

# In Gratitude

## A Report for Donors

### LETTER FROM DANIEL H. SHEVRIN, MD



*Dr. Daniel H. Shevrin*

**A**s the Medical Director for Palliative Care & Hospice Services at NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore), it is my pleasure to thank you for the many ways you have supported our hospice program, which I've been involved in for more than 20 years now. Every single day, we provide end-of-life care to an average of 70 hospice patients and their families. It is our goal to make the experience the best it can possibly be. We couldn't do it without your help.

We're seeing a progressive increase in the number of hospice patients seeking our services, reflective, I believe, of the reputation we have among patients, their families and NorthShore doctors, and for the respectful and quality end-of-life care we provide.

We're fortunate to have a highly skilled, well trained and compassionate staff that is able to provide our patients with state-of-the-art therapies to manage distressing physical and psychosocial symptoms, allowing for fuller, more meaningful quality time between patients and their families.

NorthShore Hospice patients have access to superb physicians who are board-certified in hospice and palliative medicine. Hospice staff includes nurses, aides, social workers, chaplains, pharmacists, a coordinator overseeing the work of a group of dedicated volunteers, and a bereavement counselor.

Many of our visits and much of our care take place in patients' homes; patients are also seen in nursing homes or in the inpatient setting at Evanston, Glenbrook, Highland Park and Skokie Hospitals. We're very proud of our Palliative Care Unit at Evanston Hospital, where one of our missions is to care for hospice enrollees whose needs cannot be met in other settings.

In this Gratitude Report to you, our faithful supporters, we invite you to share in the stories about some of our services. You will read about our donors who have taken their loss and turned it into an opportunity to help others in need and about our volunteers, who sustain and enrich our work on a daily basis.

We are very appreciative of your donations and your ongoing commitment to making NorthShore Hospice the remarkable program it has come to be. Thank you for your continued support.

## DONOR PROFILE | *James L. Garard Jr.*

*“My wife was never uncomfortable or fearful and that meant the world to me. I was very pleased with the care she received in Hospice.”*



*Jim Garard*

Jim Garard has been involved with NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore) as a Board member and now Life Director for more than 40 years. His wife Irene “Reenie” Garard was diagnosed with cancer in October 2009, and he says until his wife became very sick, he didn’t know much about hospice at all.

He called his good friend, NorthShore’s Janardan D. Khandekar, MD, Director of the Kellogg Cancer Center and Chair of the Department of Medicine, and asked his advice for recommended care for his wife. Garard was surprised and heartened to learn from Dr. Khandekar that NorthShore itself had a very accomplished hospice program.

Irene was referred to the program when the Northfield couple returned from their winter home in Florida shortly before she died in May of 2010. Her care was a welcome relief for her husband and children, who saw that the hospice program provided her the comfort, dignity and compassion she needed.

“She was never uncomfortable or fearful and that meant the world to me,” said Garard. “I was very pleased with the care she received in Hospice.”

The family’s positive experience encouraged Garard to meet with hospice administrators and NorthShore Foundation staff to talk about hospice’s program needs. Just a few months ago, Garard established the Hospice Communications and Education Fund with a generous gift to increase the visibility of NorthShore Hospice through communications such as this report. The idea is to share the stories about a myriad of services—from support groups to newsletters to helpful booklets and even preserving the patient’s life stories in a video—that are all available to help families through the ordeal of losing a loved one.

“The Garard gift is greatly appreciated,” says Robert A. Fried, MD, Medical Director of Palliative Care & Hospice Services at NorthShore. “While Hospice services are available at all four hospitals and in the patient’s home, there is now a wing dedicated to patients with serious illness through Palliative Care Services at NorthShore Evanston Hospital that brings the support even more front and center.”

“The increasing numbers of patients seeking our services reflects the heightened confidence patients, families and NorthShore physicians place in the quality of our end-of-life-care,” adds Dr. Fried. “We couldn’t provide the kind of programming and communications materials and education we do without our supportive donors.”

**For more information on supporting NorthShore Hospice please visit [northshore.org/hospice](http://northshore.org/hospice).**

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE | *Jill Wonsil*

**I**n the six years Jill Wonsil has been a NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore) Hospice volunteer, she has found her greatest job skill is to just be there—and to listen to whatever the patient wants to talk about in their final months, days or hours.

“Sometimes, the patient will want to talk about dying because they don’t want to burden their family with those thoughts,” says Wonsil. “Sometimes, if they try to talk about dying, their family members might say ‘you’ll get better.’ Understandably, neither side wants the other to worry so we can step in and be the listener and just let the patient talk and feel comfortable saying whatever it is they want to say.”

Wonsil says every assignment, which consists of a three hour shift, is different. The patient decides the activity and that might mean playing cards, watching a baseball game together, or having Wonsil read Emily Dickenson poems to them. Sometimes, the patients just want to have their hand held.

