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WE HONOR VETERANS

AN NHPCO NEWSLETTER FOR
WE HONOR VETERANS

WE HONOR VETERANS “SHARE YOUR STORY” CONTEST WINNER: UNITY HOSPICE

The winner of the We Honor Veterans “Share Your Story” contest is Unity Hospice of Northwest Indiana. We Honor Veterans partner programs were asked to share photos and stories that highlight what honor means to their organization’s partnership and to the Veteran patients they serve.

“Our We Honor Veterans partner programs go above and beyond, meeting the physical and emotional needs of the Veterans they serve,” says NHPCO Access Manager Katherine Kemp. “In the following story, Unity Hospice, a level four partner, arranged a ceremony to honor a World War II Veteran and patient. In the photo provided, you can see the emotion and gratitude in Mr. Hoelle’s eyes.”

Thank you to all the partner programs that submitted stories and photos and congratulations to Unity Hospice!

“Hospice for Heroes”

Submitted by: Unity Hospice

Here at Unity Hospice, we pride ourselves on arranging impactful ceremonies and events for our patients during the last few months of their lives.

Mr. Louis Hoelle was a 94-year-old Veteran living in a nursing home on hospice care. As part of our Hospice for Heroes program, we held an honor ceremony for him, complete with an official salute by active-duty Navy sailors. We arranged for sailors from Naval Station Great Lakes in Chicago to present the colors and deliver a speech about Mr. Hoelle’s service. This was one of the last times that he was formally thanked for the sacrifices he made for our safety and freedom by serving in the Navy.

Wiping tears from his eyes, an emotional Mr. Hoelle sang the national anthem. He asked his daughter to remove his cap before accepting a certificate of recognition and a folded American flag. Present at the ceremony were Mr. Hoelle’s children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even great-great grandchildren! To celebrate the occasion, we hung red, white and blue banners and flags around the room, and we ordered a large cake for Mr. Hoelle.

“I’m so emotional,” said Mr. Hoelle during the ceremony. “This is all for me?”



Mr. Louis Hoelle, a brave World War II veteran, mentally revisiting his service in the United States Navy.

FIND US ON TWITTER!

 **@WeHonorVeterans**

A DAY TO HONOR DAD

By: Sharon Campbell, Meetings Director, NHPCO

I had the privilege of seeing my father, Gary Shackelford, a Korean War Veteran, honored as one of the 109 Veterans that came to Washington D.C. on Honor Flight Chicago 8009.



Sharon Campbell pictured with her father, Gary Shackelford.

I was honored to escort my father, as his Guardian, on his day of recognition for his valiant service to our nation.

And what a day it was! The Veterans were greeted at Dulles Airport by our NHPCO team, family and friends, the Metropolitan Area Police officers and firemen, brass bands, and about 1,000 volunteer patriots who came out to thank the Veterans for their service.

We were off on a whirlwind itinerary consisting of visits to the WWII, Iwo Jima, Lincoln, Vietnam and Korean War Memorials, as well as the

Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum. I watched with pride as I witnessed these humble heroes get treated like royalty at every stop along the way. The comradery amongst the Veterans was heartwarming and I learned so much more about my dad's time in the service as he shared his stories and adventures with his comrades.

Dad, I'm so glad that I got to share this day with you. It was a special and unforgettable experience that I will always hold dear to my heart. You are a man of remarkable courage and strength of character. I love you and I salute you!

HONORING THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM

By: Kevin Curwick

My first honor flight experience was one I will never forget. One hundred and ten Veterans from the Korean and Vietnam Wars arrived in Washington, D.C. on a gloomy, overcast morning. However, the weather could not dampen their spirits as they proudly exited the plane to a mass of cheers and welcome. As I stood there clapping, smiling, and welcoming the Veterans off the flight, I took a moment to consider how things had changed since the last time they were welcomed off a plane in such a manner. I wondered if all of them had been so deservedly honored with a welcoming home from their service. The smiles on their faces and tears in their eyes – most of them would only admit to allergies or “sweaty eyes” – told me that this moment was unlike any other for the honored guests of the capital.

The honor flight experience added context to the importance of my work with the We Honor Veterans program this summer. After learning of the many challenges that Veterans face in terms of health and mobility, the opportunity for the Veterans to visit the nation's capital that they sacrificed and fought so valiantly for became much more significant. In fact, many of the Veterans that required wheelchairs to get off the plane chose to stand and walk through the memorials instead of being assisted. Their perseverance and respect for their fallen brothers in arms was admirable and inspiring.

Welcoming and walking alongside the Veterans from the honor flight renewed my respect for Washington, D.C. and its symbol of freedom. Additionally, the experience helped me understand the need to continue to show respect to our Veterans of all wars for their service and dedication to protecting the independence of our country. I cannot express my sincere gratitude enough for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Honor Flight Network for the amazing opportunity.

Kevin Curwick interned with NHPCO's Access Team and We Honor Veterans program during the summer of 2017. He recently graduated from St. John's University in Minnesota with a Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Health Science.



