

# VOICES

Of Hope Hospice

A quarterly publication of Hope Hospice, Inc.

Fall 2012

## Victoria Emmons named CEO of Hope Hospice

**When Victoria Emmons surprised Hope Hospice staff at a morning meeting last July, she was grinning from ear to ear.**

Board President David Karlsson announced to the staff that Ms. Emmons had been named chief executive officer of the 32-year-old community-based hospice.

“The Board is very pleased to have someone with Ms. Emmons’ extensive background and qualifications join us,” said Mr. Karlsson. “She is invested in our community and in serving patients and families that face a life-limiting illness. We welcome her into our Hope Hospice family.”

A 28-year veteran of the health care industry, Ms. Emmons has held executive positions at hospice and hospital organizations throughout the Bay Area. We spoke with this energetic new leader to learn more about her background and her plans for the future of Hope Hospice.

**VOICES:** May we hear a little about your own story – how you came to this type of work, and why you like it?

**VICTORIA EMMONS:** My first job in healthcare was in 1984 as a public relations manager for a hospital in Florida. I knew a lot about public relations, but very little about hospitals. I found the field very exciting.



Victoria A. Emmons, Chief Executive Officer

I served on a hospice board of directors in the Bay Area for five years and later joined the staff of a hospice in San Jose. Hospice work is very rewarding and a much-needed service.

**VOICES:** How has your background prepared you to take the helm at Hope Hospice?

**VE:** My years of experience in the field gave me the professional skills for the job. My MPA in healthcare gave me the theory and practicum. My own personal experience of family loss helps me understand the journey our patients and families undergo.

In 2011, I walked the Hike for Hope alongside so many people who support the organization, and seeing such strong community support made me want to be part of the Hope team. I also knew Hope had a wonderful reputation for providing high-quality care.

**VOICES:** What are your goals for the organization for the next few years?

**VE:** My vision is that Hope Hospice will grow and prosper to increase access for the community. Everyone deserves the amazing care provided by the Hope

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Victoria A. Emmons, MPA, CFRE, *Chief Executive Officer*  
Barbara Hepner, *Editor*

**Editor’s Note:** We are proud to introduce the first issue of VOICES of Hope Hospice our quarterly newsletter in its fresh and easy to read new design. We want to share the voices of our patients, staff and volunteers through words and pictures to bring the work of hospice alive to the community.

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**Victoria Emmons named CEO of Hope Hospice**

Hospice team. To enhance our infrastructure, retain the best staff and volunteers, and update our technology, we must also increase philanthropic donations to help us meet our growth goals.



**VOICES:** What do you wish the community knew about Hope Hospice?

**VE:** I wish the community knew what Lou said to me about Jennie, his wife’s hospice nurse, and how important Jennie’s loving care has been for their family. I wish they could know about Allan and how our counselors helped him climb out of his puddle of grief. I wish they could hear the stories that are part of each patient’s life – extraordinary stories about ordinary people. I hope that they will know to ask for Hope Hospice by name when their loved ones need care.

**VOICES:** Does hospice, in general, conjure up a certain image to many people? Is that only part of the picture?

**VE:** What many people don’t realize is that hospice is not only for the patient but also for everyone surrounding the patient. Families need support during a loved one’s end-of-life journey, as well as afterward. I have often heard our families say, “I wish I had known about hospice sooner.”

**VOICES:** Do you have any patient stories or special memories that you would like to share?

**VE:** I interviewed a woman who had grown up on Alcatraz Island in the 1930s. She knew she was dying, yet she generously shared her story with others. I learned so much from her in that one afternoon. I suggest that people at the end of life have a great deal to share – we just have to listen. ■

## It's never too late to honor our veterans

**As we recognize their service on Veterans Day, many of us might be surprised to learn that one out of four Americans dying today is a veteran.** That's

more than 1,800 veterans dying every day. These heroic Americans deserve recognition for their military service – as well as access to supportive services at the end of life.

While Hope Hospice has been caring for veterans in our community for more than 30 years, the organization recently joined the “We Honor Veterans” campaign as a way to formalize our commitment to veterans and to assist the national effort in increasing access to hospice services for veterans, many of whom are not in the VA system. The VA itself has capacity to care for only about four percent of the veterans who



are dying. “We Honor Veterans” is a joint project from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

By partnering with community hospice providers like Hope Hospice, the VA hopes to increase the utilization of hospice services by veterans and their families facing end-of-life issues.

The key components of the “We Honor Veterans” campaign focus on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening, and grateful acknowledgment of service, coupled with educating hospice staff on how to provide services in a “veteran-centric” approach.

