

Shared Journeys

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Wedum Compassion Fund: Helps homeless man die with dignity

Written by: Glen Varns, MD, Allina Health Hospice

An Allina Health Hospice team recently cared for a patient in a challenging situation whose care was dramatically impacted by the Wedum Compassion Fund. The patient had cancer, and as a result of his surgery and radiation treatments, he had a tracheostomy. **Unfortunately, he was also homeless and estranged from any family members who might have been able to assist in his care.**

The only place that he was able to stay was at a homeless shelter in Downtown Minneapolis. The shelter staff members did a great job supporting this man, and made a number of accommodations to allow him to stay. However, as he became more affected by his diagnosis, it was clear that he could no longer be cared for at the shelter. His situation reached a crisis point when the patient no longer had appropriate access to his pain medication, and he experienced a pain crisis.

Allina Health Hospice was contacted by the shelter staff members, and it was arranged that this man be supported by the Wedum Compassion Fund to ensure he received the care he needed. After his arrival at J.A. Wedum Residential Hospice, the trained nursing staff were able to care for his tracheostomy and to administer necessary pain medication. They worked with him to understand his needs even though his speech was difficult to understand. During his time at Wedum, his friends were able to visit him in a calm and supportive environment. **When he died, he died without anxiety about who would be caring for him or where he would stay.**

I'm grateful for the continuing support of all those who contribute to the Wedum Compassion Fund - your donations make a huge difference in the lives of our patients every day.



If you would like to make a gift to the Wedum Compassion Fund, please use the enclosed envelope or visit:
allinahealth.org/hospicefoundationgivenow.

Lessons learned from the dying

The Healthy Set Go team asked Mae Gibson Wall, a chaplain with Allina Health Hospice, to share some of the wisdom she's gleaned from her patients in hospice care. Here is an excerpt of her response.



The greatest lesson I've learned so far from the dying is this: to lean into the uncomfortable truth that death comes to us all and to allow that to inform our living; to plan for death's inevitable eventuality while simultaneously loving life.

A regret seen clearly from many deathbeds is the wish to have traveled more. We are good at planning for long lives. We responsibly sock away money for retirement even if it means we cannot take a vacation this year. We can travel after we retire, we think. Yet I've met many patients in hospice who received terminal diagnoses within months or

years of their retirement. They wonder why they waited to live life all those years and regret the risks they never took. The saying goes, "No one ever looks back at their lives and says, 'I wish I had worked more.'" No. They wish they had spent more time with their families. They don't say, "I wish I had had more screen time." They say they wish they had had more adventures.

So how do we live in such a way that we plan for both life and death? Across the world's wisdom traditions, from Celtic Christianity to Buddhism, those cultures who have the greatest acceptance of death are those that have allowed death to be their companion throughout life.

Recognizing our mortality does not have to be dark and macabre. It's the elephant in the room, after all. No matter how much we don't want to think about it, death is the only thing that is guaranteed to each of us.

So why not treat your death as a wise old friend and ask her advice now and then? Why not look backward from your deathbed long before you are confined to it? Because one day, you know, it will be otherwise.

Read the full story at allinahealth.org/hospicefoundation.



Ron Bagnall, director,
Allina Health
Hospice Foundation

A win-win scenario: Gifting appreciated securities

With the holidays upon us, many people are making year-end gifts to their favorite charities. The editor of Shared Journeys sat down with Ron Bagnall, foundation director, to learn about smart ways to give.

Editor: At the end of the year, many donors are writing checks to their charities. Is there a more tax efficient way to give?

Ron Bagnall: If a donor wants to make a gift and help themselves to a bigger tax break, they should consider giving appreciated stock or mutual fund shares that they've held for more than one year.

This is called gifting appreciated securities, and it allows the donor to deduct the fair market value of the securities and eliminate any capital gains tax on the future sale of the securities.

For example, if a donor who is in the 25 percent federal tax bracket (or 32 percent when you include state income tax rates) writes a check for \$10,000 to their favorite charity, the net cost of the gift is \$6,800 (\$10,000 less the \$3,200 in taxes avoided).

If the donor instead gives \$10,000 in appreciated securities that was purchased for \$3,000, the donor still receives a tax deduction of \$3,200, but the donor no longer has to pay long-term capital gains tax on the appreciated amount of \$7,000, which at 15 percent is \$1,050. Now, a total of \$4,250 in taxes is avoided.

Editor: What if the donor likes this stock and doesn't want to sell?

Bagnall: If the donor buys the stock back at the current market value, the adjusted cost basis is higher. Consequently, when the donor sells the stock, the tax bill will be less. If a donor wants to give appreciated securities to the Allina Health Hospice Foundation, she or he should contact her or his financial advisor quickly to arrange the transfer and take advantage of this win-win scenario. In addition to making a smart gift, donors also have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping patients and families at the end of life.

For more information, please contact Ron Bagnall at 612-775-2585 or ron.bagnall@allina.com.



Thank you to our 2016 Allina Health Hospice Dragonfly Gala sponsors

The 13th annual Allina Health Hospice Dragonfly Gala was on Friday, May 6, at Radisson Blu Mall of America. Through the generosity of supporters, more than \$178,000 was donated to the Wedum Compassion Fund! This translates to 445 days of care for hospice patients who do not have the ability to pay for their stay at the J.A. Wedum Residential Hospice. Thank you to those who attended and to our sponsors!

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