A Journey Into Grace and Gratitude

By Chelsea Byom

Lee Ann’s practice of mindfulness helped her achieve more than she ever felt would be possible.

The late afternoon sun cast a golden ray of light through the beveled glass front door, illuminating the magnificent display of 1,000 origami paper cranes hung delicately from the wall. “You see that, right there,” said Bill Laraway, “Just the way the light catches that one crane. If you read her book, you’d see...maybe there’s a reason the light is hitting it in such a way.”

Lee Ann Laraway and her twin brother William (Bill) were born in San Jose, California in 1958. At barely seven months old, Lee Ann was taken to the emergency room with an extremely high fever and seizures. In the first of many misdiagnoses, the doctor sent her home saying it was just an ear infection. It was not until the age of four that Lee Ann began to receive occupational and physical therapy for her weakness and slow development and was given her first wheelchair. She was also seen at Stanford Hospital in search of a diagnosis. “The final result was more of a description than a diagnosis: ‘a polio-type virus,’ and ‘flaccid quadriplegia due to polyneuropathy,’” said Lee Ann.

Encouraged by her grandmother to “do the best with what you have,” Lee Ann was enrolled in elementary school alongside her able-bodied peers at a time when being in a wheelchair normally meant segregation into an orthopedically handicapped school.

“I noticed, even at the age of 7 or 8, how my mind affected my physical body and my movement. If I was sitting in my wheelchair trying to reach the faucet to turn on the water...I knew as soon as the thought entered my head that I can’t reach it, there was no way that I would be able to reach that faucet. But if I sat back and took a deep breath, relaxed, and said I can reach that, and felt it first, I always got an energetic flow that would let me reach that faucet,” said Lee Ann.

Lee Ann’s practice of mindfulness helped her achieve more than she ever felt would be possible. Throughout her life she faced so many near-disasters and complicated health problems, that fear could have completely consumed her. To the contrary, Lee Ann believed that her struggles with illness brought her life deep spiritual meaning and purpose.

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You Can Help Hospice of the Valley Meet the Challenge!

Hospice of the Valley has received a $133,250 multi-year 2:1 Challenge Grant from the Sobrato Family Foundation, which will match new and increased donations made now through Dec. 31, 2013, doubling your gift!

If you’re a new donor to Hospice of the Valley, any amount you give will be doubled.

If you’ve made a donation in the past year, please consider increasing your support of our distinct core programs and services.

“Hospice of the Valley is grateful for the continuing support of the Sobrato Family Foundation,” said Sally Adelus, president and chief executive officer of Hospice of the Valley. “We hope you join us in supporting our mission to affirm dignity and hope for those facing serious illness by providing comfort through compassionate palliative, hospice, and grief care.”

To make a donation to Hospice of the Valley to help meet the Challenge Grant, please call 1.408.559.5600 or visit hospicevalley.org today.

Compassion in Action Conference Opens Minds and Inspires Hearts

Hospice of the Valley and the Santa Clara University (SCU) Department of Counseling Psychology’s 6th annual conference on palliative and end-of-life care entitled, Compassion in Action: Opening Minds, Inspiring Hearts, was a resounding success!

Hospice of the Valley is proud to partner with SCU, especially conference chairperson Dale Larson, PhD, professor of counseling psychology, to bring this truly exceptional conference to our community. Health care professionals from throughout California gathered on March 28, 2013 to learn best practices, gain inspiration, and exchange ideas.

One participant commented, “Coming to this life-giving conference is always the highlight of my year. Thank you for continuing to support this wonderful conference in our local community.”

Keynote speaker David Spiegel, MD, an internationally known authority on cancer survivorship, delivered an eye-opening presentation on the effects of stress and emotional support on cancer treatment. He is Wilson Professor and associate chair of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford, as well as director of the Stanford Center for Integrative Medicine. Bringing an international perspective on the changing face of hospice was David Prolll, chief executive officer of Help the Hospices, UK and co-chair of the World Palliative Care Alliance.

Neal Slatkin, MD, vice president of medical services/chief medical officer with Hospice of the Valley and Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley, and Steve Lai, MD, geriatrician and palliative medicine physician at Palo Alto Medical Foundation, joined the conference faculty for a special panel discussion on Palliative Care Today: Solutions for a World in Need. The panel discussed innovative concepts and programs in palliative care at the local and international level with a focus on issues of accessibility, integration, and misconceptions of palliative care.

