

# Hospice Matters

WINTER 2014

## Hospice Matters

- to patients we care for and those who love them.
- to anyone facing a serious or life-limiting illness seeking to control symptoms, relieve suffering, and preserve quality of life.
- to medical professionals throughout our community who turn to us as partners in end-of-life care.
- in community ethics discussions, as collaborating professionals seek to enhance standards for quality care.
- in our discussions with state and national leaders, as we work to infuse legislation, regulations, and standards affecting those in need of this specialized care.
- in national discussions, as we join the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in confronting the challenges about dignified care and support for those in pain, those dying, and those who grieve.

## Our Mission

### Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care

- Provides compassionate and expert end-of-life care to patients and their families;
- Partners with those who share our vision;
- Leads change in the community to ensure comfort for all who face serious illness.

## Our Core Principles

- Hospice care is about living.
- End-of-life events are universal.
- Comfort and dignity should be accessible to all.
- Every life experience is exceptional.
- To listen is to understand.
- Hospice and palliative care is ever-changing.
- Optimism is powerful and contagious.

*Honored to walk this journey with you.*

**PIKES PEAK**  
HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

care and support  
for each step you choose



Photo courtesy of Venus Maher

## Sounds of Angels

Hospice care is often heralded as the work of angels. At Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care (PPHPC) it sometimes sounds like angels too, thanks to the soft and soothing voices of the Pikes Peak Threshold Singers (PPTS). The group was formed for the sole purpose of singing at the bedsides of people on the thresholds of life. All of the members are also Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care volunteers.

"The singing is so powerfully comforting," says Sally Rothstein, PPTS co-director, who helped form the local choir four years ago. "Many times there's something about the music that quickly creates a strong connection and deep impact for those in the room. It's an honor for us to be able to offer that."



(l-r) Sally Rothstein, Holly Remington and Kathryn Eastburn singing for a patient at the Pikes Peak Hospice Unit at Penrose Hospital

Twice a week the choir sends an a cappella trio to the Pikes Peak Hospice Unit at Penrose Hospital to offer peaceful lullaby-style melodies. When invited into a patient's room, they come with a calm and focused presence, gentle voices, and sincere kindness.

"I so believe that music draws us all together," says retired teacher and PPTS co-director Annie Garretson. "This is a beautiful fit. It's a beautiful thing to merge a love of music with service. This is life-defining for me."

That note rings true for most threshold singers and has inspired a movement much bigger than the local group's thirteen singers. Around the world, 1500 volunteers sing in more than 130 chapters of the Threshold Choir. They sing many of the same songs, some of which are written by choir members because of the need for simple, calming lyrics. And, they share the same passion, dedication and what Threshold Choir founder Kate Munger

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Top Picture: Pikes Peak Threshold Singers at the Rocky Mountain Threshold Choir Gathering, October 24-26 at The Nature Place.  
Back row: Gloria Hearten, Kimberley Sherwood, Carolyn Dickerson, Becky Weiss, Jarla Ahlers  
Middle row: Angela Gainer, Kathryn Eastburn, Carol Milne, Kay McCormack, Mo Morrow  
Front row: Sally Rothstein, Annie Garretson, Holly Remington





Threshold Choir founder Kate Munger

calls tender-hearted courage. "To be in a room where everyone knows what's happening next and not shy away from it, is beauty," says Munger.

Munger started the Threshold Choir nearly 15 years ago, inspired by the courage that flooded her while singing at the death bed of a friend. "I started terrified and ended exultant and I figured something was there and should be shared. This is an idea that I think has been waiting to resume. Tribal cultures do this naturally. Recapturing that for our culture is very important."

Munger says one of her most touching experiences will remain with her. She recently participated as a member of a PPTS trio singing at PPHPC's inpatient unit. "One of the patients just leaned into it so profoundly. It really evoked something deep for him. It seemed like he loved it so much and he just fell right into peace. I really do believe it touches our soul."

Knowing that the patient was a World War II veteran, the trio began singing "America the Beautiful." He smiled, joined in and then wept. "That's not uncommon," says Garretson. "We get all kinds of reactions from patients and their families; hugs, blessings, sobs, disbelief. They relax, fall asleep, pray, cry. Mostly they just really appreciate it."

Munger calls the Pikes Peak Threshold Singers' collaborative relationship with PPHPC an unparalleled blessing and planned to use it as example of excellence at the regional gathering of the Threshold Choir that brought her to Colorado Springs. "The traditions and rituals that they've developed here are very special. The way they center and focus and set intentions and take such deliberate care with every aspect and every person, it's just amazing what they're doing."

Rothstein says the deliberate nature of making every encounter deeply personal is in harmony with the core of PPHPC. "Our work in this is to let every experience be what it is and to join in the fundamental hospice philosophy to support people wherever they are."

Pikes Peak Threshold Singers is a part of PPHPC's Integrative Therapies Program which is funded as a whole through donations to Pikes Peak Hospice Foundation. Financial support for Pikes Peak Threshold Singers also comes through donations directly to the local chapter and from the members themselves who pay dues.

Local members say their work is a culture of gratitude; a quiet and tender gift exchange. After singing at more than 800 bedsides, Garretson and Rothstein say every one is still so deeply touching, and they are grateful for the joy they get from sharing their voices. "These are moments that you can't find anywhere else in life," says Garretson. "That we can be included in those sacred spaces is pretty unfathomable."



(l-r) Sally Rothstein, Kate Munger and Annie Garretson sing for a WWII veteran.

*May peace be with you*

*Peace be with you now*

*May peace be with you always*

*Peace be with you now and always*

*~music & lyrics by Annie Garretson*