



## Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County

### *February, 2021 Volunteer Newsletter*



**Happy Valentine's Day to all our volunteers and friends!  
In these challenging times, you show the true meaning of love  
by the support and care you provide for others.**

#### Mark Your Calendars for these Upcoming HVHC Events:

- ❖ **Hospice Myths Debunked - Hospice Offers More Than You Think, Adult Ed Program**  
*Thurs. February 4, 2021 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. See below.*
- ❖ **Supper & Cinema: Thursday, Feb. 11, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.** Viewing the movie *Clouds*, offered online.  
For more details see page 2.
- ❖ **President's Day, Feb 15, HVHC office is closed.**

#### **Hospice Myths Debunked- Hospice Offers More Than You Think**

***Thurs. February 4, 2021 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. via Zoom***

*(Make-up date in case of power outage is Thurs., Feb. 25, 10 - 11:30 a.m.)*



Join HVHC Executive Director Jody Wolford Tucker, Program Director Lori Johnson, and HVHC Board member Helen Meyer to learn more about what Hospice can offer:

- Uncover common myths about hospice care and learn about hospice services which extend beyond what many people realize.
- Volunteer hospice service will be explained with the goal of serving patients earlier in their journeys.
- Information about other hospice services such as assistance with Advance Care Directives and bereavement support for families will be provided.

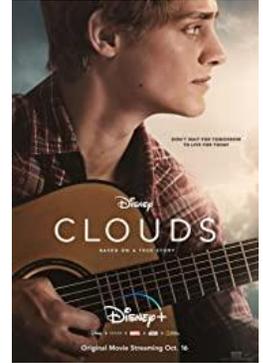
To register for this program contact either Ellsworth Adult Ed or MDI Adult Ed at:

[Ellsworth Adult Education registration link](#), (207) 664-7110 or [adulthoodinfo@ellsworthschools.org](mailto:adulthoodinfo@ellsworthschools.org)

[MDI Adult Education registration link](#), (207) 288-4703 or [mdiae@mdirss.org](mailto:mdiae@mdirss.org)

**Supper & Cinema, Thurs, Feb. 11, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Offered via zoom.**

Join us for *Clouds*, a true story about a teenager, Zach, who was originally diagnosed with bone cancer when he was 14. As this movie begins four years later, he is 17 and has completed 20 rounds of chemotherapy. As his classmates are working on their college application essays and looking forward to their futures, Zach hears from his doctors that his cancer is no longer treatable. "Clouds" is the story of his last months, his first love, his best friend, his hit song, and the impact of his music and his diagnosis on those around him. ([Adapted from a review on Roger Ebert.com](#)) To register and receive a zoom link, email [info@hospiceofhancock.org](mailto:info@hospiceofhancock.org).



**And looking ahead....**

**Mark your calendars for our upcoming Spring Community Education Series, offered every Monday in March, 12 - 1:30 p.m.**



March 1: *Family Dynamics and What We are Seeing in Relation to Covid*. Presented by Amy Wescott, LCSW, Northern Light Home Care and Hospice.

March 8: *Coping with Covid; Supporting Hospice Patients and Families during a Pandemic*. Presented by Greg Marley, LCSW, Clinical Director, NAMI Maine.

March 15: *Restoration and Renewal: Understanding Spring Faith Traditions*, featuring a panel of presenters from different faith backgrounds.

March 22: *Fun and Games on Zoom: Learn how to play interactive games online and have some fun! With Emilie Disney, HVHC Office Manager\**

March 29: Presentation by SAGE Maine, Topic to be announced\*

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88509663695>

\*These two workshops dates are tentative, stay tuned for more information...

**HVHC Book Club anyone?**

Are you interested in reading and discussing books with other volunteers? A few books that have been suggested are *Advice for Future Corpses (and those who love them): A practical perspective on death and dying* by Sallie Tisdale and *Dear Life*, a book about the beauty of end-of-life experiences by palliative care physician Rachel Clarke. Maybe you have some ideas for books as well? Let us know if you have interest by calling the office or emailing [info@hospiceofhancock.org](mailto:info@hospiceofhancock.org).



If you missed this year's HFA Conference, *Intimacy and Sexuality During Illness and Loss*, and would like to view the youtube recording with our local panel, email [info@hospiceofhancock.org](mailto:info@hospiceofhancock.org) and we can provide you with the link. We thank James VanKirk, MD, FACP, Medical Director at Northern Light Palliative Care and Professor Lenard W. Kaye, D.S.W., Ph.D., Director, UMaine Center on Aging for their time and sharing their expertise with us.

