

LIFE MATTERS

A PUBLICATION OF
HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE
CHARLOTTE REGION

IN THIS ISSUE

CLIMB FOR A CAUSE
4

SALUTING
DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE
8

REMEMBERING
THE REMARKABLE
PEARLENE SMITH
10

FLIGHT OF THE DOVE
11

HOSPICE & Palliative Care
CHARLOTTE REGION

FALL 2021



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE CHARLOTTE REGION



What does it mean to go the extra mile for a cause you believe in?

For Terry Robertson, it means climbing the highest mountain in North America. A sense of daring propelled him to the top of Denali (formerly Mount McKinley), all 20,310 feet. But so did his heart for Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region. Turn the page and read about Terry's great adventure, which raised \$10,000 for Chameleon's Journey, our grief camp for children and teens.

For nearly 300 bicyclists, going the extra mile means pedaling up to 67 miles in support of Hospice of Laurens County's (S.C.), an affiliate of HPCCR, Flight of the Dove. What a beautiful name for a bold undertaking. There's more about the ride in this issue of our newsletter.

But take heart, friends. Going the extra mile for HPCCR doesn't mean you have to climb a mountain or race down a country road on two wheels. There are other ways – equally meaningful and less risky! – to be an essential part of providing compassionate care at life's end.

- We invite you to make a tax-deductible contribution. Every gift helps us care for every patient no matter their income. Visit www.hpccr.org/give. We are grateful for your generosity.*
- Please consider a tax-efficient gift of appreciated stock at year's end. Visit our website or contact a member of our philanthropy team at 704-335-4325 to learn more.*
- Purchase a commemorative bell or star or sponsor lights on our Remembrance Trees. Details are inside on how you can carry the light of the holiday season into the darkest corners.*

Each day in 30 counties across North and South Carolina, our staff and volunteers serve over 3,000 patients in our hospice and palliative care programs. We bring care and comfort. We encourage families and caregivers. We are a friend for the journey.

You make that possible, however you go the extra mile.

Peter A Brunnick

Cover Photo:
Terry Robertson and his team on their Denali journey.



Levine & Dickson
HOSPICE HOUSE
of
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region

HUNTERSVILLE
ALDRSGATE
SOUTHMINSTER

When tomorrow... becomes *today*.

Caring for someone with acute medical needs can feel overwhelming. When faced with difficult decisions about your loved one's care, our hospice house teams are there to support you today and each day after.

Be sure to ask for us by name.

Levine & Dickson Hospice Houses are exclusively for patients of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region.



To find out more:

704.375.0100 | www.hpccr.org

CLIMB FOR A CAUSE



Some people move mountains on behalf of a righteous cause. Terry Robertson climbed one.

Inspired by how Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region's (HPCCR) Chameleon's Journey grief camp helps children and youth face the challenge of losing a loved one, Robertson figured the least he could do is face a challenge of his own. What better way to show solidarity with bereaved kids and support the cause than to climb the highest mountain in North America?

Denali (formerly known as Mount McKinley) is a mountain in Alaska that rises to a height of 20,310 feet. It's the third most isolated peak on earth. Half the adventurers who attempt to climb it succeed. The other half fail. One hundred have died.

Climbing a mountain. Children who must find a way to live life after a death. For Robertson, the parallels are powerful. So is the answer:

You put one foot in front of the other.

Robertson owns Robertson Funeral & Cremation Service in Charlotte. He has come to appreciate Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region through his profession. His place is beside the bereaved. His calling to offer comfort also comes from a personal place. He's a cancer survivor.

He learned about Chameleon's Journey, one of HPCCR's signature programs, from Chaplain Beth Brittain, and Larry Dawalt, HPCCR's Senior Director of Spiritual & Grief Care Services. Dawalt is a guiding force behind the camp, which began in 2000. Robertson made two visits to the camp on Lake Wylie, experiencing the healing taking place.

Married with three young children, Robertson also loves the outdoors and hiking. He's twice climbed Mount Rainier (14,411 feet) in Washington State. Denali has



been on his bucket list. He and a college buddy were looking to treat themselves to a 50th birthday present.

Can you see where this is going?

On May 27, Robertson flew to Anchorage, Alaska, then took a treacherous flight on a small plane to a glacier at the base of Denali. The climb was on, on behalf of a camp and kids 5,000 miles away.

With his friend, Leif Anderson, and three guides, they headed up the mountain – a combination of hiking and climbing. Think ropes and ice picks. Just in case they ran into anyone coming down the mountain, Robertson attached a toy chameleon to his belt so curious adventurers could ask, “What’s the chameleon for?” and he could tell them all about the camp.