“I had one lady who wanted to go to Old Orchard to get her makeup and nails done,” recalls Wonsil. “We try to accommodate those simple requests.” Another time Wonsil had a female patient, a writer, who asked Wonsil to write down her favorite stories and jokes. Wonsil took notes, typed everything up, put it in a notebook and presented it to the woman’s family, who read stories from the notebook at her wake. “However, what we do the most is just sit with a patient to keep an eye on them while the caregiver can take some much needed respite,” she adds.

Wonsil has had many short term patients but quite a few long term patients, whom she visited and cared for during a six-month span. “I’ll also attend the funeral and send a sympathy card because of our connection to the family if we’re taking care of the patient for an extended time.”

Being a hospice volunteer isn’t for everyone, but Wonsil, who is retired and also works in the NorthShore hospice program’s business office at least three hours a week, says the work makes her feel good because she knows she’s helping the patient and the family, who often tell her how much they appreciate her help. “I’m selfish, I guess,” says Wonsil, “because it’s very gratifying work. It’s really a privilege to be invited into someone’s life at that very private time.”



*Jill Wonsil*

*“It’s really a privilege to be invited into someone’s life at that very private time.”*

Jill Wonsil exemplifies what giving is all about, says Nadine Francione, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator. “She does whatever is asked of her, whether it’s running errands or reading a book to the patient.”

What kind of individual makes a good hospice volunteer? Francione says they should be compassionate, comfortable discussing death and dying, open minded, non-judgmental, and be flexible and open to the experience. Right now, NorthShore Hospice has about 50 active volunteers, but more are needed. Volunteers must have their own transportation and attend an eight-week training class that meets for three hours every week at the Hospice offices at 4901 Searle Parkway in Skokie.

**For more information about NorthShore’s hospice program or to become a volunteer, please contact Nadine Francione at (847) 982-4365 or e-mail her at [nfrancione@northshore.org](mailto:nfrancione@northshore.org).**

**T**hom Dennis says he heard over and over again from families who didn't want to erase their loved one's last voice mail message because that's all they had to remind them of the sound and life in the person they lost.

As Bereavement Services Coordinator for NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore) Hospice, Dennis knew he could provide more lasting memories.

"I thought, 'we can do better,'" says Dennis. *Life Stories and Lessons* was born out of a process he calls "life review," which offers patients the ability to talk about their life experiences and record highlights from their life story via a personal interview that can be videotaped, audio recorded or written into what's called an "ethical will" that passes on values, beliefs and insights from the patient's personal reflections.

Under the guidance of hospice professionals, patients are interviewed either by family members or hospice staff to leave their lasting memories in the format of their choice. *Life Stories and Lessons* is made possible by a generous gift from the James F. Walsh Foundation.

Jim Walsh died in 2005, just five months after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

His wife, Deb, established the James F. Walsh Foundation to honor his memory and to promote research, awareness and early detection of pancreatic cancer as well as the prevalence of hospice services at



*Thom Dennis*

NorthShore Evanston Hospital, where Jim received treatment. Gifts from the Walsh Foundation have allowed Hospice to purchase high-tech audio and visual equipment, said Dennis. "Other hospices do a video or recording, but it's not as extensive as what we provide. We have photographs, music,

a slide show, whatever the patient and their family wants. We wouldn't be able to offer this free and creative program without the support of philanthropy."

*Life Stories and Lessons* is especially poignant for younger patients with children to afford them the

memories of their mom or dad later in life. "It's a treasure to have," says Dennis. "Many people aren't able to watch it right away, and every single one is different. Some like to tell funny stories. Others want to pass on what they have learned in life."

Bereavement Services provides families with a folder of information about the program, complete with questions they might want to ask their loved one and tips on how to bring out the best in the patient interview. Once the family has selected some starter questions, they contact the hospice office and the recording appointment is set up in the patient's home and taken care of by hospice staff. After editing and final details are worked out, the patient and family members are presented with a CD, DVD or written transcript.

The James F. Walsh Foundation also supported funding for communication materials, including "A Widow's Guide for Survival and Hope" and "Living With Loss: When Your Wife Has Died." Both offer reflections and practical suggestions for those who have recently lost a spouse. The booklets include real life stories from those who have experienced grief, like Deb Walsh, who suggests solid tips on how to find support and make changes in your life.

"Thom Dennis has done a superb job of focusing on the family of those that pass away," says Walsh. "No one knows the pain a widow or widower goes through, but these programs, like *Life Stories and Lessons* and the guide books, are all very helpful and progressive. Our foundation is happy to support NorthShore Hospice."

Dennis says bereavement services to families remain in effect for at least a year, and often beyond that time frame. "We're not just treating the patient," he says. "We treat the families and are there whenever they need us."



*Jim and Deb Walsh*

**For more information about *Life Stories and Lessons*, support groups and other bereavement services, contact Thom Dennis at (847) 982-4364 or email him at [tdennis@northshore.org](mailto:tdennis@northshore.org).**

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— Helen Keller

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*We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind  
 us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and  
 a mystery.*

— H.G. Wells



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