### From our community partners...



#### Free Heart-Based Meditation Series Offered on Zoom

Beth C. Wright Cancer Resource Center is offering Heart-Based Meditation led by Martina Dittmar, an Ayurvedic Practitioner and Spiritual Mentor. The series will be held on each Thursday of the month, beginning on Feb. 4 from 10:00 - 11:30, followed by classes Feb. 11, 18, 25 from 10:00 - 11:00 am. Participants will learn the meditation technique of Heart-Based meditation and explore the fundamental aspects of inner development, bringing healing, happiness, creativity and peace. For more information visit [www.bethwrightcancercenter.org](http://www.bethwrightcancercenter.org). To register, call the Beth C. Wright Cancer

Resource Center at 664-0339 or email: [info@bethwrightcancercenter.org](mailto:info@bethwrightcancercenter.org).

#### Common Good Soup Kitchen Home Delivery

Run entirely by donations, grants, and volunteer labor, the Common Ground Soup Kitchen café also runs a meal distribution program on MDI, delivering fresh soup and other pantry staples to senior residences and others who cannot make it to the café or are dealing with food insecurity. Deliveries are Fridays between 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. For more information about home delivery call 207-244-3007 or visit <https://commongoodsoupkitchen.org/>

#### Start the New Year with Tai Chi for Health

Healthy Acadia will be kicking off an eight-week online course on *Tai Chi for Health* to improve wellbeing, boost immunity, and strengthen mind and body. Classes start the third week in January and are offered free of charge, donations are suggested. Pre-registration is required for all classes. [Click here](#) to register for any or all of these Tai Chi for Health courses. For more information or to register by phone, contact Nina Zeldin at (207) 479-1206. Learn more at [www.HealthyAcadia.org](http://www.HealthyAcadia.org).

#### The Inner Allies of Resilience, Understanding our Body, Brain, Heart and Breath Thursdays, January 28th- March 4 at 7:30-8:30 pm.

Modern psychology regularly identifies many of the external skills and characteristics of resilience- such as finding purpose, building connection, regulating emotions, problem solving, and good sleep. But sometimes we may not know where to begin. Join Paul Weiss of the Whole Health Center for a 6 week series that focuses on understanding and using the resources that are most intimate to what we are: turning to our bodies, brains, hearts, and breath for present-moment wellness.

This program is offered free of charge, however donations are welcome. For more information visit [www.thewholehealthcenter.org](http://www.thewholehealthcenter.org) or call 288-4128. Please join the meetings with this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/2495523308?pwd=MlpLS3daRGFyejcvUmRQT3liVGdmQT09>

*Participants are welcome to join for the full 6-week program or attend any of the following sessions, no registration is necessary.*

1. January 28: Understanding our autonomic nervous systems and the stress response.

2. February 4: The great harmonizer –making our home in the breath.
3. February 11: Demystifying the brain, and building the brain we want.
4. February 18: The heart sets the tone, and we tune the heart.
5. February 25: Authentic communication and the reciprocity field
6. March 4: The body and the energy of life.

## **Death doulas help the dying meet their end with affirmation**

*Adapted from an article by Rene A. Guzman, San Antonio Express-News, January 10, 2021*

Andrea Aycock can only sometimes look at the photos of her hands clasped with her mother’s just before she died in May. But she’ll always cherish the helping hand she got from Anna Adams, an end-of-life doula in San Antonio who preserved that personal moment and so many more for Aycock in her mother’s dying days. “Anna came and took care of her,” said Aycock, a call center operator in San Antonio. “(She) just mainly comforted me.”

Just as birth doulas help expectant parents bring new life into the world, end-of-life doulas help the dying cope with their next journey. They help the dying and their survivors face death with empowerment and affirmation instead of fear and anxiety. Also known as death doulas, these trained professionals provide the terminally ill and their families physical and emotional support before, during and after death, the San Antonio Express-News reported. These are nonmedical services that often include relaxation exercises, funeral planning, educating the family on their loved one’s condition and just simple companionship.

Adams sees death awareness becoming more commonplace in the United States in the way that Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations have grown more mainstream and that there are more calls for services of end-of-life doulas. “Cultures like the Mexican culture that have these beautiful traditions of staying in connection with that (dying) process are so admirable and so beautiful. Doulas want to make sure that is available to all people,” said Shelby Kirillin, an end-of-life doula in Richmond, Va., and program development manager for the International End of Life Doula Association (INELDA) in Jersey City, N.J.

Kirillin sees the rising awareness of death doulas as part of what she calls a “death positive movement,” where more people are getting back to supporting their dying loved ones at home and engaging with their death more up close and personal, much as their ancestors did. “In the last 100-plus years in our Western culture, that has been taken away from us,” Kirillin said. “How to be with someone who was dying, how to touch them. That was something that we knew how to do.”

INELDA is one of just a handful of death doula organizations in the nation and was launched just five years ago. Co-founder Henry Fersko-Weiss created the first end-of-life doula program in the United States at a New York City hospice in 2003. Kirillin estimates INELDA has around 40 certified death doulas across the country, yet has trained around 3,000 individuals in death doula care. Many just sign up to learn more about facing death and don’t pursue death doula work, she said, while others branch off to do their own training.

