

# Storylines

A bi-monthly publication from AuthoraCare Collective

February/March 2021



## Navigating a World Tragedy

### COVID-19 Has Affected How We Grieve

By Charity Apple

Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 are living through a world tragedy.

"It's not something that people have educated themselves about how to move through it," said Ryan Mahler, Adult Grief Support & Counseling Manager. "It puts what we, as bereavement counselors, are doing at a different level."

With the virus, loved ones are admitted to the hospital and their families are unable to visit with them.

"Before the pandemic, you could see them, sit by their bedside in their final weeks or as they took their last breaths but now, you can't," Mahler said. "There's no control. How traumatic it must be to drop your loved one off at the hospital and in some cases, never see them again. I think about how I would get through that. It's overwhelming."

Since there are so many people dealing with the grief and trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AuthoraCare Collective will hold a virtual COVID-19 Loss Support Group from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. March 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13 and 20 on Zoom. Registration is available by calling 336-621-5565 or emailing [griefsupport@authoracare.org](mailto:griefsupport@authoracare.org). Deadline to register is March 12.

"Overall, we will be creating a space where those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 can share their feelings," said Holly Lux-Sullivan, bereavement counselor. "We are lucky to be able to do this - to be able to reach out to families and support them."

Through the years, AuthoraCare Collective has offered support groups for those who are coping with death by suicide or overdose. "We are constantly pivoting to meet the needs of our patients and families," Mahler added.

During grief counseling pre-COVID-19, bereavement counselors would recommend activities with friends, going to the movies, or doing things that would relax those dealing with grief.

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Charity Apple, Linda Ann Fitts, Jane Gibson, Kate Phillips, Paul Russ

## CEO Reflection

### Ensuring Greatness for Those We Serve

"Greatness is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving ..." Oliver Wendell Holmes

Having direction is essential for success.

Our merger was the result of a clear vision, or direction, to ensure community-based end-of-life services continue to be available for the communities we serve. Throughout the pandemic, we have focused on keeping our patients, volunteers, and team safe. While it's tempting to focus on what is in front of us, we must also be looking ahead.

In September, our board launched a strategic planning process to set the vision for our next chapter. A group of AuthoraCare leaders, including board members, foundation trustees, staff, and community volunteers began meeting.

Rather than have external factors shape who we are, this group is envisioning who we prefer to be and build toward that vision. Determining what our "preferred future" is requires intentional work. And I am grateful for those who have dedicated time to this effort. A new strategic plan will be approved by the board later in March.

While the plan is still being refined, I am personally excited about our process and what it has revealed. The pandemic has reinforced the need for quality home-based care. It has also highlighted how effective our AuthoraCare team is at meeting people where they are. Our role in the care continuum has never been more essential or needed.

All of us at AuthoraCare know our expertise in caring for those with advanced illness. And our planning process has provided an objective and external validation of this truth.

I look forward to sharing more details of our vision in future newsletters. In the meantime, know that we remain dedicated to ensuring greatness for those we serve.



*Kristen Yntema*

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kristen Wither Yntema".

### Kristen Wither Yntema, MBA, MHSA

President and CEO

AuthoraCare Collective



# Navigating a World Tragedy

(cont. from cover)

"Because of the pandemic, you can't socialize with neighbors or go out to eat with friends," Mahler said. "And you're in a space with so many memories of that person that it can be daunting."

Mahler said that, "we're helping each person figure out what works for him or her. We might encourage them to stand on the back porch and scream, if they need to. And physical movement is important as well. Take a walk or ride your bike. Get outside."

The natural part of the grieving process is replaying the scenario in which your loved one died and with COVID-19, "the frustration and anger is beyond comparison," said Bereavement Counselor MJ Tucci.

And although vaccinations are being rolled out across the country, there are those who have lost someone dear to them prior to the release of vaccines – and there is a constant feeling of "what if?" What if that person had gotten the vaccine – would he or she still be here today?

Mahler referred to dealing with a COVID-19 loss as "an emotional roller coaster."

"They could be in the ICU, then out of ICU, and the family remains hopeful," she said. "It is so emotionally draining!"

David Henderson's wife, Elizabeth Jane "Janie" Souweine Henderson, 64, died on Dec. 18 of complications related to COVID-19.

