

# Above & Beyond...

Your source for news and information to take our collective care to the next level



## Get to Know Our New Vice President, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Debra Vermette

Dr. Debra Vermette joined the Hospice & Community Care team in March 2023. In her role, she is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction and medical oversight for Hospice & Community Care's hospice and palliative care services. She provides education and support for staff, physicians, and other medical professionals to foster quality palliative care and increase access to services. Dr. Vermette shared

that while 80% of her role is administrative and 20% clinical, she knows that to implement change and gain the respect of her colleagues, she needs to immerse herself in the day to day with clinicians.

"There are different styles of leadership," commented Dr. Vermette. "I prefer servant leadership." Servant leaders prioritize serving the greater good. They serve their team and organization first. They don't prioritize their own objectives.

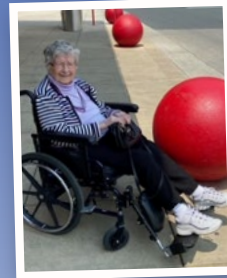
Dr. Vermette was engaged quickly. She started in Hospice's Access Department, often known as admissions. She spent three months answering phone calls, addressing questions from team members, providers, patients, and families.

"I was answering those calls to learn where we needed to adjust and what we could do to strengthen how we approached patient care," explained Dr. Vermette. "It also allowed me to examine ways to enhance collaboration and communication between our physicians, nurses and providers."

Dr. Vermette is also working directly with clinical teams as the physician on-call. "I like getting into the nitty gritty to have a better understanding of the organization's operations," expressed Dr. Vermette. "Even though these hands-on responsibilities are not technically in my job description for my day-to-day work, I see them as something I need to do to be able to develop our services."

"I look forward to building relationships with senior living professionals to ensure they feel supported when residents are facing end of life, coping with a serious illness or loss," shared Dr. Vermette. "I am excited to be part of the team and helping to enhance patient-centered care now and in the future."

## Working Together to Honor a Resident's Hope & Wish



In June, Hospice & Community Care patient and local senior living resident, Betty, spent the day out on the town at Target, thanks to the support of

Hospice's and the senior living facilities' team members. After a trip to the gift shop at her residence a few weeks prior, Betty was thrilled when Minda, a Hospice & Community Care nurse, asked her if she would like to go shopping at Target. Minda collaborated with a Hospice social worker and the transportation aide at the senior living facility. According to Minda, Betty loved getting out and looking at her "old town." Betty shared that the trip was bringing her back to life and that she was amazed by Target, so much to see and take in. Betty was the driver when she and her sister would shop.

Betty brought a little list with her to Target—buying scissors, thread, Burt's Bees lipstick, and nail polish. Betty said, "I do not have the words to thank all of you for making this happen, so I just say, thank you, thank you, thank you; I had a wonderful afternoon." Betty couldn't wait to get back to her home to look through her bag and see all her new finds. This is just one of the many benefits of working together to help residents live life to the fullest. If you would like us to help you honor the hopes and wishes of residents, who are receiving Hospice care, please contact us at (844) 422-4031.



# Grieving When Cognitive Impaired

Elderly persons with cognitive impairment may have difficulty processing their loss. They may even forget that their loved one has died, repeatedly asking others when the deceased is coming to visit. This can prove devastating for such individuals and their families who are forced to repeatedly re-experience their grief.

Most experts believe a cognitively impaired individual should be told of the loss initially, and then any further information or action should be based on

that reaction. Continuing to tell a person repeatedly that their loved one has died may not be helpful.

Women and men typically (but not always) grieve differently—cognitive impairment doesn't change that.

- ❖ Women are more likely to cry, need support from others and express their emotions.
- ❖ Men may not express their emotions (except for anger) and may not be willing to talk about how they feel.

## Here are ways you can help your residents:

- ❖ If the person asks for information about their loved one's death, gently repeat what you know of the facts, or offer to find out for them.
- ❖ If they become confused or have difficulty with answering questions, offer reassurance.
- ❖ If the person is aware and able in some way to process the loss, allow that to occur, and just 'walk the path' with him or her.
- ❖ Reminisce with them about the person who died. Talk about where they lived and what they did together.
- ❖ Talk about pictures which they may have displayed.
- ❖ Listen for and help to identify possible feelings of longing, sadness, or fear.
- ❖ Offer a comforting hug.
- ❖ Listen well, make the person's reality your reality.

For more resources on how to help your residents grieve, please contact the Pathways Center for Grief & Loss, a program of Hospice & Community Care, at (717) 391-2413 or visit [www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org](http://www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org).



## Meeting You Where You Are

Hospice & Community Care understands the time and staffing challenges that you are experiencing. We provide education in multiple formats—live in-person sessions at your facility, live Zoom sessions and pre-recorded sessions—on a variety of topics from advance care planning to compassion fatigue, from spiriting concerns to the last hours of living. Contact Karen Stauffer, Community Educator, at (717) 490-4074 or [kstauffer@hospicecommunity.org](mailto:kstauffer@hospicecommunity.org) for more information or to schedule training.



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