



NEWS FROM OMEGA HOUSE

A Community Leader & Resource in End of Life Care Issues

Summer/Fall 2017

Respite Care Available

Last summer, the Omega House board of directors, along with the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department, developed a health questionnaire/survey that we sent to physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, medical social workers, nurse care managers and clergy. One question we asked was, "Do you perceive a need in our community care for respite care – a place where an ailing or physically dependent family member could be cared for on a short-term basis to give relief to family members/caregivers?" (a "short term stay" at Omega House would be a few days to several weeks). Seventy-five percent of the re-



spondents saw a "large need for respite care." Fast forward one year and our wish to offer respite care at Omega House is now a reality as our 8th room was completed in early August. Through the foresight of our founders and early board members, the Omega House garage, which for over 10 years has been mainly used for storage, was designed with the intention of converting it to a resident room when the time was right.

All too often the health and well-being of at-home caregivers is placed in jeopardy because of stressful circumstances they face every day. Omega House respite care will allow you to spend time on other obligations, events or possibly that vacation you haven't had for many years, without worrying about loved ones. You will return with renewed energy and a fresh perspective.

Respite care can be arranged in advance or on shorter notice during a time of caregiver crisis. Whether it's for a few days or several weeks, respite care offers you the chance to reduce stress, restore energy and keep your life in balance. If you need more information or you want to reserve your respite dates, call us at (906) 482-4438 or visit our website at www.omega-house.org.

Respite Care – Allowed Me To Connect

In May, a friend was married in Chicago - a small event but a very special event. I was honored to be part of this celebration. My husband, who suffers from health problems, was unable to attend, and we needed to find a safe place where he could stay well cared for.

I reflected on a time, last fall, when I went on a short vacation. I looked for short term care, but most facilities either didn't offer this type of care or did not have space for him. Fortunately, as it turned out, my daughter and a few friends were able to help me out for the 4 days I was gone.

When the invitation to the May wedding arrived, I thought for sure that I would not be able to attend, but learned that Omega House was introducing a respite program. I visited with the staff at Omega House and confirmed that a respite room was being planned, and although it would not be completed until the summer, they were able to accommodate us with a room for my husband's short stay. The room is very homelike, with a lovely view of the grounds. Members of the staff were so helpful, and made sure his stay was comfortable. My husband enjoyed the home cooked meals and everything worked out the way we hoped.

I was relieved to find a place that would keep him safe and watch out for his needs, and I'm very happy that a respite room is available at Omega House. It is so important for both caregiver and patient to be able to take a small break from the daily stress of 24-hour care. It helps rejuvenate a relationship. I am looking forward to using the respite room again in the future.

—Lois

Volunteering Opportunities

Meet "Mo"



Modeste Muhire

Carol sat down with Mo (Modeste Muhire), our newest volunteer. She asked him to tell his story, and what brought him to volunteer at Omega House.

Mo grew up in Rwanda, a country in eastern Africa that experienced government-sponsored genocide in 1994. He reminisces about that time, saying that as humans we tend to trust our government. If our leaders abuse that power, it brings catastrophe – and this makes it so important for leaders and for all citizens to understand the meaning of "leadership" and its impact.

At age 19, Mo came to the United States and

attended California Baptist University in Riverside California, where he obtained his undergraduate degree. Afterwards he came to Michigan Tech where he obtained his Master's degree before going to work in Buffalo, NY for two years; so he "knows snow." A second-year student in the PhD program at Michigan Tech, he is studying civil engineering.

Mo's experiences have made him think about the meaning of life, especially the power that death brings to living. He said, "Life is humbling. Having humility is important. In the struggle of life, it is critical to keep in mind that we are humans, and as humans we must learn to embrace limitations innate in the human condition, and then make the best of what we can." Mo's father, who passed in 2015, reminds him how important Omega House is for people in their final days; and volunteering his time here brings back memories of him.