Janie had suffered from Sarcoidosis in the past but was in remission.

"We called her every night and talked to her," David said of the phone calls with his wife, which often included a "mystery guest." Their two grown daughters would call in and "sometimes, our

grandchildren would talk to her. She couldn't talk, because she was on the ventilator, but we would offer words of encouragement and play her favorite music."

David said that his "vibrant, young-in-spirit wife" fought this virus for seven weeks at the Green Valley Hospital in Greensboro.

While the family held out hope, "every day was a gut-wrenching day. It was hell the whole time," he said.

Because of the virus, the family was unable to have a memorial service. The urn, with Janie's ashes, sits at their Asheboro home with family photos encircling it.

"We just couldn't do it," David said. "It's not smart. It's dangerous."

The family is hoping to have a celebration this summer "as soon as it is safe to do so," he said. "You need that – to get together – to laugh, cry and look each other in the eye. We haven't had that."

This experience has taught him to lean more on his spirituality.

"I've had my talks with God. I have read a lot of books and had a lot of support from friends and family. I slowly and steadily have climbed out of the worst of it and I've accepted this new normal. It is a journey, but you leave a little bit of grief along the way so that it's not so heavy," he said.



## COMMEMORATIVE BRICKS

Commemorative bricks create a lasting tribute to a loved one. Each fall, these engraved bricks are installed in the walkways of the rose garden at Beacon Place and the Kids Path garden on our Greensboro Campus. To have your commemorative brick installed in time for the dedication ceremony in the fall, **please place your order by June 30.**

Order today at [authoracare.org/brick](https://authoracare.org/brick)





# We Honor Veterans



## Valentines for Veterans

Annual Project Offers Thanks to Those Who Served



*These Valentines were created by volunteers in Burlington and Greensboro. They were distributed to veteran patients and families on Valentine's Day.*

**By Linda Ann Fitts**

Volunteers at AuthoraCare Collective created personalized valentines to be distributed to our veteran patients during the month of February.

Since 2011, Valentines for Veterans has been an annual We Honor Veterans (WHV) project. One in every four dying Americans is a veteran. AuthoraCare Collective is a proud partner in the WHV program, a national initiative started by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Veterans Administration.

Veterans often carry experiences from their military service that can present unique healthcare challenges. By recognizing these unique needs, our team works to guide them through their life stories toward a more peaceful end-of-life experience. Our goal is to provide exceptional healthcare as well as provide specialized comfort and support to veterans and their families.

Our valentine card project is just one of the ways we can acknowledge all our veteran patients. They did everything asked of them in their mission to serve our country and we want to honor and care for them. We want to recognize all our veterans with respect, dignity, and integrity. At AuthoraCare Collective, we believe it is never too late to thank our veterans for their service.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT AUTHORACARE'S WE HONOR VETERANS PROGRAM AT [AUTHORACARE.ORG/WHV](https://www.authoracare.org/whv)**

# Burlington Campus' We Honor Veterans Program Achieves Level 3

By Charity Apple

**A**uthoraCare Collective's We Honor Veterans program on the Burlington campus recently earned its Level 3 certificate.

The national We Honor Veterans program requires that hospice agencies complete a series of activities and requirements. Completion earns stars and allows agencies to advance to the next level.

"The level you are as a We Honor Veterans hospice is a public indicator of your efforts to provide veteran-centric services to your patients and community," said Hannah Boyd, Clinical Informatics on the Burlington campus and We Honor Veterans committee co-chair along with Paul Russ, VP of Marketing and Development. The highest level you can achieve is a level 5.

Greensboro's We Honor Veterans program achieved its Level 5 status through years of work prior to the merger in 2019.

Boyd said the Burlington program is aiming to be at a Level 5 as well by 2023.

Each level's requirements take at least a year to achieve. Our campuses have different levels

because the national program realizes that an agency's programs will be customized to meet the needs of the veterans in the community they serve.

"The level 3 distinction means that we have provided multiple community and staff education opportunities about veteran care and benefits, implemented the Vet-to-Vet volunteer program, ensured our veteran care met the standards of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, and conducted an annual review of the AuthoraCare Burlington's We Honor Veterans program," Boyd added.

Level 3, Boyd said, "symbolizes that we are committed, even amidst a pandemic, to ensuring the veterans under our care and in the community are respected, honored and acknowledged at all stages of their lives."

