



# Caring Connections

## A Simple Thank You!

I joined the Great Lakes Hospice Foundation last February and was told that “once you work in hospice, you will never want to work anywhere else!” I now understand what they mean.

Everyday, I get to associate with volunteers and staff who use their gifts to make a difference in people’s lives. I am moved by the aide who knows that her patient likes to have her nails painted and brings in a new bottle of polish to try. I see countless volunteers who dedicate their time visiting with patients and families. I read letters from many family members and donors who took the time to write a thank you note to the hospice team who cared for their loved one. These are just a few examples of why I’ll never want to work anywhere else!

In this newsletter, I hope to share the joy that your kindness has brought to the lives of others. I wish that I could tell all of the stories— there are so many to tell. Please take a moment to read through this newsletter and experience all the good that you have helped create in our hospice patients’ and families’ lives! Quite simply stated, **“You’re the best!!!”**

Sincerely,

Lisa Nielsen

Community Relations Specialist

lnielsen@greatlakescaring.com or 855-650-2400



## A Night for Dwight: Honoring a Life of Giving

Great Lakes Caring, 2013 Volunteer of the Year Award Recipient, Dwight Patrick, always went the extra mile...literally. He drove hundreds of miles to visit patients, was featured in many hospice training videos, and attended all the funerals of the hospice veterans that he visited.

Although his family still mourns his passing, his grand-daughter wanted to create something to honor his life. She organized a restaurant fundraiser to be held on the anniversary of Dwight’s death. Family and friends gathered at his grave and then met back at the Three Pints Brew Pub for dinner and conversation about Dwight. It was an uplifting night for everyone which also raised \$1,004 for Dwight’s favorite charity: The Great Lakes Hospice Foundation! Even in death, Dwight continues to give. Thank you to Dwight, Andrea, and all of his wonderful family and friends!!



Pictured above: Dwight and a GLC patient/veteran. Below, left to right: Dwight’s Granddaughter, Andrea; Son, Doug; Wife, Ladonna; & Daughter, Cheryl

# You Sent Her to Scotland!!!

We all have dreams! Some dreams will be realized, but for many of us, our heart's desires may always remain a dream. Because of your generosity, you make dreams come true for some very special hospice patients!

Kerry had always dreamed of going to Scotland, her ancestral home, but due to her illness, it was apparent that she would not be able to travel there. However, her family and her Great Lakes Caring team had an idea. Memorial donations made it possible to hire a bag-piper to perform for Kerry, her family, and fellow facility residents. A seemingly normal January afternoon was transformed into a Scottish celebration. The bag-piper played his bag-pipe and also hosted a discussion about the “plaids.” Kerry’s sister topped off the day by making Scottish desserts, bringing in a DVD about Scotland to share, and decorating the room with a Scottish theme. The room was filled with energy and the day will forever remain a treasured memory in the minds and hearts of Kerry and her family!!!



**Tom, the bagpiper, Kerry, and her family**

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*“Kerry was very excited about this afternoon! She loved, Tom, the bagpiper, and his stories and music! Thank you very much!”*

*-Kerry’s sister, Pam*

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## More Than a Doll

We all want to be remembered; \*Janet was no different. A 42-year-old year old mother of two beautiful daughters, was unfortunately losing her battle with cancer. Janet’s “last wish” was to give her daughters (ages 10 & 12) an American Girl Doll to serve as a lasting reminder of her love for them. Unfortunately, her husband had recently lost his job and their personal funds had been depleted while fighting her illness. A gift for her daughters was out of the question. This is when you stepped in to help!

Because of your support, this mother’s wish was granted! Although the dolls arrived just hours after Janet’s passing, her husband was there to watch their girls anxiously open the gifts from their mom. He witnessed his girls’ sadness turn into smiles which, in his words, “created joy on an otherwise very sad day.”



# Thank You Letter From the Field

When I started visiting \*Mr. Smith, I was confronted with a challenge. Mr. Smith showed no interest in getting out of bed and he refused care most of the time. He would holler obscenities, kick, and ask to be left alone. Feeling the need to improve his quality of life, I started to read through his medical chart to see if I could find any information that could help me connect with him on a personal level and maybe earn his trust. I found that he had a love for music....Elvis Presley, specifically. I immediately contacted Jada, my branch office patient care coordinator, and asked if there was some way to get Mr. Smith a CD player for his room in the facility he resides. She contacted the hospice foundation and proceeded to see that the funds were available, and then purchased a CD player.



**Karen,  
GLC Hospice Aide**

The following day, I took the player into his room, plugged in an Elvis CD, (from my personal music collection) and it began to play “Hound Dog.” Mr. Smith’s face lit up! He smiled....he actually smiled!! Instead of offering a shave, or attempting to take him out of bed, I sat with him and started talking about Elvis. He talked and talked....he talked about cars he used to drive; he talked about his children growing up. The conversation went everywhere! I found that he also liked Bob Seger, so my next visit, I brought another CD and he let me provide much needed personal care while listening to the Silver Bullet Band. Within a week, Mr. Smith was asking to get out of bed to play bingo!

Over the past 5 months, his relationships have improved- with me as well as the staff. Mr. Smith is out of bed interacting with other residents every day! He is eating better; he is accepting care; and he is smiling more. It seems like such a small act, but that CD player, I believe, improved his quality of life completely!

**I want to thank everyone who donates to this organization and for making stories like this possible!** Music has healing power. Hospice does not mean it's time to give up. With the help of our team, we were able to help Mr. Smith feel human again, and THAT is the true reward of my position with Great Lakes Caring Hospice.

With Gratitude,

*Karen*

Great Lakes Caring Hospice Health Aide

## Because of You....

Our patients thank you! While Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance covers the costs of hospice care, there are many additional aids that add comfort to a patient’s life that are often unaffordable. When a hospice patient is unable to pay for a need, your dollars step in to help. Items purchased for patients may include small items like an activity apron for a patient with dementia or larger items like a wheelchair ramp. You also help families visit their loved one by providing bus or train fares or help us fill last wish requests (see featured articles). Your assistance pays for bereavement materials for children, supplies for patient alternative therapy programs, as well as, annual memorial services.

\* patient’s name changed

## Great Lakes Hospice Foundation

- ◆ A 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization.
- ◆ Foundation assets are used to support the needs of hospice patients & their families.

*For more information or to pledge your support, please visit:*

[www.TheGreatLakesHospiceFoundation.org](http://www.TheGreatLakesHospiceFoundation.org)

## Ways to Help Hospice...

Volunteers are an essential part of hospice! Whether it's providing companionship to a patient, support to family members &/or caregivers, or by participating in community outreach, and fundraising activities, we are grateful for the many hours that our volunteers give each month.

If you are interested in volunteering for Great Lakes Caring or the Great Lakes Hospice Foundation, please call: 800-379-1600.



To receive future newsletters by email, please contact Lisa Nielsen at:

[lnielsen@greatlakescaring.com](mailto:lnielsen@greatlakescaring.com)

or

1-855-650-2400



900 Cooper Street  
Jackson, MI 49202

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