

House Calls

St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association | Winter 2019



Celebrating our Past, Shaping our Future: Hospice House Gets a New Name in Memory of Brian D. Perin



Patti Gates Smith, Lisa Giovanni, Lisa Perin, Linda Perin, and Richard Anderson

St. Luke's Hospice House was officially renamed "The St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House" at a dedication ceremony held November 2, 2018. Thanks to the generous donation of over \$1 million from the estate of Brian D. Perin, co-owner of Grand Central Sanitation and related companies in the Pen Argyl region, the 14-bed freestanding inpatient facility has been named in his honor.

The contribution from Perin, who passed in February 2017, coincided with an endowment campaign that has raised more than 2.6 million for St. Luke's Hospice. "Our goal was to raise \$1.5 million to add to our existing endowment," said Lisa Giovanni, President, Visiting Nurse Association of St. Luke's. "Thanks to the gift from Mr. Perin's estate, we have been able to surpass our goal."

Celebrating our Past, Shaping our Future

Funds raised from the hospice endowment campaign, "Celebrating our Past, Shaping our

Future," will allow St. Luke's to continue maintaining the operations and physical plant at the inpatient hospice facility, provide bereavement services to grieving families, support the training and continued education of hospice staff, and meet the special needs of hospice patients and families.

St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House, located in Lower Saucon Township, is the only free-standing inpatient facility of its kind in the Lehigh Valley. Surrounded by beautiful trees and flowering shrubs, the inpatient unit provides patients and families extraordinary comfort. The rooms are warm and bright with beautiful French doors opening to private patios. Visitors of all ages can spend time with loved ones whenever they want and may stay overnight.

An interdisciplinary team works with each patient and family to meet their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and informational needs and goals of care. General inpatient care is provided by registered nurses. Complementary services such as aromatherapy, massage therapy, music, Reiki and pet therapy support each patient's quality of life. Volunteers provide conversation and companionship and offer a compassionate presence for each patient and family.

"We appreciate all the donations and support we have received and continue to receive to help provide compassionate, end-of-life care to residents of the Lehigh Valley," adds Ms. Giovanni.



In Loving Memory of Brian D. Perin



*"Brian had
a heart of gold."*

*~ Linda Mill-Perin,
sister-in-law and lifelong friend*

We would like to extend
**A SPECIAL
THANK YOU**
to our "Celebrating our Past,
Shaping our Future"
Campaign leadership, as well
as our donors, for
helping us to raise over
\$2.6 million for hospice.
We extend our heartfelt
gratitude for your selfless
dedication to this effort.

Campaign Committee

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Welcoming New Hospice Leadership



Diane Hummel-Spruill
Vice President, Patient
Care Services, Hospice

“I finally realized why I became a nurse.” That’s how Diane Hummel-Spruill felt when she started seeing hospice patients in

2004. Prior to that time, Diane was the Infection Control/Employee Health Nurse with St. Luke’s Visiting Nurse Association (VNA), responsible for oversight of employee health and matters relating to infection control for patients and employees.

After three years, Diane became a Hospice RN Case Manager and continued to be humbled by the experience of entering someone’s home during an extremely difficult time and being welcomed with open arms. “Patients and families are at their most vulnerable while receiving hospice care, and I became part of their most intimate circle,” explains Diane. “It still gives me the chills.”

In 2015, Diane transitioned out of the field and into the role of Hospice Quality Manager. In that role, Diane audited patient charts and educated staff on the rules and guidelines of hospice care. Diane and staff were recognized by the St. Luke’s Network for several performance improvement projects for upgraded symptom management and for enhancing relationships with skilled nursing facilities.

“Quality is not just about mandates and regulations. We adhere to those guidelines because they result in improved care and quality of life for our patients,” states Diane.

When Linda Moller retired in the summer of 2018, Diane was poised to take over her position. With nearly 12 years of hospice experience, first as a nurse and then as a manager, Diane felt she was ready for the role of Vice President, Patient Care Services, Hospice. Since taking the helm, Diane credits a wonderful and supportive team for making the transition seamless.



