

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

WHEN THERE ISN'T A CURE, THERE'S THE MIRACLE OF CARE.

Executive Director's Report

WRITTEN BY JULIE REYNOLDS

2022 was a year of transition for Walla Walla Community Hospice (WWCH). I came on board as the new Executive Director in January. Jennifer Combs became our new Patient Care Coordinator in July. Previously she was a primary care nurse with four years of experience at WWCH. Nina Buty started in September 2022, heading up Community Outreach and Marketing. She brings over 22 years of experience in the Walla Walla Valley as a former winery and vineyard owner. Then in October 2022, Melissa Swopes signed on as our Human Resources, Administrative Operations and Compliance Officer. She brings a vast knowledge of Hospice having served on our Board of Directors and as past Board President.

In 2022, WWCH admitted 397 patients. We are committed to providing high quality end-of-life care for you and your loved ones, and to start that care as early as possible. Hospice offers the "Five Wishes" booklet, which is a Living Will that talks about your personal, emotional and spiritual needs as well as your medical wishes. We naturally avoid thinking and talking about "end-of-life issues", yet when we take action and put our wishes down in print it makes it so much easier for our loved ones. If you would like to go over the "Five Wishes" with a WWCH staff member, please call our office and make an appointment (509-525-5561). Whether you have a serious illness or not it is never too soon to write out what you want done at the end-of-your life journey. Having it in print ensures that your values and your wishes are respected and followed. If you are considering Hospice at the end-of-life, please reach out to our office if you have questions. We are here to help and support you and your loved ones.

*"Live as if you were
to die tomorrow.*

*Learn as if you were
to live forever."*

-Mahatma Gandhi



Walla Walla Community
H O S P I C E

We are excited to welcome Dr. Karen Wyatt to Walla Walla for our inaugural community luncheon event on Wednesday, October 11, 2023, from 11:30am-1:00pm, at Whitman College's Reid Center Ballroom, to help educate and inspire our community with life lessons learned by people at the end of their lives. A retired hospice physician, Dr. Karen Wyatt has authored several books including [7 Lessons for Living from the Dying](#), [A Matter of Life and Death: Stories to Heal Loss & Grief](#), and eBooks [Loss and Grief Survival Guide](#), and [Coping with Life-Threatening Illness](#). She has worked in challenging settings such as hospices, nursing homes, homeless shelters and Third World countries. The medical clinic for the uninsured that she started grew from a 4-hour per week, all-volunteer operation to a full-time, full-service medical center. She believes in a whole-person approach to physical, emotional and spiritual health. We look forward to seeing you at this inspirational lunch event. Please help us by spreading the word now, and also consider volunteering as a table captain in 2024.

Dr. Wyatt is also scheduled to have a session on "Recognizing and Navigating Loss", co-sponsored with the Walla Walla Public Schools, for our region's elementary and secondary students and their loved ones. This event will be held Monday, October 9, 2023, from 6:00-7:00pm at SonBridge Center for Better Living. Childcare, Spanish language interpretation and a light dinner for the first 20 attendees will be provided.

Patient Care Coordinator's Reflection

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER COMBS, RN

On the inside of a bottle cap I once read "Life is an adventure denied to many." This brief sentence deeply resonates with me as someone who has experienced Hospice firsthand. My mother's cancer journey was one of immense suffering and loss. The pain was so intense that we made repeated trips to and from the Emergency Room for weeks on end. As a young teenager, I knew that no one should suffer this way at the end-of-life. What I did not know was the solution. The solution presented itself in the form of a referral to our local in-patient hospice house. We were there briefly. The main regret I had was not experiencing the support of hospice sooner for both her and my family. Although, this experience did direct me to dedicate my career in becoming a hospice nurse. I encourage you to reach out to your local hospice and remember that we are here to support you and your loved one throughout this journey.

