

# The Journey

News from Samaritan Evergreen Hospice

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*"Hospice is the best possible organization for the two of us to share our music."*

Nancy Higgins in reference to the benefit concert.

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## Touching hearts through music

From a Puccini Aria to Somewhere Over the Rainbow, the Friday, June 3 musical performance is sure to touch some hearts, according to Georgiana Rodriguez, who will be featured at the Songs of Inspiration and Faith benefit concert for the Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House campaign at St. Mary's Church in Albany.

Rodriguez is a classically trained vocalist who began taking singing lessons at age 13 and sang with the Nevada Opera for seven seasons before moving to Albany in 2005.

She performs with pianist Nancy Higgins, whom she describes as the best pianist she has ever known and worked with. The duo has a following for their Christmas concerts, "but this one has the potential of being magical with songs of inspiration, not necessarily religious or romantic, but covering many genres," Rodriguez said.

Both women have recently experienced family losses in which hospice care was utilized. Higgins lost her husband of 27 years, and Rodriguez her Godfather.

"Evergreen nurses, massage therapist and counselor were miracle workers," said Higgins. "For such a horrible experience, I can't tell you how much better and more positive they made it for all of us."

"I know the benefits of hospice, too," said Rodriguez. "I can take care of a relative, but these folks God has kissed; they have such strength," she said. "I hope we pack the church for hospice, especially since the money raised will be matched by a local philanthropist."

Rodriguez and Higgins were planning a benefit concert this year to celebrate the 125th anniversary of St. Mary's Church, with the proceeds going to a local non-profit. "So when the hospice request came in, Nancy and I knew it was just the right thing," she said.

The Albany General Hospital Foundation will host the concert. Tickets are \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door. For more information, please call (541) 812-4819.



*Georgiana Rodriguez (standing) and Nancy Higgins prepare for the June 3 concert.*

# Financial institutions “raise the barn” for hospice

“Sometimes it takes a grass-roots effort to identify and work together to meet a community need,” said Dave Wood, president and CEO of Willamette Community Bank in Albany and a director on the Albany General Hospital Foundation Board of Directors.

“That is just what is happening with Evergreen Hospice House,” he explained. “Like building a barn, it’s something that is needed so everybody chips in and does their part.”

Wood corralled local financial institutions together for a special meeting and helped present the hospice house as the kind of community project that benefits the entire region. “It’s an endearing project that will provide vital services to patients and families,” he said.

Financial leaders have joined together and agreed to support the hospice house campaign with pledges in support of a public family space within the new hospice facility.

## **The current list includes:**

- Central Willamette Community Credit Union
- Citizens Bank, West Albany branch
- Linn-Co Federal Credit Union
- Northwest Farm Credit Services
- OSU Federal Credit Union
- US Bank
- Willamette Community Bank

The idea was to harness the financial resources to support the hospice house development and provide the seed money to see it to fruition, according to Wood.

“Willamette Community Bank took a leadership role and motivated others to share the cost,” said Kim Sass, Albany General Hospital Foundation director. Willamette Community Bank was the first financial institution to formally support the campaign.

The bank’s employees and customers can now see a banner showing support for the hospice house at its facility at 333 Lyons Street in Albany. “We are grateful for their support, and we hope their enthusiasm will spread to encourage others to get involved,” said Sass.

“We all have friends, employees and neighbors who have been touched by hospice,” said Wood. “And, a house where patients can go for round-the-clock hospice care is a nugget of goodness that surely makes all of us want to embrace it.”

Wood said he would like to let businesses throughout the region know that this is the time to consider donating time, talent and treasures to the hospice house because it will leave a legacy far beyond our lifetimes.



*Dave Wood, CEO Willamette Community Bank*



# Grief support group offered by Samaritan Health Services

Free education and support led by professionals through Samaritan's three hospice services, serving Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties, for adults who have experienced the death of a loved one whether it occurred under hospice or not. Your loss does not have to be recent.

Albany – First Sundays and third Mondays. Call for times and more information - (541) 812-4680

Corvallis – First Wednesdays and third Sundays. Call for times and more information - (541) 812-4680

Lebanon – Second and fourth Tuesdays. – Call for times and more information - (541) 812-4670

Lincoln City – Mondays 10 to 11 a.m. Call for more information - (541) 921-8085 or (503) 392-5872

## 'Adrift' spouse discovers counseling support

A consulting engineer for CH2M Hill for 45 years, LaMont Matthews of Albany lost his wife Della to lung cancer last summer. She lived less than three weeks after the diagnosis, and Samaritan Evergreen Hospice transformed that period into quality time for the couple.

"The whole hospice team did an amazing job, but it was the bereavement counseling afterwards that was particularly helpful," said Matthews. "Nothing could have prepared me for the enormous grief that hit after my wife and companion of 37 years was gone, so I was more than willing to respond to their offer of some counseling."

"I consider myself to be a pretty strong, energetic person; but this experience really got to me," Matthews explained. "My thinking was erratic, I wasn't sleeping, and I really didn't want to do much of anything. I just felt adrift."

Matthews has a supportive family living nearby, close neighbors, and a strong church community, who helped him a great deal. However, when it came to addressing the underneath issues, he realized that he needed professional guidance. That is where Virginia Tyler came in. Tyler is an experienced hospice counselor with specialized training in helping people in times of loss and grief.

"She was totally objective and non-threatening, and she established a professional relationship right up front," said Matthews. "No matter what I said, I knew it stopped with her, and that was critical to me. With friends and family,

we might feel as though we are imposing, but with a bereavement counselor it's not like that; they are there to listen and to help."

Matthews and Tyler met once a week in his home, as she guided him on his healing journey. She recommended several books about losing a spouse and counseled him on specific ways to deal with his loss.

Medicare covered the costs of the bereavement counseling as well as the hospital bed, medical equipment, medication, nursing care and bath aids.

"Hospice is a first-class organization with high-quality people," said Matthews. "I can honestly say that, because of them, I am able to live a much more normal life as I continue to heal," he said. "I highly recommend their services to anyone."



LaMont Matthews

## Hospice staff profile: Martha Norman, RN

“It means a lot to me to connect with patients and their families, especially when they are going through difficult decisions and need specialized care,” said Martha Norman, a Samaritan Evergreen Hospice nurse and Corvallis resident.

Before joining Evergreen three years ago, she worked at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis for 16 years – five of those in ICU and five in oncology – interacting with many patients and families who were experiencing end-of-life issues.

“As a hospital nurse, I had very little time with each patient – even when someone was nearing the end of life,” she said. “In hospice, I have time to give my undivided attention, size up situations and respond with what I have been trained to do.”

“Allowing people to leave this life in a peaceful way has been inspirational for me,” said Norman who lost her brother in 1998.

“There is so much more involved at the end of life than I realized, and the team approach of hospice coordinates all the details,” she said. “The hospice house will provide a much needed place for terminally ill patients to go when they need to leave the hospital.”

“It is a joy to work with all the members of a hospice team,” said Norman, I have found my calling.”

*Hospice house tally as of April 30, 2011: \$2,719,752 raised for a building goal of \$4.33 million or 63 percent.*

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