



OHSU CENTER *for* ETHICS *in* HEALTH CARE



THE FABRIC OF *compassion*

Quilts bring powerful healing to dying patients and their families

E. Jay Greger was a woman of rare grace and spirit. People were her passion, and her life as mother, wife, social worker, and friend was an endless series of warm, enriching encounters.

So it came as no surprise to those who knew her that, at the age of 84, E. Jay elected to have risky surgery to straighten her neck, long stooped by Parkinson's disease, because the alternative – her inability to look people in the eye – was simply unacceptable to her. Nevertheless, her bearing remained regal and her desire to connect with others was undiminished.

Sadly, three days after surgery, E. Jay suffered sudden cardiac arrest, and all hopes of her recovery were abruptly crushed. "It was so unexpected and occurred so fast that I was in shock: I had lost my soul mate of 60 years in the wink of an eye," her husband Len recalls of this harrowing time.

WINTER 2007

3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd
UHN-86
Portland, OR 97239-3098

(503) 494-4466 *phone*
(503) 494-1260 *fax*

www.ohsu.edu/ethics
ethics@ohsu.edu

The Cornelia Hayes Stevens
Chair of Ethics in Health
Care, Susan Tolle, M.D.

THE FABRIC OF *compassion*

(continued from cover)

As her family gathered around her to say their heartfelt goodbyes, a colorful quilt was placed gently on E. Jay's bed. And, with this simple gesture, the roomful of medical technology that could no longer sustain her life was removed in accordance with her wishes, and E. Jay with the love and support of her devoted family came fully into focus. The sterile setting of the hospital was instantly transformed into a sacred place of tender, loving farewell.

"In the hospital it is harder to have that personal touch of home, that open door to compassion and honoring their loved one," says Samantha (Sam) Cesario, who made E. Jay's quilt and makes dozens of quilts for the Compassion Quilt Program at Oregon Health & Science University. "Quilts allow that sterile environment to feel more like home, and allow the family to take their first step toward healing."

"In the hospital it is harder to have that personal touch of home, that open door to compassion and honoring their loved one."

For E. Jay's family the quilt became a powerful symbol of that healing. As Len says of his family's experience: "That is the last view I had of her, lying under the quilt. Here at home it provides a sense of her presence to me and my family. This quilt will forever be that presence, and it is helping me transition to a state of peace."

Mary Denise Smith, RN, MS, CNS receives a quilt from Samantha Cesario for the Compassion Quilt Program



Len Greger and his daughter, Gay at home with E. Jay's quilt.



For Sam Cesario and all the other dedicated quilters each quilt with its unique pattern of color and form is a gift of love, an expression of pure caring. Their quilts bring comfort to hundreds of dying patients and the families who mourn them – patients and families the quilters have never met.

Dr. Susan Tolle talking with E. Jay Greger and daughter, Gay in the OHSU I.C.U.

The quilt selected for E. Jay is vividly in tune with her spirit and her life. Brightly colored, exuberant in its energy and vibrantly alive, it reflects the spirit of the person it honors.

This match of quilt to patient is exactly what Sam and her fellow crafters hope for when they select their fabric and design. “I think about the person who will receive the quilt and who they might have been, so that the quilt is something blooming and alive, a patchwork that tells the story of someone’s life and death,” Sam explains. And, always, she honors the season because it is the season that will forever be remembered as the last chapter of a loved one’s life.



“That is the last view I had of her, lying under the quilt. Here at home it provides a sense of her presence to me and my family. This quilt will forever be that presence, and it is helping me transition to a state of peace.”

Mary Denise Smith, Clinical Nurse Specialist of the Palliative Medicine and Comfort Care Team at OHSU, witnesses over and over again the power of each quilt to bring comfort and healing to dying patients and their families. “Quilts are a powerful healing symbol during the dying process,” she says. “And because they are so strongly connected to the patient at this sacred time, they can bring immeasurable peace to the family afterwards.”

This thought is music to the ears of Sam Cesario. “If it touches one family and brings them healing, then that quilt has done its job,” she says with a gentle smile. “This is the most fulfilling work imaginable. Quilts are easy to make and I encourage anyone who likes to sew to think about joining us in creating these gifts of love.”

As E. Jay’s family knows through their own heartfelt experience, the quilt is an expression of deep compassion and caring that any family would welcome.

To learn more about the Compassion Quilt Program, please contact the Center for Ethics in Health Care: 503-494-4466 or ethics@ohsu.edu.



A message from
Center for Ethics in Health Care
donors Cornelia Stevens and
Lisa Andrus-Rivera

Traditionally, February is the month of love so it seems a particularly appropriate time to give our heartfelt thanks to all of those who help make the Center for Ethics' work possible. As we have said before, but cannot say too often, the Center's work is entirely gift and grant funded. Your contributions are critical to our mission of bringing compassion to health care.

We also decided that February was an appropriate time to introduce our new heartfelt newsletter scheduled to appear three times a year, alternating with the traditional director's report.

Each of these newly formatted newsletters will be devoted to a single story that poignantly illustrates the Center's heart at work. In every case, the individuals described have given their permission to have their stories told for the purposes of educating healthcare students, professionals, and the lay public. In this way we all become witnesses to the significance of compassion in bringing comfort and meaning to the critically ill, the dying, and their families.

The director's next newsletter will highlight the role of volunteers who, like you, partner with us in making these meaningful outcomes possible. As professionals, volunteers, and donors we work together on issues that affect each one of us, those we love, and those we have never met. Thank you for joining your heart with ours.

UPCOMING *events*

APRIL 11, 2007

Heartfelt Community Breakfast

Governor Hotel, Billiard Room – 8AM to 9AM

APRIL 19 & 20, 2007

*17th Annual Kinsman Conference, "Access & Stewardship:
What's Fair in Health Care"*

Co Sponsor, Sacred Heart Health Medical Center

PeaceHealth

Valley River Inn, Eugene, OR

MAY 16, 2007

*The Daniel Labby Senior Clinicians Seminar, "Care for
Babies Born Dying: Responsibilities and Obligations"*

McDonald Auditorium, OHSU

Casey Eye Institute – 10AM to Noon

JUNE 15, 2007

*Statewide Palliative Care Conference, "In Patient
Palliative Care: Moving to the Next Level"*

Co Host: Legacy Health System

Red Lion Jantzen Beach, Portland, OR



OHSU
Center for Ethics
in Health Care

3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd
UHN-86
Portland, OR 97239-3098

(503) 494-4466 *phone*
(503) 494-1260 *fax*

www.ohsu.edu/ethics
ethics@ohsu.edu

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 722
Portland, Oregon