

The road ahead

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE NEWS AND INFORMATION



RIC MASTEN: A PERSONAL STORY



Just a few weeks before he passed away, poet Ric Masten pondered the many roles he'd played throughout his 78 years: writer, artist, minister, actor, singer, songwriter, carpenter, and publisher.

"You learn to cut away all those things you thought you were. That's what I learned from hospice," said Masten in an interview given shortly before losing his nine-year fight with prostate cancer on May 9.

Hospice of the Central Coast provided home care to Masten and his family beginning in early March. The services Hospice provided enabled Masten to die surrounded by family in the home he built himself more than 40 years ago south of Carmel.

Masten used his battle with cancer to inspire and encourage others around the world. He documented every step of the journey after being diagnosed in 1999 on his web site, www.ric-masten.net. He also made appearances across the United States, reading his poetry and meeting with other "cancer combatants," as he called them. He became known as "the poet laureate of prostate cancer."

Masten's poetry was sometimes playful, sometimes philosophical. His life, illness, and thoughts about his impending death will be shared in his final book of poetry, "Going Out Dancing,"

to be published later this year by Skinner House Books.

He never claimed to have all the answers, but he did discover a new sense of peace and joy in his final weeks.

During that time, he and other members of his family developed strong friendships with hospice nurse Matt Walbeck and home health aide Jim Harvey.

The hospice services were particularly helpful for Masten's daughter, Jerri Masten Hansen, the primary caregiver for her father and her mother, Billie Barbara, who has dementia.

"It made my job a whole lot better," said Hansen, who lives next door to her parents' home. As her father lost strength, taking him to the doctor became progressively difficult, and their remote location — up a series of winding roads halfway between Carmel and Big Sur — made travel challenging.

Having home care enabled Masten to save his energy for spending precious time with loved ones in his final days. Some of his last writings focused on appreciating the time he had left.

"I'm left with who I truly am — just Ric, a human being who happens to have cancer, and who knows what is really important is to love my family and friends."

ENDLINE

(dedicated to Jim Fulks)

I've always been
a yin/yang, life/death, up/down,
clear/blur, front/back — kind of guy
my own peculiar duality being
philosopher slash hypochondriac
win win characteristics
when you've been diagnosed
with advanced prostate cancer

finally the hypochondriac
has more than windmills to tilt with
the philosopher armed
with exactly the proper petard
an explosive statement
found in an e-mail message
beneath the signature
of a cancer survivor's name
a perfect endline wily and wise

Quote: I ask God:

"How much time do I have
before I die?"

"Enough to make a difference!"

God replies.

— Ric Masten



PALLIATIVE CARE

When Community Hospital began its Palliative Medicine Consult Service in September 2001, fewer than 25 percent of all hospitals nationwide had a palliative care program.

Since it was formed, the team has received nearly 2,000 requests for consultations. Palliative care is designed to prevent and relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, regardless of the stage of the disease or the need for other therapies. It is both a philosophy of care and a system for delivering that care, and serves to guide and assist patients and their families in making decisions that allow them to reach their goals.

PALLIATIVE CARE CAN HELP WITH:

- Pain and symptom management
- Emotional and spiritual support
- Support for loved ones and caregivers
- Coordination of care between patients, families, doctors, and other healthcare providers
- Referrals to outside services such as rehabilitation and hospice
- Advance-care planning to assist in making informed decisions about life-sustaining and life-extending treatment
- Assistance with care needed once patients leave the hospital
- Support with end-of-life decisions

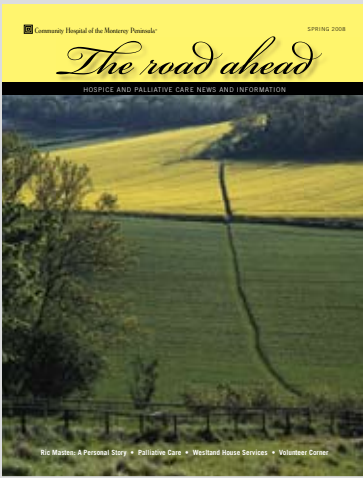
Patients are referred to the service by their physician. A Palliative Medicine Consult nurse is available 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, please call **649-7750**.

WESTLAND HOUSE OFFERS HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES

SKILLED NURSING — For patients who have completed their hospital stay but aren't quite ready to return home. This interim care promotes independence and confidence for these patients once they're home.

HOSPICE — Around-the-clock, end-of-life care, including pain management and emotional support, for patients and their families who are faced with a terminal illness. This service is for patients enrolled in Hospice of the Central Coast or another local hospice program who can't be cared for at home.

REHABILITATION CARE — Physical, occupational, and speech therapy designed for patients recovering from surgery — such as hip replacement — to provide maximum independence and improvement in daily living skills.



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HOSPICE OF THE CENTRAL COAST

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is published by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula's Hospice of the Central Coast. The information in this newsletter is intended to educate readers about hospice services, palliative medicine, the Community Health and Hospice Resource Center, and other services offered by Community Hospital. If you wish to have your name added or removed from this mailing list, or if you have comments or suggestions about this newsletter, please call 649-7750.

VOLUNTEER CORNER



These certified massage therapists donate their time and expertise to enhance the quality of life for our patients and their families. From left: Margot Tegtmeier, Daura Palmer, Joni Hoskins, and Jim McLean.

Resource Line for Grief and Loss

(831) 622-2745 or
toll-free **(888) 985-0550**

This referral service can assist in finding grief support groups, counseling services, professional therapists, and help for individuals and families. The resource line is available Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