It never got dark on the mountain, as Alaska has longer sunlight hours in the spring and summer than most states. The weather ranged from 20 degrees below zero

when they awakened in their tents to “Can I take off my jacket?” during the strenuous midday climb. The air was dangerously thin. Between backpacks and sleds they pulled behind them, they were hauling 120 pounds of gear and supplies. Candy bars during the day helped keep their energy up. The adventure combined exhaustion and awe, for as Robertson says, “You’re in God’s expansiveness.”

The turning point came at 15,000 feet. “I had been strong for the first week,” Robertson wrote in a journal. “But when I hit 15,000 feet, it was hard to catch my breath... This was the first time on the mountain I experienced the fear of failure.” He had to turn back to 14,200 feet.

But here’s where the creed that Robertson lives by came in handy: “I like being able to put myself in an uncomfortable position. For me, that’s how I grow, being able to see if I can push through it.”

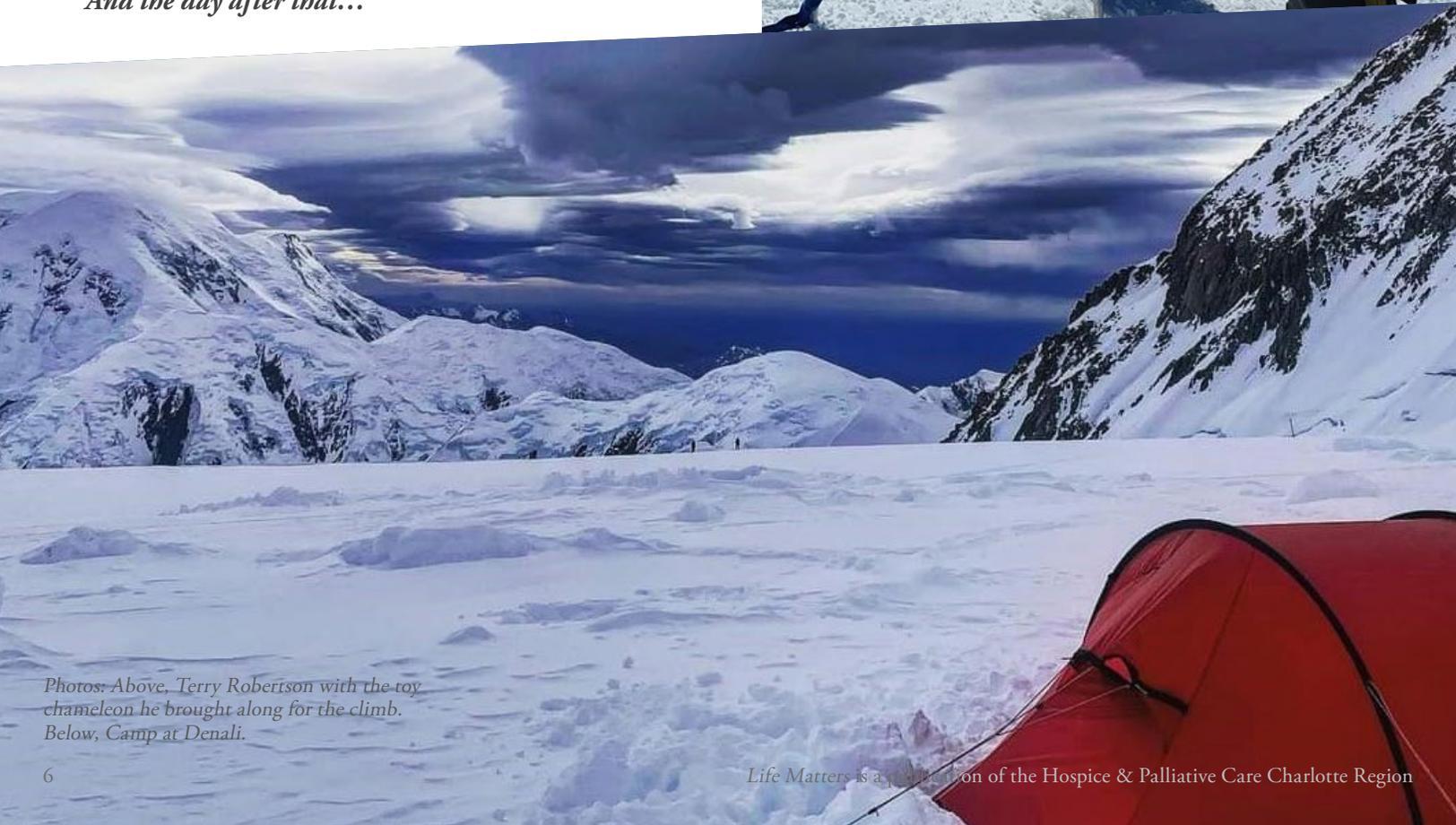
You know the rest of the story.

