Honoring Alice Sparks
Trailblazer, Philanthropist and Friend

The Bluegrass Care Navigators family recently lost a dear friend and generous advocate for our Northern Kentucky regional office, Alice Stevens Sparks. Alice was a well-respected community leader and generous philanthropist with a charismatic personality and huge heart.

Alice’s connection to Bluegrass Care Navigators began over 10 years ago when her beloved grandson, Alex, was diagnosed with cancer and entered our pediatric hospice program. She was incredibly grateful for the care BCN provided to Alex and the entire family, and she decided she would make sure all families facing a similar situation would have the opportunity to benefit from “the gift of hospice.”

Under Alice’s leadership, the Northern Kentucky FORE! Kids Golf Outing was launched. Over the past decade, the FORE! Kids Golf Outing raised more than $300,000 to benefit children needing pediatric hospice or palliative care and their families.

“There are many children who need specialized care in their homes, and we provide that care through our Bright Path program, whether or not the family can pay for services,” says Denise Burton, RN, MSN, CHPN, Executive Director, Northern Kentucky. “It is because of Alice and her commitment to our mission that we can provide this care for kids. We will forever be grateful for her care and support of our agency.”

Alice was also a dedicated volunteer for BCN for many years.

“Alice was a wonderful volunteer who always wanted to brighten the days of our hospice patients,” recalls Kimberly Heestand, provider liaison for Northern Kentucky. “She loved to deliver flowers to our facility patients. Alice truly was a philanthropist who let her hands do the work of her heart!”

Alice led a full life and impacted an immeasurable amount of people along the way.

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She was an avid philanthropist, tireless advocate for public service and education; loved politics, horses, racing, having fun and helping others.

At a socially-distanced visitation service to honor Alice, there was a tribute there that read: “Alice Sparks will be remembered as a legend in Northern Kentucky for her genuine and generous life.” What a wonderful way to be remembered. May all of us lead a “genuine and generous” life like Alice.

Neil didn’t want to make the call to hospice. He was concerned that his beloved wife Connie would feel he was giving up on her and the life she had left to live. But the complexity of her care was taking a toll.

Connie was suffering from ALS, which you may know as Lou Gehrig’s Disease. She started having trouble walking, then lost the use of her hands and soon was unable to speak.

Neil made the call. Soon our hospice care team arrived and Neil’s concerns began to subside. They helped with Connie’s care – medical, physical, emotional and spiritual – whatever she needed.

Neil remembers how Connie’s face would light up when she saw them. And how they made her laugh.

“They were really a big help and got to be family,” Neil says.

Connie’s care team encouraged her to get out of the house and live her life as much as possible. And when Connie’s mother in Indiana was nearing the end of her life, the BCN team contacted a hospice group there to coordinate care and make sure that Connie would have what she needed while visiting her mother.

It was a difficult journey and Connie’s doctors were concerned it might be too hard for her. But as Neil says, the care team “paved the way for us.”
St. Timothy Parish Gives Time and Treasure

St. Timothy Parish, in Union, KY, has been a great friend to our hospice patients and families. Last year, the parish provided grant funding to purchase materials to make personalized fleece blankets for our veteran patients – and a group of nearly 30 parishioners gathered to assemble them. It was a huge help to our volunteer services team and made so many of our patients warm and happy.

Just this fall, St. Timothy came through again by providing items to create Cheer Boxes for patients. The generous parishioners donated puzzles, adult coloring books, lip balm, tissues and bright “thinking of you” cards. But they didn’t stop at donating. Again, the parishioners gave of their time to assemble 50 boxes!

“Thank you so much to everyone at St. Timothy Parish for giving of your time, talent and treasure to make the day a little brighter for our hospice patients!”

“We pulled Connie’s wheelchair up beside her mom’s bed. They held hands and her mom passed away about an hour later,” Neil recalls.

Connie passed away earlier this year with Neil at her side.

“They were instrumental in keeping Connie home ‘til the end,” says Neil. “They made such an impression on me that I wanted to help them, too.”

Today, Neil is a volunteer for Bluegrass Care Navigators, Cynthiana region. And, as an Army Veteran, Neil is looking forward to when coronavirus restrictions can be lifted so he can help with the 11th-hour hospice program where he’ll sit at the bedside of fellow Veterans in their final hours.

Thank you, Neil. And thank you to all of you who support our mission. Thanks to you, our team is there to provide comfort, quality of life and peace of mind for our patients and their families as they face the end of their time together.
Mission Moment

Camp Hope Goes Virtual

Like so many things this year, our Camp Hope sessions – usually in-person gatherings at a camp facility – had to adapt due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Thankfully, our bereavement counselors are creative problem solvers and the kids were willing to adapt!

In October we held virtual Camp Hope to help children cope with the grief of losing a loved one in a safe and positive setting. While this was a new experience for our young participants and our seasoned bereavement counselors and staff, it was one that was truly impactful for the kids and their parents.

“Camp Hope was a huge success this year,” says Holly Bender, bereavement counselor. “With the combined efforts of our Integrative Medicine team, bereavement counselors and social workers from Northern Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky, Frankfort and Lexington offices, we were able to provide this opportunity to 24 children and teens and eight parents from all over the state.

The kids had a hybrid camp experience that combined hands-on activities with online counseling. Each child received age-appropriate craft activities, books, and other materials delivered to their home. Virtual counseling sessions were held in small groups, arranged by age, to encourage dialogue and healing interaction. We also held separate counseling sessions with guardians to provide them tools and information they need to support the grieving children over the long term.

Participants enjoyed activities, such as:

• Creating a picture frame to hold a photo of their loved one;
• Using sketch pads to depict some of their feelings;
• Painting masks to show the feelings they keep to themselves and those they show others;
• Using bubbles to learn deep breathing exercises;
• Using integrative medicine therapies – music, art, mindfulness – as coping strategies

The children were able to share their personal stories in a safe environment, support their peers who have similar experiences, and receive guidance from counselors on effective strategies for coping with loss.

