

VALUED VOLUNTEER



Serenity
HOSPICE & HOME

ISSUE 4 | VOLUME 1

APRIL 2025

As the vibrant colors of spring blossom around us, I am thrilled to welcome you to this quarterly edition of our Valued Volunteer Newsletter. This season is not only a time of renewal and growth but also an opportunity to reflect on the incredible impact each of you has in our community.

Your unwavering dedication and compassion continue to be the cornerstone of our hospice care, providing comfort and support to those in need. Every interaction, whether big or small, helps to create a nurturing environment for our patients and their families during some of the most challenging times of their lives.

In this issue, you will find inspiring stories from fellow volunteers, updates on upcoming events, and new training opportunities designed to further enhance your skills and experience. Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and commitment. Together, we are making a significant difference in the lives of so many. I look forward to continuing this incredible journey with all of you.

Stephanie Wheeler

Contact Info:

STEPHANIE WHEELER
VOLUNTEER SERVICES MANAGER
MOBILE/TEXT: (779) 861-4170
OFFICE: (815) 732-2499
EMAIL: STEPHANIEW@SERENITYHOSPICEANDHOME.ORG

CRAFTED WITH CARE

The Secret Giving of the Krafty Angels



The original Krafty Angel group was established over 25 years ago to create a keepsake for the Angel Ball. Throughout the year, they convened to create ornaments for sale at the event. Initially, all ornaments were the same, but gradually, they evolved into unique, one-of-a-kind pieces.

When Pam retired in 2010, she sought out volunteer opportunities. She learned about this group from Julie Hardesty, who was leading it at the time. After hearing about their mission, Pam decided to join. She found fulfillment in contributing to the creation of beautiful ornaments. Soon, she shared the group's efforts to support Serenity with her friends, all of whom had personal connections to Serenity Hospice, having received care for their loved ones over the years. They were eager to give back in appreciation for the exceptional care provided to their families.

Together, they began crafting angel ornaments, infusing each piece with their creativity. After several years, they shifted focus from making ornaments to pursuing other projects for Serenity. Collaborating with the activity director, the Krafty Angels identified special initiatives that had not been addressed by other volunteers. The group typically met over lunch to plan these projects, with each member purchasing supplies and setting a date for execution.

The Krafty Angels are composed of mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers. Over the years, they have built deep friendships, although they have also grieved the loss of two beloved members, Sandy Noser and Julie Hardesty, both remarkable volunteers.

Pam believes that volunteering on these special projects and sharing experiences with this close-knit group has allowed her to express her gratitude for all that Serenity Hospice has done for them. She takes immense pride in being part of such a remarkable team that she can always rely on.

Pam's experience with Serenity Hospice and Home has shown her that there is always a project available for volunteering, and it is incredibly rewarding.

Here is a list of some of the past and current projects they have undertaken:

- *Filling Easter eggs*
- *Creating activity bags for young children visiting loved ones in Serenity Home*
- *Assembling feminine bags and supplies for women veterans during Veterans Stand Down Day*
- *Filling candy containers as a thank-you gesture for nursing staff at nursing homes during Christmas*
- *Decorating the tree in the family room at Serenity in September*
- *Purchasing candy for the float for Autumn on Parade*
- *Crafting angel ball ornaments*

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING



The first quarter of the year always seems to fly by. With the holidays behind us, it's time for volunteer renewals for 2025. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has submitted their commitment forms! We have held monthly educational sessions on emergency preparedness, infection control, and the We Honor Veterans program. Our Krafty Angels gathered to create activity bags for children aged 3 to 8. We have also started planning decorations for the Garden Luncheon, and volunteers eagerly contributed to bringing the vision to life. By the end of April, seven volunteers completed the training class. Our incredible volunteers dedicated countless hours to visiting patients, providing administrative support, and ensuring everything runs smoothly at Angel Treasures. They also kept Serenity Home looking fantastic while Carmen was on vacation, and our cookie bakers ensured there was no shortage of treats. Additionally, gatherers collaborated to create gifts for patients. We are immensely grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm each volunteer brings to our community.

As always, our mission to support and uplift our community is at the core of everything we do. We eagerly anticipate continuing this journey together, making a positive impact, and creating lasting memories. Thank you all for your unwavering support and commitment.

MEET OUR STAFF

Maddie James

Hi! I live with my husband and rabbit and love to run and read in my spare time (when I have any!). I also love chasing around my two-year-old niece, whom I love dearly. I chose Serenity because I love being part of a 5-star organization that gives patients and families the utmost dignity, care, and compassion.



