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"You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but to live fully until you die."

Dame Cicely
Saunders, Founder
of the modern
Hospice Movement

Brave Heart Volunteers

Compassionate Caregiving, Respite & Education Services

WINTER 2008

P.O. BOX 6336 * SITKA, ALASKA 99835 * 747-4600

Transitions and Compassionate Care at Life's End

Shanna Hammons

For about six hours per week, and for four weeks this Fall, a group of volunteers and community members came together and talked about death and compassion. The formal title of the class was "Exploring Transitions and Compassionate Care at End-of-Life," and its goal was to give the participants tools for caregiving and coping with death and dying.



This Fall's graduating EOL class! Front row, from left to right: Nancy Short, Karen Boyer and Linda Johnston; second row, left to right: Walleen & Daneen Whitson, Sherie Mayo, Beth Caffery, John Skeele and Carole Denking; back row: Cindy Edwards, Ed Benson, Jane Langley and Shanna Hammons

During the course of the training, we heard from a wonderful group of presenters on topics such as: pain management, cultural awareness, how different faiths provide support for the dying and their families, hospice goals and history, funeral arrangements, living wills and last wishes, and much more. There was also an opportunity for us to write our own obituaries – not an easy task – and to make our own life-timelines, with an estimate of how much longer we expect to be living on this earth.

Hospice philosophy and history formed a foundation on which the class was built; in order to understand Brave Heart Volunteers' goals, it's helpful to know where those goals come from. The answer lies in hospice philosophy and practices. In hospice settings, the focus is on the desires of the person at end-of-life; if somebody wishes to die at home, hospice workers will do their best to assist with meeting that goal. They also offer

comfort and resources to the families of those at end-of-life. Essentially, hospice philosophy is founded on the idea that comfort for the dying – in the form of pain management, psychological and spiritual care, for example – is paramount in the final processes of life. At Brave Heart Volunteers, we heartily support that concept, and our aim is to be present and assist in whatever capacity is asked of us.

We all found aspects of the training challenging, but we persevered and now there are at least a dozen folks newly-trained and better able to cope with the difficulties faced when someone special and irreplaceable is at the end of his or her life. Although not everyone will go on to be a Brave Heart Volunteer, Sitka is the richer for these trainings and the knowledge shared and friendships forged.

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE HOME-BASED, COMMUNITY-WIDE,
VOLUNTEER CARE, VISITING & RESPITE SUPPORT TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED.**

An Introduction

Some of you may have noticed a new face in the Brave Heart Volunteers' office, and a new voice on the answering machine. Shanna Hammons, the new Volunteer Support and Office Manager started in mid-October, after returning from South America.



Shanna was born and raised in Sitka. She spent much of her youth arguing with her forestry-working father about how close to a helicopter door she could stand, and with her English-teaching mother about how late she

could stay up when friends spent the night. Although the maps don't show it, there is an island with a sandy beach named after her. Of course, she and her parents did the naming, so there's no knowing whether the USGS will eventually catch on.

After graduating from Sitka High School in 1998, Shanna attended Ithaca College in Upstate New York, and received her B.A. in Journalism. She then spent another year back East attending massage school, and she decided she missed the easy-going nature of West Coast living, and moved to San Francisco. Her time there was short, mainly because there wasn't quite enough rain to stomp through in Xtra Tuffs. After another couple years in Bellingham, where it rains more often, she moved home to Sitka and a job at Alps Credit Union. The folks at Alps remain dear to her heart, but Shanna was searching for a job that involved more of a compas-

sionate contribution to the community, and so was happy when the position at Brave Heart came about. She was grateful that her new employer was willing to let her travel before starting; she has inherited an itchy travel foot, and not even a 60 hour bus ride through Chile and Argentina seems to have dissuaded her from pursuing her goal of Seeing the World...all of it.

In her time here, Shanna has been busy with the Brave Heart Bowl Sale, an End-of-Life training, and all the regular office and volunteer duties that bring her closer to volunteers and caregivers. She is excited to be working on a liaison position with the Sitka Pioneers Home, and enjoying exercising her journalism training on this newsletter and the upcoming web site changes.

