



**Pro-life Healthcare Alliance**

A Program of Human Life Alliance

Dec. 12, 2016

## **PHA Monthly**

*Newsletter for the Pro-Life Healthcare Alliance  
Thirty-sixth Edition*

Welcome to the thirty-sixth edition of PHA Monthly, the e-newsletter for the Pro-life Healthcare Alliance. This newsletter provides another opportunity for the PHA to share pro-life information about current healthcare issues, PHA events, contributions from members and other relevant information.

Please share your ideas and suggestions with us.

Visit our website at [www.prolifehealthcare.org](http://www.prolifehealthcare.org) for more information.

### **PRO-LIFE HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE MISSION STATEMENT**

Promoting and developing concrete "pro-life healthcare"\* alternatives and advocating for those facing the grave consequences of healthcare rationing and unethical practices, especially those at risk of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

\*"Pro-life healthcare" means medical care in which the life and safety of each person comes first, where each person receives medical care across their lifespan based on their need for care, regardless of their abilities or perceived "quality of life."

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Julie Grimstad



This is a unique edition of the PHA Monthly -- all good news. You will be introduced to Prenatal Partners for Life, an exceptional organization that lovingly supports families who have a child--either preborn or born--with special needs, health issues, or a life limiting condition. Also, as our Christmas gift to you, our readers, the Pro-life Healthcare Alliance is delighted to present tributes to two extraordinary people--little Peter Kellett and elderly Mary Jones. We guarantee these touching remembrances will enchant and inspire you and, finally, there is even some good news on the assisted suicide front.

Merry Christmas!

## In memory of Mary Jones

By Allison Wiggins



Hospice Austin assigned a patient to me in early 1990. Mary Jones was an African American in her late sixties who had breast cancer and metastatic disease. She lived in poverty in East Austin. My hospice director said, "Mary needs a dream weaver. Her dreams are many before she dies. Interested?" "You bet," I replied.

My first phone call to Mary revealed what my director meant. Me: "Hi Mary. I'm Allison and I have been given the pleasure of being your hospice counselor. I would like to come see you tomorrow." Mary: "Are you a white person?" Me: "Well, it just so happens I am." Mary: "Good! All white people know how to needlepoint and I want to learn that before I die." I knew immediately I was in for a wonderful ride with Mary Jones!

As predicted, our first meeting was all about needlepointing. I brought all the materials needed for her to learn and she was very much a quick study. She was needlepointing pillows in no time. Also, we discovered that we shared a love of movies. Mary was still able to get out, so we attended many matinees.

The inevitable questions start to arise with patients who have not realized all their dreams. "What can I do for you, Mary, to weave these dreams you have?"

First, there were the estranged children from several marriages. Helping to mend strained family relationships is never an easy task for a hospice worker, but a much needed one. Slowly, the grown children came one by one and all were reconciled, save the one son incarcerated in Texas. More on that later.

One day, wistfully, Mary said, "I wish I had gotten my high school diploma. I am such a bad example to my grandchildren." I asked, "What's stopping you, Mary? Would you like to study for the exam

and take it? I can arrange that." (I knew it would take a lot of strings to be pulled, but it would be worth the effort.) Mary was delighted to make the attempt--never mind that she was on morphine and concentration was in short supply for her. When I left that day, I contacted the State of Texas GED Board. When I told them Mary's story, they were very discouraging and asked some hard questions. How, when and where this could happen? How would someone, 50 years past high school, do this with painkillers on board? I replied, "Just set up a meeting for me and let's see what we can do for her. It's a good public relations opportunity for the GED and I will make sure we have media coverage." These must have been magic words as everything started rolling. Private tutors were arranged to come to Mary's home. A pretest was scheduled. Then more tutoring as her pretest scores were not going to get her a diploma.

To the credit of the State of Texas, I had been told up front that a GED is not something passed out in sympathy for the dying. Mary would have to pass the test. With many prayers, the day came for the exam. The examiners arrived at Mary's home. I paced the floors like a parent! After two hours, the testing team left and said we would hear from them in a few weeks. "What? A few weeks? We don't have that much time!" I protested. They looked at each other, apparently wondering, "What ELSE is Allison Wiggins expecting us to do? Now we have to rush the test results?" With a pleading look from me, they said, "Okay. Okay. We will hand grade it." In three days, we received the joyous news that Mary had a passing score and she was set to receive her diploma.

Mary wanted to be able to speak publicly after receiving her diploma, so I arranged, through the generosity of a local hotel in Austin, to have a media gathering for a wine and cheese party to witness the award of her GED. The event was telecast on the evening news. It was quite a party with some board members of Hospice Austin in attendance. A few people from the Austin Board of Education attended and spoke about the importance of the GED no matter a person's age. Mary, by this time in a wheelchair, was still able to speak clearly and passionately about staying in school and the value of a high school diploma. TV reporters gathered around her for questions, making her feel so special. What a glorious night!

