

Valued Volunteer

VOL3
ISS 4
January 2025



Good morning and Happy New Year.

How is it possible we are about to embark on 2025? It seems like we have only just begun on 2024. I can confidently say that each year that I am in this position I never cease to be in awe of the work that you do and the differences you make. While reflecting on 2024, I want to share some of the statistics with you.

Our direct patient and non-direct patient volunteers have submitted over 4,700 hours.

We have an average of 15.86% of direct patient/administrative hours. As a reminder, CMS requires hospice to have volunteers give 5% of clinical time. This time can only be counted in direct patient and administrative roles.

Our resale volunteers have donated over 2600 hours. The proceeds from these efforts go towards many of our programs that are not covered under the hospice benefit.

Each role is imperative to the overall mission of Serenity Hospice and Home. We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and passion each of you bring to your roles. Your contributions have not only helped us meet essential benchmarks but have also profoundly impacted the lives of those we serve. As we look forward to 2025, we are excited to continue building on this strong foundation.

Looking ahead, we aim to enhance our services with even more innovative programs and expand our volunteer opportunities, ensuring that every moment spent here is both rewarding and impactful. We are committed to fostering a supportive and enriching environment for all our team members, where every effort is recognized and celebrated.

As we approach another year, let's carry forward the spirit of compassion and commitment that defines Serenity Hospice and Home. Thank you for all that you do, and here's to a year filled with hope, growth, and meaningful connections.

Contact Info

Stephanie Wheeler
Volunteer Services Manager
Mobile/Text: (779) 861-4170
Office: (815) 732-2499
Email: stephaniew@serenityhospiceandhome.org

Stephanie Wheeler


Whats Been Happening

The past three months at Serenity Hospice and Home have been filled with exciting volunteer opportunities and events, and this year was no exception! As we conclude the year, we reflect on the amazing contributions our volunteers have made, from supporting the Angel Ball fundraiser to delivering heartfelt candy baskets. Your unwavering commitment and kindness have genuinely made a difference, and we look forward to continuing our shared journey of care and compassion.

We kicked off October with one of my favorite events: Autumn on Parade. On October 6th, we gathered with a float and a generous supply of candy to share with attendees. This celebration was made possible thanks to the generous donations of candy and trinkets from our devoted volunteers and staff! Our team worked diligently to create goodie bags and even crafted special treats for our four-legged friends! It was heartwarming to see the appreciation from onlookers who recognized the support our staff and volunteers provide during their hospice care journey.

Another exciting event was our Veteran Stand Down in Rockford. This year, our Krafty Angels united to create "blessing bags" for female veterans, leaving a significant impact. Each veteran who visited our booth expressed immense gratitude for the kind donations from our volunteers. We were fortunate to assist over 100 veterans who are at risk or experiencing homelessness. During the event, we met a compassionate Marine named Elmer, who shared his experiences from Vietnam and revealed that he is a Purple Heart recipient.

A special Veteran to Veteran Cafe was held at the Rock River Senior Center in Oregon, where our veterans had the chance to pin and express gratitude to two remarkable veterans who shared their stories. The cafe created a warm and welcoming atmosphere, rich with camaraderie and heartfelt conversations. Veterans gathered around tables, exchanging experiences and forming new friendships over coffee and donuts. The narratives shared by the two honored veterans were both touching and inspiring, showcasing the bravery and resilience that define their journeys.



On November 8th, our veterans visited Oregon Elementary School to read military-themed books to students in grades K-4 for Veterans Day. After each reading, children had the opportunity to ask questions, and many learned how to properly salute! A special thank you goes to everyone who donated books for this event; they were a wonderful new addition.


Serenity Hospice and Home is proud to be part of the We Honor Veterans program. This initiative is designed to acknowledge and honor the unique needs of veterans and their families as they navigate the end-of-life journey. By participating, we ensure that our staff and volunteers are trained to deliver compassionate care that respects the service and sacrifices of our veterans.

Throughout the year, we organize various events and activities that not only celebrate our veterans but also provide them with the support and camaraderie they deserve. From hosting veteran appreciation events to offering specialized counseling services, our commitment to those who have served remains steadfast.

We are continually inspired by the stories of bravery and resilience shared by our veteran community, and it is our privilege to support them in any way we can. As part of the We Honor Veterans program, we strive to create a comforting and dignified environment where veterans and their families feel valued and understood. We are grateful to have achieved a level 5 partnership again for 2024!

