



# Flashes of Inspiration

Volume 6 Issue 1

A Newsletter for Inspiration Hospice Volunteers

January 2010

## A Message from Shar

By Shar Sweeney

As we head into this new decade, I would like to wish each one of you and your families a very happy new year. May it be filled with joy, contentment and continued service to the patients, families and staff you serve so faithfully.

I regret to inform you all that Jacqui Anderson no longer works for Inspiration Hospice. We are actively recruiting for this position and will let you know the moment her replacement is found. In the meantime, all of us here at the office stand ready to support you in your volunteer assignments and with anything you might need. Over the next couple of weeks, I will be in touch with each one of you and I am looking forward to the opportunity to hear how your current assignments are going and what your availability and needs are as we move forward. Please bear with me while we work hard to ensure continuity of care for you and your patients.

In the meantime, please know how much we appreciate you. Inspiration Hospice's volunteer program is the gold standard in our industry, due entirely to the dedication and loyalty of our volunteer team. We can't do the work we do here without you. You are, indeed, the heart and soul of this organization. And we thank you for everything you do.

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## erin harman

Compiled by Brittany Horsley

**Describe your type of volunteer assignment(s):** I visited with a rosy woman who told me wonderful things about her family, organ playing, getting her hair done and traveling the world. She was quite knowledgeable.

### Personal background

**(where you grew up, etc.):**

I grew up in Salt Lake City Utah and lived on one street, Laurelhurst Dr; (I learned to spell it by singing it to the Mickey Mouse song...M-I-C-K-E-Y, you know the one...). But in two separate houses (it was a long street) we didn't really even need a moving truck but we rented one anyway. However I never went to the schools in the school boundaries for my neighborhood so that got me off Laurelhurst (I hope you sung that) every now and then. When I got older I moved up to Rexbuurrrrgg (so cold up there) Idaho for two years of schooling and then I returned to the land of Salt, and finished my education at the U of U (Art History degree), got married and moved off of Laurelhurst for the second time in my life and have lived in the same little basement apartment ever since— although I did have a small jaunt across the seas for a bit. I'm still waiting on life to point me in my next direction, "anyway the wind blows...doesn't really matter to me."



**Why I decided to be a volunteer:** My dear husband James and I were asked, in different classes at the University, to be involved in the community through volunteering. Because of people we know at Inspiration we decided to volunteer here and we were able to visit our little lady together.

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## Meet the Staff: Mery Shunk Hospice Aide

Compiled by Brittany Horsley



### Describe your role:

Provide patient care with help walking, exercising, and moving in and out of bed. I bathe, groom, shave, dress, feed patients who are unable to feed themselves and provide basic patient care under the direct supervision of the

nurses. Sometimes we spend more time with patients than anyone else on the health care team.

**Personal background:** I am from Peru. I grew up and a town call Huanuco. It's a beautiful place. My parents still live there. My brother lives here in Salt Lake and is also a hospice aide. My sister lives in Peru and teaches at the University. I have 4 beautiful kids—Timmy, Avery, Syren and Nickolai—and my lovely husband Timmy.

**One thing I love about my job:** Helping people that can't help themselves.

### Best things about working for Inspiration:

Inspiration has the Best TEAM I have worked with.

**Best advice I've ever been given:** Live your life to the fullest.

**People who have influenced my life:** MY PARENTS

**Favorite place in the world:** My home with my family.

**Favorite Song:** *Cats in the Cradle*

**Favorite Movie:** *The Notebook*

**Favorite Food:** Peruvian food

### What talent do you wish you had been born with:

I'm happy with all the talent God has given me and I would not ask for anything else. ♥

**One thing I love about volunteering:** listening to everyone's stories about what they have learned from the patients they've visited with. Amazing how different people are but yet how much we really are alike.

### Best things about volunteering with Inspiration:

Learning about death and how it is just another wonderful phase of life and there are millions of ways to comfort and be there for the dearly departing.

**Best advice I've ever been given:** Well, the funniest I've heard of late is "it's better to be seen than to be viewed!" Ha-ha I laughed when my very old great aunt told me that one.

**People who have influenced my life:** Gene Kelly motivates me to exercise, not only could he dance but his behind is definitely something to admire. Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* has inspired me since childhood to always look past others grouchy attitude or ugly appearance and fall in love regardless. And lastly my mother, for her love of chocolate, (which doesn't help my desire to have buns like Gene Kelly) and her love for others (she's a rare beauty herself).

