



Merrill Family's Grief Journey

Mission

Benton Hospice Service provides compassionate, patient-centered end-of-life care.

We focus on quality of life; to ease suffering, honor dignity, respect choices and support grieving.

We provide resources and education for individuals, families and the community dealing with caregiving, serious illness and end-of-life support.

Cameron Merrill was born September 4, 2010 to parents Shelley and Cressey. His older brother and sister, twins Cres and Keylin, were two years old. Life was busy, but fun, for the two working parents and three children under the age of three. Little Cameron was a happy, silly, loving boy. However, in April of 2012 Cameron developed a cold that seemed to linger, and an earache. Antibiotics were prescribed yet Cameron didn't improve.

Shelley took a very pale Cameron to a second doctor. Dr. Metzler, his pediatrician, knew the moment that she saw him, and a blood test confirmed, that Cameron Merrill, at age 19 months, had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. He was sent by ambulance to Doernbecher Children's Hospital. The journey began.

Cameron's first hospital visit was a week long. The Merrills got to know the cancer unit well over the months to come. Cameron later spent

nearly two months in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Throughout Cameron's illness, the doctors worked together with the Merrills to determine the best treatments. They tried very aggressive treatments to no avail. On January 17, 2013, sweet, wonderful, precious Cameron died at age 2 years 4 months old. The twins were 4½ years old. And so began a new journey for the Merrill family.

Words can't express the enormity of the pain Shelley and Cressey felt at Cameron's death, plus, they worried about the twins. Shelley and Cressey felt lost and powerless. Shelley's therapist suggested family grief support through Benton Hospice Service's bereavement program. There they learned about Camp Compass, a one-day camp for the whole family. The Merrill family attended the camp and found comfort in being around other families who had had similar experiences. The kids

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THE MERRILL FAMILY: CAMERON, SHELLEY, CRES, CRESSEY AND KEYLIN

Celebrate National Family Caregivers Month

November is National Family Caregivers Month. It is a time to celebrate family caregivers; a time to thank, support, educate and empower family caregivers.

According to Family Caregivers Alliance, 2012 data, 52 million unpaid caregivers provide care to adults (aged 18+) with a disability or illness, 43.5 million adult family caregivers care for someone 50+ years of age and 14.9 million care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. Caregiving can have harmful mental health effects for caregivers, as well as serious physical health consequences. Caregivers need a range of support services to gain caregiving skills, manage financial resources and to remain healthy themselves.

BENTON HOSPICE IS PLEASED TO INVITE YOU TO LEARN ABOUT LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND TO HONOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN LINN AND BENTON COUNTIES AT THE SEVENTH ANNUAL FAMILY CAREGIVER CELEBRATION TO BE HELD FROM 11:00 AM TO 2:00 PM ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2.

The event is free and will be held at the First United Methodist Church in the Fellowship Hall located at 1115 28th Avenue SW in Albany at the corner of Umatilla. Everyone interested in the needs of family caregivers is invited to attend. This year the first 30 attendees will receive a gift and everyone will be entered in prize drawings. Attendees can also expect to enjoy music, chair massages and lunch.

Representatives from agencies that offer support and resources for caregivers will be present to provide information and to answer questions.

Two speakers are scheduled: Debra Weinman, Cascade Coast Regional Coordinator at Alzheimer's Association will speak on Giving Care, Taking Care; Chris Guempel, Physical Therapist at Encore Physical Therapy will speak on Mechanics of Caregiving.

For more information call Laurie Russell at 541-757-9616.

Meet Laurie Iversen; Volunteer Extraordinaire

By Stefani Sackinger

For the past 7 years, Laurie Iversen has brought her many talents to Benton Hospice Service. Laurie epitomizes the word "Service." She understands the unique needs that are special to hospice patients and works diligently to meet those needs. Laurie helps Benton Hospice in a variety of ways. One day she will be in the office scheduling volunteers to help with patient care and the next day she will be out visiting a patient providing comfort care and respite for our families in need. She assists our Transition



LAURIE IVERSEN, RELIEF VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Coordinator with difficult calls to our clients with a calm communication style that includes positive words of support. She is able to provide musical comfort to our patients by singing with family members and patients at the end of life.

She also provides transportation for patients to their doctor's appointments, as well as to social engagements in the community. In addition, for the past few years she has stepped up as our Relief Volunteer Coordinator when our coordinator was away on vacation. When our Volunteer Coordinator recently moved on, Laurie filled the gap, spending up to 20 hours a week as our volunteer - Volunteer Coordinator and she was instrumental in the interviewing and hiring process for our new Volunteer Coordinator.

