



Taking Care of Dad: The Value of Compassionate, Supportive End-of-Life Care

The care we receive at the end of life is incredibly important. While healthcare at that time may not be intended to be life-saving, it is supportive, compassionate and emotionally healing. Renée Bittner and her family experienced that kind of care this winter when her father Edward Bass passed away at NMC.

“He was so well taken care of,” said Renée who lives in Georgia. “The care that my dad got was very compassionate and very kind.” The level of kindness at such a difficult time struck her as above and beyond, and encouraged her to reach out and thank the staff in NMC’s inpatient care units including Doctors, Nurses, Concierges, the Restaurant and Catering team and many more.

Her father had been diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2015, and following the diagnosis decided to live out his last years as joyfully as possible, including taking a special trip to Honolulu after the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. The trip was special because it was after that attack in 1941 that he joined the United States Marine Corps. Edward saw action against the Japanese in the South Pacific Islands including New Guinea, New Britain, Peleliu, and Okinawa, and he was on Okinawa when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

A month after he returned from his trip, doctors removed his kidney. In early December, Ed found that his cancer had grown and spread. After a time he decided to come to live with his daughter Renée, moving to Georgia in mid-December.

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Pictured: Edward Bass visiting Honolulu in 2015.



Compassionate Care
{we do that here}

NMC publishes Insights on a bimonthly basis to help our neighbors have a better understanding of their primary care hospital. If you have questions or comments about this publication, please email insights@nmcinc.org or call our Community Relations Office at 524-1280.

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Mark Your Calendars for this Spring's Scholarship Dinner!

This year's Health Professions Scholarship Dinner is slated for Wednesday, May 23 at the Tyler Place Family Resort in Highgate.

Each spring, NMC hosts the annual Scholarship Dinner as the primary fundraising event to benefit the Martin H. Wennar, MD, Health Education Fund. Consider joining us for this black-tie optional event which supports high quality healthcare in our community.

The dinner provides the opportunity to award scholarships to high school seniors from Franklin County High Schools who are entering collegiate study in a health care field.

This scholarship is not based on financial need but rather awarded based on a student's academic performance and community service.

The fund began as the NMC Health Professions Scholarship, established in 1987. In 2003, the fund was renamed and dedicated to Dr. Martin Wennar, a retired general surgeon who passed away in August 2009 following a battle with pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Wennar and former NMC Chief Financial Officer Peter Georgeopoulos initiated the fund and its rededication honored Wennar's long-standing commitment to encouraging health professions.

The event includes a cocktail hour in the lovely reception space at the Tyler Place, a guest speaker and dinner. Tickets are \$60 per person.

To purchase a ticket, contact Kate Laddison, Community Relations Specialist, at 524-1239 or email kladdison@nmcinc.org.



We Want to Hear From You

NMC cares about the quality of your experience hospital stay. We care that you had a clean and quiet setting; that your care providers were courteous and listened carefully to you, and that you received the information you needed in order to care for yourself when you left. Because we care, NMC leaders are talking with patients every day about their stay. This feedback process is referred to as rounding.

As an extension of patient rounding, we also send out a survey that provides us with valuable feedback regarding your stay. We want to hear from you so that we can continue to provide exceptional care and address any opportunities that arise. Please take a moment to fill out the survey and provide us with your insights.

Thank you!

ENT Services Coming this Summer

Northwestern Medical Center is excited to announce the creation of a new practice – Northwestern Ear, Nose and Throat – slated to open this coming summer. The new practice fills a community need as there are currently no ear, nose and throat (ENT) providers actively practicing in Franklin or Grand Isle Counties.

Patients seeking services from an otolaryngologist must travel for their care, and NMC is pleased to be able to offer services closer to home. The otolaryngology specialty provides care for a wide and varied range of medical and surgical conditions ranging from hearing loss to speech issues and sinus disorders.

Some of the more common adult and pediatric conditions treated by ENT's include chronic ear disease and ear infections, tonsillitis, sleep apnea, facial trauma and management of neck masses, among others.

Northwestern Ear, Nose and Throat will be located in Doctors Office Commons on NMC's campus with an anticipated opening date in early summer.

For more information about this new practice, call Community Relations at 802-524-1280.



(Continued from cover)

Bass' health took a turn for the worse during the holidays and on New Year's Day, Renée found herself calling for hospice help and struggling to manage her dad's pain. It was a difficult situation as she and her family had anticipated having more time with him and caring for him at home through the end of his life.

"For the first time it really hit me," she said. "He might be dying quicker than I ever thought."

She contacted her sister Marceline and asked her to come to Vermont to be with their 95-year-old father. She called an ambulance and Edward was transported in the bitter cold to the Emergency Department, eventually being admitted to NMC's Progressive Care Unit with intensive care.

There, Ed was able to spend his last days with his two daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren before passing away on January 5.

Renée said the small thoughtful touches and respectful attention she and her family received at NMC during this time made a big impact. A coffee station was brought to Edward's room so that visitors could stay nearby and not make what felt like a long trip to the Café.

A staffer mentioned the hospital's comfort quilt program and "Before you know it, there is this beautiful quilt lying on my dad's bed," said Bittner describing the blue and green handmade quilt as making her father's eyes sparkle.

Later, Renée got to meet Volunteer Bonnie Evans who makes many of the Comfort Quilts and organizes the program for NMC. Bonnie was volunteering in the hospital's lobby, and Renée thanked her in person.