**Favorite place in the world:** Across the seas and through the woods, I'd pick Italy! (I could have stayed there forever) But here in the grand ol' USA I'd have to say Bear Lake! (Give me a ski and a cold drink and I am in heaven—I just love to be surrounded by water!)

**Favorite song:** Too many come to mind (cliché I know, I should phone up Delila and tell her about my life then she might help me narrow it down...) mostly I like anything I can sing at the top of my lungs.

*Copacabana* by Berry Manilow, *You're so Vain* by Carly Simon or *Total Eclipse of the Heart* by the legendary Bonnie Tyler, and so many more.

**Favorite movie:** *Singing in the Rain* starring the one and only Gene Kelly.

**Favorite food:** I'd say pasta; it's just so warm and hearty!!!! ♥



**Boy Scout  
Service Project**

Thanks to all who participated!



**Happy New Year!**



*A Message from Shar continued from page 1*

We are looking forward to another wonderful year together. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to give me a call – I would love the opportunity to chat with you.

Gratefully,

P.S. Please stop by the office one day very soon. We have a very nice surprise gift waiting for you here. We can't wait for you to see it!

# ABC's of Inspired Volunteers

By Lorelee Kurzius

January 2010

## I is for Infection Control:

But wait! Don't leave! There is more than one kind of Infection Control! While the OSHA standards (p.56-59 of your Training Manual) of infection control are very important information, it's the other kind of infection that we want to discuss today.



Remember my friend I mentioned last month who is going through chemo (amidst several other trials)? I sent her the column, thanking her for the inspiration and mentioning how sad it is when someone attempts to make the grieving person feel better by being falsely cheerful. The effect this can have is that it causes the mourner to feel guilty for feeling pain, as if they needed anything else to feel bad about! My friend concurred, but added "Or, when the grieving person has to try and console the one who is supposed to be doing the consoling. It's so draining..."

We would never go in and dump *our* problems on these already troubled souls and likewise we mustn't make their *own* burdens any heavier for them to bear.

We must balance our words and actions. We should empathize, and provide understanding of their pain, but *not to the point that they are comforting us*! They have a lot of exhausting mental work to do as their lives draw to a close and we are supposed to be there to help and support, to cheer and to comfort, not to spread pessimism.

I know that when I am troubled, my favorite people to turn to are those that can listen to my woes, sympathize with me and then turn around and help me laugh about them! Why not? I can laugh or I can cry, but crying just gives me a headache and makes my eyes red and puffy.

With practice, each of us can help our patients by:

1. Finding out what is troubling them.
2. Empathizing with their problems and making sure that their pain is recognized.
3. Utilizing the hospice support services team of chaplains and social workers as needed.
4. After they feel understood, trying to help them see not only how they can learn and grow from their trials, but the humor hiding in them, laughing *with* them about the ironies of life.

When my friends with young children bemoan some disaster their little ones have created, I always ask them if they have taken a picture. In the stress of the moment, they often can't figure out why, but I know that as the memory of the mess and the anger fade, that they will be able to look back on the situation and laugh. The situation may even become a favorite family story down the road. I also know that the sooner they see the humor in the situation, the better for all involved!

Laughter is liberating! It means that you choose NOT to be a victim of circumstances, giving you a sense of control.

Laughter is uplifting! It releases those feel-good endorphins that serve as natural pain killers.

Laughter is healing! It is the best medicine. No prescription is required, it's terribly cost effective and there are no side effects!

For anyone facing a terminal illness, I'd say that laughter is not just a coping mechanism, but a kind of courage.

Anatole Broyard wrote about the final days of his life in "Intoxicated by My Illness". He said, "Illness is primarily a drama and it should be possible to enjoy it as well as to suffer it... Illness, after all, is not all tragedy. Much of it *is* funny."

Your goal as a hospice volunteer, is not to transmit the toxins of gloom and drear, but to be infectious with laughter and cheer.

Hospice patients are going through some of the darkest, scariest days of their lives, and yet they are days that need to be cherished for both them and their families.

Have you noticed how being around happy people helps you be happy? A positive attitude is contagious.

Have you ever been where someone is laughing uncontrollably and soon everyone else is joining in even if they are just laughing at the one who started it? Humor is catching!

Control the kind of infection you spread. Enter any care center where the halls are lined with lonely people in wheel chairs anxious for the touch of human kindness. Something as simple as your gentle words and your tender touch can start a real pandemic... of joy! *That's Inspiration!*

### FLASHES OF INSPIRATION

A NEWSLETTER FOR INSPIRATION HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS.

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