Gail Newton
Inpatient Unit (IPU)
Patient Care Manager

After a 37-year nursing career, Gail Newton has settled into the perfect role, combining her passion for nursing and her leadership coaching skills. Gail became the

Inpatient Unit (IPU) Patient Care Manager in January 2018, overseeing all operations at the St. Luke’s Brian D. Perin Hospice House, including the management of staff, coordination of patient care and facilitation of a team approach to caring for patients and families.

Gail previously held nursing administrative roles at St. Luke’s Warren Campus for more than 20 years, spending the last few as a part-

time diabetes educator. Gail was also a certified leadership coach and says, “When I took the diabetes educator position, I realized how much I missed contact with patients and families.”

Both of Gail’s parents received hospice care, which contributed to her appreciation for helping patients and families have a peaceful, dignified, end-of-life experience. “Once a patient or family makes the decision to begin hospice care, we have the opportunity to support them and their unique journey,” explains Gail.

Gail and her team try to provide “out-of-the-box care” for patients and families, meeting their specific needs and requests. Whether that means rearranging beds and opening patio doors for a nature lover or encouraging families to bring beloved pets to visit patients, the caring hospice team works hard to fulfill all wishes.

The setting at St. Luke’s Brian D. Perin Hospice House feels more like home than a hospital, and the care is not “one size fits all.” Some patients prefer a quiet room, others love listening to polka music and some avid baseball fans want the game on. It’s not unusual for birthday parties and other celebrations to be held at the Hospice House. Being able to facilitate these wishes is meaningful not only to patients and families but fulfilling to the staff as well. “I’m so happy I made the move to this position,” admits Gail. “I am passionate about leadership and passionate about hospice care and so proud to help patients and their families have a dignified end-of-life experience.”



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

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St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership's Mission



Samantha's STORY

St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) connects mothers living in poverty with their own personal nurse to help transform the first two years of their child's life. Nurses begin working with families early in pregnancy and continue until the child turns two years old. Nurses visit families in their homes, providing assessments and education on health, development and parenting, setting life goals and sharing resources. The goal of NFP is to help first-time mothers in the Lehigh Valley have healthy pregnancies and become successful parents!

When Samantha entered the St. Luke's NFP program, she was 20 years old, without a high school diploma, making minimum wage. Samantha was introduced to NFP through the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC) and upon hearing about the available services, she knew right away that she needed to join. "Tina provided my husband and me with much needed information regarding my nutrition and exercise during pregnancy," Samantha says of her NFP nurse. Tina also encouraged Samantha to go back to school to expand her goals and expectations for herself and for her family.

That assistance did not end with Samantha's pregnancy. After Samantha's son Spencer was

born, Tina continued to provide support. "From the moment I found out I was pregnant, I had it in my heart to breastfeed and having someone there to support me and help me along the way was so beneficial," explains Samantha.

Shortly after Spencer's birth, Samantha, her

tum depression before I even realized I was suffering, and then referred me to a wonderful mental health provider," admits Samantha.

NFP continued to play a role in the family's life during a pivotal time. At 15 months, Spencer's personality was changing and NFP referred Samantha to an early intervention program

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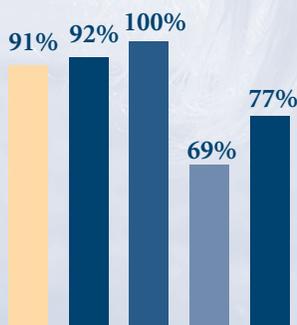
husband and Spencer moved out of state and it didn't take long for Samantha to miss the support and friendship she had come to rely on through NFP. The family returned to the Lehigh Valley after three months and rejoined the program. Reluctant at first because Tina was no longer her nurse, Samantha quickly bonded with her new nurse, Pam. "It was so important for us to be able to have someone to help us during such a mentally-overwhelming first year of parenthood," says Samantha, "and it turned out Pam was an amazing nurse too!"