"This commitment is held true by the We Honor Veterans committee and their work each month as well as all AuthoraCare that support our veterans," she added.



## AuthoraCare Collective - Burlington

is recognized as a We Honor Veterans  
Hospice Partner

**Level Three**

*AuthoraCare Collective's Burlington campus' We Honor Veterans program has earned its Level 3 certificate, shown above.*



# What's Happening?

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### COVID-19 Loss Support Group

*A Six-Session Virtual Support Group for Grieving Adults*

**Tuesdays, March 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13 and 20**

**6 – 7:30 p.m.**

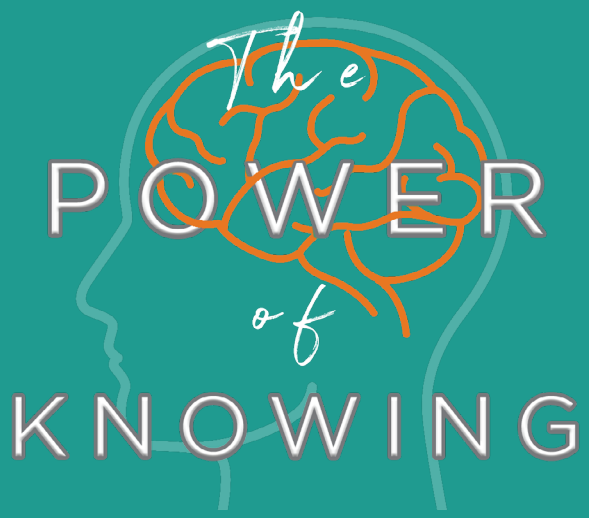
### Yoga for Managing Grief Stress

*A Virtual Workshop for Grieving Adults*

**Monday, March 22**

**6 – 7:00 p.m.**

To register and receive information, contact 336.621.5565 or email [griefsupport@authoracare.org](mailto:griefsupport@authoracare.org).  
Visit [authoracare.org](http://authoracare.org) for our most current calendar.



*A Free Webinar Series*

### The COVID-19 Vaccine

*A Webinar to Address your Questions and Concerns*

There is a lot of talk about the COVID-19 vaccines. Many have questions, concerns and doubts about their safety, effectiveness and whether or not to even get one. For communities of color, historic events intensify these concerns.

This webinar will explore some of the commonly heard questions and concerns raised by community members and will provide answers from local healthcare experts. Anyone considering the vaccines or wanting to know how to access one will benefit from this program.

**Tuesday, March 23, 12 - 1:00 p.m.**

Register at [authoracare.org/knowning](http://authoracare.org/knowning)

## Now Streaming On Demand at [authoracare.org/knowning](http://authoracare.org/knowning)

Grief and Loss During COVID-19 | Parts 1 & 2

The Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Teens

The Benefits of Palliative Care During COVID-19

Giving Thanks: An Overview of AuthoraCare's Services

Advance Care Planning During COVID-19

Healing Hearts During COVID-19

Diversity & Inclusion Series

# CORKS FOR KIDS PATH ADAPTS TO RAISE NEEDED SUPPORT

By Paul Russ

For more than a decade, Corks for Kids Path has been the primary annual event to support grieving and medically fragile children served by Kids Path. It has raised more than \$1.5 million since it was created, ensuring needed services are available.

While the demand for care and counseling continues, made more complex with the added stressors brought about by COVID-19, it will be a challenge to raise the same level of support this year – more than \$150,000 each year.

Like many community events, the pandemic is forcing organizers to reimagine an event around which tasting wine is the primary activity. As a result, the 14th Annual Corks for Kids Path will be creatively different. However, despite the changes, its mission remains the same – to raise needed support for children coping with illness and loss.

“Despite shifting to a virtual model,” said Jessica Ketner, Corks for Kids Path event chair, “our dedicated group of volunteers remain incredibly optimistic. We are confident we will create a meaningful and very enjoyable experience for those who participate.”

This year’s event will focus on the charitable feelings people have toward Kids Path. Since an in-person tasting and auction are not possible, the planning committee hopes to draw attention to the work of the program.