“Hope Hospice is honored to participate in the ‘We Honor Veterans’ collaboration,” says Maggie Robertson, Hope Hospice medical and professional liaison. “Not only will it assist the organization in honoring our services to our existing patients who are

veterans, it also allows us to educate the community about veterans and end-of-life services. Our veterans deserve the quality of care Hope Hospice delivers.” ■

## Tradition and permission: Coping with grief during the holiday season

Even if you haven't experienced the death of a loved one, the anticipation of the holidays may bring a variety of expectations and emotions. If you are grieving the death of a loved one, the holidays can bring up confusing feelings, a sense of isolation, surprising bursts of grief and overwhelm. Trying to decide what the holiday will be like this year and how you will participate may be very challenging.

Many of us are governed by tradition. While traditions are important to the development of society and family structure, they are filled with shoulds. We should entertain, bake cookies, host meals, be happy, etc. Even though tradition creates purpose and connection, it can magnify the pain of our loss.

The Grief Support Center at Hope Hospice offers the *Handling the Holidays* workshops to provide helpful coping strategies to make this holiday season be the best that it can be. During the class, you will have the opportunity to participate in simple exercises to examine aspects of the holiday season that may challenge you the most.

Acknowledging that the traditions once held by your family have been altered as a result of the death of your loved one can be an important start, as is giving yourself and your family permission to suspend or alter your traditions.

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# Lights of the Valley

Please join us in honoring and remembering someone special in your life  
**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2012**  
 4 - 7 pm  
 Shannon Community Center  
 11600 Shannon Avenue, Dublin, CA



Your gift along with the names of your loved ones and friends will illuminate our Tree of Light at the event and in the Hope Hospice offices. In addition, we will include the name(s) on a virtual tree on the Hope Hospice website.

**Entertainment**

Don Lewis  
 The Voices of Hope Choir  
 Foothill High School Chamber Singers  
 Cantabella Children's Chorus

**Tree Lighting Ceremony begins at 6 pm followed by refreshments and reception**

**Additional Trees and Angels of Light locations:**

Dublin San Ramon Services District  
 7051 Dublin Blvd., Dublin  
 Robert Livermore Community Center  
 4444 East Avenue, Livermore  
 Heritage Bank of Commerce  
 300 Main Street, Pleasanton

Thank you to our sponsors...



For more information please call (925) 829-8770, (510) 439-4917 or go to [HopeHospice.com](http://HopeHospice.com).  
 Send your completed donation card to Hope Hospice, 6377 Clark Avenue, Suite 100, Dublin, CA 94568.

## Lights of The Valley Sunday, December 2, 2012

I/we will attend the Lights of the Valley Celebration on December 2 at the Shannon Community Center, Dublin  
 Number attending \_\_\_\_\_  No, I/we will not attend

My/our name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I/we wish to illuminate a light by making a special gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Donations of \$250 or more will be recognized with a hand-crafted keepsake angel sent to your home. Place the name(s) of the following loved ones and friends below on the Tree of Light:

Memorial: \_\_\_\_\_ Honor: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check payable to Hope Hospice

Charge my

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Coping with grief

For instance, if you have always hosted Thanksgiving dinner, you might think about whether that is something you really want to do, or is it an obligation? Is there another way to bring your loved ones together without having to do it on your own? Perhaps you may choose to alter the tradition with a potluck or a pre-made meal.

In this workshop you will strategize with others about how to handle invitations to holiday functions and creative ways to include your loved one in your holiday plans. Altering our traditions to suit our current needs makes sense. Each moment, each stage of life requires its own rituals and traditions. You may choose to keep some customs and add new ones. In this way you are linking the past and present to the future. Our loved ones will always be part of us, during the holidays and forever. ■

## HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS WORKSHOPS

**Dates:** Tuesday, November 13, 2012  
Tuesday, December 4, 2012

**Times:** 2-4 pm or 7-9 pm

**Location:** Grief Support Center  
Hope Hospice  
6377 Clark Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Dublin, CA

To register call 1 (800) HOSPICE  
(1 (800) 467-7423)  
Space is limited

We offer two sessions of each workshop to accommodate your schedule. Workshops are provided as a community service. There is no charge to attend.

## A hospice pioneer tells Hope Hospice “You’re all hospice is supposed to be”

**Many people are surprised that hospice care was only established in the U.S. as recently as the 1970s.** The movement began in England in the 1960s, when Dame Cicely Saunders established the first hospice near London, using a team approach to caregiving and modern pain management.

Recently, Hope Hospice heard from a pioneer in the California hospice movement, who witnessed the care provided to a local family member. It makes her proud, she relayed, when patients get the kind of care she and other pioneers envisioned 35 years ago.

