



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

## Autumn is a perfect time for healing events

The old adage says, "Time flies when you're having fun." Often it seems vacation is just getting started when it's time to head home, or we are just beginning to reconnect with our grandchildren only to see their tail lights exiting the driveway.

However, when we are grieving, time seems to drag on. Recently, a grieving woman shared, "One day seems to last an eternity." Hours feel like days, and days feel like weeks. The truth is the grief process is difficult and takes longer than we expect.

Coastal Hospice strives to provide meaningful activities that will gradually move you toward healing. Here are two upcoming events to consider:

### Hope & Healing with Horses

Saturday, Oct. 7, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Kindred Spirit Farm

31191 Johnson Rd., Salisbury

This annual event is for children ages 6-14 who have experienced the death of a parent, grandparent, sibling, or other closely-connected loved one in the past two years. Children grieve in their own unique way, and this is an opportunity to help them.



The event is free, but advance registration is required by Sept. 29. Please honor registrations once they have been made. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Open to everyone — hospice and non-hospice families. Rain date is Oct. 21.

*Continued on Page 2*

## The weight of the glass



Not long ago, a psychology professor was teaching stress management principles to her students at a local university. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the typical "glass half empty or glass half full" question. Instead, the professor asked, "How heavy is this glass of water I'm holding?"

Students shouted out answers ranging from eight ounces to a couple pounds.

The professor replied, "From my perspective, the absolute weight of this glass doesn't matter. It all depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute or two, it's fairly light. If I hold it for an hour straight, its weight might make my arm ache a little. If I hold it for a day, my arm will likely cramp and feel completely numb and paralyzed, forcing me to drop the glass to the floor. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it feels to me."

As the class shook their heads in agreement, she continued, "Your stresses and worries in life are very much like this glass of water. Think about them for a while, and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer, and you begin to ache a little. Think about them all day long, and you will feel completely numb and paralyzed — incapable of doing anything else until you drop them."

On this journey through grief, many days may be filled with sorrow, stresses, and worries that seem insurmountable. It is important to remember that, at the point when you feel you just can't go on, let it go. No matter what happens during the day, as early in the evening as possible, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the night and into the next day.

If today you are still feeling the weight of yesterday's stress, it's a strong sign that it's time to put the glass down.

## MEET YOUR BEREAVEMENT COUNSELORS

### *Nicole Long new leader of Shore grief support groups*

We welcome Nicole Long as our newest bereavement counselor who will facilitate grief support groups in three Lower Shore counties.

Her interest in end-of-life issues started young when she attended funerals and heard stories of loss within her own family. During college, she sought insight into suffering, and studied the philosophy of suffering, psychology, and religions, but majored in English.

“When sorrow renders us speechless, when we cannot speak and only cry or moan, we know the importance of being able to express ourselves to another and to be heard,” Long said. “When we love someone who is in that state, our only desire is to reach in and relieve them in some way. I earned a masters degree in poetry, that art form that is the parallel language we humans need to try to get at, to communicate, what ‘everyday’ language cannot communicate. Poetry is philosophical, musical, visual, narrative. To me, a poem is a world, an opportunity for a moment of redemption.”

Long went on to teach stories and different kinds of writing at various levels, from 6th grade to the university, including at a medium security prison and a private school where

children were dropped off in limousines.

“Throughout all of my endeavors — professional and personal — I have accompanied people suffering the many trials that a human life involves,” she said. “Sometimes I was stumped, because I was not credentialed to ‘do the work.’ After some magnificent unfoldings, I ended up back at Boston University, studying to earn my Masters of Divinity. Now I have what I need.”

A few months ago, a friend alerted her to a bereavement counselor opening.

“I was not sure if it was going to be a fit, though I have been sure for over a decade that my calling in this life is to accompany people in a very special and profound way,” Long said. “Now that I am deep in the bereavement role at Coastal Hospice, I am having that moment of epiphany where trajectories that seemed to make no sense in my life have prepared me to be here.

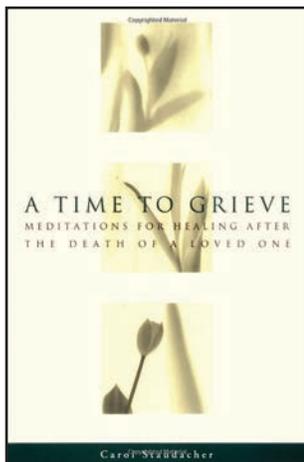
“What I have found at Coastal Hospice is people ‘down in the trenches’ with every sort of person. Death does not discriminate, and neither do we. I have encountered colleagues who have met me with the same



*Nicole Long, Bereavement Counselor*

compassion and kindness that they share with the families receiving hospice services.

