



Volume 6, No. 1

January, 2006

NO ONE DIES ALONE

Cindy Clair

Since my own humble beginning with No One Dies Alone (first as a volunteer companion in the early days to assisting in organizing systems - from what began as a grassroots movement - to becoming Program Coordinator), I have come to see this great program touch many lives in many ways. From those of us who serve our dying patients, to their families both near and far, to our culture here at Sacred Heart, I have seen the perception of the process of dying move from a quiet place of fear and denial to a sacred place so very important in the process of life. As Program Coordinator, I am in touch with all of our volunteers, as well as many of the nursing staff; there are definitely transformations taking place, too numerous to describe. One thing that strikes me so deeply is the sheer amount of organizations, groups, facilities... around the world, who have contacted us about starting their own program... and many have done so with great success. Professionally, my hope is to continue to see movement away from fear towards a better understanding of the sacredness of this step in the human lifespan. Personally, I am honored to continue serving those during this phase of life and am humbled at it's awesomeness.

Cindy Clair

No One Dies Alone Program Coordinator

My decision to become involved in NODA was due to my desire to give something of myself with no thought of concrete return or compensation. I survived my childhood as an orphan because many people decided to give something of themselves for no other reason than to give so that others might have something more. I also have been in a situation where I wish I would have made time to visit someone who I befriended in a nursing home but moved across town where she died unexpectedly.

I value my time that I can just 'be' with someone as they move through the final phase of this life. I always wonder what their lives were like, who they touched as they moved through life, and what their hopes and struggles were. The experience always make me evaluate my life and how I want to live it - and it always brings me peace as I sit with the person in calmness.

Lois

My motivation for 'No One Dies Alone' was due to the fact I had a Grandmother who died alone. She was found some time later, even though she was in a skilled nursing facility. I too am a person who lost a child at a young age and seek to find peace in death. This has afforded me

the opportunity. I am touching someone at a time when they need someone most even though the outside world may not see that. Just a touch or word they do hear, I believe, and eases that innate fear of being alone. I have found the peace and now experience the quiet joy of helping people/families at the most difficult time in their lives.

Cat, RN

A while back I was asked if I would sit with an elderly Gentleman. I don't remember his name now, although I wish I did. He was 95 and entering renal failure. It began, as most vigils do, with an unresponsive person. Then the morphine began to take away what he described as "...all over most painful ache he has ever felt." What came next was a delightful conversation with an old guy and his lifetime of stories. We talked about hunting, fishing and his long ago deceased wife. He laughed and I laughed at times. He cried and I cried at times. He was happy to hear about my family and my happiness. I was very happy to hear him say that "the staff at SHMC were the nicest folks he'd met in a long time."

Jim, House Engineer

I first joined No One Dies Alone to do for others what I was unable to do for my own family members. But what I experienced was not what I expected. The first time I arrived to sit with an elderly gentleman, I hesitate to say just how scared I was. I felt so afraid, but wasn't sure why. I wanted so much to help him, but felt incapable of doing anything useful. To my relief, Bonnie, the staff nurse was working that night. I had never met Bonnie before, but by the end of that night, I came to realize what I could give to others by simply watching her. She gave such warmth and compassion to this man; you would have thought he was one of her loved ones. I must have called Bonnie into the room five times, thinking there was something he needed or something he was trying to say. Each time she approached his bed she was just as warm and giving as the time before. I realized all he wanted was to know someone cared. Bonnie cared. And it touched me deeply.

During my second night with him, I came to understand my contribution in this most precious moment. It happened the moment he realized I was in the room. I reached out to hold his hand, and a certain calm and stillness filled the air. I stayed close to him over the next few hours, holding his hand as he drifted into a quiet sleep. Although I couldn't help but feel somewhat helpless, I felt at ease knowing I wasn't alone in helping him. I simply remembered Bonnie, and tried to emulate her actions. Although 'No One Dies Alone' has given me the chance to reach out to others as I have never done before, it was Bonnie who gave me the courage to believe that I had the strength to overcome my fear and give myself to others in their time of need.

Mel, Administrative Assistant

Resources

Institutions that have started (or are in the process of starting) their own programs (they may not be called NODA, but something else):

Providence in Portland and in Medford, Oregon
Providence in Anchorage, Alaska

Possibly at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego, Ca

VA Healthcare Network Upstate NY
<http://www1.va.gov/visns/vsn02/wny/noda/index.cfm>

LDS Hospitals, Salt Lake City, Utah ~ Helen Rollins/Director of Bereavement Program

See also book review, *No One Dies Alone* in this issue of IJHC.

TERMS OF USE

The International Journal of Healing and Caring On Line is distributed electronically. You may choose to print your downloaded copy for relaxed reading.

We encourage you to share this article with friends and colleagues.

The International Journal of Healing and Caring – On Line
P.O. Box 502, Medford, NJ 08055
Phone (609) 714-1885 - Fax (609) 714-3553
Email: center@ijhc.org Web Site: <http://www.ijhc.org>
Copyright © 2005 IJHC. All rights reserved.