Please feel free to stop in or give her a call with any questions. She can be reached at the Brave Heart Volunteers office, 747-4600.

Greetings to My Beloved Sitka

Nineteen years ago I started my trek volunteering for our beloved country and today I am back where it all started. It has been a hard task giving up my most loved Sitka, but sometimes things just have to be. And so today, and for the rest of my days, I expect the old groove can anticipate having me around, and that really ain't too bad.

My children and grandchildren seem overjoyed to have Mom and Grandma back so close at hand once more. For so many years I would get letters from my grandchildren saying, "Everyone has a grandma in town except me. When will you be coming back?"

So now I am being dragged all over, "This is my Grandma," or "this is my 92 year old Mom." And by the way, I did have a real gala bash for my 92nd on October 20th, – my birthday is really the 23rd – and it was the greatest – and possibly the last – and a real good time was had by the mob of guests. My sister and niece came in from Florida; friends I hadn't seen for years showed up and it was just a wonderful, fun time. My son outdid himself—apparently in his delight at having me home once more.

The change for me is coming together: seeing old friends, making new friend (as usual), writing for the local newspaper, doing a radio-dance show for one of the nursing homes in town, and even doing political writing (who me??) for the township office, plus



Freda Aron

whatever I can find to keep me as busy as can be. Maybe so that I will not miss my delicious life in Sitka and all of my loving family there.

Whatever is available I try to keep involved and seem to be succeeding. I live in a small town on the border of Illinois and Wisconsin; [it's] a lovely, warm florist's Heaven: so many huge trees,

faun and flora at ever turn. Of course, I miss the mountains and the water. But about 10 minutes away is Lake Michigan and best of all, in the summer the park district has a band playing in a gazebo, and there is – though not as much as Sitka – music all around. There is even an old-fashioned trolley, something I haven't seen since I left Brooklyn, New York in 1937. It takes people all around the town for an hour and a half's ride, and it is a free service. And, listen to this: there is a movie theatre with the latest showings, AND THE CHARGE IS \$2 until 4pm. And only \$4 after that.

So all of my luvs, I am doing okay and will happily be sending you pictures of all the beauties of this charming town. Until we get back together again. So long, have a great winter, and you are always in my heart.

Guess Who!

Pearl Rezek—In Memoriam 4/14/1910 to 1/14/2007 by Shanna Hammons

At our first meeting, it wasn't difficult for me to imagine Pearl as a younger woman, riding a horse bareback around her family's farm. Her freedom has always been important to her, and that kind of independent spirit is hard to miss. Pearl has two Brave Heart volunteers who visit her each week, and is an excellent example of the richness of friendship, character and personality that can be found in volunteering.



Pearl with the two BH volunteers who visited her; Jean Longstreth on the left and Greta Ryan on the right.

She was born Pearl Linnae Rezek (Olson) in April of 1910. In that time, most of the land was still wild and untamed, and her family was one of the first to start farming in Carlton, Minnesota. She remembers clearing lots of trees and brush, and that they left enough to give the place a pastoral charm so strong that in later years, folks would just show up to enjoy the views. She loved the farm; the wolves howled every night, and the robins sang every morning.

“I would've made a good farmer's wife, but I didn't want to settle down!”

~Pearl Rezek

Pearl was the oldest girl in a family with eleven siblings. She said she enjoyed having a large family; being the one her siblings came to with problems or concerns was very rewarding, and she liked knowing that she always had someone to turn to. She was very close to her father, Victor Olson; she described him as her best friend.

After sixteen years of living and working on the family farm, Pearl left home for school in Duluth,

Minn. She accidentally walked into a different high school than the one she was supposed to attend, but managed to fool the teachers into thinking she belonged. She remembers a writing assignment where the teacher told her that her work was so good, she ought to consider writing as a career.

After school, Pearl moved to Los Angeles. When she stepped off the bus on arrival, she didn't know a soul; but where L.A. might have been overwhelming for some, she fearlessly jumped right into life in the big city. As she said, “It (my 20s) was a good age to be footloose!”

