Happy December Birthday!

1 Estelle Phoebus
3 Lois Green
8 Weezie Hartman
16 Sharon Craven
16 Jean Taylor
18 Sandra Campbell
18 Jeanne Corbo
22 Gloria Baschke
25 Bobbie White

We apologize if we have missed your birthday. Please let us know so we can add your special day to our list.

Save the Date!

Volunteer Services Holiday Open House

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 11 am - 1 pm
Volunteer Services Office
Philmore Commons, Suite 102

Stop by anytime between 11 am and 1 pm
Enjoy a light lunch, beverage and dessert.
We look forward to seeing you!

Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore honors our volunteer, Walter McCabe

On Nov. 4, 2016, Walter McCabe received the Mary Gladys Jones Volunteer of the Year Award from the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore. This award is considered among the most prestigious honoring philanthropic service in this region.

McCabe was jointly nominated by the three non-profits he serves: Coastal Hospice, The Salisbury Zoo and the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art. At Coastal Hospice, McCabe gave 554.89 volunteer hours, the most of any hospice volunteer. He began volunteering for hospice in 2007.

The annual Mary Gladys Jones Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding, sustained and unselfish contributions to community service. The Foundation grants $1,000 to the Volunteer of the Year Award winner’s charity of choice.
Mountaire Farms honors Dave Duitscher with the Better Delmarva Award

Mountaire Farms, in collaboration with WMDT, will be recognizing Dave Duitscher and the profound difference he has made as a volunteer in his community. TV commercials describing Dave’s contributions will air on WMDT over the next few weeks. Filming for the commercials took place on Nov. 10 in the sanctuary of Christ United Methodist Church in Salisbury.

A neighbor of Dave’s nominated him for this award. Nomination entries are reviewed by a selection committee, and the monthly winners are notified of the results.

Be sure to look for Dave on Channel 47—WMDT!

Dave Duitscher, left, receives award from Mountaire officials.

The beauty and challenge of being a new hospice volunteer

By Tiffany Barry, Coastal Hospice volunteer

Their home was cozy and warm, small and very tidy, but that didn’t quell my nervousness. How would I communicate with the patient who couldn’t talk? How would I best serve his sweet wife?

My first time home visit was an experience that started one Thursday and went on for about six months. In that short time I came to know the patient and his wife very well. I also got a true taste of the challenges of being a volunteer.

Being that the patient had limited speech capacity, it was very difficult to communicate with him. We spent our time watching baseball, and he converted me to an Orioles fan! His wife and family were very supportive, and I always felt welcome in their home.

But here is the truth. It wasn’t easy to be there! There were days when he didn’t want me in his home and days he would try the lock at the front door endlessly, hoping to get out. As he became less mobile, there were days when he would hiss at me by his bed, and even kick! It was a challenge not to take it personally, as I have to admit.

We didn’t have a grand connection, but I continued to use the skills I learned at the hospice training, and I just focused on “being there.” I tried not to be obtrusive. I offered compassion, assistance and space for him.

There were times when I felt I shouldn’t be there, but I remembered my training and I stayed, I was there, and that is what mattered. When his wife left the house to go shopping, she was refreshed when she returned. There were multiple layers and reasons for me just “being there.”

I was never quite sure if I was helping that much, until the day that sweet man ceased to breathe, and the first person his wife called was me. I was flattered. I was honored. My time with them had been meaningful.

I look forward to “just being” with future hospice patients for those small bits of respite for the caregivers, the few memorable times the patient benefited from my presence, and the support that I offered backed by the whole team of hospice professionals.

Editorial note: Please send your memorable volunteer experiences to volservices@coastalhospice.org or call us at 410-543-2590 to submit articles, comments or issues for publication.
Welcome to new Coastal Hospice volunteers

On Wednesday, Nov. 2, participants completed the classroom portion of the 16-hour training program to become patient care, patient support and bereavement volunteers.

The classroom modules included the services provided by Coastal Hospice, the scope of different volunteer roles, family relationships and communication styles, and managing boundaries and self-care. A panel of experienced volunteers provided practical tips and advice and guided the participants through a fictitious case study.

Meet our new Coastal Hospice volunteers

Cyndi Bartolomeo
Judy Butler
Deborah Fisher-Reynolds
Fred Hough
Carolyn Jones
Diana Pikulsy
Paulette Semenko
George Shoben

Next Introduction to Coastal Hospice for volunteers

Saturday, January 28, 2017
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Philmore Commons, Suite 202, Salisbury

To enroll, call 410-742-8732 or email volsevices@coastalhospice.org. Instructions about how to begin the online learning will be provided.
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Accredited by The Joint Commission. Coastal Hospice, Inc., does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Reach Coastal Hospice at 410-742-8732 or www.coastalhospice.org

Coastal Hospice Volunteer News Editor: Sally Rankin

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**COASTAL HOSPICE VOLUNTEER EDUCATION CERTIFICATION**

**ONLY patient care and patient support volunteers** need to complete and return the education certificate.

I certify that I have read *Spiritual Maturity: How Achieving This Core Aspect of Personal Development Is Essential to Self-Care* included in the December 2016 Volunteer Newsletter.

