



This year has been quite an extraordinary one for the loss of life. Whether it was death as the result of COVID, or from any other cause, it's been a long year of grieving. **If there were a national emotion this year, it probably would be bereavement.** The COVID-19 pandemic has precluded people from saying good-bye to their loved ones and many have not been able to hold or attend funerals services. Hospice SLO County was honored to give the community a precious opportunity to memorialize the lives of someone loved and lost at our virtual *Light Up A Life* event in December 2020. Isolation has been trying for many of our clients, especially those living alone. I would like to share the many ways our amazing volunteers continue to dedicate their time to Hospice SLO County's clients, even during a pandemic.

Counseling volunteers include Licensed Therapists, Registered Associate Marriage and Family Therapists, Associate Clinical Social Workers, and Master's Prepared Trainees under the clinical supervision of licensed staff. These volunteers provide hundreds of hours of individual counseling and grief group support over Zoom or by phone. We have two new support groups that started in 2021 - Child Loss and Persons Living With A Disability. I am happy to report that our counseling volunteers and clients have transitioned well to the new virtual reality.

In-home volunteers offer respite care to relieve the primary care person. These volunteers also help with emotional and practical support, including a consistent, supportive presence for the entire family. Our **End-of-Life Doulas** offer dedicated non-judgmental support and holistic approaches to end of life health care. They bring a nurturing presence, calming influence, and compassionate support for the dying, their caregivers, family, and friends while sitting vigil for the last hours of life. These volunteers have been vital in keeping clients and their caregivers at home and safe by dropping off food, picking up prescriptions, and running errands. These volunteers were grouped as essential service workers and were offered the COVID-19 vaccine. Those who have been vaccinated have been able to go into client's homes once again.

Our **Pet Peace of Mind** program allows clients to complete their end-of-life journey with the comfort and companionship of their pet, without worrying about their pet's current or future needs. Many of these animals have never been in a kennel or without the constant love of a human companion. The Pet Peace of Mind volunteers help with feeding, walking, grooming, and trips to the veterinarian. The Pet Peace of Mind program offers a safe and loving foster home and permanent home for the beloved companion when the owner can no longer be with them.

The Hospice SLO County Threshold Singers sing for those at the thresholds of life and dying. They offer a calm and focused presence with gentle voices, simple songs, and sincere kindness. Their songs can be soothing and reassuring to clients, family, and caregivers alike. During COVID they have continued to practice and record songs over Zoom. The songs are available on our website.

Other volunteer services include **Grief Yoga** (which takes place on Zoom the first Tuesday of the month and is free and open to the public), **Front Office Support, and Fundraising**. All services can be found on our website at www.hospiceslo.org.

Care Management utilizes a blend of professional and volunteer skills to offer an integrated program capable of giving specialized and sensitive volunteer support to clients and their families. This program has seen a large increase in client numbers during the pandemic.

All services are provided free of charge and made possible by:

- A small paid staff that train and facilitate 100-120 consistently active in-home volunteers
- Collaboration with home health and medical hospice agencies and many other existing community service programs and facilities
- The financial support of local individuals, organizations, and the business community

Our clients are why we do this work, but **OUR SUPPORTERS are the how**. I am grateful for all who continue to be a part of our team to help those facing a life-limiting illness, end of life, or grief. We give our promise to be careful stewards of all financial gifts. If you have any questions, please reach out. I am happy to speak with you.

With sincere appreciation,

Shannon McQuat, Executive Director