Most death doula services come in three phases. The first is planning and preparation, which involves getting a terminal patient's affairs in order and asking some tough questions that call for honest answers. Where does that person want to die? Who do they want present for those final moments? What do they absolutely need to say or do before they're gone? Kirillin said that first phase often addresses the dying individual's regrets and unfinished business, as well as any advance directives, wills, etc. Often referred to as "legacy work," such planning makes it easier for family to understand and respect the dying person's wishes.

Fran Morgan is in that early stage with her dying mother Rosalee, who receives hospice care at the private residence of a family friend. "With Anna in the picture, she will be advocating for all of the things that need to happen," said Morgan, a retired telecommunications company manager in San Antonio. "It will release me from those responsibilities, and I can just be with my mom and cherish those final moments."

That second phase is called the vigil, usually the last four or five days of the dying person's life where end-of-life doulas and family members spend more time at their bedside. "I call them my angel vigils," Adams said. During her doula vigils, Adams, 38, often creates a soothing space for the dying with soft music and dim lighting. Sometimes she'll add a favorite scent with aromatherapy. Most times, she just gently massages her client's arms and holds their hands. And in those final moments as they take their last breaths, Adams comforts them with what they most want to hear, be it Bible verses, soothing music or just someone to say it's going to be OK.

The final phase of a death doula's work addresses survivors' grief. Kirillin said that involves circling back with the family a few weeks after their loved one's death to check on their emotional well-being. Kirillin stressed that end-of-life doulas do console families, but are not licensed grief counselors and will refer families to such resources if necessary.

When it came to caring for Aycock's mother, Adams mostly helped with her bedside care and keeping her visiting nurses on task. Adams also explained to Aycock any of her mother's diagnoses she didn't understand. Then there was that time Adams took those hand photos of Aycock and her mother. Difficult as it is for Aycock to look at those photos, much less share them, she still holds them close. She holds Adams's work even closer. "It is the best help that you can get," Aycock said. "They provide comfort not only for your loved one that is going through the transition, but for you."

Morgan expects to experience more of that care from Adams. "I'm looking forward to the relationship that we're going to have," said Morgan, who started working with Adams around three weeks ago. "For now my initial experience (and) impression is she certainly has the heart for what she's doing."

Adams's first experience comforting the dying came when she was 16. Fresh from certification as a nursing aid, Adams tended to a best friend's cousin for several months at her home with bathing and conversation. That care continued when that cousin transferred to hospice care and well up to her death. "So we just had a bonding moment. I gave her that sacred zone," Adams said. "That kind of piqued my interest."

Adams went on to pursue a career in hospice, then for the last four years worked as an EMS manager and dispatcher for a private company. But something pushed her back into working with the dying. “I told my family, ‘God wants me to do this. God is keeping me in line with this,’ ” Adams said. At the start of this year, Adams got her end-of-life doula certification. Then over the summer, she partnered with fellow certified doula Sonja Koenig to launch TX Doula Movement, an online training and certification course for death doulas, senior care doulas and doula consultants.

Adams knows of just a handful of death doulas in San Antonio right now, but she expects that number to double later this year when around five of her TX Doula Movement students complete their certification. Adams plans to launch her own doula training service next year. Adams said the coronavirus has not deterred her from her work, save for having to incorporate more video consultations with families and masks and frequent hand-washings during visits. She has yet to provide end-of-life doula services to someone with COVID-19, but one of the hospice companies she works with takes in COVID-19 patients. “I don’t have a problem working with COVID patients,” Adams said.

Adams said most hospitals still don’t work with death doulas, but hospice services are slowly warming up to them as adjuncts to their own care. “It is relatively new, but we’re seeing it more,” said Rachel Hammon, executive director of the Texas Association for Home Care & Hospice in Austin. Holistic Hospice Care is one of two hospice centers in San Antonio that works with Adams. Administrator Erica Sandoval said Adams has been a welcome bridge between families and clinical teams. “She can get on (everyone’s) level,” Sandoval said. “And she’s very calm and very patient. And she just wins their trust and they feel very comfortable with her.”

Like Adams, Sandoval, too, sees parallels between death doulas and Día de los Muertos, such as the memory books the doulas make for their clients and the Day of the Dead tribute altars families make for their lost loved ones. “I definitely think that there’s a good association to that because they are (both about) wanting you to cherish their memories and enjoy the last moments and everything that you can remember of the individual,” Sandoval said.

*HVHC Editorial note: There seem to be many similarities between this description of a Death Doula and the service of hospice volunteers. Give some thought to what you’ve read here, and maybe we can share our thoughts on an upcoming Volunteer Social.*