

# CARONDELET

## HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

### Hospice News.

Volunteer Highlights  
Pg. 2

Fall 2012

A Newsletter for Friends and Supporters

Volume 6, Issue 3

I am the coordinator of the Carondelet Hospice and Palliative Care's We Honor Veterans Program that includes working with hospice staff in developing recognition ceremonies for our patients that are veterans. Below is an example of how that honoring process works.

A recent patient was identified as a WWII Navy Ensign at Intake and had requested an honoring ceremony. The responsible social worker notified me, coordinated a date and time with the patient, his family and care team members and provided me with the patient's military history.

With that history, I designed a personalized Certificate of Appreciation that included his service dates, war era, job, rank, ship, notable battles (with German submarines), awards (Silver Star and Purple Heart), as well as the Navy Seal and his ship's patch. Using Google, I downloaded and framed an authorized photo of the destroyer escort he served aboard.

To begin the ceremony, the chaplain sang "America the Beautiful" and offered a prayer. I shared information I gathered about the veteran and his sea service experiences and then gave him the picture of his ship.

Next, the social worker read and presented the framed Certificate of Appreciation. Afterwards, I played his service song (Anchors Away) on an iPad and saluted him (I'm in my Navy dress uniform). But he quickly said, "stop" and then "I have to stand up!" It took two staff to help him to his feet and, with shaking legs and tears running down his cheeks, he gave a feeble salute and a moment none of us will ever forget.

The team nurse then presented him with a Veterans Service Pin that was recently created to specifically honor veterans. After reviewing its symbolic history, she gave regular flag pins to the three family members present.

After reviewing the history and significance of "Dog Tags," I hung authentic ones around his neck that were personalized with his name, rank, ship, war era on one and "Ceremony, We Honor Veterans, Carondelet Hospice, Tucson" on the other. Later, his daughter remarked "I'd never seen my father in tears before!"

In closing, the Chaplain read the Navy service prayer (copies were given to the family), and I played the Navy Hymn. The ceremony took 20 minutes and we all stayed afterwards and listened to more fascinating "sea stories" from the veteran---several the family had never heard before.

I especially enjoy these ceremony presentations, as it is a team effort. The participation of the social workers, nurses, and chaplains is vital as they know the patient (and family) well and are able to interact better than I can.

For all of us involved, the experience of listening to first hand accounts of war experiences while "honoring those who first served us" is a rare privilege that is difficult to describe in mere words.

**L. Lance Sholdt, Ph.D.**

**Captain, Medical Service Corps, US Navy (ret)**



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# VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS



Michael Russo has packed a lot into his 22 years on this earth. His story is inspiring and the staff at Carondelet Hospice and Palliative Care is proud to count him among their ranks. Michael is a trained hospice volunteer and spends his time freely with patients facing a life-limiting illness.

Michael began volunteering in the hospice inpatient unit. He initially thought that the experience would be terribly difficult, emotionally. However, he quickly learned that the patients were still very much alive and he couldn't believe how much he enjoyed getting to know the patients and their families. Michael realizes that the time he spends as a hospice volunteer will only help prepare him for his future as a physician.

Michael spent two summers volunteering in Peru with Imaginations, Inc. It is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life of children and families through sustainable health and education initiatives at home and abroad. For more information, visit [www.imaginationsinc.org](http://www.imaginationsinc.org).

On one of Michael's visits to the inpatient unit, he spent time with a gentleman whose family members were ending a visit - perhaps their last visit - and the good-byes were tearful. When the

visitors had left, Michael went to the patient's room to see how he was doing. The man told him that it was difficult to see his loved ones in pain, but he didn't think they realized that, "they came to say good-bye just to me, but I will have to say good-bye to everyone and everything."

***Through his volunteer experience, Michael has learned that we should, "everyday, be thankful for our life--all we have."***

Earlier this year, Michael volunteered to visit a male patient at an assisted living home. The two formed a fast bond during their conversation about - what else? - Football. The next week was Super Bowl Sunday, so Michael called the Carondelet volunteer coordinator and asked for permission to spend the big game day with his new friend. There are probably not many 22-year old sports-loving men that would choose to spend one of the year's biggest day in football at a care home for the elderly.

On another volunteer assignment, Michael witnessed a large group gathering to honor the family's matron. The family included Mariachis. The band leader cried as he played the music to his loved one and Michael realized that he was crying too - so touched.



Michael graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in Physiology and secondary degrees in Business and Chemistry. He decided to aim for Medical School during his junior year of college.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

October 17, 2012 4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### End-of-Life Ethics Conference

This teleconference will examine, using a case study approach, the ethical issues and dilemmas that emerge at the end-of-life, the principles of ethical decision-making and the effects of these decisions on staff and families.

November 6, 2012 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

### Serving Those Who First Served Us

A continuing education conference and an opportunity to honor our nation's Veterans. Speakers include Deborah Grassman, Dr. Michael Marks, and Cathi Starr.

November 30, 2012 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

### Artificial Nutrition and Hydration at the End-of-Life

While explaining the medical, legal, ethical issues, and the communication barriers that surround artificial nutrition and hydration, this conference will train staff and educate families to minimize misunderstandings and discord.

December 5, 2012 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### Lighting of the Holiday Tree of Memories

Join the staff and volunteers of Carondelet Hospice and Palliative Care to celebrate and honor the loved ones we have lost.

Seating is limited and registration is required

For more information call (520)205-7575 or email [susan.howard@carondelet.org](mailto:susan.howard@carondelet.org)

**Michael Russo describes hospice volunteering as, "a selfless act for selfish reasons."**

**One patient reminded Michael of his mother. "That was tough," he said, "As soon as I was done with my shift, I called mom to say I love you."**

**To inquire about becoming a Carondelet Hospice volunteer  
Call (520)205-7567**



Skydiving, hiking, and biking are just a few of the many activities that Michael enjoys. To meet him, one would think he knows no fear.

Michael experienced anxiety and fear about death as a child. He realized that the best way to overcome those emotions was to face them - that is why he chose to volunteer with Carondelet Hospice. His experience has shown him that death can be a peaceful and tranquil time of life.



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## HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

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## **Annual Tree of Memories**

Year after year, Carondelet Hospice & Palliative Care celebrates the loved ones we have lost in a beautiful ceremony each December. Our evening begins with the creation of memorial stars; handwritten messages to loved ones, placed on our tree. We read the names aloud to honor those who have passed this year and years before. Together, we sing, we remember, and we congregate with one another to cherish the memories we have.

**If you would like to attend one of our Tree of Memories this  
December, please call 520-205-7575 for an invitation.**

***Tucson, December 5, 2012***

***Green Valley and Nogales, December 12, 2012***