

An Unexpected Gift

HopeHealth's President & CEO, Diana Franchitto, shares her personal experience of hospice care following the death of her beloved mother, Mary Lou Ragusa, on January 6, 2020.

It was a Tuesday I'll never forget. I drove to the hospital to see my mother who was waiting for test results. My father and brother were there, and the news was bad. My mother had advanced pancreatic cancer.

The doctors said a high-risk operation might help a little, and my father pleaded with his wife of 62 years to consider it. But my mom was resolute. She grabbed my hand and said, "Diana, it's going to be okay. I want to go home." My mom knew she couldn't halt the disease, but she was determined to control how she spent her remaining time. Hospice was her choice, and that choice was a gift she gave to herself and her family.

As the head of one of the largest nonprofit hospice organizations, I work with an extraordinary group of professionals who support families in times of profound vulnerability. After my mom came home, two of my colleagues—Susan Nipoti, RN, and Mirella Loures, CNA—visited her every morning. Their warm presence along with a daily routine brought comfort to our family.

Susan managed my mother's medications and symptoms so she wouldn't be uncomfortable in any way. Mirella dressed my mom, styled her hair and put on her makeup. They made my mom feel like herself again.

The afternoons were for visits from loved ones. Some gatherings were light and joyful, filled with chatter and laughs. Others were teary. A few people couldn't bear to say goodbye in person but wrote beautiful letters that I read to my mom on their behalf.

My mom also used her time to settle unfinished business.

She thought about her jewelry, a modest but lovely collection of gifts from my father. "I want the people who wear these to think of me after I'm gone," she said. So we placed each piece in a Ziploc bag with a sticky note naming her chosen recipient.



One day my mom called for a fashion show. I tried on each dressy jacket in her closet and twirled like a model. "That one looks nice. Keep it," my mom said. "No, that one's not flattering at all!" It was wonderful to have a few moments of fun with her.

My mom was involved in every detail of her funeral planning, from the hymns to the readings. She left her thumbprint on



Mary Lou Ragusa and Diana Franchitto in 2017: "Hospice was her choice: A gift she gave to herself and her family."

everything. We never had to fret over what she would have wanted because she told us herself.

Ask yourself: What would bring peace to you or your loved one at the end of life? Your ideal experience might be different than my mom's. Many people prefer to die at home, pain-free and clear-headed. Some people have bucket lists to accomplish. Others might seek to mend rifts and heal hearts.

Whatever you choose, hospice caregivers can make it happen. Having watched them from my mother's bedside, I appreciate their skill, compassion and humanity more than ever.

Mom lived nearly a month on hospice, and every day was true living. She passed away on her terms, feeling loved and respected.

When people ask how I'm doing, I say I'm grateful to have spent every day with my mom in her last month of life. I held her hand as she passed from this world to the next, which is more than any daughter could wish for.

It will be a while before I can tell my mom's end-of-life story without a lump in my throat. But I'll keep on telling it because hospice offers something every human being deserves, the choice to die with peace and dignity.

Mary Lou's Legacy

Mary Lou Ragusa took the gift of a month with hospice care to plan for what would happen after she was gone. She told her family that she would like gifts in her memory to go to two organizations: the local senior center where she was a volunteer—and HopeHealth, so that other patients and families could experience the same care she had.

For information on making a gift to HopeHealth, visit our website at [HopeHealthCo.Org/Ways-to-Give](https://www.HopeHealthCo.Org/Ways-to-Give).

A Hospice Patient's Inspiring Last Words

John D. Martin was a lifelong educator. His blog, written during the course of his two-year illness, voiced his fears and his faith. Even in his final weeks at the HopeHealth Hultar Hospice Center, he wanted to share what he had learned as he faced his own death.



John and Sheila Martin at the Hultar Hospice Center

On the *This I Believe: New England* radio program, Sheila Brennan Martin, John's wife of 34 years, read John's writings, hoping they would inspire others facing a terminal diagnosis and would provide solace to others with a loved one in hospice care.

Here are some excerpts:

"As with every life milestone, death opens up opportunities to see life more clearly. When we embrace it, we can experience depths of love and gratitude that we could have never imagined. I am able to cherish my time with Sheila as my wife, not my caretaker. My hospice team cares for me completely. I believe it is really important to have dignity when you die."