Thank you to our generous sponsors:

Gold Level—California Health Care Foundation, Dignity Memorial;

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Copper Level—Alameda Family Funeral & Cremation, Asian Network Pacific Home Care & Hospice, Santa Clara Family Health Plan;

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Photo Credit: Jeremy Waldorph Photography

Sally Adelus, president and CEO, sheds light on the need for community-based palliative care in the Compassion in Action panel discussion.
Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley™ to Bring Extra Layer of Support to Seriously Ill

By Sally Adelus, President & Chief Executive Officer

Throughout 2012, Lisa Krieger, a national award-winning San Jose Mercury News reporter, shone a light on care for the seriously ill in her Cost of Dying series and stirred conversations among many of us about our end-of-life wishes.

The response to Krieger’s articles was so strong that Hospice of the Valley and the Bay Area News Group partnered to host a series of free forums for community members to learn more about the importance of advance health care directives and to help them make informed choices about their medical care. To date, over 350 community members have participated in these forums, and more dates will be scheduled. This is just one of the ways that Hospice of the Valley is listening and responding to the needs of our community.

In the fifth installment of the Cost of Dying series, Krieger introduced the concept of palliative care: a specialized and holistic type of care that is committed to relieving the pain, distress, and other symptoms that can accompany serious illness. Despite the obvious benefits, palliative care has not been widely available in our community.

I am thrilled to announce the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley, the first independent, community-based palliative care center of its kind in California for seriously ill patients and families. Opening in mid-2013, the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley will offer an extra layer of medical treatment for patients with advanced illness through the support of a dedicated team—including physicians, nurses, and social workers.

A division of Hospice of the Valley, the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley will bring expert medical care and pain and symptom management to patients still seeking curative and life-prolonging treatment.

With the opening of the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley, community members will, for the first time, have a place to turn where they can explore options and share information, while staying in control of their choices and enhancing quality of life to make the most of each day. To learn more, I encourage you to visit our website at pccsv.org or contact us at 1.408.277.7777 or info@pccsv.org.

To support the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley, visit hospicevalley.org to donate.

The specialized team at the Palliative Care Center Silicon Valley will address the many needs of patients and families impacted by serious illness:

- A dedicated team of palliative care physicians, nurses and other specialists work directly with a patient’s doctors to provide additional care and support.
- Expert and proactive pain and symptom management improves quality of life and daily function.
- Social workers and other team members provide counseling on adjusting to living with a serious illness.
- Individualized care focused on the goals of patients and family members.
- Emotional and practical support guides patients and caregivers through the journey.
- Assistance in navigating the healthcare system helps relieve the stress of coordinating care across multiple healthcare settings.
- Spiritual support and guidance helps patients cope with difficult feelings and emotions.
- Complementary therapies, such as massage and music therapy, bring added comfort and relief.
- Volunteers assist with practical needs and caregiver support.
In her book *Bringing Heaven to Earth: A Journey Into Grace and Gratitude*, Lee Ann wrote, “I was never interested in fantasizing about the life I could have had… I knew at some deeper level that this was the life I was supposed to have, possibly because its circumstances were too bizarre to be an accident.”

Lee Ann’s examples of life being “too bizarre to be an accident”—of having exactly the right tools, resources, and people in her life at exactly the right moment to help her achieve her goals—are many.

The nature of Lee Ann’s illness meant that over time, more of her energy was spent on simple acts of daily living. In August 2011 she turned to the Transitions program at Hospice of the Valley for help and support and began hospice care in the spring of 2012.

As Lee Ann’s health declined, the multiple circles of friends she had collected over the years wanted to give back to Lee Ann as much as she gave them. Lee Ann’s friend Taka decided to organize the group to make Lee Ann a surprise birthday gift of 1,001 origami paper cranes.

According to Japanese legend, one who folds 1,000 paper cranes will be granted a long life. The cranes have gained popularity from a non-fiction children’s book, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Taka described the story: “There was a girl who contracted leukemia after the bombing in Hiroshima. She started making the cranes in hopes that she would live.” Sadako would not complete 1,000 cranes before she died, but her family and friends would come together to help her accomplish her dream by folding the rest of the cranes.

“I tried to get as many people as possible to make the cranes, because I wanted the energy from all those different people who loved her to surround her,” said Taka. On Lee Ann’s 53rd birthday, a multi-colored display of 1,000 intricate paper cranes was installed on her living room wall. The last crane, larger than all the rest, was presented to Lee Ann as a birthday card. “Lee Ann was totally blown away,” said Taka.

The 1,000 paper cranes would become the symbol of hospice care to Lee Ann and her family. Just as family and friends pulled together to help Sadako accomplish her dream, “we all pulled together to allow my sister to be as independent as possible,” said Lee Ann’s brother, Bill.