There was still one more dream to be woven--the illusive dream of Mary's reconciliation with her son in prison. She could not travel to see him, so I needed to get him out of prison before her death, which was no longer in the distant future. I decided to call in a very big favor from an Austin District Judge I'd worked for in the past. I told him I needed Mary's son to come to her home before she died. After a long silence, he asked, "Do you have any idea what you are asking?" I told him I did and that I would be "much beholden" if he would arrange it. State troopers would have to escort Mary's son (and be paid for that). He could not be unshackled during the visit and it would not be longer than two hours. Then the judge said, and I will never forget this, "Allison, I am praying to God right now that this prisoner is not incarcerated for a parole violation. Please tell me he isn't." I said, "I am so sorry, Judge, but he is. Is it still ok?" He replied, "Just don't ever ask me for anything again." "Well," I stated, "I would really like it if her son also could come to her funeral." All I heard was, "Allison!" But, in the end, he allowed the son to leave prison for the funeral. Thank you, Judge!

In the last days, Mary felt at peace with the dreams she had woven and let me be a part of. All was well. With her children (minus her son in prison) and grandchildren around her, she died peacefully. She was a very good friend. My life was made better for my time with this woman who embodied so many virtues.

As all hospice workers know, we are often called upon to arrange and help plan funerals, which I did in this case. The local TV station was there to cover Mary's funeral in the continuing story of her GED. I spoke with the reporters for the recorded news segment that evening and then took my seat with the family in a packed church. Her son was there, through the kindness of the judge. He was allowed to wear a suit, his handcuffs covered and his feet unshackled. It was a joy to all the family.

But Mary would not be buried without one more surprise for me. The minister spoke, as did some of the grandchildren. Imagine my shock when the minister said, "And now, Allison Wiggins will give the eulogy." In a week of planning and talking to the funeral home, no one EVER mentioned that I would speak. I had not yet even looked at the program, but there it was! My name. Every face in the church seemed to turn to look at me. I thought to myself, "Ok Mary, let's do this." We had such a wonderful few months together that the words came easily and tears flowed in the church.

Mary did not waste a day of her last months. She was always a good example to others. Perseverance, bravery, tenacity, hope, faith and love. I can truly say, "In Mary Jones, all these virtues did truly reside."

*Allison Wiggins was raised in Norman, Oklahoma. In 1993, she moved to Austin, Texas to pursue a degree in psychology. She is a speaker and lecturer on family counseling issues, volunteerism, and many other topics. From 1986 to 1989, Allison was a volunteer counselor and fundraiser for Hospice Austin. From 1990 to 1994, she had a private practice in Marriage and Family counseling in Austin. She retired in 1994 and moved to Corpus Christi where she worked as a full time volunteer for Catholic Charities. In 1999, Allison moved to San Antonio to be a full time grandmother and parish volunteer. She attends Our Lady of the Atonement Catholic Church. Allison is married to Robert Wiggins, M.D. They have one daughter, Elizabeth, and a granddaughter, Lily.*

## PRESENTING A PHA PARTNER **PRENATAL PARTNERS FOR LIFE**

Prenatal Partners for Life (PPFL) was founded 10 years ago by Mary Kellett, who also is a founding member of the Pro-life Healthcare Alliance. Mary was inspired by her son Peter, who had Trisomy 18, to form an organization dedicated to providing families, either expecting or those who have had a child with special needs, health issues, or a life limiting condition, the support, information, and encouragement they need to make informed decisions involving their child's care.



PPFL believes these children are a unique gift from God and have a special purpose in life that only they can fulfill; that these children are made in God's image and that He has a plan and a purpose for every life He creates, no matter how long or short; and that these precious children are a blessing to their families, their communities, and the world.

The goal of PPFL is to provide honest, practical information and support by linking expectant parents or new parents with other parents who have had the same or a similar diagnosis for their child. PPFL strives to educate the world about the unique blessing these children are. Mary Kellett calls them "Teachers of Our Souls."

The support PPFL provides can be given in person, over the phone, by email, or in written correspondence and may include a variety of practical support that is based on each family's individual needs. PPFL has helped families in every state and in 46 countries!

Mary's daughter, Christine Hunt, composed a beautiful tribute to her brother Peter which was featured in The Newsletter for Prenatal Partners for Life Fall 2016. "A Sibling's Perspective" is a gentle reminder of the preciousness of every child as we celebrate the birth of God's own Son, another Mary's child.

