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We are all just walking each other home. - Ram Dass

- Ram Dass

Coping with Grief During the Holidays

12/06/2021

 Aroostook House of Comfort

 Grief Support Group

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Despite what most people think, not everyone looks forward to the holidays. Losing someone through death may create dread as the holiday season approaches. This is often the case for the bereaved, as holidays tend to magnify the feelings of loss. It is important and quite natural to experience the sadness especially felt at this time of year.

Whatever your holiday traditions or beliefs may be, keeping a positive memory of your loved one can help to lessen your sadness. While no one can take away the pain completely, there are some things you can do to make the holidays less stressful. Here are a few suggestions to hopefully assist you in taking positive steps to feel better not only during the holiday season but through the New Year as well as you move ahead.

- > **Realize this year will be different.** You can't change that, so be careful not to set expectations too high for yourself. Expecting things to be the same or go a particular way will likely lead to disappointment.
- > **Plan ahead.** Don't let the holidays surprise you and cause added anxiety. Prioritize what needs to be done and decide which things you can let go of. Think ahead. Sit down with your family and talk through what you want to do for the holiday season. Do only what each family member can comfortably handle. Family get-togethers can be extremely difficult, so be honest with each other about your feelings. There is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays. Some may wish to follow family traditions, while others may choose to do something new or different.
- > **Set limits for yourself.** Do only those things that are very special or important to you. What you choose to do the first year, you do not have to do the following year. Try to find a balance. Spend time with others, but also find time to be alone with your thoughts and memories.

Some additional ideas to consider:

- > Start a new tradition such as donating in your loved one's memory or lighting a candle in honor of your loved one.
- > Include the deceased in your conversations and celebrations. Once others realize you are comfortable talking about your loved one, they may share stories that will add to your pleasant memories.
- > Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings.
- > Change the times, locations, and/or menus of traditional meals if thought to be helpful or replace a traditional holiday dinner at home with dining out perhaps.
- > Decorate differently; let someone else decorate; decorate exactly the same way as usual, or don't decorate at all.
- > Break large tasks into small pieces. Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- > If you wish to go away for the holidays, do so. This year do what is right for you. Remember that although your grief will always be with you, it is possible to find joy and hope.
- > Attending religious services can reconnect you with a community that may offer help and support, as well as the spiritual assistance you once had. Meeting with a spiritual advisor or clergy for additional support or guidance can help us get through this difficult time.
- > Do something for yourself...it's okay! Purchase some small thing you always wanted or do something you have never done before. It's okay to enjoy a simple pleasure.
- > Help someone else. Helping someone else may give meaning to your loss. Focusing on others during the holidays can be both a welcome distraction for you and a blessing to others.

Please contact me at gmclaughlin@northernlight.org if you have any questions or support concerning your bereavement.

