



# Brattleboro Area Hospice

## *Newsletter* March / April 2012

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

### MAKE DEATH YOUR ALLY

Death is an important ally for appreciating life. I am not referring to a morbid preoccupation with death. Rather, I mean the felt awareness of our finitude as physical beings—an honest recognition of the short time we have to love and to learn on this earth. The knowledge that our bodies will inevitably die burns through our attachments to the dignified madness of our socially constructed existence. Death is a friend that helps us to release our clinging to social position and material possessions as a source of ultimate security and identity. An awareness of death forces us to confront the purpose and meaning of our existence, here and now.

Those who have had near-death experiences confirm that awareness of death can be an uncompromising friend, putting us back in touch with what is most important. A common sentiment expressed by many near-death survivors is a decreased emphasis on money and material things and a heightened appreciation for nature and loving other people. Dr. Kenneth Ring, a researcher of near-death experiences, quotes a young man who had a near-death experience after a serious automobile accident. As a result the young man found that he developed an “awareness that something more was going on in life than just the physical part of it... It was just a total awareness of not just the material and how much we can buy—in the way of cars and stuff, or food or anything. There’s more than just consuming life. There’s a point where you have to give to it and that’s real important.”



Gandhi once said, “Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence.” If we are to lead nonviolent and loving lives, then we can begin by coming to terms with our own death. An appreciation that we must die awakens us from our social sleep and to the reality of our situation. Death is an unyielding partner in life—an inescapable certainty to push against as we sort out the significant from the trivial in our daily lives.

We cannot hide from death. Its embrace will consume our social existence entirely. Job titles, social position, material possessions, sexual roles and images—all must yield to death. This does not mean that we should abandon our material and social existence. Rather, it means that in consciously honoring the fact of our physical death, we are thereby empowered to penetrate through the social pretense, ostentation, and confusion that normally obscure our sense of what is truly significant. An awareness of death is an ally for infusing our lives with a sense of immediacy, perspective, and proportion. In acknowledging the reality of death, we can more fully appreciate our gift of life.

If you were to choose death as an ally (as a reminder of the preciousness of each moment), and if you were to choose the universe as your home (as a reminder of the awesome dimensions of our existence), would a quality of aliveness, immediacy, and poignancy naturally infuse your moment-to-moment

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living? If you knew that you would die within several hours or days, would the simplest things acquire a luminous and penetrating significance? Would each moment become precious beyond all previous measure? Would each flower, each person, each crack in the sidewalk, each tree become a fleeting and never-to-be-repeated miracle? Simplicity of living helps bring this kind of clarity and appreciation into our lives.

*~Duane Elgin, excerpted from Make Death Your Ally, huffingtonpost.com*

## **End of Life Ethics: Living with Grief Teleconference** **Wednesday May 9, 2012 from 1:30–5:00 PM** **Sponsored by Brattleboro Area Hospice**

The decisions that are made at the end of life affect not only the way that a person dies, but also the ways that survivors face the loss. This program uses a case study approach to examine ethical dilemmas that are likely to arise at the end-of-life, the principles of ethical decision-making and the effects of these decisions on staff and families.

Following the broadcast, a panel of local professionals will lead a discussion based on questions from the audience and their experiences with end-of-life ethics.

This program is free and open to the public and CEU credits are available. Doors will open at 1:00 and light refreshments will be available. Space is limited and registration is required. To register, please call Brattleboro Area Hospice at 257-0775.

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. ~Edward Everett Hale

## **National Volunteer Week**

by Shop Volunteer Coordinator, Sarah Rice

National Volunteer Week this year is April 15th through the 21st. This week is all about volunteerism. Here at Experienced Goods Thrift Shop, one volunteer can make all the difference. Whether a volunteer is running our register or simply tagging inventory to be priced, each job is as important as the next. Without our volunteers at the shop, we wouldn't be able to operate as smoothly as we do.