MEET OUR STAFF

Mariah Cover



My name is Mariah, and I serve the community as a registered nurse taking care of our sweet patients. During my free time, I'm a busy mama of three with a 4-year-old, a 2-year-old, and a 5-month-old. My family is my entire life, so I center my world around them. When I'm not working, we're outside running in the fields, playing with our two mastiffs, or doing outdoor activities to fill the time. During my personal time, I enjoy reading, napping, and meditating/obtaining wellness. To say I am blessed in this life is an understatement.

MEET OUR STAFF

*Alexis
Lowe*



Hi, my name is Alexis Lowe and I am the new social worker. I graduated from Aurora University and have been in social work for about three years. I'm a mom to three little girls and love being outside with them when I'm not working. I'm so excited to start my journey at Serenity and get to know everyone!

MEET OUR STAFF



*Sydney
Neuschwanger*

Hello! I'm Sydney Neuschwanger, and a little bit about me is that I love being a CNA, and I've been one for about 7 years now! My husband and I have 4 kids altogether! I love spending time with my family! I recently had twin girls who are 10 months old now! Our family loves to be outside! Whether that means just having a picnic or hiking and fishing, we love the summertime! I'm so happy to have joined the Serenity family!

MEET OUR STAFF

Mary
Pendleton



Hello! I'm Mary Pendleton, the new Palliative Nurse Practitioner. Since 2002, I have dedicated my career to hospice and palliative care. I have a daughter and two wonderful grandchildren whom I cherish spending time with. I love the great outdoors and engage in activities such as fishing, hiking, camping, swimming, and gardening. Additionally, I have a passion for horseback riding, having grown up with it, and I hope to return to riding again someday.



MEET OUR STAFF

Jen Mattingly

Hi, I am Jenn M – the new evening admissions nurse. I was honored to join the Serenity Hospice and Home team in early February. I've worked in healthcare for over 30 years, starting at the age of 18 in the United States Army as an occupational therapy specialist. I did work in long-term care as a COTA when I came off active duty, then following the start of PPS moved into administrative roles in healthcare. I graduated from nursing school in 2012. I've been married for 20 years to Davy, an Air Force veteran and I have two darling sons Blake age 19 and Austin age 29. My older son is serving in the US Space Force and my youngest plans to enlist within the next year. Most may have noticed that I LOVE plants, 'culinary adventures' and all things UK/Scottish. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out on the river with family and friends, gardening and/or playing with my houseplants, and fishing, hunting and shooting.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED¹

GATHERER CRAFT GROUP

Mark Your Calendars!!! We are rescheduling our Gatherer Craft Group to Thursday, April 4th, at 11:30 due to a scheduling conflict. Please adjust your calendars accordingly and let us know if you can still attend on the new date. We will focus on preparations for the Garden Luncheon. Don't forget to stay for lunch afterward. We can't wait to see you there!

ART DASH

The Art Dash is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9th. If you're interested in attending, there are still spectator tickets for sale.

Come and cheer as dashers compete for their favorite artwork while supporting Serenity Hospice and Home!

KNITTER AND CROCHET GROUP

Join fellow knitters and crocheters as they come together to create special gifts for the patients of Serenity Hospice and Home. This will take place at 10 AM on Friday, April 11th, at the Serenity Shed.

VETERAN CAFE

Our Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran Cafe will be held on Tuesday April 1st at 10 am at the Rock River Center. We invite everyone to join us in honoring and celebrating the brave men and women who served during the Vietnam War. This event is a wonderful opportunity to express our gratitude and support for their sacrifices.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ²

BOOK CLUB

CHANGE OF DATE FOR THE BOOK CLUB!!!!

Join the Serenity Book Club at The Village Bakery on Thursday, April 24th, at 8:30 AM. We will be discussing "The Spectacular" by Fiona Davis. We are thrilled to explore this captivating story and exchange our thoughts over coffee and pastries. Whether you've finished the book or simply want to learn more, everyone is welcome to participate in the conversation. It's a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow book enthusiasts, make new friends, and engage in a spirited discussion. We look forward to seeing you there!

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CHAT

Join us on Wednesday, April 30th, at 10:45 AM in the Serenity Conference Room for our monthly volunteer support chat. We invite all volunteers to gather, share their experiences, and explore new ideas for creating a positive impact in our community and for our patients.