*"The main regret I had
was not experiencing
the support of hospice
sooner..."*

TOTAL ADMITS
397
PATIENTS

AGE AT DEATH
85+ - 169
75-84 - 116
65-74 - 69
35-64 - 42
Birth-24 - 1

PATIENT
VISITS
8,997

COLUMBIA COUNTY
21 PATIENTS
GARFIELD COUNTY
1 PATIENT
WALLA WALLA COUNTY
274 PATIENTS
UMATILLA COUNTY
101 PATIENTS

MEDIAN
LENGTH OF STAY
22
DAYS

Committed to Quality & Compliance

WRITTEN BY MELISSA SWOPES, HUMAN RESOURCES, ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS & COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Commitment Matters

Hospice care provides the community with end-of-life resources to support the patient and patient family. Hospice understands that this last phase of life is physically and emotionally draining to all involved. The Walla Walla Community Hospice (WWCH) care team has a keen sense of providing the right level of compassionate and loving care needed through to the end of the patient's life. We are so proud of the care and emotional support WWCH provided to each other and our community during the past couple of years. Thank you for supporting and demonstrating commitment to quality in everything you do.

Compliance Matters

Hospice is heavily regulated by state and federal guidelines to ensure compliance with Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP). HQRP focuses on timely submission of Hospice Item Set (HIS), a comprehensive patient assessment, and Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS), otherwise known as patient satisfaction survey. WWCH exceeded expectation for state and national satisfaction results with a 87% overall rating of hospice care and 94% rating of "would recommend this hospice to others". In addition, we exceeded timely submission of HIS data with 98% compliance in 2022.

Walla Walla Community Hospice is committed to serving our community with high quality and compliance in everything we do.

WWCH is in compliance with all seven additional elements that are monitored by regulatory bodies: 1) implementation of written policies, procedures and standards of conduct; 2) designation of a compliance officer; 3) development of training and education programs; 4) creation of a hotline or other measures

SOME 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

- Walla Walla Community Hospice (WWCH) continues to navigate the ongoing changes with the Covid-19 pandemic, patient census, and reimbursement. WWCH commits to serving the most vulnerable individuals at the end-of-life with a focus on quality. We advocate for our patients/patient families, no matter what obstacles may come our way. During our care, we are continuously evaluating quality measures regulated by Medicare such as visits in last days of life, patient experience, hospice care index, and hospice comprehensive assessments.
- We exceeded the previous year's hospice comprehensive assessment score of 95% in 2021 to 97.5% in 2022. We exceeded state and national percentages in training of family to care for patients, getting timely help, communication with the family, treating the patient with respect, and willing to recommend this hospice to others. Hospice Compare public reporting website illustrates us with a family caregiver survey rating of three of five stars. The Center for Medicare Services (CMS) reported hospice star rating across the nation of 1% one star, 14% two star, 37% three star, 37% four star, and 11% five star. Quality continues to be a high focus for WWCH and we will continue to work with our patients and patient family members to improve our overall rating.

for receiving complaints and procedures for protecting callers from retaliation; 5) performance of internal audits to monitor compliance; 6) enforcement of standards through well-publicized disciplinary directives; and 7) prompt corrective action to detected offenses.

Board of Directors President's Reflection

WRITTEN BY JEREMY HYNDMAN

There is nothing easy about death, and it is hard for us to say, simply, that a loved one died. Think about all the delicate ways our language tiptoes around death; we say that someone has departed, passed away, gone to her eternal rest, and is in a better place. In Chinese, the number four is unlucky just because it sounds like the word for death.

If simply saying that a loved one has died is hard, walking hand in hand with that loved one and her family and friends is even harder. That is what we do at Hospice. Our team provides meaning and comfort to our community when we are touched by death. And—as hard as it is to confront this truth—we are all, inevitably, going to be touched by death. Hospice is here for all of us.

As an estate attorney, I have heard so many family members tell me how Hospice made the death of a loved one so much easier, replacing pain with dignity and empathy.

There are so many ways to help at Hospice. Please consider donating, volunteering, and joining us at some of our events, such as the Tree of Life Remembrance Ceremony. Please spread the word to family, friends, and our medical community that Hospice is a compelling option.

I want Hospice to be there when I've kicked the bucket, bit the dust, and bought the farm!

Camp Amanda Report

WRITTEN BY LUCI BERG, FORMER CAMP AMANDA COORDINATOR

Camp Amanda 2022 was our first return to the lodge and cabins for overnight camp since 2019 and we were overjoyed to experience the mountain air and Mill Creek once again! Being the hottest weekend of 2022, and still under caution from the pandemic, we had a small group of campers, yet it was the perfect launch back into camp for its 37th year. Campers and staff alike enjoyed the cozy and relaxed atmosphere. 13 campers were paired with 13 camp counselors, and 17 additional volunteers helped over the weekend.