With his guide, Ty Guirano, exhorting him to “C’mon Terry, c’mon Terry,” Robertson made it to the camp at 17,000 feet. Then, three days later, at 4 p.m. on June 13, he reached the summit, the top of North America. “It was ridiculous how beautiful it was,” Robertson says. His reaction when he made it to the mountaintop? “I cried. I almost didn’t make it. Now I’m here.”

Having invited family, friends, acquaintances and business associates to support his adventure, Robertson raised \$10,000 for Chameleon’s Journey. He also hopes his adventure stirs more awareness of the camp and inspires others to give. Gifts are always welcome for the camp and other HPCCR initiatives, where philanthropy helps provide compassionate care for all, regardless of age, diagnoses, or ability to pay. Go to donatehospice.org to learn more.

Robertson says his mountain-climbing days are behind him. “I’m done,” he promises, just in case his wife, Amanda, an Episcopal priest, is reading this. But his support of Chameleon’s Journey continues, for he has directed enough funerals to appreciate that for bereaved children especially, the journey to healing never ends. As he learned on the way up Denali, it takes perseverance to make it to the next day.

And the day after that...



Photos: Above, Terry Robertson with the toy chameleon he brought along for the climb. Below, Camp at Denali.



WHAT IS CHAMELEON'S JOURNEY?

Chameleon's Journey is an overnight grief camp for children and teens (ages 7-17) who are coping with the death of a family member or other significant person in their life.

At Chameleon's Journey, children and teens quickly learn that they are not alone in their grief. In a safe and caring environment, trained counselors guide campers along a path to the development of coping skills. Campers learn that feelings which surface during the grief process are normal - though difficult.

In the midst of learning about the grief process, campers have fun, too, as they ride the zip line, canoe on the peaceful waters of Lake Wylie, play field games and get to know others with like experiences.

At Chameleon's Journey, parents and guardians can get the grief support they need, too. Although parents and guardians do not stay overnight, they are encouraged to attend a workshop each morning. The two workshops address adult grief and ways to help grieving children.

So why is it called Chameleon's Journey?

EXCERPTS FROM "CHAMELEON'S JOURNEY, THE TALE OF ONE LITTLE CHAMELEON'S JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF"

Chameleon loves changing colors and playing with his best friend! They have the best time together and go on many adventures, but one day, Chameleon receives news that his best friend has died. Suddenly, Chameleon cannot control his colors anymore... he used to have fun changing colors, but now he isn't able to control them... why is this happening? It is very confusing and scary for Chameleon. He needs to know why this is happening, so he begins a journey to find answers...

Chameleon experiences feelings of anger, sadness, jealousy and happiness during his journey and he processes these feelings as he changes colors throughout the story.

Through his journey, Chameleon learns that when someone dies, we have lots of difficult and painful feelings. The feelings we have after someone dies are called "grief feelings." Grief can make us feel unhappy and out of control." He also comes to realize that there is absolutely nothing wrong with him, because it's normal to have lots of different feelings when we lose someone we care about. And when he was ready, he was able to see that life is full of joy and sorrow and everything in between and soon he becomes a beautiful rainbow Chameleon; it just took time to heal... in his own way.



SALUTING DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Lieutenant Commander Donald B. White knows something about service. A twenty-year veteran of the US Navy, LCDR White proudly served as an officer on the USS Nantahala, a Cimarron-class refueling vessel that supported warships in both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans between 1943 and 1973.

Having begun his naval career in Norfolk, Virginia, LCDR White traveled the world courtesy of Uncle Sam. Of his many moments in uniform, he proudly remembers sailing the Mediterranean toward the end of his career, spending time in Portugal, before returning to Virginia where he retired after two decades to spend more time with his beloved wife, Madge.

Recently, Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region (HPCCR) had the honor of recognizing LCDR White's Naval career in a public pinning ceremony. What was initially planned as a small, intimate gathering soon grew into a party with friends, family, caregivers, other veterans,

and neighbors as word got out as to what was happening.

“What was really special was seeing the turnout for Donald’s pinning ceremony,” recalls HPCCR Social Worker Dan Morris who helped organize the event. “Word spread and there ended up being 30 people in attendance. Staff and other residents at Summit Place – South Park attended. Looking at old photos, Donald reminisced about his days at sea and swapped stories with other vets who were there.”

Dressed in his officer’s uniform, pressed neatly for the occasion, LCDR White was presented with his We Honor Veterans Pin and certificate on behalf of the organization and saluted for his service to a grateful nation by his veteran peers who were there to help honor and bear witness to his years of service.

Photos: Above, HPCCR Social Worker Dan Morris thanking Lieutenant Commander White for his service. Below, Veterans Heart Group Service Men, family, and friends honor and greet Lieutenant Commander White.