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER TRAINING

It's not too late to secure your place at the annual volunteer training! Scheduled for Tuesday, April 29th at 9 AM, please remember to RSVP. This will complete your education for the 2025 year.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

Check your mailbox! It's a luau invitation! Join us on Friday, April 25th, at 5 PM for our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We want to extend our sincere gratitude for all the time and effort you contribute to enhancing our community. This year's theme is "Luau," so don your favorite island attire and get ready for an evening filled with delicious food and exciting activities. It's our opportunity to thank you and celebrate the remarkable impact you've had. Remember to RSVP by April 15th. We're eager to celebrate with you!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED³

CROCK-POT MEALS

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 April:

- APRIL 11TH
- APRIL 18TH

SERENITY HOME CLEANING

Our house mom, Carmen, will be away on vacation from April 6TH to April 13TH. We are seeking volunteers to assist with cleaning at Serenity Home on:

- SUNDAY APRIL 6TH
- FRIDAY APRIL 11TH
- SATURDAY APRIL 12TH
- SUNDAY APRIL 13TH

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.

If you are interested, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

- **Sundays: 8:00 – 12:30 PM AND 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM**
- **Thursdays: 4:30 PM – 8:00 PM**
- **Saturdays: 8:00 AM – 12:30 PM and 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED⁴

COOKIE BAKING

Cookies are a beloved treat among our patients, families, staff, and volunteers! If you have a passion for baking and already possess, or are willing to obtain, a food handler or manager certificate, we would be thrilled to welcome you to the Serenity Home to bake and share your favorite cookies.

Garden Luncheon


Our yearly Garden Luncheon is scheduled for Saturday, May 10th. If you're interested in volunteering for this event, please get in touch. Tickets are still available for those who wish to attend. Additionally, we are looking for a 3D floral background; if you have one we could borrow, please let me know.

THE SERENITY SHED

Do you take pleasure in staining wood and furniture? The Serenity Shed is looking for skilled stainers who are willing to come by and assist in completing various projects. Please reach out to Stephanie for more information.

ONLINE EDUCATION

This month's online educational offering is the WHV Webinar: Dementia Series Part 1, focusing on Veterans with Dementia at End of Life. You can view it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9wleRlXMDs>. After you watch the webinar, please log the hours on your monthly timesheet and note the training's name in the comments.



My favorite time of year has arrived: Volunteer Appreciation Month! Not a single day goes by without celebrating the remarkable impact our volunteers at Serenity Hospice and Home create. As the organizer of our amazing volunteer team, I am often left in awe of your unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those we serve. You bring comfort, warmth, dignity, and joy to everyone you encounter. Your steadfast dedication and heartfelt generosity are truly inspiring. It is through your small acts of kindness, gentle encouragement, and consistent presence that our community discovers strength and solace. Each of you shines as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path for those who need it most.

As we honor this month, I reflect on the countless stories of joy and gratitude shared by our patients and their families. These narratives serve as a powerful reminder of the profound impact you have, filling our hearts with immense pride and admiration.

Thank you once more for your extraordinary service and for being the heart of our hospice community.

We have organized various events and activities throughout the month to recognize and celebrate your hard work and dedication. From heartfelt thank-you notes to a special dinner and recognition ceremonies, we want each of you to know just how valued and appreciated you are.

Additionally, we encourage you to share your own stories and experiences as a volunteer with us. Whether it's a moment that moved you or a lesson learned from a patient, your stories not only inspire others but also foster a deeper connection within our community.

Keep in mind that your contributions extend far beyond the hours you dedicate; they create ripples that touch lives in ways you may never fully comprehend. It is a privilege to work alongside such compassionate and selfless individuals.

Here's to you, our incredible volunteers, for making the world a brighter and more caring place. Let's continue to spread kindness and hope, not just this month but every day. With gratitude and admiration, we celebrate each and every one of you.

To our volunteers: We could not do what we do without you! Thank you so much! You all are SO appreciated!
-much Love - Val (community nurse!)

TO
Our Rockstar volunteers!
We could not function
as this amazing organization
if it weren't for you. I hope
you feel seen & appreciated.
Love, Connie

Thank you for
the time you
donate to our
patient and
their families!
Melina S.