“Thank you and all the staff for all that you did for the kids. My granddaughter had a great time.”

Volunteer Program Report

WRITTEN BY LUCI BERG, FORMER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

In 2022, volunteers helped WWCH save \$68,150 with the help of 76 volunteers including our dedicated volunteer Physician, Dr. Larry Zawatzky, or as our staff warmly call him, Dr. Z. The opportunity arose to nominate Dr. Z for the Blue Mountain Community Foundation "Spirit of Giving" Philanthropy Award. This award honors an individual for their heartfelt dedication in the Blue Mountain region for their volunteer involvement, and we could not think of anyone more deserving than the selfless man who has **dedicated over 25 years volunteering for our organization**. We are so excited to announce that Dr. Zawatzky was the winner of this award! Thank you for all you do for us, Dr. Z.

76
ACTIVE
VOLUNTEERS

\$68,150
SAVED!
BECAUSE OF
VOLUNTEER
SUPPORT

Our patients received social support, got haircuts, played games and puzzles, and volunteers provided caregivers and loved ones respite services. Our Board of Directors in kind time, Dr. Cookie volunteer hours, and volunteers helping with flowerbeds at the hospice office totaled 143.50 generous hours. If you are interested in volunteering for Walla Walla Community Hospice, please contact our office at 509-525-5561.



Dr. Larry Zawatzky

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." -Aesop

To learn more about being a hospice volunteer, visit wwhospice.org/volunteer, call 509-525-5561, or email info@wwhospice.org.



Save the Date!

GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS

Free interactive seminar to help you navigate the holiday season while grieving.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, 2:00 - 4:00 PM

November 5th

OR

WEDNESDAY MIDDAY, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

November 15th

AND

TREE OF LIFE CEREMONY

In remembrance of your loved one, an ornament with their name is placed on the Tree of Life and a candle is lit in their name--a poignant ceremony.

Marcus Whitman Hotel Renaissance Ballroom

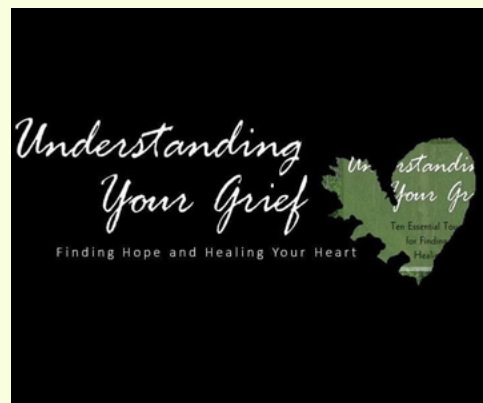
Monday, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

December 11th

Bereavement Support Report

WRITTEN BY LUKE SELF, BEREAVEMENT LEAD & SPIRITUAL SUPPORT ADVISOR

The year 2022 was a great year for bereavement support at Walla Walla Community Hospice because it was the first time since the dawn of the pandemic we could safely hold in-person grief support groups. Many of our support group participants expressed gratitude for this change, saying that they would have joined a group earlier, but they were uncomfortable with or unable to use Zoom to access our virtual meetings.



On the other hand, we found that some bereaved members of our community preferred meeting virtually, so we launched our first hybrid grief support group in the spring of 2022 made up of both in-person and virtual attendees. It was a challenge at first, but with the help of the Meeting Owl device that functions as a 360-degree camera, microphone, and speaker, our hybrid support group meetings have allowed us to care for the bereaved near and far. In fact, bereaved individuals from Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, and eastern Washington reached out to us in 2022 to join one of our grief support groups, saying that we were one of the only hospices they could find online that was offering virtual grief support.

A total of 58 bereaved individuals participated in one of our 10-week hybrid grief support groups in 2022. Here's what some of them had to say about their experience:

"I was able to share my innermost feelings and I was able to hear others' feelings without feeling threatened. I was very comfortable talking about my experience with this group." —Winter 2022 Participant

"It makes me feel better to hear others' experiences so that I know I am not unusual in my grief and the expression of my grief." —Spring 2022 Participant

"I've found new friends who I know I can share with, be supportive of, and support." —Fall 2022 Participant

In addition to our support groups, our bereavement team was able to care for the bereaved in a variety of other ways. Many from our community and beyond took advantage of Solace, a weekly one-hour drop-in opportunity for bereaved individuals who simply need a listening ear. In August, the team prepared dozens of rock painting kits and distributed 46 of them to people of all ages who were excited for the opportunity to express in a creative way their love for those they lost. In November, the team hosted a hybrid "Grief and the Holidays" seminar in the Filipi Room, providing counsel and encouragement to people who were preparing to enter their first holiday season without a loved one.