She also lived in San Francisco for a time in the late 30s, and that's where she met her future husband, Ivan Rezek. They met at a Baptist church, and they'd both heard of the famous Inside Passage. When they were engaged, they decided they wanted to see it for themselves, and headed up to Alaska on a five-passenger freighter in 1941.

After stopping in Sitka and falling in love with the small town, Pearl and Ivan got jobs managing a small grocery store on Lincoln Street, and settled down to raise a family. They had three children: Alvin, Ruth and John. Both Alvin and Ruth still live here in Sitka, along with several grandchildren who also visit Pearl.

One story that I think illustrates Pearl's fire and her compassion is the following:

When she was younger, Pearl and one of her relatives both worked in the same town. He had a car, and since the town was far from the family's farm, they carpooled to and from work. One day, her ride forgot her, and Pearl had to walk 20 miles in flat-soled shoes to get home. She recalls that although there weren't many cars in those days, none of those that passed stopped to offer her a ride. When she finally got home, and found her relative indifferent to his mistake, she let the air out of all his tires! From then on, there was a rift between them.

Twenty years later, when Pearl was home visiting her parents, she heard a truck pull into the driveway at dinnertime. She went out to see who it was, and found an old hobo in front of her. She told her parents that she was going to invite this tramp in for a hot dinner, and when he came into the room, everyone started giggling. She couldn't understand why, until her father told her it was the very same man who had forgotten her at work all those years before. They all laughed together and embraced, and the old argument was forgiven and forgotten.

Pearl Rezek lived a life of freedom that many women envied; she had all kinds of jobs, lived in several cities, and raised a family that she felt blessed for. After our conversation, I was left with the happy thought of her, hair streaming behind in the wind, riding a galloping horse with no saddle. I hope all of us can find similar moments and memories of joy in our lives.

Pearl will be very dearly missed by all of her many friends and family.

Bowls, Bowls, Bowls! The 3rd Annual Brave Heart Bowl Fundraiser



This year saw the third installment of the Brave Heart Bowl Sale. After two years of holding the event at the University of Alaska Southeast, we moved to the Centennial Building, where we were able to house the many soups, bowls and attendees more comfortably in one room.

The Brave Heart Bowl Sale is our biggest fundraiser of the year, and this year was a great success. Local potters donated over 200 unique, hand-crafted bowls, and we had sixteen delicious kinds of soup to fill them with. To combat the previous years' experience of bowls selling out within the first half hour – which meant that not everyone got a bowl – we required that people buy a ticket in order to reserve a pottery bowl. There was still a huge line at the entrance by 5:30pm, but this time there was less panic that we would sell out! I spoke to several folks who had attended the event in previous years, and was told that things seemed more organized this year – thanks in large part to the bigger space and the ticket-concept – yet still fun for all ages.

For anyone who was unable to attend this year, allow me to provide a bit of a snapshot: on one side of the main room at Centennial Hall, picture five round tables filled with different sizes, shapes and colors of pottery bowls; in the middle of the room, imagine four busy cashiers making change and taking down credit card information; on stage, there are about twenty extra-special

bowls that make up the silent auction, lit from above with spotlights; in the corner are four musicians filling the air with blues, and entertaining the tables of people happily eating soup and bread out of their new bowls; in the opposite corner are several

long tables with a large assortment of crock pots and tureens filled with steaming hot soup and surrounded by bread and desserts. If you can picture all that, and add in the hundreds of Sitkans who came to the event, you'll have a pretty good idea of what things looked like this year. You can also check out the photos taken by volunteers Jude Reis and Robin Gleason.

Without the collaboration of staff, administration and Pottery Club of the University of Alaska, and the help of 75 volunteers and donors, this event would surely not happen. We could never thank them enough! It is yet another sign that Brave Heart is truly blessed by such an active and dedicated support network. My job as a coordinator was really quite easy: all I had to do was send out a few emails asking for help from volunteers and the community, and then keep track of who responded. The response was incredible. Right up until the day before the sale, people were calling and offering to make soup, work at the event, or help in any other way necessary. It was truly heartwarming to see how eager Sitkans – and some imported family members – were to help raise funds for Brave Heart Volunteers.

