



HOSPICE NEWS

Gateway Hospice Newsletter

Winter 2018

ABOUT US!

Gateway Hospice is proud to serve **19** counties in North Iowa. We're starting a newsletter to provide upcoming information and updates available to our partners. We appreciate your partnership in caring for patients in all the counties we serve.

VOLUNTEER HERE!

With our expanding service area, so is our need for hospice volunteers. We are looking for both patient volunteers and administrative volunteers to join our team. For more information call, Kelly Langfitt @ 515-532-2907 to learn more.



Gateway's Guardians, our hospice foundation, handed out fleece blankets to our hospice patients. Wishing them "warm" holiday wishes.

Happy Holidays!



UPCOMING EVENTS:

COMFORT COFFEE

1ST FRIDAY–
MEADOW, CLARION
2:30-3:30 P.M.

2ND FRIDAY–
LEINBACH CENTER,
BELMOND
2:30-3:30P.M.

BIRTH BACKWARDS, A Daughter's Death-By: Barbara Karnes, RN

I received the email below. I have edited it a bit so it flows for this blog. I am sharing it because I think Emily's description of her daughter's death is so beautiful. I want others to learn from it as I did.

For months during this last year I told my close friends I felt like I was giving birth backwards. I could only explain the feelings I was having by that sentence "I am giving birth backwards".

My daughter was diagnosed at age 22 and died at 31. As her death grew closer I felt even more connected to her. I would just lay in bed with her day after day. This most "close-to-the-vest" daughter let me lay with her, hold her.

One day the hospice nurse told me that my daughter was in "labor". About two weeks later she told me that Lexi was in transition. Lexi was quite peaceful during this time. Thinking about the nurse's words, "labor" and "transition" I thought these were strange terms to use for my dying daughter's process.

I continued to feel as if I was giving birth backwards. There were two or three days left and "one last push", suddenly I really understood. I was indeed giving birth backwards. It all made sense but I couldn't tell anyone why it made sense.

I was at her bedside the last day of her life. Her best friend and her husband were there also. I was wiping her face for what seemed 20 minutes but was really 5 hours while she was actively dying. We told her how proud we were of her and how much we loved her and kept talking - much like helping a birthing mother.

At 8:17pm she took one more breath and then at 8:18 there was one more which I describe as hot caramel pouring onto vanilla ice cream. It was the most perfect breath, the most peaceful entering into another portal. I felt like I had had a complete birth experience.

Lexi, neé Alexandra, was born Christmas Eve in 1986 by Caesarian section. Since I was under anesthesia I never heard or saw her first breath. Now I had the sad gift of being with her for her last breath. As overwhelmingly tragic as it is to lose your child, being able to be there so completely was an amazing experience.

After her death, I reread your booklet **Gone From My Sight**. I hadn't noticed, when I read it the first time, the similarities of the "backwards birth". We are born, we live to become independent and then slowly we return to being dependent. Our sleeping increases, our food returns to soft, then liquids, and we return to not communicating. We are cared for by others as labor occurs and we are birthed into another world.

I've ordered the **End of Life Guideline Series** to pass to a friend who is helping her husband deal with the dying of his father. The descriptions of the patient's last months are so accurate. Rereading it made me feel so much better about Lexi's last year and days. The idea that she was in both worlds made so much sense. Sometimes she was very present, and other times she was somewhere else.

I have metastatic breast cancer. I plan on having some years of living ahead of me but watching my daughter and reading your booklets has taken away much of the fear I have had. I realize Lexi wasn't afraid. It was very evident to me as I watched her. I have a sense of peace from living her birth backwards.

It touches me deeply that Emily was able to refer to **Gone From My Sight** during her daughter's dying process and that she was "able to be there so completely" for her child. I often say, *knowledge reduces fear*. Please educate yourselves and those you love so that all deaths can be as good as Lexi's.



DON'T WAIT-START THE CONVERSATION

So many times when talking with families that we've served, I hear, "I wish we would have called you sooner." We as partners in healthcare are always trying to seek services and provide resources to our patients, even at end of life. Although the conversation about hospice may be one you're not comfortable having, allow us to be a part of the conversation. Allow us to have the conversation with the patient and their families to provide them with the information necessary to make an educated choice. Our trained and qualified staff is happy to visit with anyone in regards to their end of life options and what we at Gateway Hospice can provide them and their family. Start the conversation, your patients and families will appreciate the direction.

Life changing services, when the choice is comfort.