“The cranes really represent the whole team aspect. Hospice of the Valley provided a team of people whom she so dearly trusted. There was the family team. The work team. The neighborhood team. The friends team. It truly takes a village to care for someone. And when you rally around a person, you allow them to relax and enjoy life to its fullest. That’s the greatest support you can give somebody,” said Bill.

Lee Ann died peacefully at home surrounded by the energy and essence of all those who loved and cared for her on November 30, 2012.

Individuals facing traumatic loss may live in disbelief for an extended period of time and may not be able to face the reality that someone they love is gone.

We have all been touched by loss in our lives. Most agree that the death of a loved one is a life-changing experience. Coping with traumatic loss, such as an unexpected or violent death, including suicide and homicide, is especially challenging. Sadly, we have been exposed to a number of recent deaths among teens in our local high schools and community.

Inevitably, we struggle to find answers and try to make sense of all this by asking, “Why did this happen?” Our assumptions about life are often shattered when we realize the unchangeable consequences of a traumatic loss. Hospice of the Valley is responding to this emerging need in our community by offering a unique suicide loss support group.

The grief counselors who lead these groups are trained to listen without judgment. Each person brings a unique perspective and no two losses are the same—for instance, some individuals facing traumatic loss may live in disbelief for an extended time and not be able to face the reality that someone they love is gone.

Over time, the significance of what has been lost including future dreams or goals, sets in, and this is when the real work begins. It is important to experience and acknowledge the themes that may emerge throughout the grief journey, such as anger, guilt, blame, shock, and relief. Sometimes it is also helpful to take a break from grief because its intensity can be too much to bear.

While it may be a struggle to manage the balance of living with the loss and attending to life changes, one of the primary goals of grief counseling is to integrate loss into daily life instead of finding a resolution or “end point.” I have found it especially helpful with traumatic loss to talk about the loved one’s life instead of how they died. The narrative or the story of the person who died emerges as a result.

Hospice of the Valley’s Community Grief & Counseling Center provides specialized programs to support those grieving the loss of a loved one by suicide. We are the only Bay Area hospice organization that provides this type of expert support. For more information, visit hospicevalley.org or contact us at 1.408.559.5600.

Brad Leary is director of social services and counseling at Hospice of the Valley.
When Carla Dziedziak wraps a colorful quilt around herself on chilly nights, it does more than keep her warm. It also reminds her of her late husband Paul, who passed away three years ago at age 52.

Carla crafted the quilt, which she calls “a labor of love,” shortly after Paul’s death — and rather than tuck it away for safekeeping, she’s put it to practical use ever since. The quilt serves as a throw blanket and, as numerous wispy hairs attest, a favorite nap spot for her yellow Labrador retriever. Its classic design and construction also convey timelessness: “It’s something of his I’ll always have,” she says.

One highlight of their 20-year relationship and 13-year marriage was Paul’s conversion of a spare bedroom into a craft room, perfect for Carla’s “relaxing and creative” hobbies of both knitting and quilting. Paul’s generosity also extended to her four children from her first marriage, whom Paul loved. The family was close-knit and active, making trips to the Sierra town of Arnold for sun and snow.

In the summer of 2009, though, the typically energetic Paul fell ill. In August he landed in the emergency room, but was released without a diagnosis. In October he was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with dermatomyositis, an autoimmune disorder, and pulmonary fibrosis, a disease that causes scarring of the lungs. He underwent treatment, and was able to return to work. However, he was readmitted to the hospital in early January and quickly deteriorated. Paul never left the hospital that time, and died on January 19, 2010.

Paul’s swift decline left Carla reeling. “When he went back in the hospital in January, I still thought he was treatable,” she says. After his death, she sought comfort in reading books about grief and writing in a journal she’d begun in the hospital. Wanting to “stay busy and not knowing what
else to do,” she also returned to her administrative support job just two weeks afterward. These efforts proved inadequate, though: “At some point I thought, I can’t do this by myself,” she says. “I tried to heal myself, but it wasn’t working.”

Recalling her sister-in-law’s recommendation to contact Hospice of the Valley during Paul’s final hospitalization, Carla researched the hospice web site and discovered the Community Grief & Counseling Center. In March 2010 she began individual sessions with grief counselor Kristina Gatto, LMFT.

After several sessions with Kristina, Carla felt able to sort through Paul’s belongings. She set aside some items, including a stack of jeans, for Goodwill. After eyeing the jeans for a few days, though, she thought, “No, I’m going to make something out of these.” The obvious choice was a quilt, which she spent several months constructing.