Speaking with an LNA, Renée discovered that the nurse knew her father had been an electrician. While Ed had become very quiet, the nurse was able to coax out this information during his bath, making Renée realize that he was connected and comfortable with his caregivers – an enormous relief to her. "The nursing staff was excellent, they were his heroes!" said Bittner. "They were kind and compassionate to my dad and all of us. They stayed on top of his

pain and were quick to respond to any request. It was such a relief that he didn't suffer in his last days."

The family was able to stay at NMC and even sleep in the room, with chairs that lay flat and sheets and blankets provided. The care team was respectful and always asked if there was anything more needed.

"These are the things that make such a huge difference," she said of all the small gestures and comfort. "People are in a very sad time of their lives. I just felt like it was comforting and these things do matter."

Renee and Marceline were so appreciative that before they even left the hospital they decided that they would make a donation to NMC's Tree of Life program in support of comfort measures at the hospital.

Nothing takes away the struggle and turmoil of end-of-life decisions, especially for family as close as Renee, Marceline and the rest of the family. But compassionate care makes it possible for families to focus on their loved one in those important last days and hours.

"It's hard to thank people enough," said Renee, "For that extra measure of care and compassion. We are very thankful."

"The nursing staff was excellent, they were his heroes! They were kind and compassionate to my dad and all of us. They stayed on top of his pain and were quick to respond to any request."

— Edward Bass's daughter, Renée, describing her father's caregivers.

Giving Back

The Tree of Life is a beautiful maple tree sculpture in NMC's hospital entrance lobby. It is a striking piece of art which displays the names of major donors and those who have been honored by major gifts.

The tree's hand-carved maple trunk and branches display 300 engraveable brass leaves and twelve engraveable stones.

For more information about NMC's Tree of Life program, Contact Jeff Moreau, Director of Development at 524-8467.

INSIGHTS TO HEALTH

Your guide to local healthy programs, classes, and more!



Cancer Exercise Rehab Group

Ongoing Every Tuesday and Thursday
8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

This class pinpoints the common needs of patients, which include decreased range of motion, decreased strength, and cancer-related fatigue. Note: A physical therapy evaluation is required to assure that the client is able to participate.

Featuring: Wendy Lawrence, certified NMC Oncology Rehab Physical Therapist

Location: NMC Rehab gym, Cobblestone Building

Pre-registration required: Call 524-1064.

Fee: Free for the first eight weeks, then \$40

AARP Smart Driver Course

Friday, April 20 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

This four-hour refresher course is open to all drivers 50 years and older. The curriculum addresses the normal physical changes brought on by the aging process, how these changes can affect driving ability and then offers ways to compensate for those changes. The course also addresses changes in vehicles, regulations and roads. Participants will also learn how to interact with other road users, including truckers, bikers, pedestrians, and distracted drivers.

Speaker: Doug Masson, AARP instructor

Location: NMC's Green Mountain Room

Pre-registration required: Call Doug at 644-8310.

Fee: \$15 for AARP members, \$20 for non-members

Breastfeeding and You

Wednesday, May 16 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Location: NMC, Family Birth Center Conference Room

Welcome to the Department of Health's FREE Breastfeeding Prep Class for you, family members, and other moms-to-be to plan for breastfeeding your newborn in the first month of life. Personalize your breastfeeding plan, line up your support, go over the basics, ask questions, and get real-life answers. You can do it, WIC can help!

Registration required: Call 524-7971.



Featured Program

Tobacco Cessation Class

Tuesdays, May 1-22 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

Join others for this four session series to help you successfully quit smoking. Sessions include: understanding why you have an addiction and how to quit; mastering the first few days, mastering obstacles; and staying smoke-free and enjoying it forever. As a Vermont resident, you can get free patches, gum, and lozenges.

Location: Enosburgh Emergency Services Building

Pre-registration Required: Call Chari at 524-8480.

Prenatal Fitness

Ongoing Every Wednesday 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Northwestern OB/GYN offers these free prenatal exercise sessions to strengthen and prepare you for a successful birthing experience. Join other moms as we lead you through a customized routine designed to make you feel energized and confident. Please consult a physician before beginning this exercise program.

Featuring: Stephanie Preedom, AFAA

Location: NMC Wellness & Fitness Room

Pre-registration required: Call 288-1141 or email stephanie.preedom@gmail.com.

Fee: Free to Northwestern OB/GYN patients

Heart Healthy Classes - Nutrition

Wednesday, April 18 10:30 to 11:00 a.m.

This class discusses nutrition and meal planning guidelines to promote behavioral change for weight, cholesterol and blood pressure management.

Location: Cobblestone Health Commons Cardiac Rehab Gym

Registration required: Call 524-8849.

Movement for Parkinson's Disease

Friday, April 20 and Friday, May 18
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Offered for people with Parkinson's disease and their care partners, this dance class is designed to engage participants' minds and bodies through many styles of dance, while exploring stretching, muscle strengthening, postural stability, and rhythm through instruction and energizing music. The class is offered in a relaxed social environment that emphasizes enjoyment, fun and creativity, with an eye towards connecting with the community. No dance experience required. No charge, but donations are appreciated.

Location: Homestead at Pillsbury Manor

Registration and information: Please call 881-9673. You may also email Sarah at saramcm28@gmail.com, or Patty at patrica_rugg18@comcast.net.

Parkinson's Support Group

Tuesday, May 8 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

This group is open to those with Parkinson's, their caregivers, family and loved ones. The monthly meetings provide an open forum to share experience with others who are coping with Parkinson's disease, gaining education and support. Meetings will be held There is wheelchair accessibility.

(This month: Group Discussion)

Location: Conference room next to the library on the first floor of the Pillsbury Senior Community at 3 Harborview Drive, St. Albans

Pre-registration is not required. For information, call Pat at 524-5520 or Judy at 895-2312.