

celebrate **GIVING**

Summer 2025 | Issue 16



Full Circle MOMENTS



Dear friends,

Life often gives us the opportunity to use our own experiences to help others. Many recognize this as a “full-circle moment” – when those times that we’ve been the recipient of a kind gesture, helpful resource, or life-changing service enable us to extend similar outreach to those around us.

I was struck by how these full-circle moments are woven throughout the stories shared in this issue of *Celebrate Giving*. It is a continual cycle of receiving, giving, and growing in the process. It is truly the mark of an abundant life and legacy, displayed so beautifully in the lives of former Healing Patch participant Hollie Keller, Family Hospice patient LeFerne Saylor and her family, former Nurse-Family Partnership® client Megan Heit, and the

UPMC Home Healthcare patients who generously donated in recognition of their care team members.

I hope these stories encourage you to appreciate your current season of life, despite the challenges it may hold, and inspire you to use those life experiences to care for others. It is through your generosity that many served by UPMC Home Healthcare and Family Hospice have access to vital resources.

We are forever grateful for the opportunity to serve you and to be a conduit of your kindness to others.

Gratefully,

Jennifer Vennare

President, UPMC at Home

giving resources

YOUR SUPPORT Supplies Teaching Equipment for New Staff

As UPMC Home Healthcare of Central Pennsylvania and Family Hospice care for patients with a variety of diagnoses and needs, care team members must be prepared to handle anything from basic transfers to ostomy care. Having appropriate training equipment makes a considerable difference for staff who are building their confidence to care for patients in the home.

Earlier this year, your charitable support through the Home Nursing Agency Foundation purchased a new life-sized healthcare mannequin for staff training. Susie (or Sam) is used by home care aides to practice performing personal care skills, re-positioning, and transfer techniques under supervision. Nurses can learn new skills and refine existing ones, such as indwelling catheter insertion, ostomy care, and tracheostomy care.

“Our staff benefit from the ability to practice and refine skills and techniques using a life-sized mannequin prior to performing these skills on actual patients,” shares Advanced Education Specialist Rhonda Trexler. “The ability to apply practical skills during orientation improves staff performance in real-life situations. Hands-on demonstration and practicing these skills lead to improved patient outcomes and patient safety.”

To learn more about UPMC Home Healthcare, please visit upmchomehealthcare.com. To make a donation to support patients’ needs, visit HomeNursingAgency.com or call 1-855-GIVE-HNA.



giving thanks

HEART OF GRATITUDE PROGRAM Shares Recognition, Supports Needs

Heart of Gratitude is a charitable giving program through the Home Nursing Agency Foundation that allows UPMC Home Healthcare patients and Family Hospice caregivers to make a charitable gift, along with sharing their appreciation for the staff and/or volunteers who made a considerable impact. Identified care team members are awarded a Heart of Gratitude pin, and donations are used to make a difference for future patients and caregivers in need.



Here are some recent comments from UPMC Home Healthcare patients:

“My husband’s nurse, Jamey, was very personable and fit right in with my husband and me. Each visit was timely and efficient. She made sure to explain every detail and what we should do until her next visit. We looked forward to and enjoyed every visit.” -Dorothy, Bedford County UPMC Home Healthcare caregiver

“There are not enough words to express my gratitude to the wonderful caring nurse that took care of me after I fell and broke my hip. I truly believe that without her care and compassion, I may not be here today. She knew things weren’t right with me before I did and immediately called my doctor and got me an appointment. She encouraged me every time she was here. She treated me with the greatest respect.” -Miriam, Blair County UPMC Home Healthcare patient

