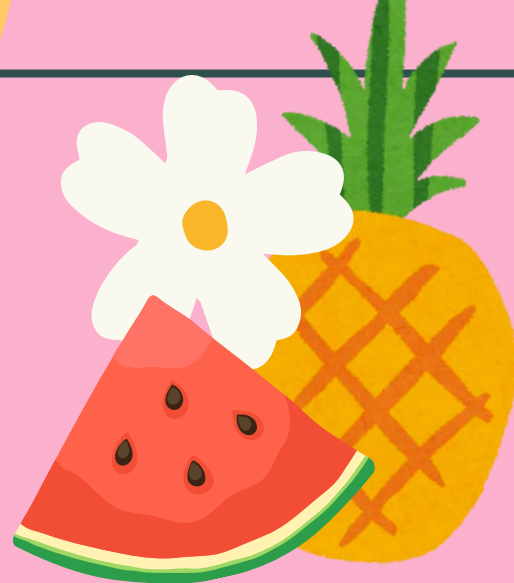


# Valued Volunteer

Volume 4 | Issue 2



July 2025

As we embrace the warmth of summer, we are excited to present the July edition of our Valued Volunteer newsletter. Your stories of kindness and generosity continue to inspire us! Whether you're offering companionship, helping with administrative tasks, or supporting our events, each of you plays a crucial role in enhancing the lives of those we serve.

Your dedication and involvement are vital to our ongoing success. We're always in search of volunteers to assist with various aspects of our mission. Whether you have just a few hours to spare or are seeking a more regular commitment, there are countless ways to get involved. You can find many opportunities within this newsletter, or feel free to reach out to the volunteer manager for more details on current openings.

Thank you once again for your remarkable generosity and spirit. Together, we are making a significant impact, one life at a time. We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and find inspiration in the stories and opportunities shared.

*Stephanie Wheeler*

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# Honoring Our Heroes:





# *Honoring Our Heroes:*

## *How Volunteers Strengthen the We Honor Veterans Program*

At Serenity Hospice and Home, we believe that every person deserves dignity, compassion, and respect at the end of life—especially those who have served our country. That's why we are proud to be a Level 5 Partner in the We Honor Veterans program, the highest recognition awarded through this national initiative developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

### ***What is We Honor Veterans?***

We Honor Veterans is a pioneering program that focuses on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening, and grateful acknowledgment of our nation's Veterans. It equips hospice staff and volunteers with the tools to address the unique physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of Veterans at the end of life.

As a Level 5 partner, Serenity Hospice and Home is committed to:

- Identifying and honoring Veterans in our care
- Providing education to staff and volunteers about military culture and trauma-informed care
- Building partnerships with the VA and local veteran service organizations
- Engaging in continuous quality improvement
- Providing inclusive, compassionate care to all Veterans—including those underserved or often overlooked

This spring, Serenity Hospice proudly hosted a special event that showcased the true spirit of We Honor Veterans. In partnership with the local Veterans Assistance Commission (VAC) and the Polo American Legion, we held a heartfelt breakfast titled “Honoring Women in Military Life.”

This gathering was dedicated to female Veterans and women who supported their loved ones in the military—the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters whose quiet service too often goes unrecognized.

Our volunteers were the heartbeat of this event, preparing and serving breakfast with care and joy. From fresh-baked pastries to warm coffee and kind smiles, every detail reflected gratitude. Local organizations set up informational booths, offering resources and support for Veterans and their families.

Most moving of all, we held a pinning ceremony where 14 female Veterans were honored and acknowledged for their service. The moment was powerful and emotional, filled with tears, pride, and sincere appreciation. It was a reminder that our community is full of remarkable women whose stories deserve to be heard and honored.

Events like this are only possible because of the compassionate dedication of our volunteers. Whether it’s helping prepare a meal, leading a ceremony, or simply offering a listening ear, volunteers play a vital role in bringing the We Honor Veterans program to life.

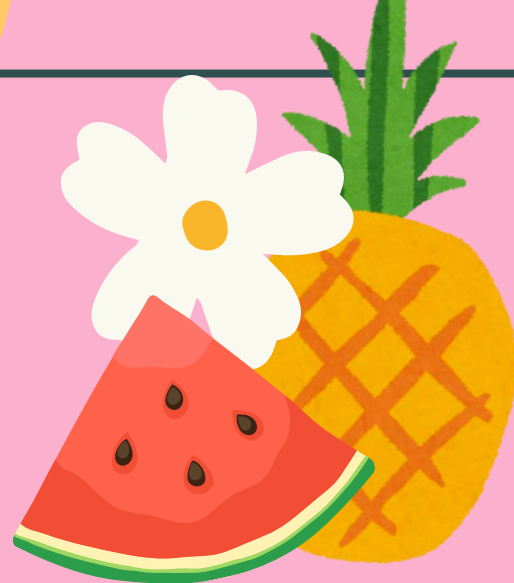
Some ways volunteers support this mission include:

- Assisting with or leading Veteran Pinning Ceremonies
- Creating patriotic blankets, cards, or tokens of appreciation
- Listening to and recording Veterans’ life stories
- Supporting events on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and other holidays
- Supporting our Veteran events
- Being present, bearing witness, and saying “thank you”

We are deeply grateful for the volunteers who continue to help us recognize and honor those who have served. Every moment shared, every story heard, every ceremony held is a meaningful tribute to those who gave so much.

If you’re interested in getting involved with our We Honor Veterans efforts—or if you have a story or skill to share—please reach out. Together, we can continue to ensure that no Veteran is forgotten at the end of life.

# Meet our Staff



Meet Jacob Fane, Director of Finance at Serenity Hospice and Home. A Dixon, IL native, Jacob brings not only professional expertise but also a deep connection to the local communities Serenity serves. He began his journey in finance at Sauk Valley Community College, continued at Northern Illinois University to earn his degree, and went on to become a Certified Public Accountant. Jacob's love for accounting—sparked by a natural talent for math and science—stems from his passion for solving problems and using data to guide sound decisions. Outside of work, Jacob stays connected to his hometown by coaching soccer at Dixon High School, where he once played himself. He enjoys mentoring players, refereeing local matches, and playing in an adult league in DeKalb. His competitive spirit extends to golf, which he says appeals to his analytical mind—most recently, he played his first round at PrairieView Golf Club during Serenity's Jonathon Knodle Memorial Golf Play Day.

Jacob credits Serenity's strong foundation to the dedicated team and Kathy Groenhagen's leadership before him. He's committed to ensuring the organization's financial stability while keeping patients first. "The numbers have to make sense, but sustainability and patient care go hand in hand," he says. With a close-knit family, a spirit of community service, and a drive for teamwork, Jacob is excited to help Serenity thrive now and in the future.



Jacob  
F



# Reflecting on an incredible 3 months

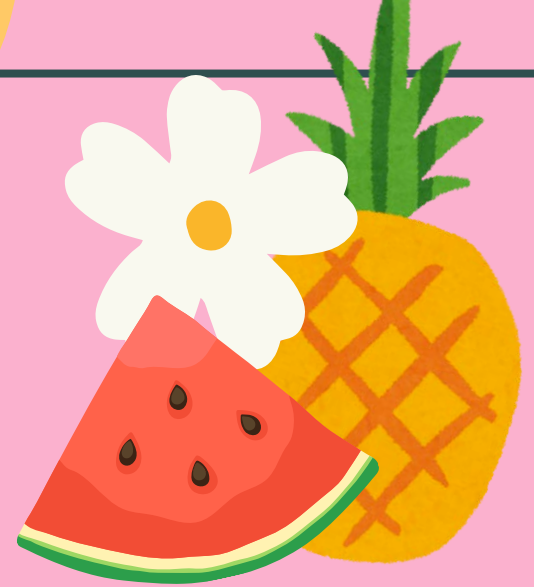
These past three months have truly been remarkable! The compassion, creativity, and dedication you have all demonstrated have not gone unnoticed.

## Highlights of Our Journey

- April kicked off with a Veteran Café at the Rock River Center, where we celebrated Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Amazing veterans gathered to enjoy donuts, camaraderie, and shared memories through photos and mementos from their service.
- We attended volunteer fairs in Rockford and Dixon, connecting with many wonderful individuals eager to lend a helping hand.
- The Gatherer Craft group met in April and May, dedicating time to create beautiful pieces for the Garden Luncheon. In June, they prepared items for the Butterfly Release.
- Our volunteers played a vital role in making the Art Dash a success on April 9th, assisting with traffic direction, serving hors d'oeuvres, and tracking dashers as they selected their favorite art pieces.
- One of our favorite events of the year, the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, took place on April 25th. Our incredible volunteers enjoyed a Hawaiian-themed dinner, complete with pork rice bowls, games, and a chance to win a raffle basket generously donated by Serenity Hospice staff.
- A heartfelt thank you to the volunteers who attended on April 29th to complete their yearly continuing education. Understanding best practices enables us to be the best volunteers possible for our patients and their families.
- On May 6th, we proudly hosted a "Women in Military Life" breakfast, where volunteers prepared delicious dishes to honor 14 female military veterans along with women supporting military loved ones.
- May 8th saw our volunteers transform the Brubaker Center at Stronghold into a Snapdragon and Dragonfly paradise for the Annual Garden Luncheon.
- On May 9th, volunteers created 600 shooter-style desserts for guests to enjoy at the luncheon.
- The main event, the Garden Luncheon, on May 10th was a triumph, with volunteers directing traffic, serving lunch, facilitating games, and supporting guests.
- Education continued in May, with volunteers learning about Palliative services on May 21st from our Palliative Manager, Whitney M., RN. On June 18th, they participated in a refresher course on End of Life Pain and Symptom Management and the vital role of volunteers.
- On June 14th, we gathered at the Prairie View Golf Course, where golfers showed their support for Serenity Hospice and Home. Volunteers managed the hole-in-one spot, offering golfers a chance to win prizes!