### **A Sibling's Perspective**

They say the best gift a parent can give to their child is a sibling. I believe this is especially true when it comes to the gift of a sibling with special needs. I say this because of firsthand experience. To put it simply: having a brother with special needs gave me new eyes and a new heart. With these new eyes I can more easily see and appreciate the beauty and dignity of every life. With this new heart I am quicker to feel a deeper level of compassion for others. How could a little boy, who couldn't walk or talk, teach a young woman these lifelong lessons in his short life span?

Gently, quietly, beautifully...just like the child Jesus in Bethlehem.

You and I know that this noisy and fast paced world doesn't often appreciate people who are differently-abled. They are deemed as an inconvenience. This breaks my heart because I know better.

Were there unique challenges and sufferings with having a sibling with special needs? Yes, to be honest, there were. However, every moment with Peter felt like it was drenched in grace. Every difficulty bore such beautiful fruit. Every ordinary day had something extraordinary in store for us. The incredible joy he brought our family far outweighs any amount of suffering. Peter gave us a glimpse of Heaven that we won't soon forget.

~ Christine Hunt

To learn more about Prenatal Partners for Life and how you can support their work:

[WWW.PRENATALPARTNERSFORLIFE.ORG](http://WWW.PRENATALPARTNERSFORLIFE.ORG)

## Ohio Passes Bill Making Assisted Suicide a Felony

By Alex Schadenberg  
Executive Director  
Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

Great news: The Ohio Senate passed HB 470.

Ohio has become the fifth state in the past few years to strengthen protections in law from assisted suicide.

The Ohio Senate voted on House Bill 470, a bill that would make assisting a suicide a felony in Ohio on Thursday, December 8. HB 470 had previously passed in the Ohio House last May by a vote of 92-5.

Jeremy Pelzer, [reported for Cleveland.com](#) on November 7 before the vote that:

[House Bill 470](#) ... would make knowingly assisting in a suicide a third-degree felony in Ohio, punishable by up to five years in prison.

Currently, [Ohio law](#) only permits a court to issue an injunction against anyone helping other people to kill themselves.

If the Senate passes the bill on Thursday - expected to be the last day of the legislative session - it would head to Gov. John Kasich for his signature. The measure passed the Ohio House 92-5 last May.

State Sen. Bill Seitz, the Cincinnati Republican who authored HB 470, said the legislation mirrors Michigan's 1998 ban on assisted suicide, which was passed in response to Dr. Jack Kevorkian's well-publicized campaign.

In the past few years [Georgia](#), [Idaho](#), [Louisiana](#), and [Arizona](#) have passed bills to strengthen protection from assisted suicide.

<http://alexschadenberg.blogspot.ca/2016/12/ohio-considering-bill-to-make-assisted.html>

### TAKE ACTION

In spite of heroic and persistent efforts made by pro-life organizations and individuals, the stark reality is that the healthcare system itself has become an ever-increasing threat to the well-being and lives of the preborn, the young, the old and the disabled and ailing of any age. The PHA is dedicated to renewing reverence for life within healthcare. For some excellent information about current and historical issues regarding abortion, contraception, euthanasia, stealth euthanasia, hospice, advance directives and other pertinent topics, please check out these resources.

[Texas Right to Life](https://www.texasrighttolife.com/) <https://www.texasrighttolife.com/>

[Pro-life Healthcare Alliance](http://www.prolifehealthcare.org/) <http://www.prolifehealthcare.org/>

[Hospice Patient's Alliance](http://www.hospicepatients.org/) <http://www.hospicepatients.org/>

[Euthanasia Prevention Coalition](http://alexschadenberg.blogspot.com/) <http://alexschadenberg.blogspot.com/>

[Patient's Rights Council](http://www.patientsrightscouncil.org/site/) <http://www.patientsrightscouncil.org/site/>

[Prenatal Partners for Life](http://www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org/) <http://www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org/>

[Pro Life Wisconsin](https://www.prolifewi.org/) <https://www.prolifewi.org/>

[American Life League](http://www.all.org/) <http://www.all.org/>

[Read Stealth Euthanasia: Health Care Tyranny in America by Ron Panzer](http://www.hospicepatients.org/this-thing-called-hospice.html)

<http://www.hospicepatients.org/this-thing-called-hospice.html>

The Pro-life Healthcare Alliance needs your support. The suggested PHA membership donation is \$25 per year. Please renew your membership or join today. Be a part of this vitally important work and help the PHA continue and grow.

Pray for renewal of reverence for life. In particular we have designated Thursday as a special day of prayer for the mission of the PHA.

STAY CONNECTED



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a program of [Human Life Alliance](#)  
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