Please print your name: ____________________________________________________________

Please sign your name: ___________________________________________ Date______________

Patient Care and Patient Support volunteers, **please sign and return to Volunteer Services**.

Email to srankin@coastalhospice.org, fax to 410-860-2094 or mail to:  
Coastal Hospice Attention: Sally Rankin  
PO Box 1733  
Salisbury, MD 21802-1733

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**Flu shot reminder**

For volunteers with direct patient contact and all volunteers at Coastal Hospice at the Lake, flu shots are required. We ask that you send the completed form to Volunteer Services as soon as possible. Our target date was no later than Nov. 1. A volunteer who is required to get a flu shot and declines must still complete the form and will be required to wear a mask while in patient areas during the flu season.

Thanks for helping us stay compliant.

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**Volunteer Services calendar of events**

- **Dec. 13 thru 16** — Santa Run
- **Dec. 21** — Volunteer Services open house  
  11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Dec. 26** — Closed
- **Jan. 28** — Introduction to Coastal Hospice  
  10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Philmore Commons, suite 202
- **Feb. 18** — Bereavement volunteer training  
  10 a.m. to 3 p.m. location TBD
SPIRITUAL MATURITY: How Achieving This Core Aspect of Personal Development Is Essential to Self-Care

By Rev. Melissa Stewart, LCSW-R

This conversation revolves around the ultimate question for all of us—health care professionals and patients alike: What is it that we need to learn and understand before we die?

This question carries others along with it: What does it mean to become spiritually mature? Why do some people make strides while others do not? Under what circumstances do we evolve spiritually—will this be the inevitable result of living or does something need to happen to us in order to become mature, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually?

And, most of all, why is reaching spiritual maturity important in terms of our well-being?

Many of us think of personal happiness as the true measure of a life lived well. However, it has been suggested that what is most important for our health is that our lives are meaningful, and not necessarily happy. Whereas “being happy is about feeling good, meaning is derived from contributing to others in a bigger way.”

To be of service in the world is, by definition, meaningful work, but it may leave us feeling other than happy. Personal qualities of spiritual maturity may lead to experiences of well-being that are more reliable measures of spiritual health than happiness.

For those of us in the health care field, we may find ourselves simultaneously coping not only with our own private challenges, but also carrying the burden of others’ struggles and sadness as we pursue the goal of living a meaningful life.

This can be overwhelming and depleting; and it requires that we take every opportunity to engage in self-nurturance, in order to keep ourselves physically and emotionally strong and spiritually fit so that we can continue to help others without causing harm to ourselves.

A core component of healthy personal growth and developing a sustained capacity for our work is achieving spiritual maturity.

Those approaching elderhood and adults with terminal illness at any age seem to have an opportunity to accelerate the spiritual maturation process. It has been suggested that “the developmental task of advanced age can be viewed as a spiritual one. The core struggle during this late stage of life is between personal integrity and despair. Coping with a life-limiting illness can be compared to the normal aging process. Advanced illness may serve as a catalyst for spiritual growth, as the person’s life and time left to achieve development is truncated by the disease process. Patients with a life-threatening illness and the elderly will benefit from engaging consciously in the aging/dying process and by embracing the occasion for learning and spiritual development.”

But it behooves all of us—elders, the terminally ill, and even the young and healthy—to strive toward spiritual maturity, no matter what our current circumstances. And for all, the key to the process of spiritual development is the acceptance of mortality.

When we recognize our physical impermanence, we have the potential to live fuller, more courageous lives. The conscious awareness of our own mortality will enable us to grapple with areas in our life that are troubling, even terrifying, and often exhausting. The wisdom that arises out of the deep working through of these experiences may serve as a protective factor against compassion fatigue.

It has been suggested that “accepting personal mortality... is,
in fact, the highest or most perfect way of living, far superior to living a life of constant and unconscious denial of mortality ... The spiritually and psychologically mature person must be prepared to shoulder a considerable load of anxiety as the layers of repression against mortality anxiety are peeled away."

Awareness of our mortality triggers intense death anxiety; however, the good news is that when we experience such anxiety, we are "primed to make significant changes. (We) are prompted to grapple with (our) fundamental human responsibility to construct an authentic life of engagement, connectivity, meaning, and self-fulfillment."  