“In (the) last days, your staff was all that hospice is supposed to be... I helped establish the second hospice in the U.S. at Santa Barbara. You are a good example of what we pioneers in the movement hoped it would be!” Jan Bauer wrote.

Bauer, a retired RN from Magalia, CA, was involved in the early efforts to develop a palliative care program in acute and skilled nursing facilities. From a federally-funded hospice demo project to collaboration with the Visiting Nurses Association, she witnessed how hospice evolved to deal with the physical, social, emotional and

spiritual needs of the dying person and family. “We saw the need to convince physicians that to care for the whole person, you need good symptom and pain control. If you can’t keep someone comfortable, then social and emotional care is more difficult,” says Bauer.

“My hopes were that hospices would provide full service under one umbrella – the communication between team members is so vital,” she says. “We planted the seeds; others made them grow.”

Now, Bauer says, “We need to raise awareness about getting into hospice earlier, benefitting from services, equipment, and counseling before the last few days of life. There are many ways to help one be comfortable, and to provide know-how for the family.”

Since Bauer’s pioneering work, hospice care has become widespread, and covered by Medicare. Today, the Hospice Foundation of America estimates that nearly 5,000 hospice programs care for 1.5 million people annually. ■

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## Companionship, conversation and sharing

### Home Care Volunteers talk about their work with patients

VOICES asked three Home Care volunteers to talk about their experiences. Each provided a personal and moving perspective on the rewards of home visits – for both patients and volunteers. Each has received extensive training and supervision and is carefully matched with patients by Wendy Celeste, Hope Hospice's coordinator of volunteers.

Primarily, volunteer visitors give family members the chance to run errands or attend to business outside the house. But so much more goes on. There is companionship, conversation, and sharing of human experience.

**KAREN MILLER** of San Ramon has been a Home Care volunteer for more than three years, after retiring six years ago from a career in education.

**JOHN TIEFENTHALER**, a Pleasanton resident, retired early from a sales career in the food industry, and has been a Home Care volunteer for four years.

**THAIS CARLUCCI**, a Pleasanton resident, is a physical therapist who also teaches Lamaze classes. She is an empty-nester and soon will be a grandmother.

### How did you come to be a Hope Hospice Home Care Volunteer?

**KM:** I had a friend diagnosed with cancer, and I saw firsthand how Hope Hospice came in – the nurses, the social workers, the home care people – and cared for my friend. That sealed it – Hope Hospice was where I needed to be.

**JT:** I feel I was called to this work; my strong Catholic tradition has influenced my retirement. I am a Eucharistic minister, who can bring holy communion when requested. I also volunteer at the Open Heart Soup Kitchen in Livermore and am involved in prison ministry.

**TC:** By word of mouth, I heard about volunteer opportunities at Hope Hospice and went to meet with Wendy Celeste. I love this! She really matches the patient with the volunteer. I volunteer about once per week. My relationships with my clients have been as short as a week and as long as six months.

### Why is this work important?



Karen Miller

**KM:** I like the concept of staying in one's own home at the end of life. To help, to enable you to do that – there is hospice. It is just an incredibly powerful thing. So many more people could plan to die comfortably at home than think they can. It's good for the one dying; they know they are loved and they can stay comfortable where they are. It's not a hospital with noise, light, and changing shifts. It's good for the family; it helps provide relief from the exhaustion of a hospital vigil. More people are catching on – it also must be so much more financially sound to avoid having someone in the hospital for days or weeks on end. A favorite quote of mine is “The ending is no less beautiful than the beginning.” Hope Hospice helps it to be as beautiful as possible.

“The ending is no less beautiful than the beginning.” Hope Hospice helps it to be as beautiful as possible.

**JT:** Americans have a lot of fear and anxiety about dying. When someone wants to have a conversation about spirituality, share philosophy, and values, I try to be there for them. In hospice, we have a whole team to serve the holistic (mind, body, spirit) needs of the patient.

**TC:** I have seen lots of people die with machines and tubes all around them, and I knew there was something else out there. When you see death in that environment, you feel bad for the family. But hospice prepares them. I personally believe it is a better way to die. If you see the film “Consider the Conversation”, about your wishes at the end of your life, you begin to see the difference. I would encourage people like me (age 55) to hold the conversation with your kids, spouse, and others. You need to speak to your loved ones and make sure your decisions are clear. Some people want every medical intervention, but others do not. Have everyone in the family on the same page. Hospice steps in and makes sure all the pieces are in place.