This year, our volunteers also embarked on a new initiative by delivering holiday meals! For Thanksgiving and Christmas, they brought homemade meals and desserts to over 10 patients in various locations. The success of this new program was overwhelming, all thanks to the dedication and kindness of our volunteers, who worked tirelessly to make each delivery special. We hope to continue this tradition in the years to come, expanding our reach and bringing even more joy to those in need. Our volunteers are bursting with talent, which shines brightly at Serenity Home. On November 25th, they showcased their skills by decorating Serenity Home with festive adornments, including six uniquely themed Christmas trees that highlighted their creativity and style.

This cherished annual tradition not only brightens the halls of Serenity Home but also uplifts the spirits of our patients and their families during the holiday season. It stands as a testament to the love and commitment our volunteers have for fostering a warm and welcoming environment where everyone feels at home. We are deeply appreciative of their contributions and eagerly anticipate many more years filled with holiday joy and heartwarming celebrations.



The Angel Ball is a delightful fundraiser organized in partnership with the Village of Progress and Oregon Rotary. Our dedicated volunteers offered their time and expertise by decorating for the event, providing desserts, and assisting throughout the evening! The night was filled with laughter, music, and a strong sense of community as attendees came together to support a meaningful cause. The elegantly decorated venue set the stage for an unforgettable evening, where guests enjoyed a delightful array of hors d'oeuvres and desserts. The event also featured an exciting silent auction, where participants eagerly placed bids on various items, fully aware that their contributions would directly support the vital work we undertake at Serenity Hospice and Home.

To close out the year, our Krafty Angels created over 45 candy baskets to express gratitude to the nursing home staff for their hard work and care provided to our Serenity Hospice and Home patients. Each basket was thoughtfully crafted, filled with an assortment of sweet treats, and adorned with cheerful ribbons and heartfelt notes of appreciation. The joy on the faces of the nursing home staff receiving these tokens of gratitude was truly rewarding.

The past three months have been truly extraordinary, and it's all thanks to our incredible volunteers! Your steadfast dedication, creativity, and compassion have profoundly impacted the lives of those we support. As we reflect on these meaningful moments, we are reminded of the strength of community and the remarkable achievements that arise when individuals unite with a common goal. The smiles, expressions of gratitude, and genuine connections formed during these events highlight the exceptional kindness of our volunteers. We are immensely thankful for your support and eagerly anticipate continuing this journey of care and compassion in the upcoming year. Your generosity and enthusiasm inspire us all, and we are excited to explore the wonderful initiatives that lie ahead.

Whats Been Happening



Volunteer To Volunteer Night

Meet our Volunteer



DeeAnne
Janke

Introducing Dee, one of the latest volunteers at Serenity Hospice and Home.

- A resident of Oregon for four decades
- A proud mother and grandmother to five children and four grandchildren
- Recently retired after 26 years of service at a local dental office
- Excited to explore traveling, hiking, and kayaking with her husband during retirement

Meet our Staff



Suzanne
Ravlin

We are excited to announce Suzanne Ravlin as our new Chief Executive Officer, effective January 1, 2025. With a wealth of experience in healthcare and a proven track record of working for nonprofit organizations, Suzanne is poised to lead Serenity into an exciting future.

She is a proud Fighting Illini graduate with a Finance degree and earned her law degree at Michigan State University. Suzanne was born and raised in Dixon, Illinois and feels blessed to have returned to the area. Suzanne is not a stranger to Serenity as she has served on the Serenity Hospice and Home Board of Directors for over 12 years. Suzanne believes in our mission, she is a part of our community and we are confident that her leadership will continue to provide high quality care and commitment to our patients, their families and friends, our employees, our donors, and all of the communities we serve.

Meet our Staff



Jennifer
Seeley

Jennifer Seeley is the Education Manager at Serenity Hospice and Home. She has been a nurse for six years. Prior to becoming a nurse, she was a former music educator in local area schools. Jennifer absolutely loves working for Serenity and being able to work alongside such strong individuals. Her and her husband keep busy with their four kids; Genevieve, Deacon, Abram, and Marlow. They also have a flock of chickens and a standard poodle named "Stormy."

Volunteers Needed 1

GATHERER GROUP

Join Our Gatherer Group for Creative Fun!

Our Gatherer group is a lively craft gathering that takes place on the first Wednesday of every month at 11 AM in the Serenity conference room. We invite individuals of all skill levels, whether you're a seasoned crafter or just beginning your creative journey. Each month, we delve into a new project, creating delightful items for both staff and patients, and everything in between. It's a fantastic chance to learn new techniques, exchange ideas, and connect with fellow crafting enthusiasts. We supply all the materials; all you need to bring is your creativity and enthusiasm. Join us for a morning filled with laughter, learning, and artistic expression! This month's Gatherer Group will be held on Wednesday, January 8th at 11 AM in the Serenity conference room.

