

# Voice of Tara Home

## Compassionate end of life care November 2011 Newsletter

www.tarahome.org

5800 Prescott Road, Soquel, CA 95073

831-477-7750



FPMT North American Regional Meeting  
Photo: Rosanne Hebert

The recent FPMT\* North American Regional conference in Vermont offered a lovely opportunity to network with others providing valuable community service. The end-of-life companionship that Tara Home offers garnered great interest as a critical component to maintaining the fabric of culture, and dignity of the intimate experience of death.

Palliative care is a direct expression of the goodness-of-heart long sustained by volunteers of all faiths and socio-economic backgrounds. The ancient ideals of hospice – providing shelter and rest for the sick and weary, have made their way into the modern era not without challenges: humanistic end-of-life care met stumbling blocks as early 20<sup>th</sup> Century advances in medicine projected shame and feelings of failure onto the fact of dying. In hospitals, there became a perceived conflict-of-interest that patients might actually die from a terminal disease!

With the founding of St. Christopher's Hospice in London by Cicely Sanders (1967), and education on palliative care in the U.S. beginning with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' seminal book, *On Death and Dying* (1969), we have preserved and expanded the philosophy of compassionate end of life care to include: a. home care, when possible, over institutional care, b. respect for patient choice in care, c. psycho-spiritual support, and d. upholding patient dignity during the dying process.

It is very important to die with loving-kindness in the mind. Specifically, our Spiritual Director, Lama Zopa advises: During an illness, the main thing is to take care of the dying person's mind...such people can die

peacefully, happily, and confidently, without fear, worry, or doubt, knowing that they are going to a better place where they can be of more benefit for mankind, for other living beings. \*\*

Tara Home is grateful to be able to offer a safe environment in which to develop such a peaceful mind. We host a range of end-of-life services: a home, compassionate care, and public education.. We look forward to assisting many other developing outreach programs throughout the U.S., ensuring service for all who seek shelter and peace of mind during the tender process of letting go.

Nicole MacArgel  
Director

\*Foundation of the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition.

\*\*from [Caring for The Dying](#): A collection of advice for FPMT Hospice Services From Lama Zopa Rinpoche, December 2002, updated June 2004. [www.FPMT.org](http://www.FPMT.org)

### Tara Home Fall Volunteer Training

Tara Home hosted a one-day training for new volunteers on Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. We were pleased to train another exceptional group of individuals with diverse experience and beneficial skills. In addition, over the last six months Tara Home has been fortunate to welcome several Cabrillo College nursing graduates and current students who bring both knowledge of and comfort with compassionate bedside care. We plan to continue more frequent condensed training sessions to accommodate volunteering interests throughout the year.

The success of this training was a collaborative effort in planning, managing, and facilitating the event. I wish to thank each dedicated Tara Home "family" member for their participation.

We currently have several referrals for residents. The Steering Committee is very grateful for this new group of volunteers to help support shift coverage when the time for action falls upon us.

Submitted by Cybele Lolley, Co-Director



Affiliated with the Foundation for the  
Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

## **Ripped from the headlines...Lunging humpback whales nearly swallow up surfer, kayakers...**

Eager spectators paddled out to watch pods of humpback whales as they fed on anchovies unusually close to shore. Neat huh? Until you discover that the one of the yakers is our very own Neil Christopherson!

As Neil describes these amazing sightings: "This led certain crazies into their kayaks to go watch up close... All I can say is the experience was magical, and did not feel all that dangerous. I guess I trust whales more than bad drivers." From the video link below, it looks like they are being eaten alive.



<http://www.grindtv.com/outdoor/blog/30915/lunging+humpback+whale+nearly+swallows+up+surfer+kayaker/> “

### **The Cab Ride**

That evening, I arrived at an address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes I walked to the door and knocked. 'Just a minute', answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor.

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters.

'Would you carry my bag out to the car?' she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, and then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness. 'It's nothing', I told her, 'I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated.'

'Oh, you're such a good boy, she said. When we got into the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, 'Could you drive through downtown?' 'It's not the shortest way,' I answered quickly. 'Oh, I don't mind,' she said. 'I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice. '

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. 'I don't have any family left,' she continued in a soft voice. 'The doctor says I don't have very long.' I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. For the next

two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, 'I'm tired. Let's go now'. We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

'How much do I owe you?' She asked, reaching into her purse. 'Nothing,' I said. 'You have to make a living,' she answered. 'There are other passengers,' I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. 'You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,' she said. 'Thank you.' I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware-beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one. People may not remember exactly what you did or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here we might as well dance.

Anonymous story  
shared by our dear friend Marsha Clark

### **Tara Home Steering Committee**

Nicole MacArgel, Director  
Cybele Lolley MFT, Co-Director  
Neil Christopherson, Volunteer Scheduler  
Majel Jordan, Operations  
Alicia Kennedy R.N., Admissions  
Rama Khalsa Ph.D, Outreach  
Lennie Kronisch RN, MS, Founder  
Truus Philipsen, Finance Chair  
Renee Robison MSW, Admissions