Providing ongoing bereavement care is challenging work, but seeing the difference that it makes in people's lives makes it worth it. The bereavement team has already begun working on exciting new bereavement services for 2023, and we look forward to sharing about those with you in our next Annual Report.

Medical Director's Insights

WRITTEN BY DR. DUSTIN COLGROVE, MEDICAL DIRECTOR

I am a board-certified hospice medical director and have been the medical director of Walla Walla Community Hospice (WWCH) since 2020. In my contribution to this WWCH annual report, I wanted to answer some common questions regarding hospice and end-of-life care—particularly regarding when to access hospice care.

When is it advisable to access hospice care?

Hospice care is a unique type of healthcare available to anyone with a life expectancy of less than 6 months.^[1] This life expectancy determination is made by a primary care physician in conjunction with a hospice medical director. As a hospice medical director, I see that enrolling in hospice sooner than later leads to the best outcomes both for patients and their families. Hospice enrollment once a terminal illness is identified gives time for a rapport to be built between the hospice recipient and the interdisciplinary hospice team (nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, chaplains, volunteers, and the hospice physician/medical director). A lot of education and care is provided during this critical time.

Why is enrolling in hospice care sometimes delayed?

Patients and their families frequently struggle with many questions surrounding end of life. One of the most common questions revolve around the determining the timing of when to change their medical treatment philosophy from restorative (doing everything they can to 'get better') to more of a comfort-based focus. This question frequently revolves around whether the patient or their family have ever been given the opportunity to consider an alternate treatment philosophy. The American healthcare system is focused on extending life, often at any cost. Frequently there is more of a discussion held about what the next treatment is for a particular condition even when it is a terminal one. There is very little discussion about hospice care for several reasons.

Reason #1

As physicians we do not want to 'give up' on our patients. We do not want to feel like we are failing to help someone. What can go unappreciated is the toll of the healthcare system on the patient. Doctors sometimes get so focused on the medical condition they ignore the big picture. Hospice and palliative care specialists provide a different perspective and realize that hospice enrollment is never 'giving up' but instead changes the clinician's focus from focusing on the disease process to instead symptom management and the patient's overall well-being.

Reason #2

Patients and their families are not offered an alternative other than restorative treatment. As an internal medicine hospitalist, I frequently engage patients and their families and talk about hospice. Most are appreciative of the information and many feel relief that I am validating their experience. They have been witnessing their loved one decline despite multiple hospitalizations and medication regimens. At some point they question when it is time to get off the proverbial healthcare hamster wheel.

Reason #3

Physicians or advanced practice providers (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) may be unsure whether their patient even has a life expectancy of less than 6 months. This can be seen when we receive referrals for patients that have a matter of days of life expectancy. At this stage, hospice is not as helpful for our patients or their families as it could be if the referral was made several months before. We have been focusing our efforts on providing education to community providers and caregivers about when to consider referral.

Is it true that people can live longer on hospice?

This has previously been studied and the answer is yes for patients with certain conditions.^{2} There was a mean survival of 29 days longer for hospice patients compared to non-hospice patients. People with congestive heart failure, lung cancer, and pancreatic cancer had significantly longer mean survival compared to those not on hospice.

Why is this the case for hospice patients?

- They receive additional monitoring and treatment by the hospice team
- They can avoid risks of medications that could have side negative effects (especially chemotherapeutics) or the negative effects of over-treatment of various conditions
- They can increase their desire to continue living that may be triggered hospice's focus on well-being

An additional revelation of this study was that patients who are enrolled in hospice do not die faster than those patients who are not on hospice. This dispels the myth that hospice care causes people to die faster by giving them medications.

What advice would I offer regarding end-of-life planning and care?

My main piece of advice would be to always ask questions of your medical team and to always go with your instincts. If you feel like your (or your family member's) condition is not improving, it is always okay to take a time-out and re-evaluate what is important to you: quantity vs. quality of life. I recommend discussing goals of care with your family and bring this up with your primary care provider. Be sure to do this well ahead of time and avoid doing this in the setting of an acute illness. Completing a Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form is also important and will ensure that your treatment decisions are known and respected.