"Please don't dishonor a dying person's suffering with platitudes. Just be with us, stand by us, help us be honest and pray with us for the peace we will need."

To hear more, visit the *This I Believe: New England* page on thepublicsradio.org.

Clinical Staff "Recharge and Reboot"

A grant from the Warren Alpert Foundation supports wellness and resiliency

A fundamental component of HopeHealth's mission is to recognize patients' needs and address them with expertise and compassion. Equally important is the recognition that care teams need support as well; that their jobs are physically, mentally and emotionally demanding.

This is why The Warren Alpert Foundation's recent \$10,000 grant was so meaningful. The grant was designated specifically to support clinical staff resiliency, wellness and work-life balance. "HopeHealth clinicians give 100% of themselves to their work," noted Alpert Foundation Trustee and HopeHealth Board member, Fred Schiffman, MD. "But just as patients have to have internal reserves to draw upon, our care team must be similarly resilient to minister effectively to them and their families at the bedside."

With the support of this generous grant, HopeHealth sent four care team members to immerse themselves in the practice of mindfulness and positive psychology at a weekend retreat at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge, MA. Eighty HopeHealth Leaders also participated in an afternoon wellness session in Providence, led by Kripalu staff, and where the participants shared what they had learned during their retreat. "My role on our interdisciplinary team is filled with holding and supporting people's emotions and transitions," shared HopeHealth Chaplain Jeffrey Thomas, who attended the weekend at Kripalu. "I learned that resilience in the workplace has to do with the ability to bounce back and continue to grow in the face of day-to-day challenges. Calm can be something as simple as intentional breathing."



Felecia Carl, RN, Jeffrey Thomas, Chaplain, and Sarah Congleton, MS, NP, still glowing after their retreat at Kripalu. Susan Anzlovar, MSW, LICSW, also attended. Carl said the experience helped her to "recharge and reboot."

Tripling Space for Staff Education

A new Clinical Education Lab will offer professional development training for all of HopeHealth

The Edward J. and Virginia M. Routhier Foundation has supported a variety of projects at HopeHealth over the years: from equipment for the HopeHealth Hultar Hospice Center, to palliative care, to telehealth programming for home care patients. This year the Foundation supported a grant that will benefit every clinical staff member across HopeHealth. The Routhier Foundation's generous \$25,000 grant for the construction of a new Clinical Education Lab at

HopeHealth Visiting Nurse's offices in Lincoln, RI, will allow us to nearly triple our space dedicated to clinical education for teams from HopeHealth Visiting Nurse, HopeHealth Palliative Care, and HopeHealth Hospice.

The new Clinical Education Lab is a purpose-built venue for the hands-on training required for all new HopeHealth staff. Through both simulation and classroom learning, clinical educators train new employees in best practices and offer professional development and skills refreshers for more than 400 clinical staff, as well as clinical training for nursing students from Salve Regina University, Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island.

HopeHealth is grateful for the Edward J. and Virginia M. Routhier Foundation's continued partnership in our nationally recognized training models and the continuing education of our clinical teams.



Lisa Wasson, RN, CHPN, HopeHealth Clinical Educator

Best in Class

HopeHealth's Volunteer Department is recognized for Best Practices by the Rhode Island Foundation

In November, the Rhode Island Foundation presented HopeHealth with a prestigious 2019 Best Practice Award for Volunteer Engagement. Along with a grant of \$5,000, this honor recognized HopeHealth for best practices in recruiting, training, and managing the organization's 300+ hospice volunteers. "These awardees emerged from a highly competitive process and an impressive group of nominees," said Jill Pfitzenmayer, Vice President of Capacity Building at the Foundation.

A key component of the success of HopeHealth volunteers is the over 16 hours of training and ongoing support from our staff. "This work is often emotionally challenging work for our volunteers. We want them to be prepared, as well as paired with patients and families where their skills can provide exactly the support they need," remarked Nicky D'Abrosca, Volunteer Manager.



Pictured, left to right: Deanna Upchurch, Director of Clinical Outreach Services; Christa Merlino, Hospice Volunteer; Kim Keck, Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI, Marsha Ireland, Volunteer Coordinator; Nicky D'Abrosca, Volunteer Manager; Jen Martin, Special Events Manager; Jen Grace, Volunteer Coordinator; Suzanne Fortier, Vice President of Philanthropy; Neil Steinberg, Rhode Island Foundation.

