

# Cherishing Life



Hospice  
of the  
Calumet  
Area

A tri-annual publication celebrating the inspiring patients, families, staff, donors, volunteers, stories, events and initiatives of Hospice of the Calumet Area.

## Embracing the Journey

Debbie Richards has an inspiring love for serving. An Air Force veteran, Richards is “grateful and proud” for the opportunity to volunteer at Hospice of the Calumet Area’s William J. Riley Memorial Residence.

Richards was introduced to WJR nearly a decade ago when her husband Tom spent his last days there after battling a difficult bout with pancreatic cancer.

“I am grateful for the Riley Residence because I was taking my daughter back and forth to school and things became overwhelming,” said Richards. “Tom received beautiful care and I was so appreciative of the compassion our entire family received. I just knew I wanted to be part of Hospice of the Calumet Area.”

Richards has been volunteering since 2014 and feels the opportunity has been such a “blessing” and is compelled to help educate others about hospice services and the benefits for patients and their families.

“I wish everyone knew how wonderful hospice services are because there is still a huge misconception about it,” said Richards. “So many people think it is only for the last days, but nothing could be further from the truth. We need to continue to educate people, one family at a time, about the benefits and making the decision sooner.”

Months ago, when her 96 year-young mother Betty Whitford struggled with health issues, Debbie proudly informed Mom about the wonderful team at HCA.

Betty embraced hospice and now spends her days inspiring others with her fascinating stories and savvy one-liners. Whitford’s nurse, aide, volunteers and social workers quickly fell in love with her zeal and sparkling personality.



Hospice of the Calumet Area patient Betty Whitford with her daughter Debbie Richards and their favorite fur baby, Comet.

“I do miss my golfing, especially when I look out and see the sun shining so beautifully” said Whitford. “I started playing because my husband loved it so much and I realized the only way I’m going to see him is on the course. And I was able to show those other girls that he was spoken for so they just better back off.”

Debbie loves spending days with her mother and hearing stories about the “good old days.” Her parents always watched what they ate, exercised and lived life to the fullest with little regret. She strongly feels that philosophy is the result of their long-lived happy lives.



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## Message from CEO Adrienne May



National studies have repeatedly told us that 80 – 85% of Americans do not want to spend their last days and months in the hospital, yet that is where most experience end of life.

Unfortunately, there are still many people in the Region, who have never heard of hospice care and even more who have misconceptions about it.

Recently, I received a thank-you letter from a patient’s son and daughter. They were appreciative of the care our team provided and commented that the time their father spent in our hospice program was the most comfortable he had been in the last 2 years. He was our hospice patient less than one week. I was grateful but very saddened.

Hospice care is designed to care for individuals and families for six months. Providing care and comfort is skilled work that is most effective when patients

are in hospice care months, not days. Helping patients keep active and comfortable is a cornerstone of our care. It involves a team beyond the doctor and nurse who work aggressively to keep physical symptoms under control and includes social workers and counselors who work equally hard to address practical, psychological, and spiritual concerns that effect an individual’s well-being. Nothing we do hastens death as some mistakenly believe and studies have even shown in some cases that on average patients live longer in hospice care.

In our cover story, Debbie Richards shares how precious this time is with her mother. They are forging new positive memories and cherishing every minute of life. That is the gift of hospice care and how HCA is bringing care, compassion and comfort for those facing life limiting illness.

If you know someone who could benefit from this type of care or want to learn more, please call us at 219.922.2732 or 708.895.8332 and you will be directed to someone who can help.



## Dedicated to Patients and Families

**HOSPICE**  
HONORS elite

Hospice of the Calumet Area is exceptionally proud of our top-notch staff that continues to exemplify inspiring leadership, vigilance and remarkable care for their patients and families amidst this pandemic.

For the second consecutive year, Hospice of the Calumet Area has been honored with HEALTHCAREfirst’s prestigious Hospice Honors elite award. Hospice Honors is a landmark compilation of hospices providing the best patient and caregiver experience. The honor recognizes the highest level of care measured from the caregiver’s point of view. The recognition endorses high-achieving agencies by analyzing the performance of their Hospice quality measures. In order to be recognized, a hospice must have superior performance measures in 20 of 24 quality measures. In 2019 and 2020, HCA garnered excellence in all 24 measures resulting in **Hospice Honors elite** status. HCA has been recognized with Hospice Honors every year since the initiative was created in 2015.

