

Silverado Hospice Los Angeles Silverado Hospice Newsletter

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Thank you Volunteers!

Most of us remember a person who seemed to go out of their way to help us during a difficult time in our life – a grandparent, a special teacher, even a stranger who became a friend. Recollections of these caring people remind us of the good within each of us and make up the communities we are part of. Nowhere will you find more compassionate people than the volunteers who serve hospice patients across the country.

In honor of National Volunteer Week, which is recognized April 17 through 23, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our very special volunteers at Silverado Hospice.

Throughout the years we have had hundreds of wonderful, dedicated individuals in our communities who have given selflessly of their time and talents to serve our hospice patients and families in so many different ways.

Some of our volunteers work directly with patients, visiting with them, playing music for them, and reading to them. Some volunteers share their talents making quilts or preparing meals while others help with special programs like 11th Hour Vigil, We Honor Veterans, Memory Catchers, Petals for Patients and Pet Therapy. Some choose to support the mission of hospice by assisting with bereavement, clerical work and general support. So, THANK YOU again to all of our exceptional volunteers. What they do is amazing and a true calling!

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Our volunteers are caring, dedicated people who share their time to help make a difference to those who are nearing the end of their lives. We are blessed to have such an amazing team of volunteers who selflessly contribute their time, talents and, most importantly, their compassionate spirits. Meet our volunteers and their stories.



"About five years ago, my father was terribly sick and actively dying back home. For many reasons, I wasn't able to physically be there with him at all times and it would break my heart. I tried, but logistically and financially, it was just too complicated. I started volunteering with Silverado as a pay-it-forward gesture. A way to give my heart, time, and company to someone else's sick or dying parent, in lieu of my gratitude for those spending time with my own father, when I couldn't be. It was deeply healing beyond my comprehension. My experience with handfuls of amazing people at the end of their life has been a true honor for me. It often leaves me speechless and in awe. It's gratifying and humbling and brings me back in touch with a bigger, more intimate life picture. I will never forget a single person I sat with. Their memories and specialness are embedded in my heart forever. What a privilege to know each of them." **-Romina D.**

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Arthur Ter-Pogosyan has been serving as a Silverado Hospice volunteer since 2019. As a direct patient care volunteer, Arthur provides companionship and supportive care to our hospice and memory care center patients during his regular visits. As a UCLA undergraduate student aspiring to become a physician, Arthur deeply appreciates the opportunity to positively impact the lives of our patients, and he cherishes the growth and maturation opportunities that arise from his meaningful relationships and encounters with them. Arthur strives to continually improve as a volunteer by internalizing the skills and lessons he learns during his patient visits. We hope to see him carry the invaluable attributes that he has gained and polished as a volunteer for the rest of his life.



"It's been quite a ride so far in this journey I've been on, since I decided I wanted to become a Silverado Hospice Volunteer. There have been times when it was very challenging, other times when it was wonderful, sometimes even fun, but always it's been surprising, and life changing. In the beginning of my journey, it was all fun and excitement. Our Volunteer Coordinator is so upbeat, positive and friendly. We discussed the various difficult situations that we may come across and they seemed so easily handled, because we're "good people" doing "good deeds" and we will be just fine! So I left training fully inspired, armed and ready to make a difference in the world.

After I was assigned my first patient, boy, I was excited, a little nervous, but couldn't wait to meet my first patient, and start making the world a better place. Just a few hours before I was to meet her, she passed away. So there it was, I had "lost" my first patient even before I met her. I have to admit, it deflated my tires a bit. And it was a clear indication of what this Hospice business entails, that people will pass away. We are not here to save them, we are here to be there for them, just like we would like someone there for us.

Next patient was actually unresponsive and asleep, but her husband was in need of a friend. When I got to their residence I discovered that his English was extremely limited, and my spanglish wasn't going to work because he was Iranian. Fortunately his son came, and was able to explain to him exactly who I was, that I was a volunteer and there to talk if he'd like. He looked at me, deep in my eyes like I was both crazy and an angel. The look lasted a moment, like he was making sure he could trust me, and then, boom! He unloaded, in his broken English, all of his angst and sadness and anger over his wife's illness and the way she was dying. All I could do was to listen. It was intense. I had never felt so much emotional pain from someone in my life.

My next two patients were asleep the whole time I tried to visit, and passed away after just one visit. It started to feel strange how fast all these patients went right after I visited. I was not getting the amazing life changing friendships I had envisioned in the beginning.

