

House Calls

St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association | Summer 2019



Remembering Kathy Mills Passionate Ambassador for Moms and Babies

Lehigh Valley attorney, community volunteer and lifelong advocate for women and babies Kathleen M. Mills passed away earlier this year, leaving a huge void at St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP).

NFP connects low-income, first-time mothers with registered nurses, who are a much-needed support system from early in pregnancy through the first two years of the child's life.

A member of the NFP Community Advisory Board since its inception, Kathy played a pivotal role in the development of the program for more than a decade. According to Kelly Berk, MPH, BSN, RN, Network Director, Maternal Child Health Initiatives at St. Luke's, "At its core, NFP is a child abuse prevention program. We are trying to break the cycle of poverty and our mission was near and dear to Kathy's heart. Kathy believed every child, regardless of where they started in life, should have an opportunity to be successful, and with the support of NFP, our moms and babies have that opportunity."

A staunch believer that true early prevention can make a huge impact, Kathy provided unwavering support in many ways. No task was too big or too small for Kathy. She regularly attended community events on behalf of NFP, searched for developmental baby toys and books and quietly performed a variety of administrative tasks. Kathy was on site at the NFP office once a week and wrote hundreds of thank you letters to donors on behalf of NFP. "Kathy provided unwavering support to St. Luke's NFP for years. She was a fierce ambassador for our moms and babies, advocating for both with compassion and strength. Kathy contributed in so many ways – large and small, publicly and privately – and she is missed every day," says Kelly.

Kathy had a long and successful law career focusing on employment and labor law, practicing at the Lehigh Valley law firm Fitzpatrick Lentz & Bubba, P.C. (FLB) since 2006. Joseph A. Bubba, Co-Managing Partner at FLB, says "Kathy was the 'heart and soul' of FLB's

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St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association, as part of St. Luke's University Health Network, provides compassionate, excellent quality, cost-effective home health care, hospice services and home-based parent/child programs.

St Luke's
VISITING NURSE
ASSOCIATION

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ST. LUKE'S NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is a voluntary, evidence-based home visitation program in which Registered Nurses with specialized education visit low-income, first-time at-risk mothers from early in pregnancy through the first two years of the child's life to accomplish three goals:

- Improve pregnancy outcomes
- Improve child health and development
- Improve families' economic self-sufficiency

WHO CAN JOIN?

First-time mothers who are

- Less than 28 weeks pregnant
- Low income
- Living in Lehigh or Northampton County

Entry into the program early in pregnancy is correlated with higher program retention and completion.

PROGRAM COST: FREE

Learn More: 484-526-2786,

nfp@sluhn.org or

www.sluhn.org/vna/nurse-family-partnership



Kathy Mills being honored as a St. Luke's "Shining Star"

community efforts. She rallied our employees around causes that were important to her. She was passionate about St. Luke's efforts to work with underprivileged families and children and she engaged our staff in efforts to collect clothes and supplies, knit booties, and donate their time to families in need."

Kathy facilitated endless initiatives at FLB on behalf of St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership. Tags on the Christmas tree for moms and babies were converted into beautiful gifts for families who otherwise may have received none. Piles of scarves – thousands of which Kathy personally knitted – were donated to the young mothers in the NFP program. "We are so grateful to FLB and the firm's employees," says Kelly.

"Kathy believed every child, regardless of where they started in life, should have an opportunity to be successful."

In addition to her commitment to St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership, Kathy previously served on the Boards of Trustees of St. Luke's University Health Network and St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association. At the St. Luke's 2015 "Dinner by Starlight" event, Kathy was recognized as a "Shining Star" for her advocacy of young mothers and children.

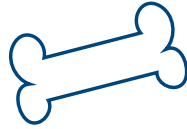
"I worked with Kathy in the early 2000's," says St. Luke's Sacred Heart president Frank Ford, who was St. Luke's VNA president while Kathy was board chair. "Kathy was very compassionate and did everything possible to help young mothers and babies – especially those from disadvantaged families. She was a wonderful woman and I can't say enough about her and her dedication to the NFP program."

Kathy worked tirelessly as an ambassador for young mothers and their babies until her death. She will be missed by the NFP team and the entire St. Luke's community.

NFP supporters continue to honor Kathy through their incredible work with new moms and their babies.