“In bereavement, some need us more than others. When I am invited into someone’s experience, I listen with them, feel with them, and help sort through things, and people begin to emerge from pain and see a way forward for themselves,” Long concluded. “What an honor.”



### RECOMMENDED READING

*“A Time to Grieve: Meditations on Healing After the Death of a Loved One”*  
by Carol Staudacher

A collection of truly comforting, down-to-earth thoughts and meditations, including the authentic voices of survivors, for anyone grieving the loss of a loved one. We highly recommend her book to you as a further means of connection on your grief and recovery journey.

### *Help wanted: Bereavement Counselors*

Do you have a heart for hospice? We are seeking LCSW or licensed counselors to care for hospice patients and their families. Full time, part time, or per diem. State license required. Benefits available.

Please apply on our website:  
[www.CoastalHospice.org](http://www.CoastalHospice.org) > Join Our Team

### Upcoming healing events *continued from Page 1*

#### Memorial Service for Wicomico County

Friday, October 13, 2 p.m.  
Dove Pointe, 1225 Mt. Herman Rd., Salisbury

#### Memorial Service for Somerset County

Wednesday, November 8, 1 p.m.  
J. Millard Tawes Museum, 3 9th St., Crisfield



Our memorial services are special times for hospice families and friends to gather together to remember and honor their loved ones. Joining with others to honor those we’ve lost is an important part of the healing process.

The services are free, and we welcome anyone who would like to attend. For more information, please call Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732.

## Volunteering is a way through grief

Cindi Strawley had been a volunteer for Coastal Hospice for six years when she suddenly needed hospice care for her own family.

In September 2016, Cindi and her husband, Michael Strawley, Sr., popular owner of The Bearded Clam bar in Ocean City, were looking forward to a vacation in Wyoming. Two weeks before they were scheduled to leave, Michael, who had already survived lung cancer, was diagnosed with brain cancer and given a prognosis of six months to a year. The couple had an appointment at Johns Hopkins for a consultation upon their return from Wyoming.

Michael was feeling tired but okay, so the pair decided to go ahead with their trip. Michael became ill on the flight, and, when they landed, Cindi took him straight to the ER. Four days later, with his health continuing to decline, he was flown to a larger hospital in Salt Lake City where he spent a week with no improvement.

For Cindi, watching her husband fail so quickly was a shock.

"I was stunned that this was going on, and he was going to die," she said. "No one came out and told me that, because I don't think they knew what was really going on with him."

Getting back to the home he loved became Michael's final wish.

"He kept saying, 'I just want to go home,'" Cindi said.

A private jet staffed with two ICU nurses flew the Strawleys to Salisbury, and Michael was admitted to PRMC, where Cindi worked as a nurse. After a few days, the outcome seemed inevitable.

"I had confidence in them; I knew the doctors," Cindi said. "But he was just going downhill. Finally, I said, we already know he's going to die. Why are we putting him through all this? He'd already been in the hospital for two weeks and was worse instead of better. That's when we decided to make him comfortable and take him home."

Even though Cindi had an intimate knowledge of hospice care and was a nurse, making the call to Coastal Hospice was difficult.

"I'm younger than most spouses of hospice patients, 20 years younger than my husband. I was a nurse for 20 years, and a hospice

### *Interested in volunteering?*

There are many ways you can help: by visiting patients like Cindi, working in the office, helping out our bereavement team, working in our Thrift Shop in Berlin. Our next volunteer training is:

**Wednesday, September 20, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Call ahead, and we can give you all the details.

**Sally Rankin 410-742-8732**

volunteer. You would think, 'She's got this wrapped up.' No, you don't have it wrapped up," she said.

"I was in shock. The whole thing is overwhelming. Even with age on my side, medical experience on my side, and knowing hospice, it still was a trying time. It's difficult when it's your own person."

Four days later, Michael died at home, with his family and hospice by his side. Cindi grieved, taking a month off from volunteering.

"I was walking around in circles. What am I going to do now?"

