



HOSPICE PARTNERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Our mission is to provide compassionate end-of-life-care,
emphasizing life, choice and dignity in partnership with patients,
families and community.*

Volunteer E-News

September/October 2008

A Note from Leslie

“In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

It is time once again to express my gratitude! We have a fabulous team of volunteers! Thank you all for your enthusiasm and the wonderful work you are doing with and for our patients! We have grown to 26 patient care volunteers, two prayer shawl volunteers and two special projects volunteers. In addition, we receive beautiful lap blankets from Stitches from the Heart, Israel Levin Senior Adult Center and Binky Patrol. We also receive decorated table top Christmas trees, Hanukkah bushes and Spring baskets from the JoyCatchers.

Our Open House - held September 23rd here at our office, was a success! We had a great turn out of volunteers and staff – a few physicians even showed up! 😊 Thank you for your support and the many positive thoughts sent by volunteers unable to attend!

Halloween, All Saints Day and The Day of the Dead are just around the corner and I thought it would be fun to share an article on the Day of the Dead that I found on-line. Hope you enjoy it!

Celebrations Reflecting Mortality: Halloween, Day of the Dead

Posted on [Pallimed](#) (a Hospice and Palliative Medicine Blog) by Christian Sinclair, MD



Candy corn, costumed kids, ghouls, goblins, and scary stories. The traditions of the American (commercialized) Halloween are good for a few laughs and scares, but this time of year is a great example of how embracing our own mortality can be a celebration of life. Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a traditional holiday, originating from Latin America spanning Halloween, All Saints Day and All Souls Day. The most well-known celebrations of Dia de los Muertos originate from Mexico where whimsical artistic expressions of skeletons help people remember and commemorate their loved ones. It originated



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with the indigenous cultures of Mexico (Aztec, Olmec, Maya, etc) and was later merged with Catholic themes as those two cultures merged in the past few centuries.

With a superficial glance, celebrating and honoring the dead may seem morbid or perverse, especially to those who may see death as a taboo subject, only to be talked about when necessary. But Dia de los Muertos helps break the somber tone with various traditions that I wanted to share with you here. Events like Day of the Dead are not meant to take away from personal reflections around the time of a loved ones' anniversary, birthday, death day etc. But when we have times to get together and communally celebrate and not just memorialize with somber mood, these too can be important on an individual and public basis.

This is a great theme to bring up in palliative care as a teaching point or in counseling and working with patients and families in how to embrace mortality as a celebration of life.

Celebrating the lives of the deceased

Dia de los Muertos is a time to go to cemeteries and bring gifts to deceased loved ones. Toys for children or flowers, candy, food and even alcohol for adults. There people often eat and picnic near those who have already died. In addition altars are made with pictures, candles and other memorabilia celebrating the deceased.

Symbols

The skull is omnipresent in Dia de los Muertos altars, decorations, and costumes. It is typically drawn in a light hearted way, and some art portrays skeletons in colorful, comical situations. The symbol of a skull is also highlighted in food preparation with sugar skulls, cakes, and other foods decorated with them. It is interesting how the skull has recently been raised in teen pop culture and clothing in the past two years, often in an ironic and funny way.



Food

The above mentioned sugar skulls are a popular treat. They are for eating, not just for decorations. Pan de muerto (bread of the dead) is another popular food made during this celebration.

It would be nice to see some of these traditions given some attention in the United States outside of the Southwest. Death does not have to be solely perceived as the inability to cure. The traditions that help us preserve the memory of deceased loved ones are important. Hospice and palliative care teams could engage their local communities to highlight these traditions. It might make us all a little less fearful of death and more appreciative of the short lives we have.



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Mark your Calendars!

- ♥ **November 8th & December 13th at 10am – 4pm** - Volunteer Orientation Training
- ♥ **November- 12th 5:30 – 7:00pm** - Volunteer support meeting
- ♥ **November 12th 7:30 pm** "What is a Good Death?" at [NPR West](#)
- ♥ **November 19th at 1- 4pm** - Mindful Communications Workshop
- ♥ **November 19th at 5:30–** Team Party (details will be emailed to you!)

Happy Birthday to You ...



"It takes a long time to grow young." - Pablo Picasso

Judith Ubick	September 4	Lila Saint Denis	November 23
Eva Barrow	September 20	Sunda Bamaung	November 25
Eva Salzer	September 23	Agnes Anderson	November 25
Susan Mayle	October 5	Melanie Burns	November 29
Barbara Kennedy	October 13	Karen Vinje	December 10
Edith Kennedy	October 16	Gemini Adams	December 21

Happy One Year Anniversary!

John Sellman	May	Stacy Bozeman	November
Gladys Godwin	July	Susan Mayle	November
Anh Ong	October	Joanne Press	December
Karen Vinje	November	Denise Johanson	December
Lila Saint Denis	November	JoDee Moen	December

Down to Business ...

Protecting Your Privacy

Using our home and cell phone risks your own privacy. If you do not have Call Blocking as the default on your home or cell phone, dial *67 + number you are dialing to block your number from showing up on patients/families' caller ID for that **one** call.



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After Hours Phone Number

If you want to leave a non-urgent after-hours message for the Volunteer Department call: (310) 315-1538 ext 104. Please use the regular number (310) 264-8413 during normal business hours.

Links you might find helpful ...

Communication and Active Listening

[Learning to Listen](#) an article from LATimes.com (Submitted by Barbara Kennedy – Thank you!)

[Listen up](#) an article on Active listening from revolutionhealth.com

[Caring for Alzheimer's - Communication](#) an article from the Alzheimer's Association

Hospice Foundations and Associations

[Hospice Foundation of America](#)

[National Hospice Foundation](#)

[The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization](#)

National Hospice Helpline: 1-800-658-8898

Diseases

[Cancers A-Z](#)

[What is Heart Failure \(CHF\)?](#)

[What is Dementia?](#)

[What is ALS?](#)

[What is Multiple Myeloma?](#)

[What is COPD?](#)

[What is Alzheimer's?](#)

[What is Parkinson's Disease?](#)

[What is Renal Failure?](#)