George McLaughlin, Bereavement Coordinator
Northern Light Home Care and Hospice

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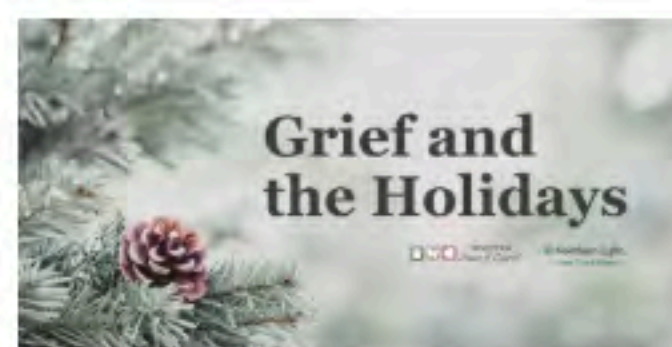
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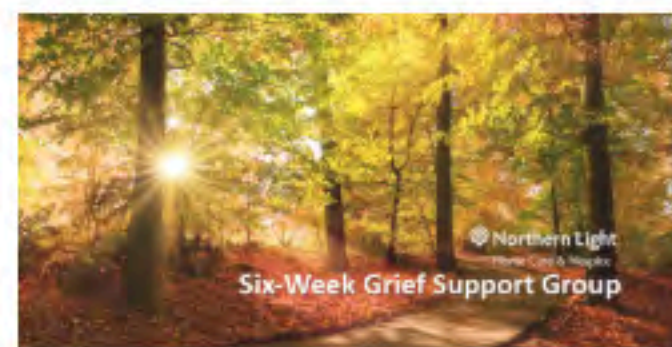
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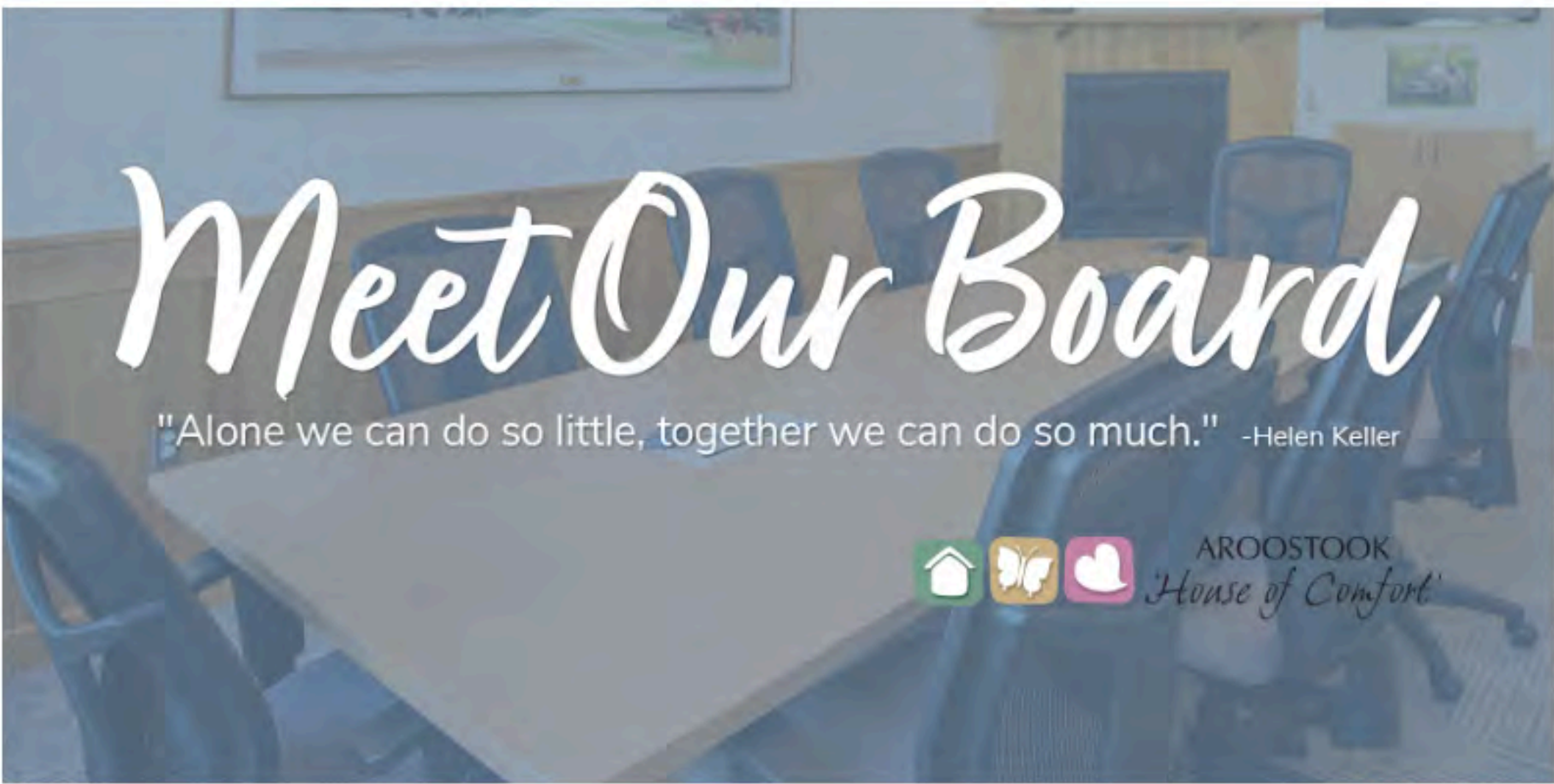
Meet Our Board - Ray Hews

10/25/2021

Aroostook House of Comfort

Board of Directors

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Ray Hews

Why did you become a Board member?