Pam provided encouragement and guidance to be sure Spencer was developing and growing and achieving optimal health. According to Samantha, Pam also helped with her mental health. "She was able to recognize my postpar-

that provides services for children with development disabilities. Spencer was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder Level 2 and NFP provided support for the entire family during that trying time as well.

With the encouragement and support of NFP, Samantha went on to complete school and now, utilizing her passion for pregnancy, childbirth and infants, has embarked on a career as a birth doula. Samantha's advice for any soon-to-be mother who is debating getting a nurse through NFP is, "Do it. You will thank yourself for years to come, and not only will you learn things that will stick with you forever, but you will develop some pretty incredible relationships and feel more confident in this whole 'being a parent' thing."

St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership Making a Difference



- 91% of our mothers initiated breastfeeding
- 92% of babies born to mothers in our program were born at healthy weights
- 100% of children in our program were up-to-date on immunizations at 24 months old
- 69% of our mothers 18 years of age and older were working at the time they graduated from our program (PA, 64%; national, 61%)
- 77% of graduate mothers postponed having their second baby beyond 2 years (PA and national averages are 74%)

Caring for Hospice Patients in Monroe County



Douglas A. Degler, MD, FACP, chose to practice primary care because he wanted to develop longstanding relationships with his patients. Dr. Degler states, “Internal medicine has allowed me to take care of the whole patient. I firmly believe

that patients can receive better care when they are at their sickest if their doctor knows them when they are at their best.”

Dr. Degler, one of several internists and specialty physicians at Medical Associates of Monroe County in East Stroudsburg, is the Chief of Medicine for St. Luke’s Monroe Campus. Board certified in hospice and palliative care medicine, Dr. Degler serves as a hospice physician for patients in Monroe County receiving hospice care. In his role, he supports hospice nurses, manages medication adjustments, and approves certifications and pre-certifications for patients qualifying for hospice care.

“I believe it is important to address end-of-life care plans with my patients and help make an appropriate transition between aggressive treatments and control of pain and suffering,” explains Dr. Degler. “Understandably, patients and families sometimes get so focused on the disease process that they lose sight of the imminence of

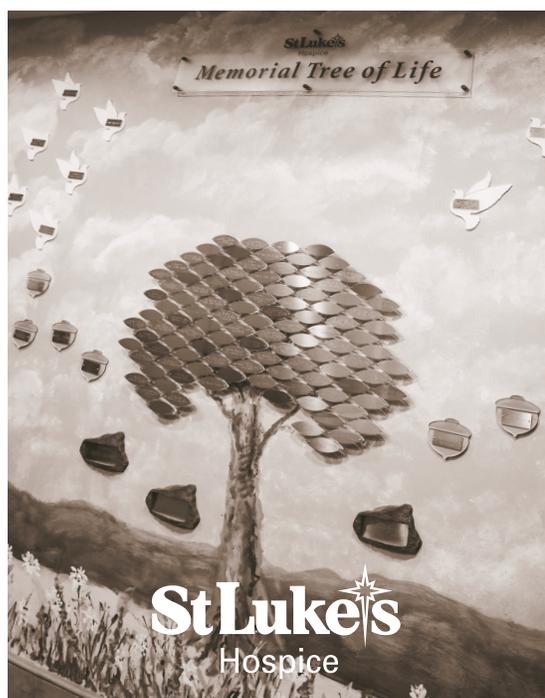
death. As a result, efforts can be spent on labs, studies and x-rays when that time may be better spent at home with family members close by,” expresses Dr. Degler.