To support St. Luke's NFP, visit www.sluhn.org/vna/nurse-family-partnership



Scout the Therapy Dog

Sporting her custom-made St. Luke's neckerchief, 5-year-old Golden Retriever Scout makes her weekly rounds at St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House. First, she visits the social workers, then the chaplain's office before stopping at the front desk. Next, Scout swings by the volunteers' office, greeting staff members, physicians and administrators along the way. This is all before she arrives at the sign-in kiosk! Scout, named after the young girl in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is a certified therapy dog who, along with her owner Susan Reppert, has been providing comfort to hospice patients and their families since last year.

Susan is well-acquainted with St. Luke's Hospice – her mother was in hospice care for two years at the end of her life and Susan's father received in-home hospice care many years earlier. "The hospice nurses were incredible, and I am so grateful for the care they provided to my parents," says Susan.

When Susan learned St. Luke's was utilizing therapy dogs at St. Luke's Hospice House, she knew Scout was an ideal candidate. Recently retired, Susan was walking 4-5 miles every day with Scout, and they had become quite a team. "Scout has the typical golden personality – she is even-tempered and playful, yet quiet and calm. Also, she gets car sick so the short ride to Black River Road is perfect for us," explains Susan with a laugh.

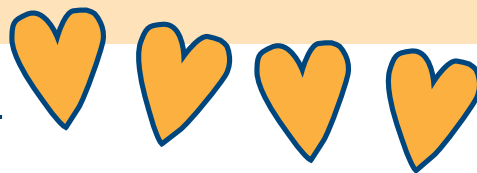


Brings Comfort to Hospice Patients and Families

Following pet therapy certification provided through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, both Susan and Scout completed St. Luke's volunteer training and began their visits. Typically, they are at St. Luke's Hospice House between 45 and 90 minutes, once a week. Visitation with therapy dogs results in reduced anxiety and stress, feelings of peace and tranquility and can also create a much-needed respite during what may otherwise be a stressful time for families. According to Susan, most families are receptive to Scout and welcome her visits. Susan recalls one gentleman petting Scout while having a conversation who admitted "I'm not really crazy about dogs – I was a mailman – but this is a nice dog!"

Susan shares that each visit is unique, but one aspect remains consistent: almost every time they visit the hospice house, Scout gets at least one request to have her picture taken. As for Susan, volunteering allows her to give back. "Hospice is near and dear to my heart and Scout and I can do this together. She is a happy, special dog and I am so happy to get to share her."

In addition to volunteering at St. Luke's Hospice House, Susan and Scout also periodically serve as greeters in the lobby of St. Luke's Hospital – Bethlehem as well as in the surgical waiting room there.



If you want to learn more about volunteering for hospice, please visit sluhn.org/volunteernow or contact Juana Van Steenvoort, Volunteer Coordinator, St. Luke's Hospice at 484-526-7124.

Riding Across America in Honor of St. Luke's Hospice



Will Towne
Biker and Hospice Volunteer

In 2011, William Towne, Ph.D. biked 500 miles through Iowa with a friend, planting the seed that one day he wanted to bike across the whole country. An avid cyclist for more than 20 years, Will continued riding several times a week in and around the countryside near his home in Kempton, Pennsylvania. "I am certain this is one of the best places in the country to ride a bicycle," explains Will, "You can find hills if you want them or you can avoid them. This farmland creates a beautiful place to ride."

Recently retired following a 33+ year career in the Biology Department at Kutztown University, Will finally has the time for a cross-country journey. Will Towne's Ride Across America 2019, a 3,695-mile bike ride across the United States from Oregon to New Hampshire, started June 23, and runs through August 12, 2019. Will and one of his regular riding buddies are participating in the 6-leg, 7-week ride, cycling an average of 80 miles a day.

Will decided to make the ride "in honor of an inspiring person and a compassionate organization." He will be accepting donations for St. Luke's Hospice and the Joshua W. Wesner Memorial Scholarship. Josh was an inspiring young man Will taught at Kutztown who passed away in 2000 at the age of 23 after

heroic battles with injuries from a car accident, followed by Hodgkin's lymphoma. The pre-medical scholarship, established in 2000, was created to honor Josh's dream of becoming a physician and is awarded to a student once a year.

Following his mother's hospice care in 2010 and his father's service as a hospice volunteer, Will began volunteering for St. Luke's Hospice in 2016. "When my mom was receiving hospice care we appreciated the nurses and aides so much. They were caring, reassuring and uplifting – they inspired me," says Will. He visits patients in their homes for an hour or two once a week. Each family's needs are different, so sometimes he does odds and ends around the house, other times he plays chess with a patient and many times he simply visits with the patient, so a spouse or caregiver can get a break or run an errand.

