



LOPEZ ISLAND
HOSPICE
& HOME
SUPPORT

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Summer 2018

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360-468-4446
admin@lihhs.org
178 Weeks Road
PO Box 747
Lopez Island WA
98261

www.lihhs.org

Lopez Island
Hospice & Home Support
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
volunteer organization.
All services are free.

Ways to Support Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support

- Donate on our website via Paypal
- Make your Amazon purchases at smile.amazon.com. .5% of the purchase price goes to LIHHS.
- Write us a check – we've included an envelope for your convenience.
- Credit card.

Many thanks for your continued generosity.

The Power of Sharing Family Stories

By Elizabeth Landrum, Ph.D.

I treasure the words a 96 year old man once said: "In the end, it all comes down to the stories you can tell." In stories live our most significant human connections, our ways of understanding ourselves, family histories, and even our values. Because stories connect the past and present to the future, cultures have always reinforced societal norms through storytelling. Narratives provide the most memorable, repeatable ways of understanding our place in the scheme of things.

Family stories bear close witness to an individual's personal experiences, giving us access to their uniqueness, to their simple truths, to what, and how, they endured. Hearing the stories of our families helps us develop understanding, compassion, and empathy for our elders, and for ourselves. It is the stories that bind us.

It's not the facts of one's life but the anecdotes contained within that life that communicate what's noticed. Whether dramatic or mundane, they are somehow telling, and worth retelling. Have you wondered about the true-life stories of people named in your genealogy search? Have you appreciated someone telling you a story about a deceased loved one? Have you treasured old letters, recordings, writings, or pictures? Repeated anecdotes heard over the family table? Regretted not asking some detail before it was too late?

When you have questions about a loved one, the answers could be just a phone call away, but that won't always be the case. The only way to guard against being left without answers is to ask those questions now. It is never too early. Ask them of your aging and younger relatives, and even ask them of yourself.

Sharing stories benefits the storyteller and the listener.

A great deal of evidence supports the notion that sharing stories is beneficial for seniors. Writing or reminiscing about their lives offers new perspectives and ways of understanding their histories. As Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support volunteers and other caregivers can attest, elders value reflecting over their life events and choices, reviewing the unique life they've led, its significance and meanings. They almost always appreciate the presence of an interested listener. For the very elderly, a chance to tell their story is powerful medicine that has been shown

to improve mental, emotional, and even physical, functioning.

Sharing stories is a gift that truly benefits all, and keeps giving. I am fortunate to own several family videotapes, including one of my father and his siblings, then in their late 80s, reminiscing during a visit to their hometown where stories flowed easily, a legacy for generations. For family members, these conversations can build and strengthen relationships. My grandmother believed she had accomplished little in her life, yet when she understood that her grandchildren wanted to hear her stories, she gained a different sense of meaning, and then enjoyed writing a book of family stories we continue to re-read. You might find that a person's unique handwriting, wording or voiceprint offers a special kind of access to their essence when they are no longer present.

There are many ways to capture, share and preserve stories.

The most obvious way to obtain stories is by having conversations, yet people often don't know where to begin. While there are no rules, there are several helpful avenues. Common advice is to start with an open-ended question or a topic that is of interest to you, then

simply have a conversation, allowing the person to take it wherever they want. Listen gently, asking questions for clarification and interest. Prompts, like a particular time, event or place, and pictures or music, can be helpful in stimulating memories. You might want to record as you talk, perhaps over a period of time.

Ways of recording have become easier, and there are hundreds of apps, websites, and digital tools that can help you question, preserve, and/or tell your story your own way. For example, "Storycorps" has produced countless projects, including "The Great Thanksgiving Listen," which encourages people to ask their elders about their lives. You can access lists of helpful questions on their website and on another site called "52stories." A different way to pass down guiding principles, memories, values, and wishes for your family's future is called the "ethical will." Practical suggestions for writing an ethical will are easily accessed online, where you can also find suggestions for recording voices on a phone or computer and organizing stories, as well as other people's experiences.

