

Hospice of the Valley

Celebrating 30 Years of Service

Living with Dignity
Redefining Hope

The mission of Hospice of the Valley is to affirm dignity, hope, and comfort for those facing a life-limiting illness by providing compassionate palliative, hospice, and grief care. Our professional medical staff and volunteers serve the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of individuals and their families. We enhance our community through education, research, advocacy, and volunteerism.

A Better Way—The First Ten Years

There is always a better way!

—Thomas A. Edison

Hampered by poor vision and needing glasses to read, Benjamin Franklin tired of constantly switching his glasses to see near and far. Taking two pairs of spectacles, he cut the lenses in half and put half of each lens in a single frame. Today, we call his invention bifocals.

Like all great inventions and medical breakthroughs that were created and developed on the premise that there had to be a better way, Hospice of the Valley (HOV) was created on the belief that there had to be a better way to serve patients and their families at the end of life.

In April of 1975, HOV founder Jennie Magid stood by her husband, George Joseph Magid, MD, as he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Enduring multiple surgeries, he finally succumbed to the disease leaving Jennie and their three small children, without the family having an opportunity to say goodbye the morning he died.

"My husband was a physician and practiced here in Santa Clara County. He died at Stanford Hospital where we had a lot of care. We were lucky to have a life raft of family and friends for support. But, while I waited in the waiting rooms, I saw families all around me who were isolated and alone waiting to hear the news about their family member. I felt at that time that we needed to find an organization that could help patients and their families through this difficult period in their life. Being a young woman at the time, I thought instead of becoming a bitter person, I needed to do something. Hospice was the answer to that need.



Founding members at Hospice of the Valley's 20-Year Celebration pictured left to right: (Back Row) Rev. Roy Strasburger, Anne Loudon, Jennie Magid (Founder), Dr. Robert Reid, Grace Parker; (Front Row) Molly Ording, Margaret B. Slemmons, Helen Hansen (director, Catholic Charities, San Jose), and Gay Crawford.

Hospice was originally a medieval way station for pilgrims to be replenished, cared for and refreshed on their arduous journeys to the Holy Land. The same concept can be applied today: hospice is comprehensive care for people going through life's last station. (Excerpt from: The Hospice Movement: A Better Way of Caring for the Dying, by Sandol Stoddard)

Meaning a place of refuge for the sick and/or weary traveler, the concept of hospice was carried from the Middle East to medieval Europe by Crusader Knights Hospitallers. The name hospice also migrated northward to Ireland. During the 19th century, The Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent DePaul established a hospice in Dublin. The Daughters of Charity hospice of the 1800s, however, resembled a hospital more than the type of hospice physician Dame Cicely Saunders later established in London.

In 1948, Dame Saunders, then a nurse, cared for and befriended a man with terminal cancer. While caring for him, she had the revelation that better pain control and overall care for terminally ill patients was needed. Coining the term "total

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pain", she believed that dying people have physical, spiritual, psychological, and social pain that must be treated. In 1967, she opened St. Christopher's Hospice in London—the world's first modern hospice—which sparked the modern hospice movement world-wide.

Inspired by Dame Cicely Saunders who presented several lectures at Yale while Florence Wald was dean of nursing, Wald eventually resigned as dean and, with a small group in New Haven, opened Connecticut Hospice—the first hospice program in the United States—in 1974. Other hospices opened shortly thereafter at Yale Medical Center and Hospice of Marin, now known as Hospice by the Bay.

"After my husband died, I visited Hospice of Marin and it was then that I decided to gather a group of friends who I felt were talented and skilled, who had a lot of commitment and dedication, and I knew would see things through," said Jennie. She engaged her friends, Anne Loudon, Margaret Slemmons, Grace Collins, Grace Parker, and her neighbor, Dr. Robert H. Reid, in discussions around the idea of starting a hospice. In an effort to create structure and support, she called Gay Crawford, who had been a volunteer for the American Cancer Society.

"As a breast cancer survivor, I ended up starting a program called Reach to Recovery in all the hospitals in Santa Clara County," said Gay. "Jennie talked to me on the phone and said that she had an idea about hospice. I'd heard just enough about it to know that this was a tremendous need.

I had been visiting breast cancer patients—some of whom lost their battle. I had seen death in a way that I felt wasn't right. And, I knew there had to be something better out there."

So began Project Journey, Hospice of the Valley's first name. The group met in homes for several years and, joining the group, Rev. Roy Strasburger helped to put together a planning board to seek funding. Dr. Reid also suggested the name of Hospice of the Valley. And, as luck would have it, one day Helen Hanson, director of Catholic Social Services, knocked on Gay's door and offered the project operational insurance, an office, and a phone. Patient service began on February 29, 1980, with an all-volunteer team of physicians, nurses, respite workers, a social worker, and a chaplain. Original funding came from the Junior League of San Jose with an \$18,000 grant for a patient care coordinator and a public relations campaign.

"It seems to me a guiding hand always brings the right person to you at the right time. This journey has been so rewarding. Everyone involved was so supportive and gave of their time because they knew how important this was. And look what happened. It has really come to fruition. When you go through a period like I did, it's like you are in limbo and, when your compassionate, loving, and kind friends come through for you, it's like a gift. And, I wanted everyone else to have that too," said Jennie.

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