I have had the great fortune to have worked directly with Laurie over the past year or so. She is able to find humor to diffuse challenging situations. She demonstrates her care for our patients and treats them like they are family. When she volunteers for a patient she goes above and beyond, being a good listener and solving problems so patients can spend their last days as they wish. Laurie brings boundless energy and positive support to Benton Hospice Service. We are blessed to have Laurie as a member of our extraordinary volunteer team!

Benton Hospice Service Announces New Volunteer Coordinator, Naomi Hirsch

By Bob Schwartz, Benton Hospice Service Volunteer

With a passion for interacting with people and building caring communities, Naomi Hirsch joined Benton Hospice Service on August 24th as its new Volunteer Coordinator. Like many who are part of Hospice, Hirsch has seen its work and value first hand when Hospice cared for a family member. But she especially likes the people and affable environment at Benton Hospice.

Hirsch's priority will be connecting with existing volunteers and then trying to expand the volunteer base. By being creative about the tasks that volunteers may do, she hopes to broaden the ways in which volunteers can contribute. A volunteer in Corvallis herself, Hirsch has a deep commitment to the general welfare of our community, an interest she pursues while also raising a daughter adopted from Ethiopia six years ago as a single mother.

Hirsch's interest in others goes back decades to her days as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Research Management and a graduate degree in Adult Education. Before joining Benton Hospice she was Research Translation Coordinator at OSU. In that capacity she trained scientists and graduate students how to effectively communicate their research to diverse audiences.

In the days to come she will be considering ways to improve the recruitment and training of volunteers. Please stop by to introduce yourself and welcome Naomi next time you are near the Benton Hospice Service office. Welcome Naomi!

Accepting Donations of Old Vehicles

Did you know that you can donate your used car, motorcycle, truck, boat, motor home, travel trailer, recreational vehicle or aircraft through our vehicle donation program? It is easy! Call 541-757-9616 or visit www.bentonhospice.org/donate.

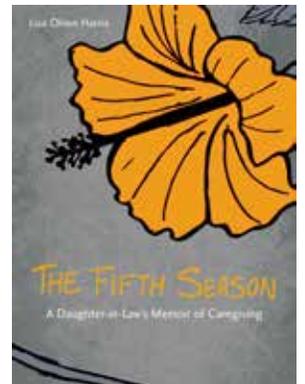


NAOMI HIRSCH, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Book Recommendation from Volunteers & Staff

“The Fifth Season: A Daughter-in-Law’s Memoir of Caregiving” by Lisa Ohlen

Lisa Ohlen Harris shared a household with her mother-in-law, Jeanne, for seven years. When Jeanne's health deteriorated due to COPD, Harris became one of 65 million American family caregivers. The two women grew so intertwined that Harris began to feel she herself was the one fading away. Harris helped Jeanne file an advance directive specifying that no extraordinary measures were to be taken to preserve life. As they navigated the healthcare system in Jeanne's final months, Harris and her mother-in-law realized that an advance directive is not as clear and controlled as it seems. End of life issues involve a series of small decisions—sneaky ones, with no big drama—and life support is already established before any one big decision is made.



In *The Fifth Season*, Harris's recounting of those years bestows illuminating immediacy on the difficulties of caring for an elderly parent while raising four young children in an extended family household.

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CAMERON MERRILL'S BIG FIGHT

learned through play, and made friends with other children who had experienced loss. Shelley explained, "It normalizes what you are going through. We all know that the others had gone through a loss of a loved one, so it was not awkward to be around them."

After camp they began attending the Family Grief Support group offered by Benton Hospice Service. At the monthly group sessions, adults and children are split into smaller groups with children grouped by age. Cressey shared, "The biggest thing about the group is that it gives us an outlet to talk about all of this. Everyone there understands and you aren't 'corrected' for sharing what you feel. Group helped us understand that we are not weird for how we are feeling or expressing our grief. We are normal."

The parents gained "tools" for their own grief and for helping the twins process their grief. They also learned how to use age-appropriate language when they talked with their children. Cressey stated, "This is a group nobody wants to need or be a part of." However, Shelley quickly added, "We are so thankful for it. It has made a huge impact on our lives. The facilitators are wonderful tour guides in the terrible process. Group is a beacon of light when it can be so dark you can't see the light. It has totally made our path easier. The facilitators make sense of things that don't make sense. They are the translators."