A Message From The Executive Director

“Planning Ahead”



Michael Lutz
Executive Director

Would you consider yourself a planner or someone who is more spontaneous? For most of the day, I plan - from the moment I wake I like schedules. My workday is easier with a plan. My bucket list includes a few great trips, which receive my attention well in advance. I don't usually “play it by ear” to see how I feel in the moment. I already know that I'll feel stress and unease if my day isn't planned. And, while there are pros and cons to planning and allowing things to play out for themselves, your preference is up to you - one is bound to fit your personality better, more naturally.

I am not alone when it comes to organizing my life. Whether you realize it or not you are continuously planning your life, from a family vacation, buying a home or making retirement plans, to name a few. Have you ever discussed or talked to family members about planning for the end of your life? Why should that be different? Do your loved ones know and understand

how you want to pass if you not be able to tell them when the time comes? We know from experience that difficult decisions are easier if we take time to sort through the details and consider our feelings. The same is true when making decisions about the kind of care we want at the end of life. Advance care planning (ACP) is a process that helps you decide and document what kind of care you would want or not want in the event you have a health crisis and are not able to communicate or make decisions. This is important for everyone who is 18 or older. This process includes thinking about what is significant to you and talking about it with those close to you. Very importantly, it includes talking with your doctor and selecting someone to act as your representative. Facing the reality of dying is difficult, but talking about it, ahead of time, can be very helpful for all involved. Advance care planning improves end-of-life care and can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in surviving relatives.

If you would like to know more about ACP, or would like to talk to someone about *5 Wishes*, our advance directive, call Carol Pfefferkorn at (906) 482-4438 or email carolpf@omega-house.org. To read more about advance care planning, visit our website at www.omega-house.org.

House Happenings

by Mary Kay, House Coordinator

At Omega House, our doors are always open. residents and families are welcome, and we all connect, knowing that life becomes more delicate with each loved one's passing. We like to make life the best each and every day by providing everything from BBQ's to a simple smile. Our resident care aides and volunteers are what it's all about with their tender care and thoughtfulness. We want to welcome Betsy Stromer and Nancy Wenberg to our staff of nurses' aides; and new volunteer Modeste Muhire (Mo).

The House has been busy with visitors. Recently, Michigan Works toured with a class of Certified Nursing Assistant students who were curious about a typical day in the work life of a CNA. After their tour, we surveyed the

students and received comments, such as: “Omega House is a place to live, not only to die;” “memories are made there;” and “it's more of a home rather than a facility.” These are what we take pride in.

If you would like to know what we are about or wish to volunteer, please feel free to stop for a tour.



Mary Kay Grabig

A Daughter's Story

Hospice, it was never a word I wanted my mother to hear. In the beginning, it was easy to deny that word. We focused on hope, recovery and anything that kept my mother motivated to stay strong and in control as she battled cancer. My heart reminded me she was strong, however the illness slowly started winning and our denials about hospice turned to reality.

In her last two and a half months, my mother saw more doctors than she had in all her 86 years of life. She was never an advocate of the healthcare system, once citing the last time she'd seen the inside of a hospital was when she was in labor. Much like the last time she'd been around doctors and nurses, aiding her as she brought life into the world, she would again be surrounded by the same helpful hands to guide her spirit onward.

As it became evident that my mother would not be returning home, the questions that came to mind were



many. What do we do next? Where would she go? What would she want? Ironically, the word hospice seemed to flutter to life. In the past, my mother had made it clear she never willingly would enter a nursing home, even disguised as a rehabilitation center or convalescent home. Hospice beckoned us closer, and soon after we placed my mother at Omega House. When we arrived I undoubtedly knew this was where my mother would have wanted to be.

Comfort began to replace worry as we collectively placed our faith in strangers. After caring for my mother for some time, it was a worry I kept close to my heart and responsibility I wasn't sure I could let go of. It was the compassion of the nurturing staff that resonated something deep within. These uniquely wonderful human beings

were not only guiding my mother as she completed the journey of life, they were guiding all of us. They relieved enough of our heartache and permitted us to lovingly stand by her side as her spirit continued forth.