My interest in hospice stems from prior experiences with family members and my interest in seeing a stand-alone hospice facility be developed in Aroostook County.

What are some of your skills that have helped AHOC and AHF?

I have assisted with the Investment Committee and Strategic Planning Committee (Chair of both) and volunteered at the House to occasionally cook, help with the front desk, work in the gardens, and provide the nursing staff with special chocolates on occasion.

How long have you been an AHF Board member?

I have been on the Board for more than five years.

What is unique about AHOC?

The compassionate care that is provided by the dedicated staff and supported by a team of committed volunteers is what makes the House of Comfort very special to me.

What is most rewarding about being part of AHOC and its Board?

It is very rewarding to me to work beside a group of like-minded individuals who selflessly offer their time to provide comfort and care to individuals and their families during their time of need.

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The Circle of Care Award

10/01/2021

Aroostook House of Comfort

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Stephanie Coffin, HHA
Northern Light Home Care & Hospice
Hospice House HHA

The Circle of Care Award recognizes a staff member who is dedicated to helping individuals and families on their journey through hospice and end-of-life care.

"After being a stay-at-home mom for 17 years, I decided it was time to do something different. I wanted something special that made me feel happy. I found hospice to be the most rewarding experience I had ever encountered. I have worked for AHOC for 2 1/2 years. The ability to help a mom, dad, sister, or brother take a step back from being the caregiver and just be a family member is very fulfilling.

Hospice is not a job. It is a true passion. It is an honor to be with someone as they near the end of life. To know that I help them be comfortable is a blessing. The care I provide for the patients and their families during the most emotionally challenging time is the biggest reward a person could ever ask for.

At the Aroostook House of Comfort, we want you to walk through the doors and call it home. The small staff allows us to have a great connection. The staff is loving and caring with one goal in mind; supporting patients and their loved ones as they near the end of life. In the experience of celebrating the patient's life, we listen to stories of who they are and grow to accept them as family. To support them and put a smile on their face is amazing to me."

- Stephanie Coffin, HHA, Northern Light Home Care & Hospice

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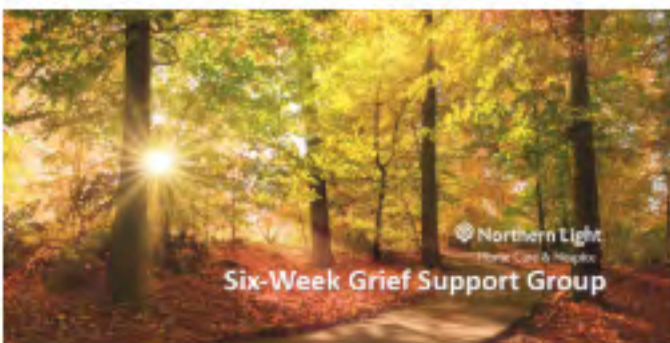
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Hospice Awareness Survey

07/16/2021Aroostook House of ComfortOur Community

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The Aroostook House of Comfort is in the process of strategic planning. We invite you to take a short survey to help us understand community impressions of hospice care in our region. The survey takes less than five minutes to complete and is open until midnight, August 2nd. Please help our community learn more about hospice awareness.

Take the Survey!

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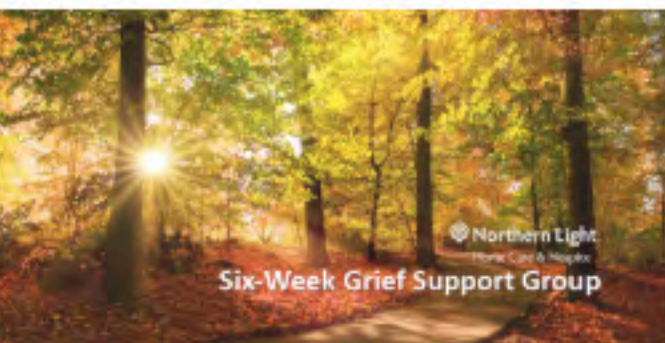
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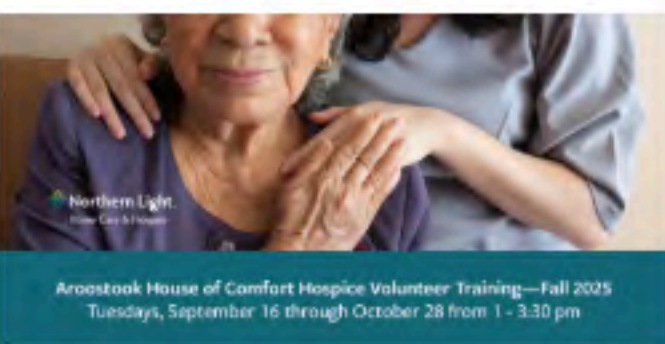
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Meet Our Board - Mike Thibodeau