“The three professionals who came to my home for assessment, evaluation, and care were informative, compassionate, and true caregivers. Although their time with me was brief, they reviewed my plan of care, medications, exercise routines, and made suggestions to improve and maintain my rehabilitation. They were respectful and provided good educational info. I was quite pleased with UPMC Home Healthcare and staff.” -William, Somerset County UPMC Home Healthcare patient

giving impact

Congratulations to 2025 MERCEDES MOMENT Winners

Congratulations to Altoona residents Crist and Betty Polito, winners of the 2025 Mercedes Moment with ticket #267. As Home Nursing Agency Foundation’s signature fundraiser, Mercedes Moment raised more than \$67,000 this year. Crist and Betty were given the choice of a 2025 Mercedes CLA 250 or \$30,000 cash prize. Mercedes Moment benefits those who have needs beyond normal circumstances or require additional resources not covered by insurance. This year, the Home Nursing Agency Foundation has awarded \$187,144 in grants to directly impact the lives of Central Pennsylvania residents who are served by UPMC Home Healthcare and Family Hospice. The Home Nursing Agency Foundation supports patients and families in Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, and Somerset counties. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for the 2026 Mercedes Moment, please call 1-855-GIVE-HNA.



Saturday, October 25, 2025 • 5 PM
Blair County Convention Center, Altoona

A \$100 ticket includes ONE chance for cash prizes (need not be present to win) and admission for TWO for dinner and entertainment, along with six drink tickets. Only 250 tickets will be sold with more than \$4,500 in cash prizes, including a \$3,000 grand prize. Other exciting opportunities to win will be offered throughout the evening. All proceeds benefit the Healing Patch Children’s Grief Program.

To purchase tickets, call 1-855-GIVE-HNA, visit HomeNursingAgency.com, or scan this QR code.



Former Participant Reconnects with the **HEALING PATCH**

“Giving and receiving is a full circle: a full circle feels more natural than a half circle.”

— Laura Huxley

Tyrone resident Hollie Keller has carried her mother’s compassion, empathy, and humor since her mom’s passing in 2013. Now a junior at Penn State Altoona, Hollie was reconnected to the loving community of the Healing Patch Children’s Grief Program that helped her to navigate her grief and loss more than a decade ago.

Laughter Before Tears

Hollie was 11 years old when her mom passed away from cancer, and a few months later, she began attending the Healing Patch with her dad and two of her four siblings.

“I was scared to go at first but comforted that everyone there had lost someone,” she says. “There was something community-based about the meal that we shared. We weren’t there to just grieve and leave. When we broke out into rooms, I felt more empowered to share what I was feeling. I remember laughter before tears. I remember how gentle the volunteers were with us and that I felt at peace. It was obvious that was our space. They let us share and didn’t interject.”

Hollie has fond memories of certain Tween Room activities, such as creating a feelings mask (decorated the inside with how she felt and the outside to resemble the *Princess Protection Program*, a favorite movie at the time) and doing a balloon release. The memory bear she received continues to be a precious keepsake.

“The bear is very special to me,” Hollie says. “I picked my mom’s gardening shirt. It carries even more meaning now.”

Crossing Paths

Pursuing a degree in English with minors in sociology and entrepreneurship, Hollie is part of the esteemed Sheetz Fellows program, through which students grow their experience by partnering with local businesses and organizations. She had no idea that the Healing Patch would be the assigned project for her team last fall.



FAMILY HOSPICE

Gives Somerset County Patient Life on Her Terms

Rockwood resident LeFerne Saylor had lived more than nine decades full of family and friends when she was diagnosed with a thyroid tumor. Knowing that she wanted to live out her days in the farmhouse that she called home, her son, Richard, and daughter, Wanda, made the decision to enroll her in Family Hospice care to focus on quality of life.

As the Family Hospice team got to know LeFerne, they were able to support her in the ways that mattered most in meeting her physical and emotional needs.

“They were so good at learning her preferences,” Wanda shares. “She always liked to walk people out and stand at the window and wave as they left. The Family Hospice team learned to stop and wave and not just drive away because that mattered to her. Her volunteer, Carol [Wagner], would even put her window down so she could see better.”

Serving as LeFerne’s primary caregiver, Richard was particularly grateful for the Family Hospice team. This support enabled her to remain at home until she passed away peacefully on February 6, 2025.