“There is a silver lining,” Ketner pointed out. “With a simplified virtual gathering, we can really tell the Kids Path story. We are looking forward to broadening people’s understanding of the program and expanding the base of support.” Zeto has returned as the event’s leading partner, and an early appeal for sponsorships has demonstrated the passion people have for Kids Path, generating nearly \$40,000 to date.



*Jessica Ketner, Corks for Kids Path 2021 Event Chair.*

The planning committee also recognizes the impact that the pandemic has had on local businesses. As a result, there will not be a strong push for auction items. Instead, a portion of the event will be focused on celebrating the years of support from these businesses.

The committee is envisioning an online event later this spring that will bring supporters together and offer a platform to celebrate the history of Corks for Kids Path, as well as the community impact of this beloved program. “We are looking forward to ‘raising a glass’ together for the cause,” Ketner added.

If you would like to support this work or learn more, please visit [www.corksforkidspath.org](http://www.corksforkidspath.org).

**Visit [corksforkidspath.org](http://corksforkidspath.org) to learn the latest news about this year’s event, become a sponsor, and more!**

# Nourish your Weary Heart

## Focus on 'Invisible Gifts' During In-Between Time

By Hillary Irusta

**H**opeful. Weary. Optimistic. Restless. Strong. Depleted. Overwhelmed. Grateful.

We are in that in-between time. The merriment of the winter holidays and religious celebrations have passed, but the days remain short, the nights long, and the wind has a chill. We anticipate the promise of warmer months to come and for our longings to be fulfilled.

While 2020 is officially in the past, its grief and losses continue to haunt us as we anticipate the relief that we desperately hope for. Sometimes, it feels like we are on a seesaw, bouncing between one extreme set of inner experiences to another. Other days, we settle into one feeling and it lingers. We are physically fatigued and spiritually depleted. Our deep inner wells that usually flow with compassion, empathy, and resiliency often run dry and struggle beneath the great demands of our time.

In the midst of this season between winter and spring, desolation and consolation, scarcity and abundance, lie February and March. The month of love and the month of transitional weather to spring. They are little gifts of respite on the journey. Invitations to pause and nourish our weary hearts before the full bloom of spring or the excitement of summer set in.

What are some ways you can tend to your hearts? Maybe it's time to schedule that spa day, indulge in

that self-care activity you've been putting off, or experiment with yoga positions to relieve stress and fatigue. Guided loving-kindness meditations provide wonderful opportunities to flex our love muscles and bless ourselves and those around us as we anticipate warmer weather. Linger awhile with your household or virtually with someone special and allow your heart to swell with gratitude.

Most of all, let's remember that we are not alone. Let's remember that we are loved.

Mr. Fred Rogers (March 20, 1938-February 27, 2003), known for his children's television show, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," was often heard sharing his "invisible gift" exercise. One minute of silence to recall all of those who have "loved you into being." Remember how they believed in you, encouraged you, challenged you, cared for you, and helped

you. Perhaps, if you have just one minute, you can pause right now and do this exercise with me. As you recall them, invite their love, affirmation, and strength to nourish your tired spirit and fill your well.

During these challenging days, linger in these invisible gifts of love and strength. Embrace the journey whatever it may be, knowing you are held in the hearts of many. And may you be blessed with opportunities to love another into being.



*Hillary Irusta, MDiv, BCCC, is an AuthoraCare Collective chaplain.*



## Are you grieving? AuthoraCare can help.

Talking about the loss of a loved one and the adjustment issues involved can be helpful to you and others who grieve. The professional, licensed staff of AuthoraCare Grief Support can provide one-on-one counseling to you or your family members.

Contact us at [griefsupport@authoracare.org](mailto:griefsupport@authoracare.org) or 336.621.5565 to learn more and make an appointment. Virtual appointments are available.

# What is Palliative Care?

## AUTHORACARE'S SCREENING TOOL ASSISTS PATIENTS & CAREGIVERS

By Charity Apple

One of the most common questions we hear from patients and caregivers is “What is palliative care?”

Palliative care is specialized medical care for those with a serious illness. This could include new or current illnesses such as cancer, heart conditions, kidney disease, dementia, Parkinson's, respiratory conditions, HIV/AIDS, stroke and others.

At AuthoraCare Collective, registered nurses, nurse practitioners and social workers work together to support the patient, along with caregivers, friends and family members.