The result was so lovely that, at Hospice of the Valley’s request, Carla created another quilt for an October 2011 charity gala to benefit the Palliative Care Center Silicon ValleyTM, which will open this summer. Though she had made quilts for loved ones, including her newborn grandchildren, the charity gala marked the first time she gave one away that she would never see again. “Most things I make I hold on to, but I had gotten so much from Hospice of the Valley that I wanted to give something back,” she explains.

“I’m forcing myself to do things so I don’t just sit in my house...I never thought I’d do these things by myself, but I can.”

More ambitious projects have included buying a cabin in Arnold, navigating New York City on her own, and traveling to Ireland with a girlfriend. “I’m forcing myself to do things so I don’t just sit in my house,” she says. “I never thought I’d do these things by myself, but I can.”

A few experiences have left Carla thinking, “Now I know I can do that, but I never will again—next time I’ll hire someone!” Smiling, she recounts changing the battery in her Ford Mustang with the help of her daughter, a scene she describes as a “comedy of errors. My husband was probably looking down and laughing!”

As part of her healing process, Carla has also learned that “it’s okay if you think you’re getting better but then take three steps back. It’s okay to have trouble around holidays.” She muses, “Kristina tells me I’m in a pretty good place. After three years I do have a life. I’m not wallowing in grief. I have my moments, but I get through them and move on.”

Carla still sees Kristina, and continues to heal. The first year involved “just getting through it,” she says. “The second year I thought, okay, this is how it is now. The third year I forced myself to get out and do things.” These include “pet-peeve” tasks Paul once performed and which her now-adult children initially helped with after his death, such as rolling the garbage cans out to the curb.
Planning For Your Future
Advance Health Care Directives

Featuring national award-winning San Jose Mercury News science and medicine reporter Lisa Krieger of the Cost of Dying series and Gary Bertuccelli, MDiv, MSW, LCSW, manager of social work and spiritual care with Hospice of the Valley.

The advance health care planning forum can help you:
• Understand the importance of Advance Health Care Directives
• Make informed choices about your medical care
• Choose your health care “agent”
• Learn more about palliative care (it may not be what you think it is)

For more information or to schedule a Planning for Your Future program on advance health care directives and other related topics for your group, please contact Jeanne Wun, community engagement manager, at 1.408.559.5600 ext. 5423 or email jwun@hospicevalley.org.

Community Grief & Counseling Center
Support Groups Schedule

Beginning the Week of June 24
All Groups Held at Hospice of the Valley

Weekly —
Mondays:
Partner Loss, Parent Loss

Wednesdays:
Kids Group, Senior Partner Loss, Expressive Arts, Suicide Loss

Twice Monthly—
2nd and 4th Mondays:
Step by Step (Second Year Partner Loss)

2nd and 4th Wednesdays:
Healing Hearts (Second Year Senior Partner Loss)

For more information, contact Becky Gomes, bereavement office manager, at 1.408.559.5600 ext. 5460.

Poodle Parade
Sunday, July 21, 2013 | 11:00 am
LB Steak, Santana Row

Don’t miss the 8th Annual Red Carpet Poodle Parade! Pooches of all shapes and sizes, not just poodles, parade the red carpet at Santana Row in a four-legged pageant perfect for proud dog owners and dog lovers alike. The registration fee and your generous donation support Hospice of the Valley’s Pet Companion Program, which is fully funded by grants and donations.

For more information, contact Amy Ramsey, special events manager, at 1.408.559.5600 ext. 5446 or visit hospicevalley.org.

Connect with us on Facebook for up-to-date information on events and the latest Hospice of the Valley news! facebook.com/hospicevalley
Shining Example of Service Wins Crystal Bowl Award

By Lisa Crystal

Roberta Williams’ reputation for serving others, and her innovation and willingness to try something new, truly set her apart. As the first volunteer to provide phone support to seriously ill clients in Hospice of the Valley’s Transitions program, Roberta adds an extra layer of support for clients and families.

During her more than 13 years with Hospice of the Valley, Roberta has also served as a chaplain, a Calm Companion, a mentor to fellow volunteers, and in the words of director of volunteers Victoria Wild, “an amazing ambassador in our community.” It is for these contributions that Roberta was honored by the Junior League of San Jose on April 26, 2013, when she received the League’s Crystal Bowl Award, bestowed annually on outstanding volunteers in Silicon Valley.

Roberta’s call to community service came in the early 1970s, after her husband developed lung cancer at age 41. In caring for him without hospice assistance—which was not yet available in the U.S.—Roberta “saw what illness is like, I saw what caregiving is like, I saw what death is like.”

After her husband passed away, she was drawn to volunteerism. Even while working in administration at a local manufacturer and parenting her three children, Roberta contributed to United Way campaigns, participated in food drives, and collected toys for needy children.