“It would have been really tough without your care,” he says. “Family Hospice provided the supplies we needed, answered any



When it came time to celebrate LeFerne’s 99th birthday, the Family Hospice team made it a special day complete with flowers and pie, two of her favorite things! The team purchased a yellow rose bush and three different kinds of pie slices with funding through a Home Nursing Agency Foundation grant supporting quality of life. Those and other small touches allowed LeFerne to feel cared for and cherished.

questions that I had, and kept her comfortable. She was able to stay at the house as she wanted.”

Part of LeFerne’s legacy was maintaining a mammoth calendar of family and friends’ birthdays and phone numbers. She would celebrate her cherished loved ones by calling to share birthday songs.

“She wouldn’t just sing ‘Happy Birthday.’ She’d make up special verses,” Wanda remembers. “Her voice was strong and beautiful until last fall when the tumor grew. At the funeral, everyone talked about their special songs.”

“She was so encouraged and loved the personal attention,” Wanda explains. “I was reassured that she had someone else looking out for her.”

In gratitude for the care she received, the family chose to designate Family Hospice as a recipient of memorial donations. LeFerne’s legacy lives on, as other patients and caregivers have access to emergency funding, quality-of-life experiences, educational resources, patient supplies, bereavement support, and more.

To learn more about Family Hospice, visit upmc.com/familyhospice. To make a donation to Family Hospice, visit tiny.cc/FHmemorial or call 1-855-GIVE-HNA.

CAROL WAGNER AND LEFERNE SAYLOR



HOLLIE (THIRD FROM RIGHT) AND HER SHEETZ FELLOWS COLLEAGUES ARE PICTURED WITH HEALING PATCH STAFF (CENTER) SHALEN STEINBUGL, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR/GRIEF SPECIALIST, AND MELODY RAY, HEALING PATCH COORDINATOR, AND PENN STATE ALTOONA PROFESSOR AND HEALING PATCH VOLUNTEER DEB HOMMER (RIGHT).



“It was such a full-circle moment.
It feels amazing to give back, and I’m grateful that I was given the opportunity to do this.”



“It was such a full-circle moment,” Hollie shares. “It feels amazing to give back, and I’m grateful that I was given the opportunity to do this.”

The partnership was formed through Professor Deb Hommer, Associate Teaching Professor of Business Administration and Altoona Business Program Coordinator at Penn State Altoona. Having joined the Healing Patch volunteer team in 2022, Deb could see the potential of pairing the two programs.

“Supporting children through their grief is one of the most powerful ways to bring positive change to the world,” Deb says. “The Healing Patch’s mission aligns perfectly with the values of the Sheetz Fellows—compassion, service, and impact—making it an incredibly meaningful project for our team.”

The project took on more significance for Deb and the team, as Hollie was open about having personally attended the Healing Patch.

“Hearing Hollie’s story was incredibly moving,” Deb says. “She’s an inspiring young woman with a deep sense of purpose, and her personal connection to the Healing Patch added a powerful, emotional depth to our work. Knowing that the program helped her through her own journey made our team even more committed to raising awareness and supporting the cause. Her involvement reminded us all of the real impact this program has on individuals and families.”

The project included a Children’s Grief Awareness Month campaign in which students painted the windows of several area businesses with a message of “No child should grieve alone.”

“I have enjoyed getting to know the group in the Sheetz Fellows program who are devoted to helping the community,” Hollie shares. “We’re committed to it not because we have to be, but because it’s making a real difference. As a child, I didn’t realize how much work goes into the program. Now, I can see it takes an entire force of people.”

To stay updated, follow the Healing Patch Children’s Grief Program Facebook page. To support the free services of the Healing Patch, visit tiny.cc/healingpatchgiving or call 1-855-GIVE-HNA.