Born and raised in Berks County, Dr. Degler moved back to Pennsylvania following his military career to raise his children closer to family. Practicing in East Stroudsburg since 2002, he regularly sees patients with diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney disease, and heart and lung disease. Dr. Degler encourages his patients to eat right, exercise, optimize weight and get enough rest to improve or maintain good health. His many years of experience help him to discern when someone should be transitioning into hospice care. “There comes a point when patients and families will benefit from less intervention and more pain alleviation and spiritual well-being. I am privileged to be part of those conversations,” he says. “Even if a patient disagrees with my recommendation, I am here to provide my experience and to help.”

“I believe it is important to address end-of-life care plans with my patients and help make an appropriate transition between aggressive treatments and control of pain and suffering.”

~Dr. Degler

Consistent with many hospice care providers, Dr. Degler laments that more patients don’t take advantage of hospice care earlier. “Hospice care is most beneficial weeks and months before end-of-life, not days, so patients can take full advantage of all hospice has to offer.”



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

Honor a loved one or a special friend by dedicating a plaque in their name on the Memorial Tree of Life at St. Luke’s Brian D. Perin Hospice House. Naming opportunities are available for those who desire 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 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.



“Warm Up for Winter” Raises Nearly \$8,000 for Hospice

In 2015, retired physician and longtime hospice volunteer, Kathleen Kucer, MD, established “Warm Up for Winter” to raise money for items needed to improve the quality of life for hospice patients. Dr. Kucer, along with a committee of dedicated hospice volunteers, realized there were a lot of talented knitters in the region, many of whom belonged to knitting groups. Fortunately, those knitters also had a charitable spirit and were happy to donate handmade goods, including scarves, gloves, hats, prayer shawls and blankets, for a good cause. Just in time for the holidays, the volunteer committee set up its wares in the lobby of the Priscilla Payne



Hurd Pavilion at St. Luke’s Hospital-Bethlehem for two days and sold more than 500 knitted items. The original goal for the inaugural event was to raise enough money to purchase an iPad for the Hospice House so that patients could connect with friends and family who were unable to visit. Thanks to the generosity of knitters and shoppers, proceeds exceeded \$5,000, allowing the volunteers to purchase six iPads, hearing assist technology, bed sheets and much more for the Hospice House.

Dr. Kucer, who volunteers weekly at St. Luke’s Brian D. Perin Hospice House, sitting with patients and families, giving

baths and preparing meals, was overjoyed with the success of the fundraiser. “I always had respect for the hospice program, especially since my dad passed away at the Hospice House,” explains Dr. Kucer. “I always wanted to be a part of hospice, and volunteering allows me to remain in touch with patients and families.”

*“It is such a thrill to see
the enthusiasm of the community
coming together for this cause.”*

~Dr. Kucer

To keep the event “special,” the committee has decided to hold it every three years instead of annually. Plans for the 2018 “Warm Up for Winter” began in 2017. In some instances, one or two scarves were delivered, and other times crates

of items would be dropped off from knitting groups. The sale was expanded to several St. Luke’s locations over multiple days this year, and nearly \$8,000 was raised. The committee decided to contribute the proceeds to the “One Wish Fund,” which helps to cover the cost of basic needs and wishes—things like heat and grocery bills—for those receiving outpatient hospice care.

In addition to raising money, “Warm Up for Winter” is a wonderful way to build awareness and educate people in the community—including employees across St. Luke’s University Health Network—about hospice care.

To learn more about volunteering for hospice, visit sluhn.org/vna/volunteer or call 484-526-1100.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday
May 8

**Dr. and Mrs. Max Littner
 Memorial Lecture Series
 for Bereavement**
 Robert Neimeyer, Ph.D.
 "Loss, Grief and the Quest for Meaning"

Tuesday
May 28

**DONATIONS
 ACCEPTED
 5/1-5/17**

Through Saturday June 1
 boutiqueattherink.com

Boutique at the Rink



Saturday
June 1

**9th Annual
 Charity Bike Ride**
 To Benefit St. Luke's Hospice



To learn more and register for St. Luke's events, visit sluhn.org/events.

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