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## Companionship, conversation and sharing

### What are some things you do when you visit your patients?

**KM:** My first gentleman lived at home with his wife. I would talk with him, read him things, and our visits spilled over to help his wife, who felt so alone. Another client was in a board and care situation; one was in a nursing home. If the patient is able to converse,

**“I would talk with him, read him things, and our visits spilled over to help his wife, who felt so alone.”**

we talk about whatever they like, i.e., “how did you meet your husband?” or share memories. I might bring their favorite cookies, bring music, other things. They just want somebody to listen to them – there are a lot of people talking at them. Hope Hospice is giving them the best chance of doing this well, leaving this earth. We need to respect them and let it happen. We do such a good job of keeping people in the dying process physically comfortable. This realization enables them NOT to physically suffer, something loved ones are often afraid of.

**JT:** I look forward to every visit. I admit to being kind of a closet guitar player, and I love to sing and laugh when I visit. The work involves being the gift of presence. Perhaps the person can’t talk, or can’t even hear. But silence is powerful. You don’t have to accomplish anything. If I am matched with a client of the same faith, I can bring other aspects to my visits, if it is requested, from music to scripture and comforting prayers.



Thais Carlucci

**TC:** One older gentleman was writing his life story, and I took notes for him, and gave them to his family. One woman wanted me to read poetry to her. It all depends on the nature of the relationships. I have brought art books, and nature photos. Sometimes a picture can stir up a lot of thoughts. I have learned so much!

### What has been most challenging or memorable?

**KM:** It is challenging if a client is unable to speak. Early on, one of mine could raise his fingers – one for yes, two for no. I would talk to him about what day it is, what season, and talk about sports and the election. He was a fan of 1930s and ’40s jazz, with singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, and used to tap to the music on the side of the bed. Now, it is more difficult for him. But I still get a hand squeeze. I’m quite certain I’m reaching him.

**JT:** People become your friends. Often the patients are inspiring and they teach me to accept my own death. Each person whom we have lost is still with me in a very special way.

**TC:** The most surprising challenge has been having people “graduate.” After six months, one of my clients got better.



John Tiefenthaler

### What does it bring to your life?

**KM:** The payback is exponential. The satisfaction is great. And I get to share vast experiences. I learn wonderful things from people who have survived difficult times. They have courage and fortitude. It is such a gift to have the opportunity to talk with them.

**JT:** Part of the gift of presence is to learn to listen deeply. With compassion and loving kindness, you try to put yourself in another’s situation. Everyone lives and dies differently. You try to connect with the client in the way he or she would like.

It has given me a journey of transformation, and the guidance to live more fully and abundantly. They are my role models.

**For more information on volunteer opportunities at Hope Hospice call our office at 1 (800) HOSPICE (1 (800) 467-7423) or go online at [HopeHospice.com](http://HopeHospice.com)**





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## Hope Hospice Grief Support Center programs and classes

You do not have to face your grief alone. Our grief support groups offer the opportunity to join others who have a similar experience to yours. The trained facilitators provide a safe place to share thoughts and feelings, to learn about the grief process and discover effective coping strategies.

Prior to joining our support groups, we require that you participate in a meeting with a Grief Support Provider to determine whether our services can meet your needs. It is not necessary to be a Hope Hospice family member to participate. Our Grief support programs are open to the community.

**To learn more about any of these groups, please call: 1 (800) HOSPICE.**

### Grief Journeys: support groups for adults

These eight-week sessions provide a way to explore grief in a safe and supportive environment. Sessions include sharing, coping strategies, exploring memories and discovering hope and finding meaning.

#### Child Loss

Mondays, February 4 – April 1  
(no meeting February 18)  
7-8:30 pm

#### Parent Loss

Wednesdays, November 7 – January 9  
(off November 21 and December 26)  
7-8:30 pm

#### Spousal/Partner Loss

Thursdays, November 8 – January 10  
(off November 22 and December 27)  
7-8:30 pm

#### Transitions (General Loss)

Tuesdays, February 5 – March 26  
(off November 27)  
11-12:30 pm

### Drop-in groups for adults

#### Tragic Loss

Mondays, Every 1st Monday  
5:30-7 pm

#### Pet Loss

Mondays, Every 2nd & 4th Monday  
7-8:30 pm

### One-on-One grief support

To assist those facing this challenging journey, we offer up to ten private One-on-One grief support sessions for individuals, couples, and youth. Each 50-minute session is offered at no fee both to our hospice patient family members and to the bereaved in our community. Call the Grief Support Center to make an appointment.

### Children and teens

These six-week sessions provide a safe and nurturing environment to help children and teens understand emotions and learn healthy coping skills. With guidance in age appropriate support groups, participants can explore their feelings through sharing, creative writing, art projects, music and games.

#### Children's Support Group

Tuesdays, January 29 – March 5  
5:30-7 pm

#### Teen's Support Group

Thursdays, January 31 – March 7  
5:30-7 pm