Community Foundation for the Alleghenies Gift Elevates NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP® Impact



“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

- Maya Angelou

Knowing better and doing better is the premise of Nurse-Family Partnership®, a national evidence-based program that improves outcomes for high-risk families. NFP pairs income-eligible first-time moms with an experienced RN who mentors them through pregnancy and their children’s first two years of life. The program’s success comes through education – first of nurses, then moms, then children.

A recent donor gift through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies has allowed the Cambria County Nurse-Family Partnership program to elevate educational efforts and make an even greater impact for new moms and their children. To date, this funding has provided board books for children, a special celebration for recent graduates, mileage expenses for nurses to travel to clients’ homes, nutrition classes, CPR training, and nurse education to facilitate improved parent-child interactions.

Preparing For The Unexpected

“I don’t know what I would have done without our nurse, Taylor [Deitman],” explains new mom Eleanor “Ellie” Bavey. “She walked me through what to expect through pregnancy and birth and how to be ready for my plans not to go as planned!”

Diagnosed with Atrial fibrillation (AFib) in her third trimester and delivering her daughter, Riley, via c-section, Ellie also underwent emergency surgery a short time later. Through the unexpected challenges of her pregnancy and post-partum journey, Ellie has relied on Taylor’s direction and encouragement.

“Taylor was with us the whole time,” Ellie shares. “I felt more listened to, guided, and helped by Taylor than any of our doctors. When I was concerned about Riley’s development and being behind, Taylor was the one who helped to connect us with Early Intervention.”

As Riley works toward developmental milestones, she is benefitting from board books supplied through the donor funding, and Ellie is learning through Nutrition Links and CPR classes.

“They have given me endless information, and it’s all applicable and useful for myself or Riley,” Ellie says. “We are so lucky to have this program in our area.”

Helpful In Every Way

“When I was pregnant with my daughter, Pyper, Taylor helped me with my blood pressure and taking care of myself,” shares NFP client Krystain Costlow. “When I was breastfeeding, they taught me a lot. When I had a hard time finding formula because so many were recalled, Taylor and Kathleen [Bickford, NFP Supervisor] went out of their way to find formula.”

Teaching clients and linking them to necessary resources is a valuable aspect of NFP. While the recent donor funding covered expenses to celebrate graduates, the event was also an opportunity to showcase community organizations and connect former and current clients to beneficial services. One of these was the Parents as Teachers program, which Krystain enrolled in to help guide her through teaching Pyper at home.

“Taylor and Kathleen have been helpful in every way,” Krystain says. “Anything I needed, they have helped me with.”

To learn more about Nurse-Family Partnership, visit HomeNursingAgency.com or call 1-833-315-4358.

Example pictured on opposite page: Nurse-Family Partnership® clients in Bedford and Somerset Counties have access to developmental and safety items, such as toys and an enclosed playpen, through grant funding from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. Most recently, these needs were met by the Bedford County Community Fund, Lynn and Craig Ashe Fund, and Benjamin Bosler Fund. Additional funds for these needs are provided by the United Way of the Southern Alleghenies.



TAYLOR DEITMAN, ELLIE BAVEY, AND RILEY



GRADUATION CEREMONY



NUTRITION LINKS CLASS

Former **NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP®** Client Grows Thriving Family and Business

“My baby was the first baby I ever held,” Johnstown resident Megan Heit says. “I knew nothing about being a parent, and I didn’t have a stable job.”

It was in this season that Megan found a friend and mentor in her Nurse-Family Partnership® nurse, Chrissy Anderson. Over the course of a decade, Megan’s life was transformed from a bartender to a wife, mom of three, and successful entrepreneur.

“Chrissy was kind of my only friend at the time,” Megan remembers. “I grew immensely in that time. It would have been so lonely and hard without Chrissy.”

Megan and her husband, George, welcomed a baby girl, Dandelion, in 2014. They later added a son and another daughter to their family. In the midst of this growth, Megan sought a job outside the home and saw an ad for a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor with WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). With Chrissy bolstering her confidence, Megan applied.