 06/17/2021

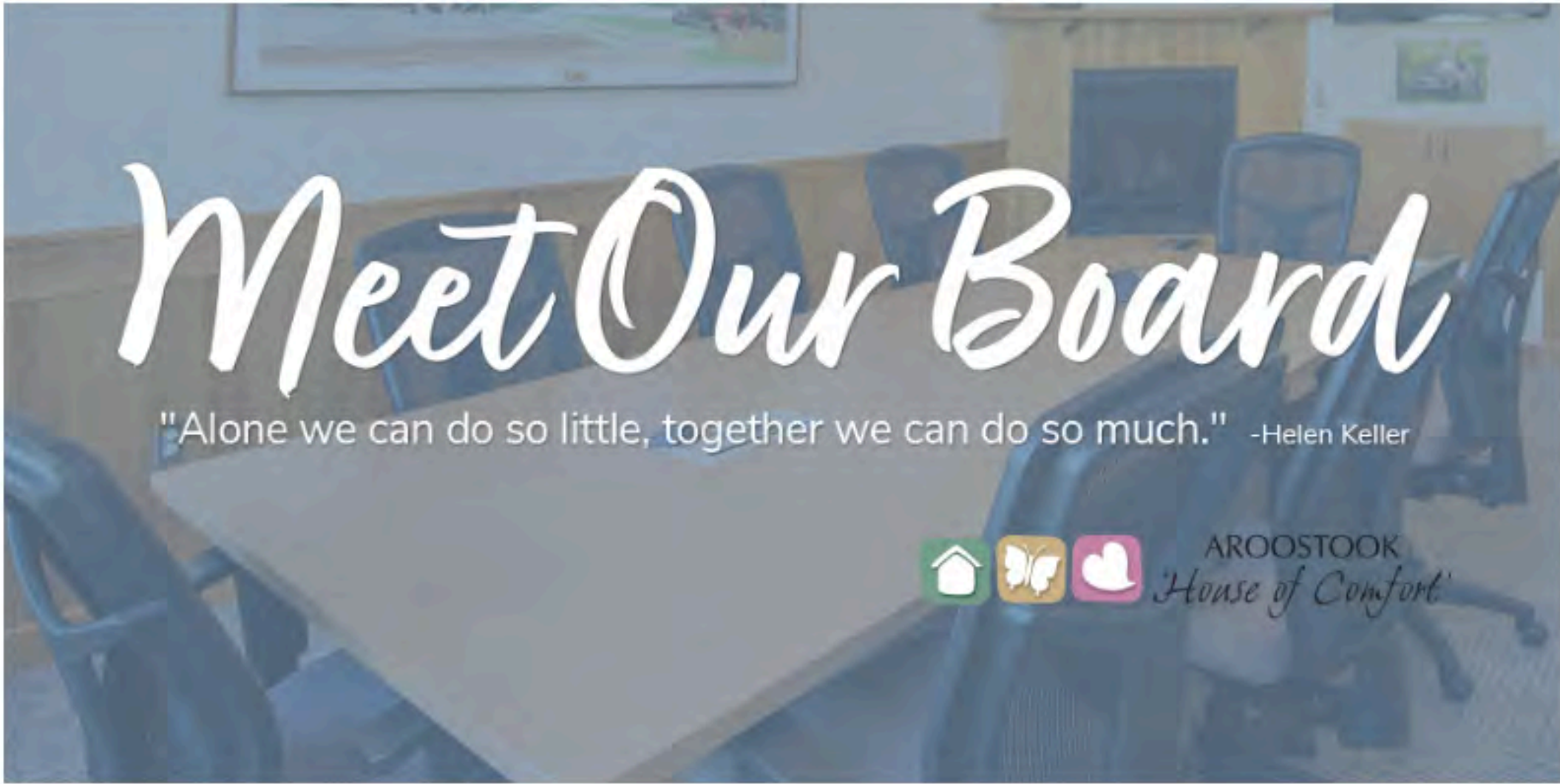
 Aroostook House of Comfort

 Board of Directors

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Mike Thibodeau

Why did you become a Board member?