Over the years, Roberta also volunteered as a hospital chaplain and visited her church’s homebound parishioners. In 1999, a fellow church member introduced her to Hospice of the Valley. Since then, Roberta’s hospice work has included sitting vigil with patients in their final days, which she considers a “privilege.” Through simple gestures such as tidying a room, reading aloud, or holding a hand, she strives to create a “peaceful” environment. She finds meaning in experiences such as “speaking with and listening to a young man with cancer and AIDS express tremendous gratitude, hearing how special it is to him not to be forgotten.”

Outside Hospice of the Valley, Roberta still wears other volunteer “hats”—including a red clown wig. The “Pick-a-Pocket Lady,” as she is known, dispenses goodies from 13 apron pouches, entertaining seniors at church events, and delighting children at fundraisers for the JW House, a respite facility at Kaiser Permanente. Even when “clowning around,” Roberta is serious about serving the community.

Two other Hospice of the Valley volunteers received Certificates of Appreciation from the Junior League on April 26. Marilyn Johnson, office “angel,” has provided valuable administrative support for the past six years. Ed Wendler, volunteer “ambassador” for three years, has educated thousands of community members about end-of-life issues through his friendly, informative presentations. Hospice of the Valley is proud to see them both honored.

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Kirkorian Enterprises and Hospice of the Valley to Host the 9th Annual Kent Kirkorian Memorial Golf Tournament

Save the Date!

11:00 am
Friday, October 4, 2013
Cinnabar Hills Golf Club
San Jose

Lunch, dinner and prizes will enhance the experience of playing 18 magnificent holes at this first-rate golf facility. Invite your family and friends to come out for this grand day of golf!

For more information visit: hospicevalley.org
Email: golf@hospicevalley.org | Call: 1.408.559.5600

Have Questions About Caring for a Loved One?

Approximately 1 in 4 Americans is providing care to someone who is ill, disabled, or aged. As commonplace as caregiving has become, for many it can be a challenging, exhausting, yet meaningful, time in their lives. Hospice of the Valley proudly offers a free educational resource to caregivers: Living with Serious Illness. This comprehensive website offers sound advice on a variety of caregiving topics, from medical concerns to emotional and spiritual issues and important decisions. A monthly e-newsletter brings topical articles with valuable and useful information for caregivers. From tax tips for family caregivers to coping with depression, Living with Serious Illness provides up-to-date advice from national experts. To learn more, visit seriousillness.org/santaclaracounty or subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter.

For Patients and Families in Santa Clara County

Access Information.
Visit our website at seriousilness.org or call our information line at 1.800.982.9555.

Contact Us.
Hospice of the Valley
1098 De Anza Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95129

Volunteer.
Volunteers are an important part of our mission. Please contact us for more information.

Financial Assistance.
For more information, please visit our website or call our information line at 1.800.982.9555.

For Patients and Families in Santa Clara County
Planned Gifts
Leave a Legacy of Caring

Hospice of the Valley’s programs are made possible because of generous community support. By making a gift today, you can ensure that Hospice of the Valley will be here in the future to advance our mission of affirming dignity, hope, and comfort for those facing serious illnesses.

Hospice of the Valley accepts a variety of gifts to help support its programs and services. One of the easiest ways to give is through your estate plan. A bequest made through a will or living trust are one of the most popular forms of planned gifts. In a bequest, one or more charities receive a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, or a stated percentage of the estate. You may also choose Hospice of the Valley as a beneficiary in an existing or new life insurance policy or of life income gifts, gift annuities, and other plans.

Our hope is to provide you and your family with a variety of ways to support Hospice of the Valley and enhance your personal well-being. The Hospice of the Valley development department would be delighted to work with you and your advisor to evaluate and implement any of these bequests or trust arrangements. Please contact us by e-mailing development@hospicevalley.org or calling Carlene Schmidt at 1.408.559.5600.

If you would like to learn more, please visit our website at hospicevalley.org/plannedgiving, which provides interactive tools and information to help you understand your choices. Hospice of the Valley appreciates and recognizes those who have included Hospice of the Valley in their estate plans. Legacy gifts provide an important source of funding for current needs and also help to build our endowment to support our future. Thank you for your support!

Did You Know?

Google has a tool for managing your ‘digital afterlife.’

Called “inactive account manager,” the feature lets users of Google’s services tell the company what to do with email messages and other data after they die—or become inactive online for any other reason. Google explains that,”users can choose to delete their data after three, six, or 12 months of inactivity. Or they can choose specific people to receive the data.”

For more information, please contact Chelsea Byom at cbyom@hospicevalley.org or 1.408.559.5600.
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