“She said, ‘Just go for it!’ I got hired on the spot,” Megan says. “That was a life-changing moment for me. It was a real job! It also shifted from me always needing help to being the one that others reached out to for help. I relied on Chrissy, and then I became the person others relied on.”

In 2020, Megan and George found themselves out of work and facing a “sink or swim” moment for their family. They began casting vision for a future that drew on their history of working at the bar together and their unique strengths – Megan’s love of customer service and making drinks and George’s affinity for recipe creation and the back-of-bar operations.

“We found a food cart on Craigslist for \$600, and my mom lent us money to buy it,” Megan says. “We started with the bare minimum each day and set up wherever we could go for free. Every time we went out, we did a little better. Those baby steps have transformed into what it is now.”



MEGAN HEIT AND CHRISSY ANDERSON



THE VERY FIRST LEMONADE SETUP



PURCHASING A HOT DOG CART

From those humble beginnings, the Heits have created the ROOTS Kitchen + Juicery brand, which includes locations in Johnstown and Ebensburg, along with a food truck.

“There were a lot of times in the past few years that people thought we were crazy, and now they may look at us and think we were so lucky, but we got where we are one step at a time,” Megan shares. “You can change your life around completely. You can start with nothing and believe you can do it!”

Megan reflected on her growth through Nurse-Family Partnership and encouraged recent graduates and clients as Chrissy invited her to speak at the NFP graduation event last fall.

“I talked to the moms about how hard it is to be a first-time mom. People see where we are now, but years ago, we were struggling to buy diapers,” Megan says. “I wanted them to know that you can be so far down and make the choice to keep going and believe in yourself. Thinking about it now, it was really a full-circle moment. The experience of having Chrissy look out for me and go above and beyond has inspired me to do that for others.”

To learn more about Nurse-Family Partnership, visit HomeNursingAgency.com or call 1-833-315-4358.



THE FIRST FARMERS MARKET



OPENING A SECOND ROOTS LOCATION



RECOGNIZING OUR SUPPORTERS

The generosity of community partners – individuals, businesses, local governments, and organizations – helps to ensure that our mission of providing care and services for those in need will continue.

Every dollar matters. Every gift has a story. The following donors gave gifts of \$100 or more between March 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025. Donors of all amounts can be viewed online at: tiny.cc/HNAFoundationSupporters. Thank you to the donors who have helped to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors and our communities.

We apologize for any errors or omissions to this list. Every effort is made to assure that proper information is recorded. Please call the Home Nursing Agency Foundation at 1-855-GIVE-HNA to make us aware of any corrections or changes.

**Donor is deceased.*

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HEALING PATCH Snapshots

Family Session Peer Support Groups

This February, Middles Room participants decorated broken heart puzzles and shared thoughts/ feelings related to grief and what helps piece broken hearts back together.



Community Outreach and Education

Healing Patch volunteers often represent the program at community events to share about support options for grieving children and their families. Pictured in this example are Jessica Peacock and Chrissey Wagner at the Hollidaysburg Area High School SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Wellness Fair. They are displaying a paper chain of hope and happiness compiled by students.



Patch Club In-School Group

Healing Patch Volunteer Michele Marcinko (center) joined forces with IU8 Social Worker Brandy Harpster to facilitate a fun Patch Club at Saint Michael Catholic School in Loretto. Michele read the story *How Full is Your Bucket*, which led to student discussions on their own drips and drops with an activity to address feelings, managing difficult emotions, self-awareness, and supporting others.



Flashlight Egg Hunt

More than 350 participants raced to gather 6,000 eggs at the 3rd Annual Flashlight Egg Hunt in March 2025. The event raised more than \$8,000 to benefit the Healing Patch. Many participants went home with great prizes!





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You can also call the Foundation hotline at 1-855-GIVE-HNA to donate by credit card. For more information about ways you can help, please contact Kim Helsel, Director of Development/Marketing Communications, at 814-947-7024 or khelsel@HomeNursingAgency.com.

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