Thank you
~~for~~ for your time!
our Patients
Appreciate you all!
-Allie

You Are Amazing! Thank
You For The Joy You
Bring To SERENITY.
CANCE

Thank you for your
time and compassion
that has helped promote
comfort and support.
April B

I have gotten to
meet and know you!
What a Blessing - Susan

We are so blessed
to have you!
Thank you for
everything!
-Marianah, RN

We are blessed!
We have the most
Amazing volunteers!!
you are all angels!
Thank You & ☺
Connie

Thank you
so much for
all the time you
take and all of the
work you do for our
patients! You are
amazing! -Rachel RN

What an amazing
team. Thank you
for all you do
-Dana

Thank you for
all you do to help
us. You are all a
Blessing
-Facy

A huge thank you
to gatherer. Sometimes
I am overwhelmed
with things and it is
a lifesaver when
they help! -Emily

Thank you so much
for the time you
spend with our patients
and all you do for
Serenity!! Sheila

Thank you for
everything you all
do! You all make
a huge difference
at Serenity!
-Jen B

We are so BLESSED to
have each of you!
Thank you! -Jen

Serenity is
beyond special...
all of you are a
huge part of who we
are & the care we
provide! Thank
you
-Aimee

Thank you for
giving your time for
our patients.
Greatly appreciated!
-Lauri

Thank you so very
much for all you
do for Serenity and
our patients + families.
You are all Amazing!
-Carmen

Thank you so much
for all the time you
take with our
patients!
-Chamber

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers for everything you all do. we appreciate you ♥

Love,
Carmen

Together we care deeply
and your volunteer dedication
inspires all of us to be our best.
Thank you for your help and compassion.

- Rob

Thank you to all
the volunteers! Esp-
Bob, for putting my
admit charts together!

- Sam

Thank you for
giving your time
and helping our
organization.

Maggie

We truly are blessed
with the VERY best in
volunteers. Thank you
for ALL that you do to
enrich the lives of our
patients. ♥,
Jenn M.

we can't do what
we do without you!
Thank you for being
part of our mission!

Sam P.

Thank you for all you
do! Volunteers are such
special people who give
freely of their time and
talents to help others. May
God bless you! Love,
Linda

Thank you to our cookie
volunteers! Last week I
saw a small child (3 or
4) running around w/ a
cookie grinning ear to
ear. His mom looked on
the brink of tears and
this is a very hard time
for families. Despite it
all, something as simple
as a cookie eased
the mood, and the
emotional burden on
the parents. It made
me think of the Domino
impact they have on
families. - Gabby

You are all Angels
on earth! I sincerely
appreciate your
willingness to giving
your time and talents
to support the work
of Serenity Hospice
and thank your
dedication and
generosity plays a
crucial role in
making Serenity the
wonderful organization
we are. Thank you!
does not say enough!
God Bless you!
Sincerely,
Marilyn

Where do I begin to thank you
all? I have had the
privilege of working with some
of you for nearly 20 years,
and it never ceases to amaze
me how willing you are to
help in nearly every capacity
at Serenity. Whether you sit
with patients, bake cookies, answer
phones, clean bathrooms or help
at one (or more) of our many
fundraisers, it is inspiring and
humbling to know you. Bless you! Rose

I would also like to shoutout thank Karen Virnode-Brown, for truly going the extra mile to make Art Dash happen. NO matter what is going on, she is working on Art Dash. She is meticulous down to the spelling of Artists' names in every print and has done so much behind the scenes to get quality art for the event. She doesn't forget a detail, and has even managed to get several new artists involved w/ Serenity and our other events. She literally works on making this event successful, day and night, year-round. Even beyond that, she still signs up for crockpot meals and donates things to the shed for new craft ideas. Serenity and its mission are always on her mind. Thank You! - Gabby

Simply said... We could not do this without you, your time, and your talents. Thank you everyone, for everything! Abby

Your commitment to Serenity is appreciated!! Margaret

A million Thank you's to our Amazing volunteers! We truly ~~would not~~ be able to do what we do without your continuous dedication to Serenity and our patients! There really is a special ~~heart~~ inside everyone of our volunteers. Thank you All so much for dedicating your time help & enrich our patients & staffs lives. It truly means the world and you are all so appreciated! ♥ Jasmine, SH-CNA

Thank you for all that you do, we could not function without you. Everyone of you are special and very appreciated. There is not enough words to express what you mean to us. Thank you for your dedication & commitment to the patients/staff ♥ Lisa

It has been almost 10 years since Sandy Suslek walked through the Serenity Shed doors! Sandy has blessed us with her many talents painting and teaching classes to adults and children. Sandy is always looking for new ideas and loves the Shed as much as we do. She comes in to cover for us when we have to leave and is happy to give tours and tell anyone who walks through the doors all about the shed. Of all the things Sandy brings to us though the most important is her friendship.

-Cathy Warren