“Early diagnosis or late diagnosis can benefit from palliative care,” said Cheryl Rodrigues, MSN, BSN, RN and Administrative Director of Palliative Care. “We don't replace their primary physician. That's important to note. A lot of our patients have been going to their physicians for a number of years and not only feel comfortable with them but respect their advice. We collaborate with their physician on a care plan.”

Palliative care clinicians also answer questions about advance care planning, symptom management, nutrition needs, requests for information about hospice care or other healthcare needs and questions related to changes in care (patient being discharged to home or nursing home or from nursing home to home).

**AuthoraCare Collective's Palliative Care Screening Tool has 13 questions for caregivers, listed below. If one of these is answered “yes,” the patient can benefit from palliative care:**

- New or current serious illness
- Serious health problems that require frequent contacts with the physician office or emergency department
- Serious illness with plans to receive or continue treatment
- Unclear goals related to health or needs help talking about healthcare wishes (Healthcare Power of Attorney, Living Will, etc.)
- Side effects of treatment or medications (nausea, pain, shortness of breath, weakness, falls, etc.)
- Unclear information or education needed about illness and/or treatments
- Issues with physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual suffering (depression, anger, irritability, withdrawal, loss of appetite, etc.)
- Has questions related to changes in care (hospital discharges to home or nursing home, nursing home to home)
- Needs help talking about nutrition needs
- Patient, family or caregiver needs support (family meetings, one-on-one discussions, education and community resources)
- Difficulty with bathing, toileting, meal preparation/eating, walking, etc.
- Patient has unintentional weight loss
- Request for information about hospice care or other healthcare needs

“As healthcare providers, we know how important it is to care for patients and improve their quality of life and that's what palliative care does,” Rodrigues said.

COVID-19 has been challenging for both hospice and palliative care.



# What is Palliative Care?

(cont. from page 9)

“Virtual visits have been utilized as a way to close the gap,” she said.

AuthoraCare Collective has seen an increase in palliative care patients since the pandemic began.

“We have had as many as 25 referrals in one day,” Rodrigues said. “Before the pandemic, we would have between 10 and 20 patients over weeks or months.”

AuthoraCare Collective, Rodrigues said, “has really pivoted to address the needs of our patients and caregivers. We have utilized Zoom and other virtual platforms so that we can stay connected, monitor and tend to our patients’ needs.”

Palliative care is available between Monday through Friday (during regular office hours) and the Hospice Triage Nurse is available after hours.

To request assistance related to palliative care, visit [authoracare.org](https://authoracare.org) or call 336.790.3672.



## Mary Manley Selected for National Diversity Advisory Council

By Jane Gibson



Mary Manley (left), Director of Growth and Provider Relations with AuthoraCare Collective, has been named to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization’s (NHPCO) Diversity Advisory Council.

Comprised of 15 members from across the United States,

the Diversity Advisory Council provides information, guidance, and technical expertise to the NHPCO and its members related to serving diverse communities. With a goal of increasing access to services, the council also assists in the development of resources and tools needed to find success. The NHPCO is the oldest and largest leadership association working to advance person-centered care in the United States.

One of its most significant and recent contributions was the creation of the NHPCO Inclusion and Access Tool Kit. Released in 2020, the kit is available at no charge and can be downloaded by all NHPCO members. The information serves as a guide for creating an inclusive organization and offers suggestions for better understanding the needs of unique communities. While the Diversity Advisory Council will continue to promote this kit, the new goal is the revision of its three outreach guides which target the care and support of African Americans, Chinese Americans and Latinos.

“Matters surrounding diversity, inclusion and equity have never been more relevant, at least in my lifetime. However, their importance is often dismissed, mitigated and overlooked,” Manley said.

Manley feels hopeful and invigorated by the rare opportunity to address these issues at a national level. She also recognizes that her participation will enhance her contribution as a member of AuthoraCare Collective’s Inclusion Council, as well as her role as Director of Growth and Provider Relations.

Recognizing that leaders in both NHPCO and AuthoraCare value an inside-out approach to inclusion and equity is a source of pride for Manley.

“Meaningful change begins from within an organization and is reflected in how we treat each other. It is the foundation required to honor every patient’s story and to offer every individual dignity and respect,” she said.