My mother was a long-term home hospice volunteer. In her final days in January of 2005, my family experienced the stress, frustration, and pain in trying to piece together home hospice care to enable her to die with dignity and comfort at home. Thank God for VNA home hospice nurse Ruth Collins who coordinated with other hospice volunteers and set up my mother's bedroom to keep her comfortable until she passed. Through this experience, my wife became a hospice volunteer, and it was the genesis for my interest in hospice. When Rick Duncan and Mike MacPherson approached me about joining the AHOC Board, I didn't hesitate and jumped at the opportunity to help with this beautiful hospice house that finally provides a vital hospice services to the residents of the County.

What are some of your skills that have helped AHOC and AHF?

40 years of experience in management, accounting, finance, budgeting, human resources, risk management, and corporate governance. Also, a compassionate and caring attitude.

How long have you been a AHF Board member?

Although I can't remember specifically, I believe in 2015 or 2016.

What is special about AHOC?

Aroostook County residents are used to being told that "it can't be done." We were told the same thing when Rick Duncan's vision of a hospice house in Aroostook County was born in 2009. In 2018, through prayers, divine intervention, dedication, teamwork, and financial support of people throughout the County, Rick's dream became a reality. Not only is AHOC a success, but it is also arguably the best hospice facility in the State of Maine. AHOC is supported by a network of dedicated volunteers, staff, and board members, all who share their own stories with working to enable their loved ones to die with comfort and dignity. This patchwork of human experiences formed the foundational underpinnings of the successful AHOC story. The love, compassion, and feelings of family are apparent when passing through the doors at the House of Comfort to begin their end-of-life journey.

What is most rewarding about being part of AHOC and their Board?

Witnessing families being able to be with their loved ones in their final days in a warm and loving environment without having to deal with the burden and stress of being their caregiver. The testimonials are gratifying and reinforce the mission of AHOC and AHF.

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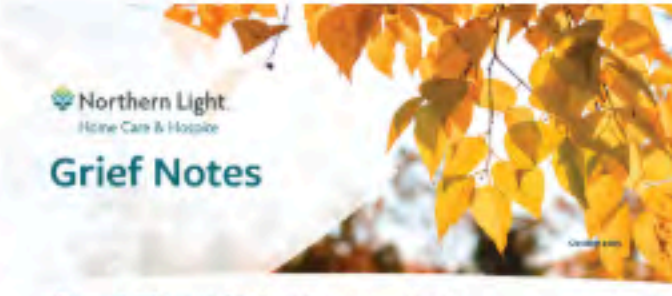
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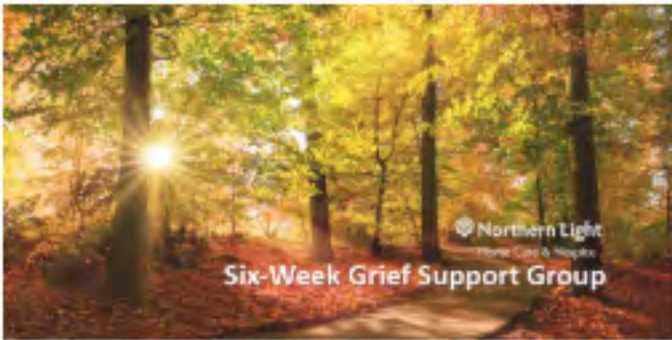
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Welcome Nancy York Putnam to Our Board of Directors

03/18/2021

Aroostook House of Comfort

Board of Directors

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Nancy York Putnam, MSN, FNP, grew up in Aroostook County, was educated in Maine, and works as a family nurse practitioner in her hometown of Houlton. She has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Husson College, a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Maine and completed a fellowship at the Andrew Weil School of Integrative medicine focusing on melding eastern and western medicine. Nancy is employed at Houlton Family Practice, where she cares for persons throughout the lifespan. During her 25 years of family practice, she has used a holistic and preventive healthcare approach.