Each day we have from 4 to 8 volunteers at the shop that do a minimum of 2 hours of service in a shift. In all of 2011 we had a total of 4,583.5 recorded volunteer hours worked at the shop. Some of our volunteers stay with us for only a few short shifts and others have been with us since our doors first opened back in 1989. We have volunteers that are retired professors and volunteers that are fulfilling their high school community service hours. We have staff that started out as volunteers and volunteers that started out as staff. Volunteering is an in-kind donation of time to the organization and is as valuable as item and monetary donations.

Thank you to all our volunteers for all the great work you do!



Where you are going  
and the place you stay  
come to the same thing.

What you long for  
and what you've left behind  
are as useless as your name.

Just one time, walk out  
into the field and look  
at that towering oak—  
an acorn still beating at its heart.

~ Peter Levitt, *100 Butterflies* (excerpt)

## Change the World

“When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.”

At times, it is easy to get caught up in the folly of “saving” the world or our neighbors or even a family member. As we endure the challenges of a certain path, our conditioning starts to turn into arrogance and what was initially a humble endeavor becomes a statement of one's worth. Then, we start to boast the greatness of what we do in hopes of subtly inflating our ego; instead of genuinely making a difference, we only attempt to reiterate the hidden impressions and values of our own subconscious.

To help anyone, we must first understand what real help is. As we gain greater awareness of ourselves, we realize our true nature and start a revolution within us. Inevitably, this change in us reaches the rest of the world.

~Author unknown, from *ijourney.com*

### **All of our services are free because of you!**

We rely on donations from the community to keep our services free of charge. Help support our work by sending a donation to: Brattleboro Area Hospice, 191 Canal Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301. Thank you!

## Brattleboro Area Hospice

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Ellen Graham  
*Assistant Store Manager*  
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Gemma Champoli  
Christopher Gabriel  
Christopher John  
Jen Reichman

## Calendar

*March 5 & April 5.* Volunteer Report Forms due.

*March 12 & 26; April 9 & 23, Monday, 6:30 to 8 pm.* Bereaved Parents Support Group meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month.

Facilitated by Lynn Martin. Call Elizabeth to register.

*March 14 & 28; April 11 & 25, Wednesday, 5 to 6:30 pm.* Spouse/Partner

Loss Support Group meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month.

Facilitated by Cheryl Richards. Call Elizabeth to register.

*March 27–May 22 (skipping May 1), Tuesdays, 5:15 to 6:45pm* if there is sufficient interest. A Grief Support Group for adults whose parent, sibling, friend or other cared-for person has died. Facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman & Steve Walton. Call Elizabeth to register.

*May 9, 1:30–5:00 PM, Wednesday,* End of Life Ethics: Living with Grief Teleconference. More information in this newsletter.

**Good Grief Groups** meet when 4 or more close-in-age **children or teens** express interest. Contact Elizabeth Ungerleider: 258-0763 or [hanglidr@sover.net](mailto:hanglidr@sover.net) or your school counselor. Or call Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775 x104.

### Coming This Summer:

**June 1-3 2012, Camp Knock Knock, North Hero, Vermont,** is a weekend camp held at YMCA's Camp Abnaki for families with children and/or teens who have experienced the death of a loved one. For further information or to register for Camp Knock Knock, please call Ally Parker at 802-860-4410 x3405. You may also call Elizabeth at 257-0775 x 104.

**August 19-24, Circle of Tapawingo, in southwestern Maine** is a tuition-free overnight camp for girls 8-12 years old who have experienced the death of a parent. To register, call Cathy Spear, Director of Camper Services, 781-820-3388. For more information, check [www.circleoftapawingo.org](http://www.circleoftapawingo.org).

**June 3, Sunday, 1:30-2:30 pm, Memorial Planting Service at the Hospice Garden, Living Memorial Park, Brattleboro.** Details in May-June 2012 issues of SEASONS and Volunteer Newsletter.

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