Will also manages the front desk at St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House once a week. His presence allows the inpatient unit staff and nurses to have an uninterrupted status update meeting between shifts.

According to Juana Van Steenvoort, Volunteer Coordinator for St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association, "Will is an amazing volunteer! He is always willing to do more to help us, our patients and families, and our program. He truly has a generous heart!"

Because Will and his wife Ann are covering the expenses for the bike ride, 100% of donations will benefit the recipient organizations.

***Donations are being accepted now through the end of the year.
To learn more and to donate, visit www.rideacrossamerica2019.com***

Memorial Tree of Life at St. Luke's Hospice House

Honor a loved one or a special friend by dedicating a plaque in his or her name on the Memorial Tree of Life at St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House. Naming opportunities are available for those who wish to leave an everlasting memorial of a loved one on a leaf, acorn, or stone plaque.* One-time gifts of \$1,000 or more will secure your personalized plaque.

Philanthropy brings comfort and care to thousands of people each year. Proceeds from the Memorial Tree of Life will support the St. Luke's Hospice Endowment Fund to ensure that everyone in need of hospice care will have access to this special resource, regardless of ability to pay.

For more information about naming opportunities, memorializing a loved one or leaving a legacy gift, please contact Melissa Siegfried, Director of Development, at 484-526-3691 or Melissa.Siegfried@sluhn.org.

*** See enclosed envelope for order details.**



Celebrating a Loved One's Birthday at the 9th Annual Hospice Bike Ride



Scott McLaren was an avid bicycle rider much of his life. When he was in his 20s, he once biked from Philadelphia to his dear aunt's front doorstep in Florida. In 2011, he rode in the inaugural St. Luke's Hospice Bike Ride on the 60-mile course. Shortly after that first hospice ride, Scott was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. The summer he was diagnosed, he rode almost 1,000 miles. Scott loved cycling.



Scott's Birthday Riders at the 2019 Charity Bike Ride

Jill and Scott were married 33 years, and along with sharing their love for cycling, they also had a jewelry business together. On the day of their 33rd wedding anniversary, Scott lost his battle with cancer and passed away at home with hospice. Jill held onto the jewelry business as long as she could, but it wasn't the same without Scott and after a couple of years she chose to give it up.

Jill could think of no better way to honor Scott's memory than to participate in the annual St. Luke's Hospice Bike Ride – the same ride that her husband once loved. As her jewelry business was winding down, Jill decided to sell her jewelry at a reduced cost to raise money. With the money raised, Jill covered the registration fee for friends and family to ride along with her in memory of Scott.

The ride always falls around Scott's early-June birthday. "I just started telling everyone, 'I want to do this ride for Scott's birthday. Want to join me?'" The first year her team was 7-8 strong, and each year the more who learn about it, the more who want to participate. "This year we had 20 on our team," Jill says. They ride

under the banner: "Scott's Birthday Riders." "I never expected to be riding in this ride for him," she says.

At this year's ride, Jill spoke to the crowd at the start and shared with the other riders why she participates. She encouraged others who have experienced loss to celebrate their loved one's memory and explained how this bike ride is the happiest day of her year. This was the fourth year Jill has participated in the annual ride.

With a large group, Jill says, "We go at a very leisurely pace. We start at 10 am and don't finish the 20 miles until around 1 pm. No one is in a hurry." Jill holds a gigantic picnic after the event to thank those who rode along with her.

"The weather this year was spectacular," Jill says. "It was one of the best years we've ever had. We saw waterfalls flowing that hadn't been flowing in the past. It was just such a great time."

Jill says she would encourage anyone who has suffered a loss to find ways to celebrate their loved one as she has with this ride. "My hope is to recommend that others give it a shot and find ways to celebrate their loved ones with something that is just so joyous. My husband liked to bike and it was important to him, and so, I like to do a fun activity for him while helping others at the same time."

This year's ride was the biggest turnout to date, with over 240 riders raising more than \$15,000 for St. Luke's Hospice. This annual fundraiser helps to cover non-reimbursable hospice care costs and fund specialty programs that will benefit future hospice patients and families.

"My hope is to recommend that others . . . find ways to celebrate their loved ones with something just so joyous."



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Don't Wait Tour

SEPTEMBER 2019

Learn more about
Dr. Baxter's
journey to raise
awareness
of end-of-life care
at sluhn.org/vna.



SAVE THE DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 2019

The 7th Annual
Luminaria Lighting

St Luke's
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House Calls is published by St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association.

**St. Luke's Home Health/St. Luke's
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