"I became interested in the House of Comfort initially because I wanted to know more about its operation and align myself, and therefore my practice, with such a worthy cause. I strongly support the Hospice philosophy from both my nurse practitioner perspective and my personal experience. As a family nurse practitioner, I follow persons throughout the lifespan, including until the time of their death. My experience has taught me that when cure is not possible, leaving mortal existence in peace and comfort becomes the focus of treatment. Palliative care and Hospice fulfill that need. The Aroostook House of Comfort is unique to the area and new to many persons. The more I know about this organization, the more persuasive I can be with patients and families who could benefit from the service.

I consider Board membership a privilege. I am grateful for your offer of a position where I may serve my community while helping families at the end of their lives. A Board such as this provides an opportunity to expand and learn through new friendships and other professions. And finally, as a health care clinician, I may also be able to offer professional advice."

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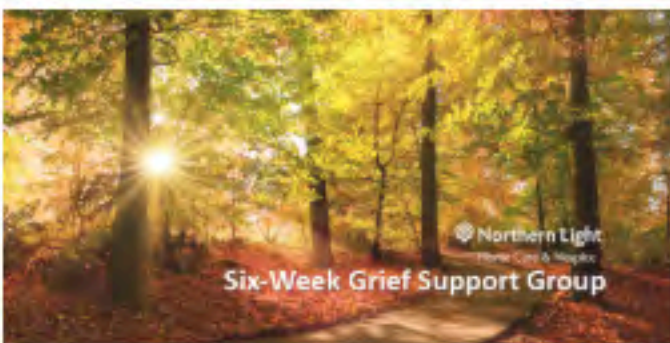
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Home Care Alliance of Maine Hospice Volunteer of the Year Award

01/18/2021

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Congratulations!

Phyllis Robichaud was nominated and won the Maine Home Care Alliance of Maine Hospice Volunteer of the Year Award!



January 2021 Volunteer News



A Note from Robin

I have some wonderful news to share!



Phyllis Robichaud, Hospice Volunteer from Washburn is pictured in front of the fireplace at the Aroostook House of Comfort in Presque Isle.

Home Care & Hospice Statewide Locations

Presque Isle
18 Greenhill Drive, Suite 1
Presque Isle, ME 04769

Bangor
885 Union Street, Suite 220
Bangor, ME 04401

Ellsworth
441 Maine Street, Suite 2
Ellsworth, ME 04605

Waterville
325-C Kennedy Memorial Drive
Waterville, ME 04901

South Portland
50 Foden Road, Suite 1
South Portland, ME 04106

Phyllis Robichaud was nominated and won the Home Care Alliance of Maine Hospice Volunteer of the Year Award for the State of Maine!

Chris Turner, Associate VP of Hospice Care with NLHCH compiled information provided by Robin and Gail and submitted the following nomination:

Phyllis has a passion for hospice. She truly understands the philosophy of care and upholds that understanding of providing comfort to her hospice patients and their family members with the utmost respect and dignity.

Phyllis is a real gem and is a natural at making families feel welcomed during their time of grief. She has a friendly and warm approach and certainly advocates for the patients when they have needs.

Phyllis also has a great relationship with staff who consistently say how much they appreciate her and how positive she is. Phyllis is willing to help with anything! From patient visits, to fundraisers, to bake sales, to volunteer training, to bereavement visits,

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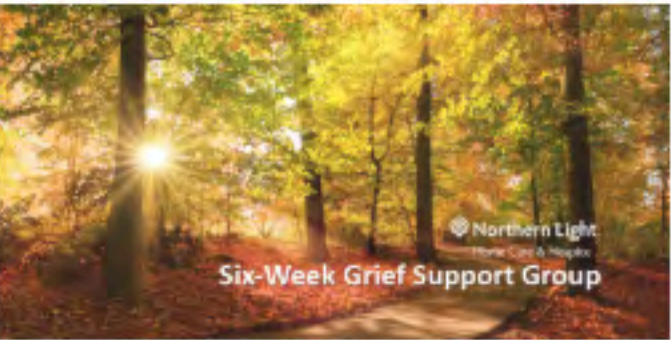
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Aroostook House of Comfort (nurse's station): (207) 764-9406

Billing Questions: 1-800-757-3326

Executive Director: (207) 540-1080

The Aroostook Hospice Foundation, owner of the Aroostook House of Comfort, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 2009.

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