In April, I was honored to attend the Omega House volunteer recognition celebration. I was surrounded by the familiar faces of the warmhearted staff and wonderful people who tend to the gardens, read to patients, bake for families, and give their time in countless other ways. A strong feeling encompassed the room, allowing all the things that made Omega House so special play out once again. It was hard for my feelings to manifest into words; however I realized that these people had done something I thought impossible. They were bringing life to a place I had associated only with death. They were filling the halls with songs, the rooms with light, and the air with humor. They were showing the beauties of life in a simplistically profound way by expressing that a journey's end was just as important as the beginning.

—Jody Kindall-Rivera

Make a Difference Today — Donate Now!

Every dollar counts and as a nonprofit organization for 12 years, Omega House has provided competent and compassionate care for over 470 terminally-ill patients and support for their families. To make a tax-deductible donation to Omega House, please complete and submit the form below to Omega House, 2211 Maureen Lane, Houghton, MI 49931.

Donations can also be made on-line at www.omega-house.org

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____

I would like to join the Sustainer Program. Please charge \$_____ to my credit card on the following schedule:

Monthly Quarterly Annually

I understand Omega House will charge the above amount on the schedule I've chosen indefinitely. I may end my participation in the Sustainer Program at any time by contacting Omega House via phone or mail.

Please make my donation

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DONATION INFORMATION

Enclosed is my check made payable to Omega House

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Thank you for your "Gift of Home"

Omega House, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible under the limits of the law.

2017SUMLTR

Planned Giving



Charlsie Antikainen and her aunt Valeda Tomasi

Valeda Tomasi was considered by those close to her as a very unselfish and fun loving person during her lifetime - a life that spanned 105 years. She was known as a caregiver with a generous heart and a strong faith. Her life wasn't always easy as she experienced the loss of her mother at a young age to cancer. This loss forced her to place her education on hold so she could help her father in their family meat business. Follow-

ing the loss of her dad she completed her schooling and became a licensed practical nurse working in the Hancock TB Sanitarium until her retirement in 1968. She loved the simple things in life. Birds, music, dancing and spending quiet times at her cottage on Lake Superior brought her joy. Valeda was committed to her church and fond of several charitable organizations. That fondness led her to set aside her entire estate to help these organizations. She believed strongly in our mission at Omega House of providing a home-like environment for people facing a terminal illness.

The Omega House Planned Giving Program allows anyone to leave a legacy of compassion by including Omega House in their will or estate plan. By including us in your estate plans, you make a lasting contribution that supports our mission and will touch countless lives. Speak to your financial planner or attorney to discuss options available to you, and make a gift that will strengthen the future of Omega House.

With a planned gift to Omega House, you can:

- Make a charitable donation you thought never possible during your lifetime
- Take care of the financial needs of your family first
- Provide inheritances for your heirs at a lower tax cost
- Reduce your income tax and even avoid capital gains taxes
- Increase income and effective rate of return
- Leave a gift without giving up assets

Events



"Friendship" Concert

An overcast evening did not dampen our spirits at the Omega House 11th annual summer benefit concert, "Friendship." Pictured here are our performers who volunteered their time, talent and good cheer. Our thanks to organizers Kierse Birondo, Erin Kauppila and Kate Van Sussante and sound guru, Andrew Bess.

Golf Scramble

The 15th annual Joe Evans Golf Classic was held on June 3rd at Portage Lake Golf Course. More than 30 teams participated this year and with a large number of business sponsorships proved to be our most successful to date. Pictured are the overall champions of the event with a score of 59. From left to right are: Dennis Harbour, Zoe Woodworth and Mark Maroste.



From left to right: Dennis Harbour, Zoe Woodworth and Mark Maroste



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Staff

Michael Lutz, *Executive Director*
Mary Kay Grabig, *House Coordinator*
Carol Pfefferkorn, *Marketing & Events Coordinator*

Omega House Fall Benefit Concert
Saturday, October 21, 2017

Performance by:
Joshua Davis
Michigan native & singer/songwriter
Season 8 finalist on The Voice

7:00 PM

Orpheum Theatre 426 Quincy St. Hancock, MI 49930
www.omega-house.org

PosterMyWall.com