Before joining AuthoraCare in 2018, Manley worked for more than 20 years in sales and marketing within the senior healthcare industry. Born and raised in Greensboro, Manley graduated from North Carolina State University. She and her husband live in Browns Summit and have two adult sons. Since the death of Manley’s mother in 2019, her father also resides in the Manley home.

# 12 Days of Caroling Generates Donations

By Charity Apple

Musician Clinton “Clint” Horton witnessed firsthand the impact that the Hospice Home in Burlington had on his late aunt, Katherine Miller.

“She was, by all purposes, somewhat of a recluse. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer, it was advised that she go to the Hospice Home,” he said. “At first, she was reluctant and stand-offish, but within a few weeks, she was transformed. She would tell the staff, ‘make sure to let me know when my people arrive, because I want to see them.’ We were amazed at how her demeanor changed. And I believe that was because of how loving the staff was toward her.”

Since then, Horton said that AuthoraCare Collective has become “one of my favorite charities because of not only the difference they made in my aunt’s life, but in that of countless other friends and family members.”

That impact is the reason Clint and his wife, Ethel (pictured right), selected AuthoraCare as one of the 12 charities to receive funds during their “12 Days of Christmas Caroling.”

From Dec. 12-24, the couple sang Christmas carols at 6 p.m. on Facebook Live. A local charity was represented each night and Clint asked listeners to contribute, if they could, at least a dollar a night. Donations were accepted on CashApp, Venmo, Apple Pay or payable to the charity’s website by mentioning “12 Days of Christmas Caroling.”

AuthoraCare Collective was the selected charity for Dec. 14. To date, AuthoraCare has received \$177 in donations from the event. The concept was an extension of a Facebook Live event that Clint and Ethel did when the pandemic began.

“One day we were talking and we wanted to perform inspirational songs,” Clint said. “Every evening, we would perform one to two songs on Facebook Live. This took place for 49 consecutive days and ended when the lockdown was lifted.”

Clint said he was lying in bed one night, processing things and “I continued to develop this idea around the 12 days of Christmas. It was a process, but we knew we wanted to help local charities because they have been so impacted by this pandemic.” During the Facebook event, Clint and Ethel heard from listeners as far away as California and overseas. “One lady messaged us and said, ‘It is 1 a.m. here, but I’m listening,’” Clint said. “I appreciate the fact people supported the effort the way they did.”



## MCMASTERS’ LIGHT SHOW A ‘THANK-YOU’ TO AUTHORACARE

By Charity Apple

Since 2013, Randy and Karen McMasters have held a Christmas light show at their home in Graham in exchange for donations for area charities.

The first year was a way to thank the Hospice and Palliative Care Center of Alamance-Caswell, now AuthoraCare Collective, for the way they cared for Karen’s late mother. This year, AuthoraCare as well as CityGate Dream Center in Burlington, received the donations. The light show raised \$7,283.50, which was divided between the two charities.

“In a year of this pandemic, we were shocked and pleased at how generous folks have been,” Randy said.

The lights were on display from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on weekends and the week of Christmas.

Setup typically begins around mid-October. And by the first week in November, Randy joked that “folks are stopping, while I’m in the yard, to ask when the light show starts.”

All of the wooden cutouts are designed by Randy and Karen. “We do a lot of the painting during the winter,” Randy said. There are 40 woodworking pieces on display. And Randy said the couple has “one big woodworking surprise” planned for next year.

The LED lights are synchronized with Christmas music played on 87.9 FM. And the McMasters’ grandchildren can be heard in segments, encouraging folks to donate in the box located near the house.

“It is a lot of work,” Randy said. “But when I walk out there and hear the kids and parents singing along and see how excited they are, well, it definitely motivates me to do it the next year.”

## Our Mission

AuthoraCare Collective empowers people to be active participants in their care journey, enabling them to live on their own terms through personalized support for mind, body and spirit.

## HOSPICE THRIFT STORE TRUCKS CAN COME TO YOU!

Do you have heavy furniture, a bulky donation, or even an entire house worth of items that you'd like to donate to the hospice thrift store?

Call 336.229.0490 to schedule a pickup from one of our thrift store trucks!



*You can't miss our bright purple trucks!*

Questions? Contact the thrift store at 336-229-0490 or visit the store's [Facebook page](#).

## Getting Social

Connect with us to stay informed about the latest news, upcoming events and more!



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