Thanks to all those who attended and helped with the event, we'll be able to apply that money to our continuing mission of providing compassionate care, respite and education services in Sitka.

Bowls Connect Us....

"Why is the Brave Heart Bowl Fundraiser so successful? Well, it's easy. For one, you have the arts. The process of creating something of beauty, value, and practical use, that is especially breathtaking when you see two hundred bowls of different shapes and colors spread out over a few tables.

Then, there is the aspect of community. You stand in line with your friends, and as you wait you update your relationships...

Then there is the element of nurturing. Filling the bowls with steaming, homemade soup, that is what humanity did forever.

Making clay pots and eating from them is an ancient human activity. It is this collective memory and the simplicity that attracts us to come to this event...

That's what it is all about. It's simply an ancient human activity, a celebration of our deepest longing to be connected with our humanness and our past. Humans, bowls, and soup were always there."

--Martina Kurzer



A Brave Heart Bowl attendee and her young one try to decide which bowl to pick.

Senior Movement Classes

Three instructors began teaching movement classes to seniors in October. The classes are part of a partnership program between the SEARHC Steps office and Brave Heart Volunteers. In addition to improving flexibility and balance, they serve to increase self-confidence in movement for elders; and they're open to caregivers and family members as well!

The classes meet every Saturday and Wednesday from 3:00pm-4:00pm at the Sitka Pioneers' Home Chapel. On Wednesdays, the instructor is Dorothy Orbison, who teaches participants to improve their balance and increase strength through her "Steady On Your Feet" class. Dorothy has been a certified fitness instructor since 1999; as she said, senior fitness is of special interest to her, and she's done some specialized training in that field.

To Dorothy, teaching the class is rewarding because she gets to see people gain the strength and skills they need to stay safe and keep from falling. As she put it, "It's even more heart-warming to help participants overcome their fear of falling and gain confidence that directly improves the quality of their lives."

Saturday classes are shared between Martina Kurzer and

Kathryn Snelling, who switch off teaching their respective courses. Kathryn teaches the gentle movements of "Tai Chi Chih, Joy Through Movement" every other Saturday for those interested in enhancing their spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing. She said, "The movements are easily learned and are not strenuous."

"Too often the balance between our physical body and the spiritual/emotional part of us is unrecognized and neglected..."

Kathryn Snelling,
Tai Chi Chih
Instructor

Kathryn is a life-long Sitkan, and recognized the benefits of Tai Chi Chih while working as the Recreational Therapist at the Sitka Pioneers' Home. She then attended the required training to get certified as an instructor, and has been enjoying passing along the benefits of TCC ever since.

Of the benefits of practice Kathryn said, "Maintaining our flexibility and balance is important, especially as we age. Practicing TCC will improve physical and inner balance...I find even a brief practice of the movements to be a great stress-buster as well as an energy boost."

The other Saturday class is taught by Martina Kurzer, and is called "Bones for Life." The goal of this course is to help participants gain balance and bone strength by using gentle movements that safely align posture. When taking the class, people will notice less muscle tension, fewer headaches, and less chronic back pain. Martina has a private movement practice in town, and also works at Sitkans Against Family Violence.



Erika Apathy attaches Brave Heart coupons to items at Sea Mart Quality Foods. Photo by Carole Knuth

Coupon Coup Update

October saw the launch of BHV's Coupon Coup. Thanks to a partnership with the Hames Corporation, shoppers at Sea Mart Quality Foods have the opportunity to facilitate refund of the face value of heart-marked coupons, found on items throughout the store, to Brave Heart Volunteers. So far, we've collected over \$500 in redeemed coupon values. Thanks to those who have been helping by either donating coupons, purchasing products with heart stamped coupons attached or doing all the prep and follow-up work that makes the coup possible!

If you're interested in helping with this special, on-going fundraiser, we could use at least two more two-person teams to spend about 1 1/2 to 2 hours each Tue. or Wed. afternoon or eve. attaching the coupons to appropriate products at Sea Mart. Also more individual help is needed to clip, print, stamp and file coupons.