HPCCR'S COMMITMENT TO VETERANS

As a program of the National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) the We Honor Veterans initiative empowers hospice providers to meet the unique needs of America's Veterans and their families by offering guidance and resources focused on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening, and grateful acknowledgment of service. As a Level 5 We Honor Veterans organization, HPCCR maintains the highest possible ranking available as a reflection of its commitment to serving those who have served.

Are you a veteran who would like to volunteer?

Contact: Elise Hurst at hurstel@hpccr.org | 704.887.6413

457 SERVICE PEOPLE CARED FOR IN 2021 BY HPCCR SHOWN BY BRANCH OF SERVICE



ARMY
234



NAVY
86



AIR FORCE
74



MARINES
29



COAST GUARD
3



RESERVES/
OTHER
31

CELEBRATING SUSAN ANDERSON

When HPCCR medical social worker Susan Anderson enters a room, veterans of all ages snap to attention. It is an honor she has earned through her work supporting veterans who are on their hospice journey.

With the help of the Veterans Heart Group, Susan has made it her mission to recognize our nation's heroes.

"Susan is fantastic at working with families to craft a moment of meaningful recognition for the veterans under our care," says HPCCR Senior Director of Clinical Services, Sharon Moore. "She is proof-positive that someone with passion can accomplish things that have lasting power."

When Susan recently announced her retirement, Veterans Heart Group Founder, Robert Phillips, invited his volunteer peers and HPCCR staff to surprise Susan with a meaningful send off.

While she may have departed HPCCR, Susan's legacy of making veterans feel honored and appreciated will last forever.

Photos: Below left, Susan Anderson surrounded by Veterans Heart Group members and HPCCR President & CEO, Pete Brunnick.

Below right, the award presented by Veterans Heart Group to Susan for her service.



REMEMBERING THE REMARKABLE PEARLENE SMITH

A memorial brick engraved with your personal message may be placed in the walkway at the hospice house. Memorial bricks may be purchased at anytime with a \$500 donation. Your charitable gift strengthens Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region's ability to serve more community members in need of compassionate end of life care. We are committed to serving all regardless of age, diagnosis, or ability to pay.

For more information, contact Coletta Tolbert at 704.602.0893 | tolbertc@hpccr.org.

On a crystal clear Saturday last October, with Carolina blue skies on full display, nearly 40 members of the extended Smith family joined one another at HPCCR's Levine & Dickson Hospice House – Huntersville to remember the extraordinary life of Pearlene Smith.

Mrs. Smith was the mother of HPCCR Chaplain Dewey Smith - a dedicated and beloved employee who has been offering pastoral care to HPCCR's patients and families for several years. Chaplain Smith is scheduled to retire this coming December and just prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Chaplain Smith purchased a memorial brick at the hospice house in Huntersville to pay tribute to his mother with the hope of gathering extended family and friends to thoughtfully remember his mom.

Then, the world shut down. But Chaplain Smith and family would not be deterred. With area COVID-19 numbers on decline, HPCCR staff, working collaboratively with the Smith family, engineered a way to accommodate such a large gathering while still mindful of the organization's COVID-19 protocols. Taking part in the morning's program were members of the Smith family and co-workers of Chaplain Smith.

What resulted was a beautiful tribute on a beautiful day to a beautiful woman.



Photo: Friends and family of Pearlene Smith celebrating her life at the Hospice House in Huntersville, NC.



FLIGHT OF THE DOVE

For the last 16 years, Hospice of Laurens County (HOLC), an affiliate of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, has hosted an annual cycling event to raise funds and awareness for its community-centered mission of providing compassionate, end of life care for area residents regardless of age, diagnoses, or ability to pay.

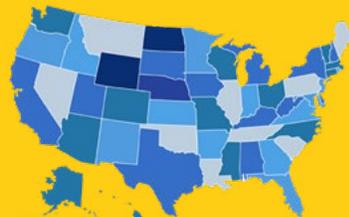
Over the years, Flight of the Dove has grown into a “destination event” for cycling enthusiasts across the Southeast and as far away as South Dakota. Participants choose one of four routes based upon ability. These routes range between the “family friendly” 14-mile course and the more ambitious “metric century” (67 miles).

Regardless of the distance they ride, all cyclists are joined in common cause: supporting their friends and neighbors who need help at a fragile time in life.

FLIGHT OF THE DOVE BY THE NUMBERS



287 CYCLISTS



6
STATES REPRESENTED
SC, NC, TN, SD, GA, OH



4.8/5
HOW CYCLISTS RATE THIS EVENT



\$23,547
FUNDS
RAISED
THROUGH
CYCLISTS
&
SPONSORS



187
OF PATIENTS SERVED IN 2020

97
% OF PARTICIPANTS
WHO WOULD
RECOMMEND FLIGHT
OF THE DOVE
TO OTHER CYCLISTS