Before Cindi left for Wyoming, she had been volunteering with two hospice patients, and had planned with them for her absence.

"I took a month off after Michael died, and then got back to my patients. I was ready. I needed something to do. I was home alone. I was glad I was volunteering," she said.



*Cindi Strawley is Santa's helper during Coastal Hospice's annual Santa Run, where volunteers visit every patient in hospice care.*

"I don't know how some people do it, older people taking care of their spouse. It made me realize how really hard it is. I should have been able to do it with two eyes closed and my hand behind my back. But I didn't know what to do, and I should have."

Cindi found comfort in family, friends, and her volunteer family.

"Everybody knew me at hospice, and knew what was going on. They were sympathetic, empathetic. I just tried to stay busy more than anything. I've been trying to keep up some of our traditions."

One year after Michael's death, Cindi is once again enjoying life. She works part time at a local garden center, is moving into a new home, and continues to volunteer for Coastal Hospice.

"I love volunteering," she said. "I like doing a variety of things, and volunteering gives me that variety. I have two patients right now who are so different. One is in the Compass program, not ready for hospice yet. We walk every week. We go to Walmart or to the doctor."

"I also volunteer with a 90-year-old who has full-time paid caregivers. Her daughter told me, 'These people are being paid; it's their job. You're doing it as a friend.' It makes a difference to the families."

Cindi is eager to pass on her knowledge of volunteering to others, and steps up to mentor new Coastal Hospice recruits.

"I'll take a new volunteer with me when I go visit a patient," Cindi said. "I'm also on a panel during volunteer orientation where we go over different scenarios. They're hearing our own experiences in real life rather than just reading it on a paper. You can see them relax with us. They feel like they have a friend in me."

"I hope to keep volunteering for many years to come."



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**Coastal Hospice Editor** Elaine J. Bean

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**TO OPT OUT:** You are likely receiving this publication following the death of a family member, friend or loved one who received care from Coastal Hospice. Grief support is a vital part of the hospice philosophy of care. This publication serves to share information you can use during this time and highlight upcoming events. If you do not wish to continue receiving this publication or have a change of address, please contact Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732, ext. 621 or [mdasher@coastalhospice.org](mailto:mdasher@coastalhospice.org).

## UPCOMING GRIEF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

### Dorchester County

**Support Group** – Dorchester Co. Library, Cambridge  
Tuesdays at 6 p.m.: Sept. 5 & 12; Oct. 10 & 24  
*Information ~ Elmer Davis 410-726-2583*

### Worcester County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.  
Sept. 21 - Crab N Crush, 525 S. Main St., Berlin  
Oct. 19 - Harborside Bar & Grill,  
12841 Harbor Road, West Ocean City  
*RSVP ~ Diana Pikulsky 410-641-6566*

**Support Group** – Ocean Pines Library  
Every Thursday at 11 am.  
*Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142*

### Somerset County

**Support Group** – Somerset Co. Library, Crisfield  
Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 11 a.m.  
*Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142*

**Memorial Service** – J. Millard Tawes Museum  
Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m.  
*RSVP ~ Melissa Dasher 443-944-5846*

These groups provide a time of respite and a safe place to express feelings in the grieving process. Support groups are free to any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, even if they were not a patient of Coastal Hospice. Lunch socials are Dutch treat. For information, call 410-742-8732.

### Wicomico County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.  
Sept. 13 - Adam's Taphouse, 219 N. Fruitland Blvd., Fruitland  
Sept. 27 - Denny's, 100 East Cedar Lane, Fruitland  
Oct. 11 - Red Lobster, The Center at Salisbury  
Oct. 25 - Outback, 8245 Dickerson Lane, Salisbury  
*RSVP ~ Lynette Chase 410-901-2292*

**Support Group** – MAC Center, 909 Progress Circle., Salisbury  
Every Friday at 1 p.m.  
*Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142*

**Memorial Service** – Dove Pointe, Mt. Herman Rd., Salisbury  
Friday, Oct. 13 at 2 p.m.  
*RSVP ~ Melissa Dasher 443-944-5846*

**Hope & Healing with Horses** – Kindred Spirit Farm,  
31191 Johnson Rd., Salisbury  
Saturday, Oct. 7 at 9:30 a.m.  
*Registration required ~ Melissa Dasher 443-944-5846*

**NOTE:** All lunch socials are "Dutch treat."