

For the Patient, the Patient's Family and Friends

Resource Guide Addresses Vital Community Need

When someone dear to you has a life-threatening illness, how do you get the information and resources that are needed for the patient and the patient's family and friends? You ask the experts, such as Sandy Larson of Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and Dana Calhoon of Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System.

Though Dana has recently retired, Sandy continues to serve as resource librarian at Community Hospital. For several years, Sandy and Dana searched their files and the web compiling articles and links for a community resource.

"When their effort was completed, Sandy and Dana handed us an organized stack of papers almost eight inches thick and said, 'Here's your website information,'" recalls Resource Guide Committee Chair Jennifer Pettley.

"Once the site was completed, we continued to find more links and information for our patients and their family members," says Sandy, who related the following example of how the resource expands:

"When a patient and her daughter-in-law visited the Community Hospital Resource Library, the patient knew she was near the end of her life and requested information for people who wished to cease treatment. Her request prompted us to add other resources to the guide, including an American Bar Association 'tool kit' for end-of-life planning.



"The Caring Resources Guide is a living entity, created to help patients, caregivers, family members and friends in addition to professional providers," Sandy says. "After all, we're all going to face death at some time, and this helps make the situation a bit easier."

Evolution of the Alliance

Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) began as a grass roots coalition group nearly five years ago to improve end-of-life care in Monterey County. The coalition established a twofold mission:

- to raise public awareness and create opportunities for dialogue



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about end-of-life issues, care choices and planning;

- to provide access to comprehensive information and resources on end-of-life care.

The coalition decided that the first step in achieving its mission was to create an information resource for county residents which was to be called the

Caring Resources Program. The Program included the development of a website and resource materials. Additionally, the "Healing through the Arts" Project was launched with the production of the play *Vesta*.

Today, CCA's extensive membership includes legal advisors, therapists, spiritual leaders, physicians, community leaders and representatives from hospices, home care services and social-service agencies.

In December 2002, the coalition incorporated and became a non-profit agency making it eligible to receive funding from individuals and foundations.

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Message from the Executive Director

Community Leaders Join Our Compassionate Team

Welcome to our inaugural issue of *CompassioNotes*. Since Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) began over five years ago, it's had an incredible evolution and it's been a personal one for me as well.

Seven years ago, I moved to Monterey County from Los Angeles with plans to "settle in" but knew almost no one. Before looking for employment, I wanted to become involved in the community by volunteering. Several months after arriving, I saw an ad for hospice volunteers that piqued my interest. After meeting with Chaplain Larry Fenton of Heartland Hospice, I felt ready to make a commitment. Over the next year and a half, Larry and I created a series of bereavement newsletters for those who had lost a loved one at the end of hospice care. This helped define my purpose in Monterey County.



During my involvement with hospice, I met **Michael Schmidt**, who was also a member of the hospice team. Michael had co-founded the CCA with **Jennifer Joseph Pettley**, director of communications for Hospice Foundation. Michael was the first

president of CCA's board of directors, and Jennifer served as a board member. When Michael moved to Boise, Idaho, to start-up a hospice program, **Dr. Bill Kennedy** took over his position. Bill had been a cardiologist at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital. He also was a founder of Los Palos Medical Group and continues to serve on Salinas Valley Memorial's Bioethics Committee.

When the board was planning its first project—the Caring Resources Guide—I became more involved with the organization. Together with **Amelia Craig** and **Jackie Pierce**, we

wrote a grant proposal to Hospice Foundation for the funding of the project. Amelia is a marriage and family therapist specializing in grief work and serves as CCA board secretary/treasurer. Jackie is CCA's legal counsel and practices medical malpractice law.

Other members of the Caring Resources Guide Committee were **Mary Brusuelas**, who serves as board vice president and is program director for Hospice of the Central Coast, and **Teresa Sullivan**, who is executive director of Alliance on Aging.

Also contributing their time to CCA are committee chairs **Mitch Matthews**, Latino Outreach, and **Cindy Gum**, Healing through the Arts.

I'm grateful to my colleagues and friends for their expertise and support. How could we not succeed with dedicated professionals like this? We hope you'll join us by supporting CCA's important work.

—Vicki Nelson, Executive Director

Performing Arts

'Healing through the Arts' Opens a Dialogue on End-of-Life Issues

An important part of the Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) mission is to provide opportunities for dialogue on end-of-life issues, and the use of artistic expression opens the door for that dialogue. When CCA was introduced to the play *Vesta*, the concept of a "Healing through the Arts" program was born.

Director and actor Nick Hovick provided valuable insights for creating a staged reading of the play and producing it. He also put together the cast of actors, who not only needed to perform their parts, but needed to understand the dynamics of a family in crisis as it faces the issues surrounding the end of life. Under Nick's direction, the actors learned how to discuss the issues



brought up in the play with the audience following each reading. This proved to be a powerful means of exploring the struggles that people face with themselves and their families and friends.

CCA's second Healing through the Arts project was created by Cindy

Gum, a marriage and family therapist whose practice has involved grief and loss work. Cindy developed a healing methodology called "Love Letters from the Heart," and the first workshop was held earlier this year. (See article on page 4.)

Healing through the Arts is an integral part of CCA's Caring Resources Program. In the future, additional projects will be developed.