Throughout all these activities, our volunteers ensured that patients and families received companionship, respite, compassion, and cherished moments together. They participated in volunteer support chats, shared experiences about patient visits, and helped maintain the smooth operation of Angel Treasures resale shops. Their contributions included answering calls, administrative tasks, crocheting and knitting for patients, beautifying the Serenity Home, creating memory pillows, participating in grief groups, baking goods, and so much more.

# Meet our Volunteer

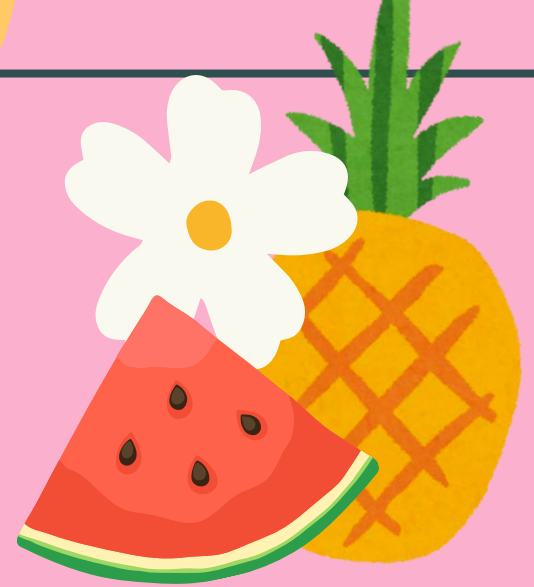


My name is Trisha Henson and I just started volunteering a few months ago, so you may not have seen me just yet! But here is a little background about me. I am originally from Bloomington, IL. I moved to Dixon about 2 years ago when I met my husband. I have an 18 year old son who just graduated high school this year and a stepson who is starting his junior year of high school. In my free time I am currently going to school to get a Masters in Elementary Teaching. I also enjoy taking my dogs for walks or hanging out with my 2 cats, one of which is extremely snuggly. Hope to meet some of you soon.



Trisha  
H

# Meet our Volunteer



I'm Sandy. I've always believed in the importance of giving back to the community. My journey has included participating in Boy Scouts, 4-H, and various other activities as needed. I enjoy making quilts and I have a certified therapy dog. I am currently in the early stages of training her sister for the same title. My husband and I have been happily married for 53 years, and we are proud parents of three sons and grandparents to three grandchildren. Two of our sons and our granddaughter also engage in volunteer work.



Sandra  
S



# Volunteer Opportunities



## GATHERER CRAFT GROUP

Join Us for the Monthly Gatherer Craft Group!

- **Date:** Wednesday July 2nd
- **Time:** 11 AM
- **Location:** Serenity Conference Room

Come and join us for our monthly Gatherer Craft Group! This is a fantastic opportunity to connect with volunteers from various roles at Serenity Hospice and Home. Whether you're a seasoned crafter or just beginning, everyone is welcome to join in! We will provide all the necessary materials for a fun and relaxing crafting session. This is a wonderful chance to unleash your creativity, acquire new skills, and contribute meaningfully to our community. We look forward to seeing you there, ready to craft, chat, and enjoy the company of fellow volunteers!

## KNIT & CROCHET GROUP

Join Us for the Monthly Knit and Crochet Group!

- **Date:** Friday, July 11
- **Time:** 10 AM
- **Location:** Serenity Shed

If you have a passion for knitting or crocheting, we invite you to join us at the Shed for our gathering. Crafters of all skill levels are welcome, whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out. Don't forget to bring your yarn, hooks, needles, and a smile—refreshments will be provided. We eagerly await your presence for a morning filled with creativity and friendship!