We will offer our virtual Camp Hope each Tuesday in January 2021 from 5–6 p.m. For more information or to register, please call 859.277.2700.

The Camp Hope Children’s Bereavement Program was able to host the virtual camps thanks to a grant from Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky (TMMK) and the support of other sponsors including Walmart Palomar (Lexington), Walmart Hazard and Partners for Youth.

Thank you all for your partnership!
Grant Expands Telemedicine Services for Bluegrass Care Navigators Patients

Bluegrass Care Navigators is very grateful that our organization has been awarded a substantial grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utility Services. The $468,483 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program grant will be used to fully develop our telemedicine services in many rural communities.

Through the “Telemedicine Services for Hospice Care in Southeast Kentucky” project, Bluegrass Care Navigators will provide seriously ill patients in 16 counties of southeast Kentucky with greater access to healthcare services.

More than 400 patients each day, who primarily receive care in their homes throughout the region, will be served by clinicians based at hub sites in our Hazard, Barbourville and Pikeville regional offices. The patients and clinicians will be equipped with videoconference tools that will enable them to interact and communicate remotely, which will result in improved care for patients.

This is an especially important project as Bluegrass Care Navigators continues to develop innovative ways to serve our patients and families in a safe manner to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Please take a quick moment to tell us how our staff, our services or our support has made a difference in your life or the life of someone you love, at:

bgcarenav.org/mystory
Veteran Gifts

Volunteers delivered beautiful glass block gifts to patients in Northern Kentucky to honor their service on Veteran’s Day, Nov. 11.

Honoring a Chaplain’s Legacy

Joey McKenney, a former nurse with Bluegrass Care Navigators, was inspired by Jim Sluss, a chaplain he worked with in the Hazard region. Jim passed away a few years ago, and Joey wanted to honor Jim’s kindness and ability to uplift and help hospice patients and families.

Jim’s son Paul, also a BCN chaplain, told Joey that on one of Jim’s first visits to the Hazard area he commented to his wife, “These people are my family and these mountains are my home.” That comment stuck with Joey, and he is now offering a sweatshirt with the quote for sale at Appalachian Apparel Co. A portion of each sale will be donated in Jim’s honor to the Greg and Noreen Wells Hospice Care Center in Hazard. To purchase your sweatshirt, visit appappco.com.

Sharing Our Thanks with Gratitude Pumpkins

The Frankfort Community Outreach team delivered gratitude pumpkins to community partners during the 30 Days of Gratitude November. Pumpkins were given to chambers of commerce, emergency management services (EMS) and Capital City Senior Center to show our appreciation for all they do for community members.

Looking for a way to give back while you shop this holiday season? Bluegrass Care Navigators is a participating charity with AmazonSmile. Visit smile.amazon.com to shop while giving back this holiday season.
Thank You, Buffalo Trace

Each year Buffalo Trace Distillery gives back to the community by recognizing organizations that make a difference and improve the quality of life locally. Bluegrass Care Navigators is proud to be one of the featured charities. Thank you Buffalo Trace Distillery for investing in our mission.

Food Donations Help Families

A huge thank you to Save-a-Lot and all of the customers who give $5 at checkout to help provide food to those in need.

Your donations have helped so many hospice patients and families in Hazard!

Thank You!

We are so grateful to our friends at Orbis Corporation in Georgetown, and the Menasha Corporation Foundation, for their generous philanthropic gift in support of our hospice patients. Thank you!

Thank You!

Wishlists: 3 Ways

Our patients depend on the generous in-kind gifts we receive from our community. Please consider checking off one of the items on our Wishlists and help a patient in need. There are three easy ways to help:

1. AmazonSmile Charity Wishlist: amazon.com/gp/clpf (Search “Bluegrass Care Navigators”)
   Please email us at give@bgcarenav.org to let us know that you provided an item from the list so we can thank you!
2. Visit: bgcarenav.org/wishlist
3. Email Us: give@bgcarenav.org

Planned Giving

Have you considered including Bluegrass Care Navigators in your will or estate plans? It’s a simple way to make a powerful impact for patients and families. Contact us at give@bgcarenav.org or 859.276.5344 to learn more.

Make a Gift Online
bgcarenav.org/newsletter
Did You Know?

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was created to assist those facing economic hardship related to the coronavirus pandemic. The Act includes some additional tax incentives to encourage charitable giving, which may affect you and your charitable goals for this year. Here are a few key points:

- **If you itemize deductions**, you may deduct cash donations to most charities, including Bluegrass Care Navigators, to offset as much as 100% of your income. This provision is for the 2020 tax year only.

- **If you don’t itemize your deductions**, you may still reduce your taxable income by $300 for your charitable contributions in 2020.

- **Relaxed limitations on charitable deductions** for corporations are increasing the corporate deduction limitation to 25% of taxable income in 2020 (normally limited to 10%).

- **Most required minimum distributions** from retirement plans have been eliminated for 2020.

- **If you are 70 1/2 or older**, qualified charitable distributions are still a great way to make contributions. A qualified charitable distribution (“QCD” or “IRA charitable rollover”) allows you to make a tax-free gift of up to $100,000 to Bluegrass Care Navigators from your IRA.

If you have questions about how your gift can help further the important work of Bluegrass Care Navigators, please contact Laura Klumb, Vice President of Philanthropy, at 859.296.6865 or lklumb@bgcarenav.org.

As you consider your charitable giving for 2020, we encourage you to talk to your financial advisor regarding how the CARES Act might help you realize your charitable goals for the year.

bgcarenav.org/cares-act