# Community Corner

## Music Therapy Program Receives New Funding

Hospice of the Calumet Area understands how complementary therapies can enhance the effects of medication in managing patient's symptoms and promoting comfort. After seeing positive results from our massage therapy program, we set out to initiate a formal Music Therapy program. "Some of the most dramatic results have been seen in our longer-term patients living with Alzheimer's and Dementia," explains Adrienne May, CEO.

Complementary therapies are not mandated in hospice care and no additional reimbursement is provided for this effective care. A Bachelor's or Master's degree in Music Therapy, along with a 1040 hour internship and passing a certification exam is required for certification as a Music Therapist. This makes music therapy a costly service to provide, but HCA is committed to expanding this innovative option for our patients.

Since the program was initiated in 2018, the organization has been actively holding fundraising events and looking to local businesses and foundations to help support these efforts; and the results have been encouraging. Most recently, HCA received



Horseshoe Casino executives provide Hospice of the Calumet Area staff with a \$12,500 investment for their Music Therapy Program, created in 2018.

a special grant totaling \$12,500 from the Caesars Foundation through Hammond's Horseshoe Casino and another \$3,750 from Lake County's Legacy Foundation. "With this wonderful support, we are well on our way to building a solid program that will touch the lives of even more of our patients and families."



## Friends of Hospice and a Fabulous 50s Style Show

The Friends of Hospice added a special twist to their annual Friends & Fashion Style Show this year by partnering with the Towle Theater's dynamic duo, Jeff Casey and Kevin Bellamy. The Towle Theater started its collection of 1950s fashion when it first produced A Fabulous 50s Christmas in 2003 and has been adding to the collection every year since. Hospice of the Calumet Area nurses, volunteers and board members modeled their stellar collection with beautifully prepared hair and make-up generously donated by Vanis Salon & Day Spa.



Held at Patrician Banquets in Schererville, the lively and stylish event also consisted of boutique shopping and a wine and cheese reception sponsored by Johnson Brothers of Indiana, E.&J. Gallo Winery and Charcuterie of Griffith. Other event sponsors included, Calumet Electric Supply Corp., Linda Delunas, PhD., Dr. Robert & Lydia Dershewitz, dermatology, Dr. Geissler's Hearing Center, Horizon Bank, Largus Graphix Solutions, Peoples Bank, Tara Moore Designs and the Times of NWI. Pete Doherty of Doherty Images also donated his time and talent to capture the spirit of the event; to view event photos visit [HospiceCalumet.SmugMug.com](http://HospiceCalumet.SmugMug.com) or our Hospice Calumet Facebook page. Event proceeds benefit hospice patients and their families.

Top, Chris Valvanis, Kevin Bellamy and Jeff Casey. Bottom, HCA nurses, volunteers and board members don 50s attire.



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

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## Seeds of Hope 2020 Update

*"If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together." - African proverb*

With the many changes that have occurred related to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have made the unfortunate decision to cancel our Seeds of Hope event scheduled for April 23, 2020.

This year's honorees were to be Dr. Robert and Lydia Dershewitz. Two individuals who for the past 20 years have gone above and beyond in their role as volunteers and contributors to our hospice mission. And even now they continue to help navigate through these unusual circumstances through good counsel and hands on assistance.

Hospice of the Calumet Area is continuing to serve individuals and families and has put measures in place for our nurses, aides, social workers, spiritual counselors, staff and volunteers to work as safely as possible. We continue to receive calls from families in need; our work simply can't stop. Your help is needed now, more than ever before.

Although we will not be holding the event, we welcome you to donate in honor of Lydia and Bob, embracing the spirit of *Seeds of Hope*. Your gift will directly support our clinical staff providing core hospice and Transition™ Program services.

We will plan to resume the Seeds of Hope event in 2021, but until then, thank you for understanding and for your unwavering support as the world faces this unprecedented circumstance.



Photo by Ann Latinovich

*Dr. Robert and Lydia Dershewitz*