And then I was assigned "Chuck". He had trouble speaking due to his illness, but he said he was a good listener, and he wanted me to talk about myself. I told him about my history and he listened attentively and I could tell he was a very nice guy, and smart as a whip. We developed a really cool friendship. He even let me call him by his nickname, which only his friends use. One visit, I discovered he was playing pokino with some other residents. It is sort of a combo of bingo and poker, and they were playing for pennies. It was so cute, they let me "buy in" and I played next to Chuck, as well as helped him play. I had so much fun with those folks, and was cracking up at how serious they took their pennies, even Chuck. It was so inspiring to know that no matter what, you can keep a positive outlook, and have a bunch of friends, even if you all are in your 80s and up! Chuck himself told me on more than one occasion that it's all about your mental outlook how your life will be.

He has now moved on, and I lost a really dear friend. So I did get that life changing friendship that I dreamed of, as short as it lasted. It's funny, but it was still a shock to find out he passed away, even though I knew it was coming even before our first visit.

So this has been quite a ride being a volunteer. It's nothing like I thought, and has been much more difficult than any of the "difficult" situations we theorized about in training. However it has changed me, I have grown, as cliché as that sounds, I have. I have grown in compassion, and in understanding the process and shocks of life. I started as a volunteer thinking I would change the world, make it better, but it in the end it changed me." **-John**

Alyssa Wong has always had a passion for helping and caring for others. Her firsthand experience of providing comfort and care to her grandfather inspired her to become a Silverado hospice volunteer in 2019. Alyssa looks forward to connecting with her patients and enjoys giving back to her community. Alyssa is working towards her goal of becoming a research scientist.



"My hospice volunteer experience has been life changing. It has provided me the opportunity to become a more caring, sympathetic, and supportive person something I plan to carry forward as I become a Physician Assistant. The patients have touched my heart in a way no one else can replace and I am forever grateful. I have a new profound respect for life and have a more positive outlook on life. I hope I had even half the impact on my patients' lives as they have had on mine."

- Sarina P.

"My volunteer journey started quite a few years ago. Being a former foster parent, I learned how even a small amount of love and care impacts another's life so deeply. As our lives evolve, I found myself without a job. For the first time since the early 80's, I was out of work and a little lost.

Never one to sit at home too long, I started thinking about how I could make a difference and fill my time in a positive way. I started to research different volunteer options and I came across Silverado. I have always had a passion for our elderly and that death as sad as it is, can be peaceful and even beautiful. I know this to be true, in my mid-20's I sat alone with my grandmother while she passed. Those last few hours of her life are etched into my memory. Had I not stopped by the hospital that morning, my grandmother would have passed alone, this made me sad. It made me think of those that are alone, isolated, or may not have family or friends close enough to visit. As I learned more about Silverado and the services they provide, the more it felt like the right fit for me. In my grandmother Mary's memory, I set out on my hospice journey, to make a small difference in someone's life.

My first patient was non-verbal and slept quite a bit. I would visit her, sit beside her, and hold her hand. She had a strong grip and would squeeze my hand every so often. I talked to her, let her know what was going on around us, the weather outside, the upcoming holiday, etc. Sometimes I would show up at mealtime and sit with her when the staff helped her eat. One day, a staff member mentioned the patient most likely did recognize me and why do I talk to her if she does not respond. I smiled and said, "She knows, and I am glad I can offer her some companionship." A couple of visits later, I walked into the rec/dining room and greeted everyone with a "Hello!" and my patient immediately lifted her hands out in my direction reaching for me. Took the staff by surprise as that was the most action, they had seen from her. I reached for her hands and clasped them in mine, she pulled our hands to her chest. From that moment on, I knew she understood I was there for her. The last few visits she was bed ridden but would always clasp my hands tightly and hold them next to her. Sadly, I was not with her when she passed in the early hours of the morning.

Many times, I would have multiple patients at a time and often at the same facility. I always enjoy when I can visit one of Silverado's facilities. I not only had a chance to visit and engage with my patients, often I would get to visit with their families and learn more about my patient's past. Not only do I find their pasts intriguing, but it also helps me gain insight as to their interests and makes for better visits. On one such visit, I learned from my patient's daughter, that her father was an artist, who studied and taught color theory. He loved colors. I searched a few local used bookstores and found wonderful books on art with vibrant and bold colors to share with him. His smile was my biggest reward.

I have had many patients over the last seven+ years. Some passed quickly within a short amount of time, and with others I was able to visit and bond with for 1 ½ - 2 years. At one small facility, I had two patients, a loveable lady who loved cheese puffs and one non-verbal gentleman who loved surfing, sailing, and the Grateful Dead. He shared a room with a WWII vet. When I would come to visit and read sailing and Grateful Dead stories to my patient, his roommate would wheel back to the room, crawl in bed, and listen. I fear I bored my patient as my stories always lulled him to sleep within a brief time. I would stay a little longer and visit with his roommate. One of the staff members let me know that the roommate was alone and had no family they knew of. On one visit, I learned that he was in the process of transitioning, I sat and held his hand for quite some time so that he would not be alone during the process.