## CANDY REQUEST

We are thrilled to participate in Autumn on Parade each year, and we couldn't do it without your generous donations! I am currently collecting individually wrapped candy (please, no chocolate) and fun trinkets for children. Here are some suggestions for trinkets:

- Colorful stickers
- Mini puzzles
- Temporary tattoos
- Bouncy balls
- Bubbles
- Small toy figurines

If you have any other creative ideas or items you'd like to contribute, please feel free to add them as well. Every donation plays a vital role in making our event a success and brings joy to many. Thank you for your kindness and support!

# Volunteer Opportunities



## FRONT DESK GREETER

We are seeking a friendly and organized individual to assist at the front desk of Serenity Home. Your responsibilities will include:

- Greeting visitors
- Managing phone calls
- Assisting with various administrative tasks

We require help on the following days:

- **Sundays: 8:00 AM – 12:30 PM and 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM**
- **Tuesdays: July 1st and 8th from 4:30 PM – 8:00 PM**
- **Thursdays: 4:30 PM – 8:00 PM**
- **Saturdays: 8:00 AM – 12:30 PM and 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM**

## CROCKPOT MEALS

A delightful way to contribute is by providing a crockpot meal on Fridays for the visitors at the Serenity Home.

We are seeking assistance on the following dates:

- **July 4th**
- **July 18th**
- **July 25th**
- **August 1st**

## BOOK CLUB

- **Date: Thursday August 21st**
- **Time: 830 AM**
- **Location: Village Bakery**

Join us at book club! In August, we'll be diving into "Iona's Version: Rules for Commuting" by Clare Pooley. It's an engaging read that explores the nuances and quirks of daily travel, wrapped in Pooley's signature wit and warmth. Whether you're a seasoned commuter or simply curious about the unique stories that unfold between bus stops and train stations, this book is sure to resonate.



# Volunteer Opportunities



## SUPPORT CHAT

- **Date:** Wednesday, July 30th
- **Time:** 10:45 AM
- **Location:** Serenity conference room

Volunteering your time and energy to assist hospice patients is a truly noble and compassionate act. It's a great opportunity for all volunteers to gather, ask questions, and expand their knowledge on how to best help those in need. By sharing experiences, insights, and tips, everyone can improve their skills and offer enhanced care and companionship to hospice patients.

## ONLINE EDUCATION

Our Online Education Program: Vietnam Remembered, a Film by Larry Capetto

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_HkDtCBdNUs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HkDtCBdNUs)

This program offers an immersive exploration of the personal stories and experiences of veterans who served during the Vietnam War. Through impactful interviews and archival footage, the film aims to honor the sacrifices of these courageous individuals while giving them a platform to share their memories and reflections.

Viewers are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of the war's complexities and its enduring effects on those who experienced it. Once you've watched the film, please be sure to log your hours under training and take note of this film.

## EDUCATION

- **Date:** Wednesday, July 23rd
- **Time:** 11 AM
- **Location:** Serenity Conference Room

We are excited to announce a special guest for this month's volunteer education session! The Alzheimer's Association will be presenting on **"Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors."** Join us for an enlightening experience where we will acquire valuable insights and practical strategies to better understand and support individuals living with dementia. This presentation will equip volunteers with the skills needed to foster a compassionate and supportive environment for those affected. Don't miss this chance to learn from experts and make a meaningful impact in our community. Refreshments will be provided, and a Q&A session will follow. We look forward to seeing you there!

# Volunteer Opportunities



## TRAINING CLASS

We are thrilled to share details about our next volunteer training class! Please spread the word about our four-part training series scheduled for the following dates:

- **Friday, July 25th**
- **Tuesday, July 29th**
- **Friday, August 1st**
- **Tuesday, August 8th**

This training will take place from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM and will equip volunteers with the essential tools to become a valued volunteer at Serenity Hospice and Home. This training offers an excellent chance to enhance the hospice understanding and make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve.

## COOKIE BAKING

### Calling All Baking Enthusiasts!

Do you have a passion for baking? Our patients and their families absolutely adore cookies and baked treats. We're seeking volunteers who can come to Serenity Home and whip up some cookies for our families. Whether you're an experienced baker or simply enjoy the delightful scent of freshly baked cookies, this is a fantastic opportunity to share your love for baking and bring joy to others.

If you're interested in dedicating your time and skills to make a meaningful difference, we would love to welcome you to our team. Together, we can create a truly sweet impact!

## VETERAN CAFE

Join us on Monday August 18<sup>th</sup> at 1pm at the Rock River Center, Oregon for our Veteran Cafe ice cream social. It's a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow veterans and enjoy some delicious ice cream in a friendly and welcoming environment. Bring your stories, share your experiences, and make new friends. We look forward to seeing you there!