Continued donations of coupons for products sold at Sea Mart which have a value of at least 40 cents on a single item and an expiration date at least one month in the future are greatly appreciated. These coupons may be deposited in any BHV coupon collection container located at Sea Mart Video counter, Sitka Community Hosp. (bulletin boards outside P.T. or Bistro), SEARHC Hosp. reception desk, Kettleson Library, Presbyterian Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Pioneer Home employees lounge, or in the entrance to BHV Office at the Pioneer Home Manager's house

To offer assistance, please contact one of our Coup Organizers, Jean Frank at 747-8244 or jeanfrank2@yahoo.com, or Shirley Winters at 747-3525 or Shirley.winters@ecunet.org.

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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In Memory of Dale DeArmond
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Ron Fribush

**In Honor of Cindy Westergaard
and her 50th Birthday**
Elizabeth Faulkner & Auriella
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**In Honor of Tad Fujioka and Sara
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Norm and Barbara Richards

In Memory of Wilma Fields
Catherine Allgood-Melema

In Memory of Mike O'Donnell
Jennifer Ihde

In Honor of Janis Rountree
Renda Heimbigner

**Plus, thank you for these in-kind
donations:**

Jane Demmert for her contribution to
the BHV Library and AK Day food

Candace Vanderbeek for housewares
and her contribution to the Library

Larry and Maggie Jackman for the
new BHV microwave

Margaret Dangel for her beautiful
Halloween and Thank You cards

John Stein for BHV library items

Donna Hebbeler for the new Personal
Digital Assistant & Photoshop program

**Many thanks to the following, who
brought food to our AK Day Open
House. Your kind donations made
for a delicious event!**

Brita Speck
Ruth Culp
Amelia Gage
Jude Reis
Sherry Tuttle
Mary Suminski
Ruth Roth
Kathleen Moats
Mark Howey
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Morced Asnin

Mary Stevens
Dianna Stevens
Steve Warren
Diane Weaver
Susan Compagno
Katherine Snelling
Michael Harper
Quinnia Culpepper
Dolores Wakefield
Margaret Dangel

*Did we forget something you donated
to Brave Heart Volunteers?
Please remind us
so we can make record of it!*

Family Caregiver Support—Community Meeting and Discussion Held on Jan. 23, 2008



Quinnia Culpepper and Freddie Young discuss family care-giver support needs for the community of Sitka.

Brave Heart Volunteers regularly holds a monthly **Family Caregiver Support Meeting**, and in January we are hosting a special community meeting. *We would like to gather your input*

about educational and support needs for those caring for family members with memory loss, chronic illness, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. We are also looking for volunteers

who would like to help in this specific area. We are in the process of creating a new 12-month informational curriculum *based on feedback from family caregivers in Sitka*. Our goal for

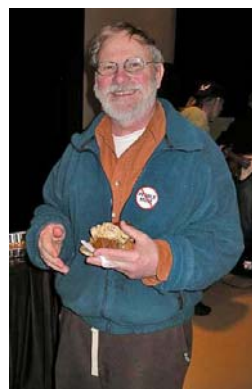
the support group is to combine the open sharing time and an educational component that is meaningful, pertinent and will fulfill the needs of family and friends caring for loved ones.

Thank You to our Dedicated Hospice Presenters:

The following community members kindly donated their time, energy, and expertise in presenting Hospice training material at this year's End-of-Life training, and we wish to sincerely thank them:

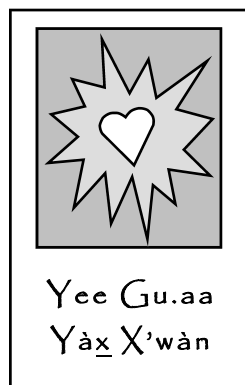
Jean Frank	Iva Greywolf	Kathryn Snelling
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More Brave Heart Bowl Pix '07



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Making a Difference in Someone's Life



The Spirituality Panel addresses community members at this year's Compassionate Care at End-of-Life training.



Brave Heart Volunteers
747-4600

Offices located at 120 Katlian
Manager's House - 2nd Floor
On the Alaska State Pioneers' &
Veteran's Home grounds

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