Due to the pandemic, I have missed visiting with patients, at a time when they needed us the most and I look forward to the day I can start visiting again. My original thought process was to make a small difference in someone's life, in reality the patients have made an ENORMOUS impact on my life. So many patients, so many stories to hear, so many hands to hold, so many beautiful smiles and memories to cherish. 'Be the reason someone smiles today!' - **Connie M.**

"I joined the Silverado Hospice Volunteer program around March 2021, when I was 56 years old. Prior to this, I had never volunteered in any significant way because I had been focusing on pursuing a career and together with my husband, we raised a daughter. In March 2019, my mother passed away due to Parkinson's disease and a year later my father also died from old age. Watching the sickness, old age and death of my parents made me pause and think: Why am I here on earth and what's the purpose of my life? It occurred to me that while life is full of uncertainty, death is sure to happen to everyone no matter what our worldly possessions and achievements might be. I felt it was time for me to re-direct my focus in life to start to spend time and efforts in caring and serving others outside of my immediate family. Through an online website to match volunteers, I saw an ad that said "no one should die alone"; it resonated, and I decided to apply for a volunteer position at the Silverado Hospice.

After onboarding and training, I started visiting in June 2021 my first client, whom I will call "Miss A". Miss A. had lung problems and lived alone most of the weekdays. She surely needed a cadre of volunteers to help her out, and it was great that multiple people from Silverado were able to visit her and provide her with various support. After getting to know each other in the first few weeks, I started to look forward to visiting Miss A. every week, like visiting an old friend. I recalled the training session from Silverado to use active listening skill, and I tried my best to reflect what I heard from Miss A. It must have made Miss A. feeling heard and understood, and she started to share her deeper emotions with me as time goes by. It was those moments of trust from Miss A. that made me feel so honored to be able to be there to serve her emotional needs. In addition, while I was with her, I routinely made light brunch for Miss A. I would listen to her request carefully and worked slowly and steadily in her kitchen, with the best loving intention in my heart I prepared and served her food. An unexpected request from Miss A. was that she asked me to tell jokes, which I am bad at.

**"I SAID THIS
SILENTLY IN MY
HEART:
'THANK YOU, MISS
A., FOR ALLOWING
ME TO SERVE YOU
AT THE MOST
VULNERABLE TIME
IN YOUR LIFE.
NO, YOU DID NOT
DIE ALONE.'"**

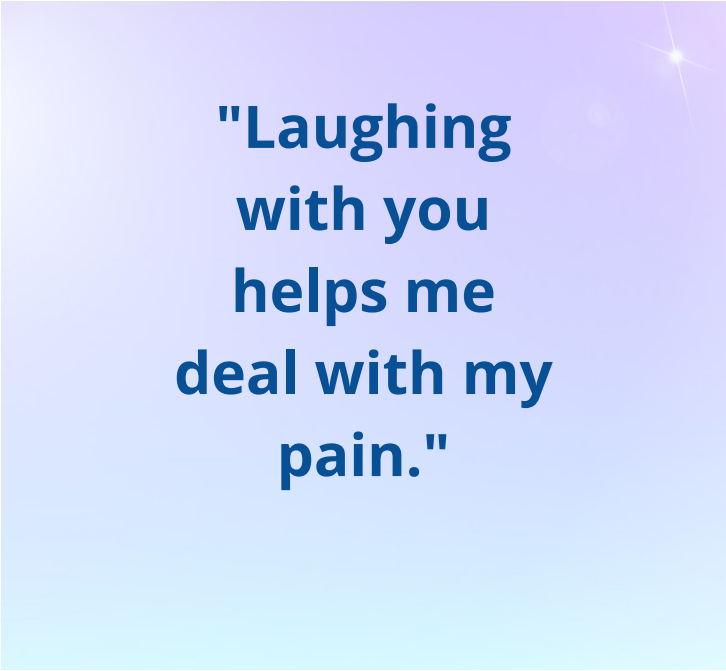
Thanks to the internet, I was able to find plenty of clean jokes online and read those jokes to her. In those moments of laughter, clouds over Miss A's head moved away temporarily and I saw her heart shined.

After 4 months of my routine visits to Miss A., her health took a sudden turn and she passed away without me being able to say goodbye. Although I knew that death was inevitable, I felt a deep sense of lost and disorientation; a beautiful and gracious human being was gone from this world. I recalled the quality time I spent with Miss A. and a sense of gratitude towards her arose in me. I said this silently in my heart: "Thank you, Miss A., for allowing me to serve you at the most vulnerable time in your life. No, you did not die alone." - **T.K**

"My Silverado journey has been eye-opening. I went into hospice expecting the patients to be in grief about their terminal illnesses. What I discovered through my patient visits was quite the opposite. Patients are resilient, reflective, joyful, and have so much to share.