IMPROVING END-OF-LIFE CARE BEGINS WITH HONORING PATIENT PREFERENCES

By: **Scott T. Shreve** and **Susan C. Miller**

Dying in the U.S. is “far harder than it should be,” according to the Institute of Medicine report *Dying in America*. The interests and inclinations of payers and providers often outweigh the needs of patients, especially when it comes to end-of-life care. Take hospice care for seniors. If Medicare beneficiaries choose hospice care, they lose Medicare coverage for disease modifying interventions, nursing home and hospital care. This isn't much of a choice for patients and certainly doesn't account for their preferences. At the same time, physicians often substitute more familiar options, like surgery, regardless of patient goals or in lieu of a full range of alternatives (e.g. palliative care). In order to improve end-of-life care, health care systems and providers must first align the care they deliver to their patients' values, goals and preferences.

The fragmentation of American health care makes system-wide improvement of end-of-life care challenging (at best), but it can be done. Findings in the [July issue of Health Affairs](#) show that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) system-wide efforts to improve end-of-life care, premised on honoring veterans' preferences, resulted in large increases in hospice use.

In order to make end-of-life care easier for patients, the VA implemented the Comprehensive End-of-Life Care (CELC) initiative in 2009, which improved the quality of veterans' end-of-life care by increasing VA Medical Center inpatient hospice units, palliative care staff and training, quality monitoring and community outreach. This investment enabled veterans to choose the services that best aligned with their preferences and needs. It also allowed veterans to choose hospice care while continuing to receive active disease treatment, so for many veterans it wasn't an either/or choice like it is for so many others.

Most patients want to spend their final days—whether they be counted in months, weeks or days—in familiar places with loved ones doing as many of the things they enjoy as they can. While hospitalizations and aggressive disease treatment are common in serious illness, hospice and palliative care specialists support patients through the entire trajectory of disease to include educating and empowering patients about the benefits and burdens of various interventions. Unsurprisingly, patients and their families perceive the resulting care as higher quality because it aligns with their needs and goals. Every VA Medical Center has palliative care programs, but only two-thirds of private sector hospitals have them.

Evaluation of the VA's CELC initiative found that increased access to palliative care resources resulted in increased hospice use by veterans that surpassed increases for similar Medicare beneficiaries not enrolled in VA health care. Not only was there increased hospice access, but numerous related studies have shown improvements in the quality of patient care following the VA's CELC initiative.

While the VA's efforts as a one-payer medical system are not easily replicated, all health care systems and providers need to find ways to align an ever increasing array of treatments and services with patient and family preferences, with the likely outcome of less costly and burdensome care for patients.

Scott T. Shreve is national director of hospice and palliative care at the Lebanon VAMC, in Pennsylvania.

Susan C. Miller is professor of health services, policy, and practice at the Center for Gerontology and Health Care Research, Brown University School of Public Health, in Providence, Rhode Island.

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 13th
from
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.
EST

The next partner networking call is September 13th from 2-3:30 p.m. (EST). To register [click here](#) or email us at veterans@nhpco.org.

Did you know that you can listen to past call recordings and get notes to see what was discussed? [Click here](#) to see what you missed!

ELNEC – FOR VETERANS UPDATED CURRICULUM NOW AVAILABLE

THE END-OF-LIFE NURSING EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (ELNEC) FOR VETERANS

Project is a national end-of-life educational program, funded by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, administered by City of Hope (COH) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and designed to educate nurses on how to provide better palliative care for Veterans with life-threatening illnesses.

ELNEC FOR VETERANS was developed to meet the unique palliative care needs of Veterans and to guide nurses in orchestrating this care. Given that the number of Vietnam-era Veterans over 65 years of age will continue to grow through 2034, so too will the need for hospice and palliative care in the VA system.

The expertise gained through this curriculum promises to improve the quality of palliative care for thousands of Veterans and will provide tools to educate members caring for Veterans at the end of life. Module topics include An Introduction to Palliative Nursing Care, Pain Management, Symptom Management, Cultural Considerations in Palliative Care, Communication, Loss, Grief, and Bereavement, and Final Hours.

The curriculum is available at no cost on the We Honor Veterans website [HERE](#).

EARN YOUR STARS

Already a We Honor Veterans partner program? We know that your organization is committed to providing Veteran-centric care to the Veteran patients you serve each and every day. If your program is ready to move up through the levels to increase your ability to serve your Veteran patients, [contact us](#) today. You can learn about the different [We Honor Veteran partner levels here](#).

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Are you part of a non-hospice organization that would like to join the mission to provide support for Veterans in your community? [Contact us to learn how you can become a Community Partner](#).

SPONSORSHIPS

Interested in learning how you can support the We Honor Veterans program beyond becoming a partner? Individuals or organizations interested in sponsorship opportunities can contact Sarah Meltzer at smeltzer@nationalhospicefoundation.org or 703-837-3149.



WE HONOR VETERANS
Sponsor

VETERANS DAY COMMUNITY OUTREACH RESOURCES

Looking for Veterans Day community outreach materials and social media graphics to honor and remember those who served? [We've done the work for you!](#) You can access professionally designed Facebook and Twitter graphics by visiting the We Honor Veterans partner resources page. There is also a press release template and listicle available that you can use to spread the word in your community about the work you're doing.

P.S. Don't forget to use hashtag [#wehonorveterans](#) when posting on social media.