We serve patients and families by raising funds for end-of-life care that provides peace, dignity and comfort.

**Veteran Pinning Ceremony**

As a longtime partner of the We Honor Veterans program, Allina Health Hospice has been committed to serving and honoring veterans who need end-of-life care. One special way Allina Health Hospice honors those who have fought for our country is through the Veteran’s Pinning Ceremony. The Veteran’s Pinning Ceremony creates a time and space for veterans to share their stories with friends and family, and reflect on their life of service.

During these ceremonies, the individual is presented with a personalized framed certificate of thanks, a thank you note signed by the entire hospice team, and a metal flag pin that can be placed on their military shirt or hat. While a ceremony can range from a small gathering to a large celebration, the purpose of the ceremony remains the same – to honor the veteran and thank them for their commitment to our country.

“These ceremonies give veterans the freedom to share their story. It provides a special time for them to feel proud about their service,” describes Mary Schoeneck, a social worker with Allina Health Hospice. During pinning ceremonies, veterans are given the time and attention to share stories that they may not have felt comfortable sharing before, and connect with fellow veterans.

In one instance, the pinning ceremony took place at a former U.S. Marine’s home that was filled with marine memorabilia and meaningful items related to their years of service. When presented with the certificate of thanks by another former Marine, it brought the veteran to tears. “You can see it in their face and body, their whole disposition changes when they are being honored by others who have also served,” Schoeneck explained. It is moments like this that inspire members of Allina Health’s hospice team to be involved in these ceremonies and to show support for programs honoring veterans. As Schoeneck noted, “We don’t thank veterans or publicly show our gratitude for them enough, so it’s really special that Allina Health Hospice takes the time to partner with and support these programs.”

**Veteran Irl Larsen during a pinning ceremony**

Allina Health Hospice Foundation has been committed to supporting veterans with the financial burden that can accompany hospice care. The Honoring Veterans Fund was created to assist veterans’ room and board expenses at the J.A. Wedum Residential Hospice. In 2017, more than $47,000 was used to assist veterans with hospice room and board expenses.

If you would like to contribute to the Honoring Veterans Fund and provide them the comfort and care they deserve, contact the Hospice Foundation at 612-775-2550 or online at allinahealth.org/hospicefoundationgivenow.
Frequently Asked Questions About Grief And Grief Counseling

Grief is a natural response to death and everyone experiences grief in different ways. Whether you are seeking face-to-face counseling, group support groups or connections to community resources – Allina Health is here to support you during your grief journey.

Aaron Beaudry, MSW, LICSW, Allina Health grief counselor, sat down with us to answer some of the most common questions about grief and grief counseling.

1. Why is grief counseling so important?
Not everyone is open to, or in need of grief counseling. We live in a “hurry up and get over it” society, but this type of counseling allows people the space and time to process the death of their loved one. Also, people can often have compounded grief so the current death can bring up past losses, thus, compounding the individual’s current experience.

2. Why does Allina Health offer 13 months of counseling?
Our bereavement program is available to friends and family members for 13 months after the loss of their loved one. It can be an overwhelming time, and people often don’t realize the need for support right away. As time passes, people can experience increased feelings of grief and loss, and they have the opportunity to reach out to us for support. Within those 13 months, we can also support people through the “firsts” – birthdays, anniversaries and holidays – without their loved one. Bereavement services are not a requirement of our hospice program, but rather a service available to those who need it.

3. What are some of the challenges people face along with grief? The challenges that come along with grief is different for each person. For example, the loss of a spouse is very life changing as it impacts each area of your life. Adult children coming in for the loss of their parent may have challenges of family dynamics that were heightened during their parent’s illness. Or, someone who struggles with mental health or chemical dependency issues may reach out for support because their symptoms have increased or they’ve lost track of taking care of themselves during their loved one’s illness. Someone who has served as the caregiver may experience grief due to the death, as well as the loss of their caregiver role.

4. What’s important for people to understand about grief?
Grief is not a mental health issue, it is very normal. It is not usually a linear process but a forward, backward, sideways kind of experience. Also, people are incredibly resilient.

5. What has been most meaningful to you in your years working as a counselor?
The most rewarding piece of my work is being able to see heartbroken individuals find hope in their future. I see it physically wash over them and it’s a true honor to be present during this time in someone’s life.

Allina Health Hospice Foundation continues to support the Bereavement Service Team by providing a variety of resources to them in their work to help grieving families.

Anyone may contact the Allina Health Grief Resources line for more information or resources at 651-628-1752 or AHCGriefResources@allina.com.