KNITTING/CROCHETING

Do you enjoy knitting or crocheting? If so, this group is perfect for you! Join us at the Serenity Shed on the second Friday of every month at 10 a.m. as we craft prayer squares, shawls, and lap blankets for the patients at Serenity Hospice and Home. This month, we will gather on Friday, January 10th, at 10:30 a.m. at the Serenity Shed. You'll discover a warm and inviting atmosphere where creativity and compassion unite to make a meaningful impact.

Do you have a love for reading? Serenity Hospice and Home hosts a book club! The Serenity Book Club gathers every other month at 8:30 a.m. at Village Bakery to discuss the selected book. Join us on February 20th to explore *The Last Bookshop in London* by Madeline Martin. The delightful scent of freshly baked pastries and hot coffee from Village Bakery enhances the experience. Be sure to mark your calendar and come ready for engaging discussions and new friendships. Happy reading, and we look forward to seeing you there!

BOOK CLUB

Volunteers Needed 2

FRONT DESK GREETER

Our Front Desk Greeters hold a vital role in welcoming visitors and patients at the Serenity Home. With their warm smiles and friendly gestures, they make sure everyone who walks through the door feels comfortable and appreciated. Their presence goes beyond mere functionality; they truly represent the caring essence of the Serenity Home.

We have numerous volunteering opportunities available for the month of January. Additionally, we are in search of a dedicated front desk volunteer on Wednesdays from 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM. If you are interested, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

- **Sundays: 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM**
- **Wednesdays: 8:00 AM - 12:30 PM and January 1st from 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM**
- **Fridays: 4:30 PM - 8:00 PM**
- **Saturdays: 8:00 AM - 12:30 PM and 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM**

We are delighted to offer a special touch of comfort through crockpot meals for the families of our patients. We are currently seeking volunteers who would like to provide a crockpot meal on the following Fridays in January:

- **January 3rd**
- **January 24th**
- **January 31st**

If you're looking ahead to 2025, please feel free to let me know any Friday of the month that you would like to sign up for!

CROCKPOT MEALS

SERENITY HOME TREE

We have a beautiful tree in the family room of Serenity Home that our wonderful volunteers decorate each month to bring joy to the visitors and patients of Serenity Hospice and Home. There are numerous openings for 2025. If you're interested in decorating the tree for a month at Serenity, please reach out to me. Here are the available months:

- **January**
- **April**
- **May**
- **July**
- **August**
- **September**
- **December**

Volunteers Needed 3

VOLUNTEER EDUCATION

Volunteer education at Serenity Hospice and Home is a crucial aspect of ensuring that volunteers are well-informed about best practices. This training equips them with the essential skills and knowledge needed to deliver compassionate care and support to patients and their families. By keeping abreast of the latest developments in hospice care, volunteers can significantly impact the lives of those they assist, fostering a comforting and dignified environment. Join us Wednesday January 22nd at 1045 to review Emergency Preparedness and Fire Safety in the Serenity conference room.

SUPPORT CHAT

Our volunteer support chat offers an excellent opportunity to learn new techniques and discuss challenges faced while assisting hospice patients and their families. Participants can share their experiences, exchange valuable tips, and provide support to each other in a compassionate and understanding setting. This chat allows you to connect with fellow volunteers who recognize the unique challenges and rewards that come with hospice care. Whether you seek advice on communication strategies, emotional support, or wish to celebrate small victories, this chat is a welcoming space for everyone. Through collaboration and shared insights, we strive to enhance the care and comfort provided to patients and their families during this significant time. Join us on Wednesday, January 29th at 10:45 AM in the Serenity conference room.

January's online education features Dr. Brené Brown's insights on Empathy. According to Dr. Brown, empathy is a vital tool for fostering connection and understanding. It requires actively listening and responding to others in a manner that acknowledges their emotions and viewpoints. By embracing empathy, individuals can cultivate deeper interactions, strengthen communities, and foster a culture of compassion and support.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw&list=PLkfraFd1tAezvIAC9Sc59cILRPdEucqvW>

ONLINE EDUCATION



Angel Treasures

I

201 IL-64
MT MORRIS, IL
61054

II

102 N ELIDA
STREET
WINNEBAGO,
IL 61088

III

847 N GALENA AVE
DIXON, IL 61021

**WE ACCEPT DONATIONS MONDAY – WEDNESDAY –
FRIDAY.**

DROP OFF TIMES VARY.