Pictured (l to r): Marcia Hovick, actor; Nick Hovick, director/actor; and Victoria McCaffrey, actor

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Jennifer Pettley
Teresa Sullivan

Committee Chairs

Cindy Gum, *Healing through the Arts*
Mitch Matthews, *Latino Outreach*

New Programs Have Begun

Outreach Project Expands Resources for the Entire Community

From its inception, Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) recognized the need for a Latino Outreach project in the community. Simply translating materials was not enough. Members of the Latino community were needed to create culturally appropriate information.

Sam Trevino, director of the Area Agency on Aging, has brought CCA first-hand knowledge of the challenges inherent in reaching community members whose primary language is other than English.



Chila Correa, who has worked in health education and cultural and linguistic group needs assessment in

the community for over 40 years, has also been a valuable resource for guiding CCA's grass roots efforts.

Programs have recently begun to provide much needed information to employees of the agriculture industry.

Pictured (l to r): Mitch Matthews, Chair of Latino Outreach Committee and Director of Provider Relations, Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice; Vicki Nelson, Program Director, CCA; Tino Plank, Admissions Director, Heartland Hospice; Chila Correa, Director, Entre Nosotras; Sam Trevino, Managing Director, Monterey County Area Agency on Aging

CCA/Alliance on Aging Collaboration

First Airing of 'Healthy Aging' TV Series Scheduled for October

In October 2005, Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) will air its first broadcast on AMP, the local public access television station. The series entitled "Healthy Aging: Finding the Answers for Tomorrow" is a collaboration between CCA and Alliance on

Aging, a local non-profit serving senior citizens of Monterey County and is sponsored by The Joseph O. Bellini Foundation.

The series is designed to help raise public awareness and create opportunities for dialogue about end-of-life

issues and care choices that affect each of us. Host Cindy Gum, MA, MFT, will conduct informal interviews with real people in real health care situations and discuss the physical, emotional, spiritual and practical issues that they face during healthy aging.

Compassionate Care Alliance Donors

The Alliance gratefully recognizes gifts received from September 1, 2004, through September 1, 2005. All gifts are tax deductible.

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'Love Letters from the Heart'

Workshops Encourage Healing through Creative Sharing

Developed by marriage and family therapist Cindy Gum (pictured), "Love Letters from the Heart" creates an opportunity for people to talk about their losses in a safe workshop setting. Participants pay tribute to loved ones by making a collage that expresses their sentiments and sharing their story with others.

"The more we tell our story, the more we make sense of our loss," Cindy explains. "The expressive arts help people go beyond talking about something and support the healing process by dissipating the trauma of the loss. It allows us to find a safe place to 'hold' the loss. After all, if we can't hold loss, we can't hold joy."

Gina, a workshop participant who had tragically lost her sister, was initially uncertain if she was ready to participate in the Love Letters program.

"Creating the collage was an integral part of my healing process," Gina says. "I needed to do something by myself...something tangible that would be helpful to me and others."

Though Gina and her tablemates shed tears at the beginning of the process, they were laughing and recalling the happy experiences with their loved ones by the time it ended. When Gina completed the workshop, she took a blank collage mat for her mother. Her mother subsequently told her that it helped her get through her



days and brought the family closer together.

After the workshop, Gina continued working on her collage, which was photographed and used on the cover of her sister's memorial service invitation. At the service, four collages were displayed, which Gina believes helped support the healing process for everyone attending.

Paul was another participant of the workshop. He thought that it might help him with the loss of a beloved pet dog. "It was over, but it wasn't over," he said 15 months after his dog had died. "Not a day went by that I didn't think about my dog. But after the workshop, I felt I was 'relieved of the charge.'" Cindy guided us down the path that led to a joyful experience of creating a tribute."

When the workshop was first announced, Cindy was surprised by the number of people requesting a workshop for those suffering from a pet loss.

"After speaking with representatives from the SPCA," Cindy recalled,

"we decided to collaborate."

"We receive many requests for grief support but didn't have a program in place," said SPCA Director of Community Outreach Beth Brookhouser. "Now grieving pet owners have a chance to work through their loss."

The loss of a pet can bring up past losses of family members and friends," Cindy added. "Love Letters workshops are designed to help participants get in touch with their feelings with any and all loss."

In Gratitude Hospice Foundation Paved the Way

From the beginning, Hospice Foundation has played a major role in the success of CCA. Hospice President and CEO Alice Kinsler and Director of Communications Jennifer Joseph Pettley took leadership roles in the formation of the coalition.

The Foundation hosted meetings and created the first means of communication through e-mail and postal mailings. The Foundation also supported and funded CCA's first project, the Resource Guide, with a \$50,000 grant and \$50,000 Challenge Grant in the first year.

Without the Foundation, CCA would not be where it is today. CCA is pleased to share the goal of informing our community on end of life issues with the Foundation and is grateful for their continued support.

You're Invited! November 9, Pasadera Country Club

Noted Author, Medical Anthropologist to Speak at Symposium

On Wednesday, November 9, CCA will present its second symposium on health care issues. Medical anthropologist Dr. Sharon Kaufman, author of *...And a Time to Die: How American Hospitals Shape the End of Life*, will speak at the event, which will be held at Pasadera Country Club.

Dr. Kaufman's book examines how advanced technology and health care delivery have changed where, when and how Americans die. Howard Spiro,

M.D., emeritus professor of medicine at Yale University School of Medicine, says, "Reading this book is like listening in on the conversations and problems that American physicians have in caring for the dying and their families, and the choices for which nobody—not even those with living wills—can really plan."

Reservations are required to the event, which will be hosted by Vince Cardinale of Ordway Drugs & Medical Supplies. For reservations, please call 655-9506.