Unfortunately, we live in a culture in which most people do not think or speak about illness, aging and death unless they must. Because of this, most of us feel utterly unprepared for these very natural experiences. It has been said that "without envisioning old age" or terminal illness during younger years, "as the culminating stage of spiritual development, we short-circuit this process and put brakes on the evolutionary imperative for growth."  

Spiritual maturity allows us to achieve completion by enhancing our ability to engage with the ending of one's life with equanimity and grace as well as the grief that accompanies life's end. If one possesses spiritual maturity in the face of death, as potentially brought to conscious awareness when the body is threatened by severe illness or old age, it will enable each of us to review our accomplishments and failures, to reconsider, reconnect and revise plans where needed, to forgive and be forgiven, to say goodbye to this life and the people and things we have loved, and perhaps to embrace whatever, if anything, might come next.  

Although undeniably useful, this process is by no means easy, and we must be reminded to be gentle with ourselves as we face our biggest fear. "Achieving a state of emotional balance between that which causes us terror and that which enlivens and inspires us to live fully requires a continuous and intentional negotiation. Periods of 'denial' allow for a momentary reprieve, or neutral space, in which to regain psycho-spiritual equilibrium."  

So, how does a spiritually mature person get there? I have identified two broad-strokes pathways for spiritual growth. One is the path of "deepening into" a prescribed tradition, such as when one works with a particular religious law or practice and observes how the experience changes and evolves as the person ages and brings it to various life circumstances. The other path is giving oneself permission to explore and "try on" various practices and beliefs from one or more traditions, listening for a personal resonance or sense of alignment with them.  

These pathways provide some context in which a medical crisis or "crisis of the body" occurs. In other words, we may use (or not) our spiritual framework to support how we might come to understand and approach the experience of a changing (aging, injured or ill) body. An individual's prior experience with religious or spiritual practice will likely affect how he or she manages the event/process.  

For example, a person who is deeply engaged in intentional spiritual practice may immediately draw upon comforting belief systems or rituals, or may quickly place the experience into the category of "Things God/The Universe Places Before Me" to learn from or perhaps to burn off some bad karma. From a humanistic perspective, in the absence of a belief in a Divine figure or process, one may simply trust that it is a person's responsibility to find the good in every circumstance in an effort to become a better person.  

Confronting death anxiety, as much as with any other troubling emotion, with awareness, instead of fleeing from it, and viewing it as a fundamental part of one's spiritual practice or discipline will naturally allow this core existential fear to be entertained as an ally.  

Simply living a long time does not necessarily guarantee that a person will become mature emotionally or spiritually, although the likelihood of being confronted by life-altering challenges that would inspire such growth increases over time. For those older people who tend to become more inflexible as they age, this rigidity can conflict with spiritual maturity.  

Maturity has been defined as ripeness, which relies only on time. It has also been defined as full development, which relies on intention, brought to
doorway to spiritual practice, one that
transcends any particular religion or
faith.” 19

The following reflects qualities
that I have found to be present in
those who appear to have achieved
spiritual maturity: acceptance,
courage, curiosity, discernment,
flexibility, forgiveness, generosity,
gratitude, honesty, hope, humility,
humor, joyfulness, kindness, patience,
transcendence and vulnerability.

Lastly, they possess a sense of
freedom. As Victor Frankl wrote in
his best-selling book “Man’s Search
for Meaning,” “Everything can be
taken from (someone) but one thing:
the last of the human freedoms—to
choose one’s attitude in any given
set of circumstances, to choose
one’s own way … It is this spiritual
freedom—which cannot be taken
away—that makes life meaningful
and purposeful.” 20

Rev. Melissa Stewart, LCSW-R, of
New York City, has been a clinical
social worker specializing in oncology
for nearly 25 years and currently
practices at Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center, New York City. She
was ordained as an interfaith minister
through One Spirit Learning Alliance
in 2010.

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A Personal Note

Through professional experiences for nearly 25 years with patients with cancer and their loved ones, I have been
profoundly changed by witnessing their process of coping with a life-threatening illness. During this time, I have
also been challenged by my own personal losses and tragedies.

And something else happened, too. I have gotten older. In some ways, as a middle-aged woman, I’ve retained
many of the personality traits of my younger years, but as my body has aged, my mind and my spiritual perspective
have also matured. My spirituality has been shaped significantly by being so close to illness and death. I do
come to recognize this as a gift, although it can be a heavy one to bear.

I approach this subject of spiritual maturity with a great deal of humility, knowing that I can only share my
observations and contemplations on this most essential human process that is experienced by all mortal beings. I
have certainly relied heavily on the wisdom of others, and I offer these ideas as a point for your own reflection.

It is a blessing to be aware of the concepts that I believe are necessary for spiritual maturity without the
immediate threat, as far as I know, of my own death. I hope that I have enough time to learn how to live with them.

—Stewart