My visits with John Doe were full of deep conversation and laughter. As a former Marine, he had plenty of stories to tell about war and being self-sufficient. For every visit, we had at least a 2-hour conversation about his regrets, his family conflicts, and his bucket list before dying. He was like an older brother because on the one hand, he would give me life lessons and tell me to be humble and "chill". On the other hand, he would give unsolicited dating advice. I'll never forget how he used to say "Laughing with you helps me deal with my pain". Every time I look at one of his paintings on my wall, I'm reminded to stay chill and live with joy.

Visits with my second patient were different. I was warned that he was not open to conversation. He would end my attempts to talk so I sat in silence. One time, he shouted, "Why are you still here?" After this, I considered stopping visits and called Juliet for help. But, I continued seeing him with the hope that he would "break out of his shell". And he did. Over time, he started telling me about his job, his family, his hobbies, and his life. In the end, he started hallucinating and we enjoyed eating imaginary ice cream together during our last moments. He started to trust in me, which was a huge milestone. Patients have so much to share if you just give them time/space to open up.



**"Laughing
with you
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pain."**

My third patient was nonverbal and had memory loss so I was unsure how my visits could be helpful. This was until his wife excitedly talked about how he started a band and loved all genres of music. Using his old keyboard, I played some classical and pop music for him. He would wave his fingers in the air and nod his head. On mornings when he was agitated, he would fall asleep halfway through the music. Despite losing his ability to communicate, patient never lost his sense of music.

A year into this journey, I have learned so much from these patients, who became my friends and mentors. They've taught me: to live with joy, have patience when caring for others, and retain my sense of self until the very end." **-David H.**

"To say that I have an appreciation for what hospice volunteers do and the impact they have is an understatement. The personal connection I have to someone giving up their time to spend time with someone with a terminal illness is close to home.

My mother, Carol Jenik, lost her beloved husband of 54 years in 2010. It was the decision she made after her experiencing the death of her husband that would allow her to heal appropriately. She became a hospice volunteer to give back and be a part of the service that helped her husband die peacefully and with dignity.

We often discussed her experiences and how it helped her to help them. Sometimes none of us realize this as we go through life... helping others helps your own pain. It helps you process things in a different way. It just simply helps...and allows you to experience and love on a deeper level.

Thank you Volunteers for the help and love you give to our patients in need. It makes our community better and it inspires me to the best I can be." - **Richard, Administrator**

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**"Volunteering
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My father passed in 2005, at the time I felt like I wasn't there for him the way I should have been. So in 2009 I started volunteering with Silverado Hospice as a way to give back and be there for others at the end of their lives. In 2016, my mother was diagnosed with cancer and in 2018 was admitted to Silverado Hospice. I was not only her caregiver, but I became my mother's volunteer. The last few days of her life, I sat by her bedside, played all her favorite songs, held her hand, and thanked her for being an amazing mother. My journey in volunteering and working for Silverado Hospice has taught me that every day is a gift, even our final ones. There can be beauty in our final days and hours, instead of looking at death with fear and discomfort.

As volunteer manager, I feel privileged to work with such remarkable people. All of our volunteers are sincere, committed and giving individuals. What amazes me the most is that they are able to carve out time in their busy lives to give back to those in need. This selflessness seems so uncommon in our world today. Yet, one would be amazed at how many people are willing and do volunteer. The satisfaction I get from making this possible can not be found in many other jobs. I am honored to know our volunteers and coordinate this wonderful work.

- **Juliet, Volunteer Manager**

Silverado Hospice LA Takes Part In PanCAN's PurpleStride

This year, Silverado Hospice Los Angeles participated in the PanCAN's PurpleStride, a year-round national movement that funds lifechanging programs and services for pancreatic cancer patients and their families.



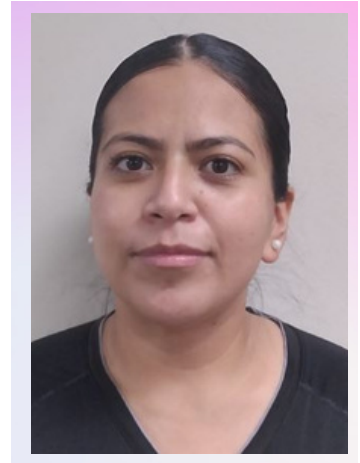
**TAKING STEPS TOGETHER
TO END PANCREATIC CANCER.**

Spotlight On!

Meet two of our wonderful employees who were recognized as employees of the month in April!

Meet Mayra, CHHA

"Goes above and beyond her duties. Families, facilities, and caregivers are so happy with her."



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Silverado Hospice
Los Angeles

Your feedback is important to us. If you have a concern, please contact our Administrator, Richard Jenik, at (888) 328-6622

Meet Susan, CHHA



"Always so kind and willing to help her team. She's very caring with her patients and has a great attitude."