Stories make us who we are. They should not be lost. As Joan Borysenko said, "Harvest the meaning of life and pass it down to the next generation through stories."

To be a
person is to
have a story
to tell.

~ Isak Dinesen

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Summer 2018

A Talk with Grisha Krivchenia

By Nancy Ewert

Last summer I had the delight of attending a small concert by Grisha Krivchenia, which I can only describe as unforgettable. Grisha trained as a classical musician and shares his profound work of composing music with people who are reaching the end of their lives. As he unveiled each composition, he told a brief vignette about his co-creator whose story was woven with the piece. I have rarely been so moved by an evening of music. Grisha clearly is a gifted, generous young man.



In an ongoing effort to incubate more programs like *Lifesongs*, Grisha has developed *Up Close: Voices of our Elders* on San Juan Island. Up Close pairs local artists with elders in the San Juan Island community. Composers, playwrights, choreographers, and poets meet weekly with elder partners for several months. They gather stories and engage their elder-partners directly in the creation of original works, which are then performed for the public. These performances have been enormously popular, with their high-impact, simple delivery and beauty. It is clear that this model stimulates community connection, empathy and deep, soulful inter-generational exchanges.

You can share in this experience on Sunday, September 9, 4pm at Center Church, when Grisha will perform with Up Close. Guest appearance by Kip and Stanley Greenthal. By donation; proceeds go to Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support.

Eating Well is Vital

Presentation a Great Success

Following our very successful “Physical Balance is Vital” presentation, Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support presented a panel discussion concerning gaining maximum benefit from the foods you eat. Topics included how your body utilizes food and cellular health of the body (Susie Teague); the great quality and abundance of locally grown food on Lopez (Sue Roundy); and expanding access to locally grown food through Lopez Fresh and other programs (Deborah Bonnville). Other topics included “cultural bias” toward food production and consumption, and emerging research on the human microbiome. Lastly, healthy snacks and recipes were provided by Nancy Ewert.

All the attendees enjoyed the event, and more on this topic was requested. The presenters did an excellent job of blending information with some of the history and magic of Lopez. So, stay tuned as we will be presenting EATING WELL IS VITAL - PART II, November 10, 2018.

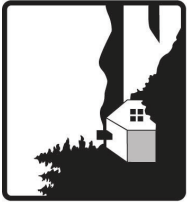
Eating Well is VITAL 2

ALL AGES WELCOME.

Saturday, November 10, 1pm at
Grace Hall. Bring your friends.

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PO Box 747
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WA 98261

178 Weeks Road
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LOCAL POSTAL PATRON

Grief Support is Always Available

After experiencing a loss of any kind, many people find it helpful to share their journey of grief with a confidential and compassionate listener. Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support offers one to four sessions, free of charge, with an experienced grief counselor in a private setting. To access this service simply request assistance with grief support by calling our office, 360-468-4446, or email admin@lihhs.org. All is held in strictest confidence.

In Concert
GRISHA KRIVCHENIA
Up Close: Stories of Our Elders
Guest Appearance by Kip & Stanley Greenthal

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 4PM
CENTER CHURCH

THE TENTH ANNUAL JINGLE BELL DINNER

We're coming up on that time of year - November 26 is the Jingle Bell Dinner at the Lopez Community Center. Break out your holiday best and plan for a festive evening with your friends and neighbors. This year is the tenth annual dinner, so look forward to some surprises! Tickets are \$70, and go on sale November 1 at Paper Scissors on the Rock. Tickets sell out quickly, so mark your calendar.

Stop by our office located at 178 Weeks Road (kitty corner from the post office) Monday through Thursday, 10am - 3pm to find out more about how Lopez Island Hospice and Home Support serves our community.

Summer 2018

More than Twenty Years of Service to the Community