The twins start second grade this fall. They are doing very well. Shelley credits the Family Grief Program for giving the entire family the tools to work through grief and make something good out of something really

terrible. As the twins have gotten older, they have gained new understanding about Cameron's death. With each developmental state they are able to express their grief in different ways. Shelley and Cressey have learned how to help the twins better express their feelings. They are all learning to live with Cameron's death and look toward the future.

The Merrills created "Cameron Merrill's Big Fight" legacy program. Shelley says, "The life and story of Cameron Merrill didn't end when he died, his life still has more chapters in it. Had he been able to grow up, we would have wanted him to have a lifetime of good works, to make the world better and to help people going through the toughest of times. We are working to make it his legacy." Blood drives, toy drives, an ongoing collection of personal items for families of children in medical crisis are a few of the good works done as a part of Cameron's legacy. Learn more by searching for "Cameron Merrill's Big Fight" page on Facebook.



CAMERON MERRILL

Family Grief Group and other classes and support groups are funded through generous gifts from individuals and community organizations.



Light Up A Life & Service of Remembrance

Light Up A Life represents a time to celebrate life as well as support the mission of Benton Hospice by remembering the people who have died. Celebrate those who have died by dedicating your donation in memory of someone. Honoree names will be read aloud at our Service of Remembrance. They need not have been in hospice care.

You are warmly invited to join us for our Service of Remembrance on December 8th at 6:00 pm to be held in Dennis Hall at First Presbyterian Church, 114 SW 8th Street in Corvallis. Names of those who died will be read at the Service of Remembrance followed by a candlelight tribute. A note will be sent acknowledging your gift. You may submit a picture to be shared at the Service of Remembrance if you wish. Call 541-757-9616 for more information.

Your gift makes a difference

No matter how much you choose to give, your donation to Benton Hospice Service makes an impact on families in our community. You become a part of making our community the caring, compassionate place it is. Your gift gives a family needed support during a very trying time. Your gift provides extras not covered by Medicare or other insurance such as massage, caregiver education and support, age-appropriate grief support for the entire family and Transitions, a program for those not under hospice care but living with serious illness. You offer hope and connection so families do not face this time alone. Thank you! Visit www.bentonhospice.org/donate to learn more.

EVENTS CALENDAR

For a complete list of Benton Hospice Service events visit www.bentonhospice.org/events

ADULT GRIEF EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Six-week sessions open to anyone who has experienced a loss. Pre-registration required. Benton Hospice Service meeting room.

- Thursday 5:30 to 7:30 pm beginning October 8, 2015 and January 7, 2016 OR
- Friday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm beginning October 9, 2015 & January 8, 2016

VOLUNTEER TRAINING Two-day training, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm each day. Pre-registration required. Tuesday and Thursday, October 20 and 22, 2014.

POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS A six-week educational program designed to help family caregivers. Held quarterly. Pre-registration required. Series location rotates between Corvallis, Albany, Philomath and Lebanon throughout the year. Next class in Lebanon beginning October 19 at the Lebanon Senior Center. In Corvallis beginning January 13 at Grace Center for Adult Day Services.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS A special drop-in workshop that addresses the challenges of grief during the holidays. All welcome. Benton Hospice Service meeting room. Wednesday, November 18, 5:30 to 7 pm.

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE December 8 (see adjacent story "Light Up A Life & Service of Remembrance" for details)

CAREGIVER CONNECTIONS For family caregivers to share and learn from each other. Drop-ins welcome. In Corvallis the second & last Tuesday of each month, 1:30 to 3:00pm; Benton Hospice Service meeting room. In Lebanon the second Thursday of each month, 10:00 to 11:30am; Lebanon Senior Center; 80 Tangent St.

COMMUNITY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP A drop-in group for anyone grieving a death of someone they care about. Held the second Monday of the month, 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Benton Hospice Service.

FAMILY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP Ongoing support group for families with children and teens ages 5-18 who have experienced loss. First Wednesday of each month 5:30 to 7:00 pm. Must register and complete a brief questionnaire before attending. Call 541.757.9616 to register.

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Celebrating 35 Years

IN 1980 THE FIRST PATIENT IS ADMITTED TO BENTON HOSPICE SERVICE. VOLUNTEER NURSES PROVIDE CARE. SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS FROM THE COMMUNITY PROVIDE OCCASIONAL HELP AS REQUESTED.

Learn more at www.bentonhospice.org

“The care and compassion by the entire hospice team was extraordinary. You soothed our fears with information and soothed our anxieties with kind and loving support so we were able to be fully present for our Mom’s transition.”

~DAUGHTERS OF HOSPICE PATIENT