Citations

1. Wermuth HR, Tadi P. Hospice Benefits. [Updated 2022 Oct 17]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2022 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554501/>
2. Connor SR, Pyenson B, Fitch K, Spence C, Iwasaki K. Comparing hospice and nonhospice patient survival among patients who die within a three-year window. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2007 Mar;33(3):238-46. doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2006.10.010. PMID: 17349493.

New Event notice!

connect | learn | support

**HOSPICE
AUTUMN
LUNCHEON
SERIES**

wednesday | 11 |
october

You're invited to a luncheon hosted by Walla Walla Community Hospice, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Karen Wyatt sharing "Beautiful Life Lessons from Hospice Patients" 11:30am to 1:00pm in the **(NEW location)** Whitman College Reid Center Ballroom located at 345 Boyer in Walla Walla. Tickets are \$50, and nearly sold out. Please RSVP by Oct 2 at: wwhospice.org/events





Save the Date!

The Pond & Garden Tour is making a comeback--though in its new iteration it will be a **tour of SPRING gardens on Saturday, May 18, 2024**. Save the date for this self-guided tradition exploring the beauty of our region's garden diversity.

If you would like to discuss being a garden host (even if you've hosted before, a spring garden is fundamentally different than a late summer garden) or volunteering in another capacity for the tour, please email info@wwhospice.org. Providing a water feature not required.

Grant Update for New Spanish Program

In 2022, WWCH received funds from the Sherwood Trust Fall Impact Grant to research, create and execute a Grief Support Group for native Spanish-speakers in our community. Led by two fluent Spanish-speakers on the WWCH Team, the first of these classes started in September 2023. We look forward to continuing to co-create this program with our community.



Donations & Planned Giving

In 2022, WWCH received many investments in our work in the form of donations from individuals and organizations. A partnership with the Blue Mountain Community Foundation and their Valley Giving Guide program was exceptionally beneficial to us (and the whole non-profit community) during the period of year-end giving.

Fundraising was so negatively affected by the pandemic in 2020-2022, WWCH felt it was important to invest time and resources in a Planned Giving program to encourage supporters to consider designating major, lasting, and sustainable gifts to WWCH as part of an Estate Plan. To learn more about planned giving options, visit wwhospice.org/donate.

Each and every donation we receive is an investment in the work we do and regardless of the amount, is valued and appreciated.

In Closing

Walla Walla Community Hospice is a non-profit hospice organization which has been operating since 1980. It employs a staff of administrative professionals, MDs, RNs, LPNs, CNAs, Social Workers and Spiritual Support professionals. WWCH serves Columbia, Walla Walla, and NE Umatilla Counties providing compassionate care for patients in the final stages of life, support for their caretakers, and grief support and education to the community as a whole.

Throughout these years of the Covid-19 pandemic the administration and staff of WWCH showed great resilience by caring for a great number of patients, by implementing many new practices to improve patient care, and by supporting grieving individuals of all ages, all the while navigating the Covid landscape and dealing with a national labor shortage.

The purpose of this Annual Report is to share information with our partners in the community, to those who support us, and to those who want to learn more about us. A remittance envelope may be enclosed. We rely on the generosity of our donors to invest in our education, outreach, and grief support programs. You may also visit wwhospice.org/donate to make a one-time donation, a recurring donation or to learn about planned giving options.

If you would like to know more about Walla Walla Community Hospice, we encourage you to contact us to schedule a phone call, a meeting, and/or a tour. We welcome questions and feedback.



Walla Walla Community
H O S P I C E

2022

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Alexa Davidson
- Dan Dierdorff
- Jessica Dougherty-Burt
- Rebekah Heath
- Brian Hope
- Jeremy Hyndman
- Dr. Eric Jauhiainen
- Gricelda Justice
- LeAnn Kemmerer
- JoAnne Payne
- Matthew Sursely
- Brandon Zaro

Our full financials are available to view on Guidestar.org where we have achieved a Platinum rating as a result of our commitment to transparency as it relates to sharing financial information. Our EIN is 91-1144144.



1067 E ISAACS AVE WALLA WALLA, WA 99362

509-525-5561 | INFO@WWHOSPICE.ORG | WWHOSPICE.ORG