therapeutic plush animals reduce agitation and provide a sense of wellbeing to pediatric patients, those living with advanced dementia and many others. See you at the Walk!
A Little Boy and His Lion

This is the story of a little nine-year-old Amish boy who was living with a medical condition no child should ever have to endure: an inoperable brain tumor. Although it’s a story that is difficult for most of us to think about, it is also a story about love, hope and even incredible moments of joy in the midst of terminal illness. It’s about parents who found a way to support their child and spend quality time with him in his own home. Most of all, it’s a story about allowing a little boy’s dream to come true.

The story came to light when Michelle Miller, a pediatric social worker, nominated Jennifer Palmer, Team Leader of the Pediatric Palliative Care Team, to receive a monthly caregiver award sponsored by Busch Funeral and Crematory Services. These are the words Michelle wrote on the nomination form.

I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED to be a pediatric social worker with Hospice of the Western Reserve for the past 20 years. My role is to provide for the emotional and psychosocial needs of the child and the family.

I had the absolute honor of working with a little nine-year-old Amish boy who was battling two brain tumors, one diagnosed at 15 months and another at eight years old. Our team had been involved with his family for the past two and a half years.

My weekly visits included working with him and his siblings on expressing their feelings related to his illness, playing games, creating memory items, and just providing an overall supportive presence. It was during one of my visits a few weeks ago while playing a game called Adventure Park, which is about feelings related to being sick, when a life-changing moment took place. It was his turn to draw a card. He read his aloud, which said, “If you go anywhere in the world, where would it be? And with whom?” He responded without hesitation, “I would go to the zoo. And I would go with you.” He pointed to me.

Days later in our team meeting, I shared what took place. Jennifer Palmer, my Team Leader, said emphatically: “You need to get this boy to the zoo!”

Two weeks later, I had the absolute HONOR of taking an entire day to make this happen for him. I was given the time to drive out to Amish country, and I picked him up and took him back to the Akron Zoo. We brought his wheelchair in case it was needed, but he walked the entire day, with no need for the chair. His favorite part of this day was going to the gift shop and walking around for 20 minutes looking at all the items in the gift shop. He was overwhelmed by all the choices. He finally chose a big lion that he carried proudly with him throughout the zoo.

My reason for writing this is my need to acknowledge the attention Jennifer Palmer paid to the psychosocial needs of this kiddo. As a nurse, she was able to step outside her medical nursing role and recognize the invaluable memorable experience this would be for this little boy.

To those of us that have been to Disney World, in this little boy’s culture it was as if he was given the chance to go to Disney World. His lion remained at the end of his bed and close to him up until he died one and a half weeks later.

Thank you, Jennifer Palmer, for your attention to the true heart of what this work is all about. This family has been comforted by the memory they know he enjoyed so much. His eight-year-old only brother will take care of his lion now, as he would have wanted.

– Michelle Miller, Social Worker, Pediatric Palliative Care Team

The Piper Samuels Pediatric Endowment fund was established to support the work of HWR’s Pediatric Palliative Care Team.

To learn more, visit hospicewr.org/donate.
Red Oak Camp Combines Healing with Fun to Support Grieving Children

Looking for a summer camp to support a grieving child or teen? Red Oak Camp, offered by Western Reserve Grief Services, is a three-day grief support camp for children ages 6-13. The camp is held at the scenic Red Oaks Campground in Kirtland.

The camp connects children with peers who have also experienced the death of a loved one. It incorporates art, music, play and nature exploration and is led by children's grief support specialists from Hospice of the Western Reserve.

"Children tend to process their grief differently than adults," explained Diane Snyder Cowan, Director, Western Reserve Grief Services. "It provides a 'safe zone' where kids can feel comfortable sharing emotions and asking questions in a supportive environment."

"The children engage in memory-making art and nature projects that honor their special person. We do a drum circle every year that the kids and counselors enjoy," she added. "They also have time to enjoy the gorgeous outdoor setting and have fun with other children. There is swimming, rock climbing, archery and kayaking in the afternoon. They learn they are not alone, they are not going crazy and that other children their age are coping with some of the same kinds of feelings."

Registration for the Red Oak Camp is due by July 8. For more information and applications, visit hospicewr.org/camps or call 216.486.6838.