An Evening of Hope & Gratitude Rescheduled

In response to the growing concern around the COVID-19 virus, HopeHealth's annual gala, An Evening of Hope & Gratitude, will be **rescheduled from May 30 to Saturday, September 12, 2020** at the Providence Marriott.



HopeHealth has an important role in caring for a most vulnerable population. Our goal is to ensure that our community is as safe as possible and can continue to depend on HopeHealth when they need us most. We will continue to update our constituents about plans for the event in the coming months.

A Hulitar Hospice Center Wedding



Patient Cathy Costanzo was readied for her son's wedding by hospice aides Ligia Adonseca, CNA and Elbia Soto, CNA.

Cathy Costanzo was suffering from metastatic breast cancer and that meant that, in order for her to attend her son Zach's wedding to his longtime sweetheart, Katey, plans had to move quickly. Cathy, a patient in the Hulitar Hospice Center, didn't have much time – and she didn't want Zach to look back on his wedding day wishing she had been there.

The staff of the Hulitar Hospice Center came up with a plan to commandeer a conference room – close to medical care if Cathy needed it – that would hold 24 friends and family for the wedding. "We have profound moments here, and this was a really happy one. It's just another facet of our team; they made it all happen," recalled Virginia Magnan, RN, manager of the Hulitar Hospice Center.

The family decorated the conference room with floral centerpieces, an altar and lace tablecloths. A friend flew to Rhode Island with the layers of a homemade wedding cake packed in her carry-on luggage. Two hospice aides, Ligia Adonseca, CNA, and Elbia Soto, CNA, gently moved Cathy from her hospital bed to a reclining chair, dressed her in festive clothes and did her makeup. She was radiant.

Cathy died 10 days after the ceremony. Zach and Katey will always remember the day with gratitude.

Nourishing our Hospice Families

"When we were young, our mother started bringing comfort food to the local hospice center in Albany, NY," shared brothers Joe and John Martone. "We wanted to honor our mother's memory and carry on her tradition of providing nourishment to these amazing caregivers." For five years, the Martone brothers, who manage Bayberry Beer Hall and Xaco Taco in Providence, have organized a soup to nuts "Tuesday Night Dinner" each month at the HopeHealth Hular Hospice Center, often tapping into their friends in the restaurant business.

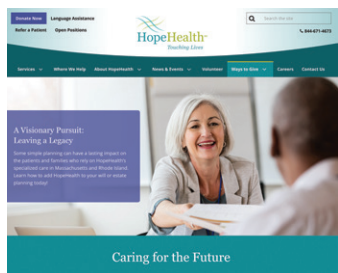
In December, the Martone brothers invited their friends to see their good works in action. They provided a gourmet three-course holiday meal for Hular Hospice Center patients, families, volunteers, and staff—beautifully prepared and donated by chefs from three local restaurants.



Hular Hospice Center staff enjoy a holiday dinner provided by John and Joe Martone and friends.

Executive Chef Dave Johnson of Bayberry Beer Hall, Xaco Taco Executive Chef Andy Pyle, and Bravo Bistro Pastry Chef Teresa Nelson joined Joe and John in creating the menu, preparing the food—which featured coq au vin, bacon-wrapped pork loin, and homemade pastries—then serving dozens of grateful staff and families in the Hular Hospice Center.

Legacy Giving Website



At HopeHealth, we understand that planning for the future of your loved ones and the causes you feel passionately about can feel overwhelming. There are so many ways to give, confusing tax benefits, and changing laws and regulations that make it difficult to choose what feels right for your family.

To help you explore these important financial decisions, we have added a new feature to our website. At Legacy.HopeHealthCo.org, you will find a wide range of tools to help you determine the options that are right for your financial goals and that you can then share with your family, financial planner or estate attorney.

For more information on how you can support HopeHealth patients and families with a legacy gift, we invite you to visit Legacy.HopeHealthCo.org, or call Kathleen Bentley at (401) 415-4708.

Get a free comprehensive estate-planning guide
at Legacy.HopeHealthCo.Org/Guide.



With Gratitude Credits: Contributing Writer: Katie Lempert Sklar;
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HopeHealth Philanthropy Department

Please contact us to share your HopeHealth story, to learn more about how your donation impacted our work, or to make a gift in support of our compassionate care.

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