Impact of End of Life Washington (EOLWA), 1/1/15 - to Date:

- 42 Volunteer Support Advisors and Volunteer Medical Advisors gave 4,825 hours of support to clients.
  - 93% of Washington residents choosing Death with Dignity were assisted by an EOLWA volunteer.
  - 860 terminally ill clients were assisted by EOLWA volunteers.
  - 255 clients chose to hasten their death using the Death with Dignity Law.
- 22 Advance Planning Seminars and 148 presentations were given statewide.
- 5,100 EOLWA packets were distributed around the state.
- 25 EOLWA Volunteer public speakers are available for education events.
- 86% of EOLWA funding ($495,381) in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, came from individual donors.

End of Life Washington is the only agency offering unbiased advocacy for terminally ill Washington residents and their loved ones for the full range of end-of-life choices. Our services are always given without charge. All of this is available utilizing only a few paid staff and a large cadre of dedicated volunteers.

Because our mission is considered controversial, we receive no government or corporate grants, and limited foundation funding. We depend heavily on the many individuals who believe passionately that end of life choice is a right.

Wont you support our work? Thank you!

We’ve been busy at End of Life Washington since our name change in October of 2015 as we continue to evolve in exciting directions.

On December 1 of 2015, after ten months as Community Education Director, I assumed the Interim Executive Director position, which was made permanent in March. It is a privilege to lead End of Life Washington in our efforts to steward the Death with Dignity law and educate about end of life choice.

I am joined by three dedicated, talented staff members: Beth Glennon, our Director of Client Support, oversees forty Volunteer Medical Advisors who serve countless families throughout our state as they seek information on end of life choices and consider the Death with Dignity Act. Luke Volkman, our Office Manager since December of 2015, is that friendly voice you’ll hear at the other end of the line when you call our office for any number of services. Kathy Sparkman, our new Development Director, hit the pavement running on March 1 and has made impressive progress with fundraising and major gifts acquisition. Our speakers’ bureau, comprised of six skilled presenters who travel Washington State, respond to the many requests we receive for education on end of life considerations.

Our Board of Directors is under new leadership as well. After three years as our inspired and inspiring president, Kay Longhi welcomed a new slate of board officers: Bob Free, Esq., was elected as our new president, Jordan Posamentier, Esq., serves as our vice-president, Rachel Schachter has taken on the duties of board secretary. Terry Barnett, Esq., former EOLWA board president, has assumed the role of treasurer, and longtime board member, Arline Hinckley, represents the Client Support Program. There seems to be no end to the energy and dedication of the EOLWA board.

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After eight years as our effective advocate in Olympia, Kate White Tutor, Esq., handed the lobbyist reins to Nancy Sapio, Esq. Under Kate’s excellent mentorship, Nancy has made a seamless transition and is already up to speed on several significant initiatives. We are beyond grateful to Kate for her years of impressive diligence and are equally excited for Nancy’s leadership in the lobbyist arena.

In February of 2016, after more than fifteen years in the shadow of the Space Needle at Fifth and Denny, End of Life Washington relocated to the King County Medical Society building, where we occupy the entire third floor, effectively tripling our square footage and improving our ability to serve our clients.

We continue to make strides in ensuring that residents in Eastern Washington have more reliable access to our Death with Dignity Law. To that end, we have established an EOLWA hub in Pullman and are making headway in the Tri-cities area as well.

Our five Volunteer Medical Advisors, ably led by Drs. Bob Wood and Terry Law, serve as a resource for physicians throughout Washington State as they support their patients who wish to pursue the Death with Dignity Law. They also work with anesthesiologists and pharmacists to improve the choices of medications and protocols available.

So, as you can readily see, we remain vitally engaged in end of life services as we continue to utilize Margaret Mead’s observation: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

Hear more about our organization at the Annual Meeting, Oct. 8

The End of Life Washington annual meeting is Saturday, October 9 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the University Unitarian Church, 6566 30th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

We are planning a program that will focus on the critical work done by our Volunteer Client Advisors who have served more than 500 clients since the start of 2015.

Also on the program is keynote speaker George Eighmy, an attorney who helped make Death with Dignity a reality in Oregon. He will speak about the development of the Oregon Volunteer Client Advisors system that EOLWA uses to steward the CVD law in our state.
Volunteer Profile
Meet Jessica Rivers

End of Life Washington is fortunate to have a host of highly competent, committed volunteers who help our clients navigate the intricacies of Washington State’s Death with Dignity Act.

Jessica Rivers is one of those valued volunteers. Jessica joined us in January 2015 as an intrepid Volunteer Client Advisor in Eastern Washington where many remain unaware of “Death with Dignity.” At times, Jessica has been the sole volunteer covering the Spokane and Pullman areas, willing to drive 2-3 hours to meet with clients, listening compassionately to their stories, and helping them navigate the law when appropriate. Her impressive professional background working in Social Services also makes Jessica adept at helping people with advance directives.

When asked what brought her to this work, Jessica mentioned caring for her mother who died from pancreatic cancer. She also referred to her work training hospice volunteers. Jessica is convinced that people should be supported in seeking options that offer control and dignity. Knowing firsthand the stress people endure when facing a loved one’s death, she challenged herself to “have the courage to volunteer in a capacity that not everyone can do.”

A Death with Dignity

By Judith Gordon

Perry called to say goodbye about ten days before his death. We hadn’t seen each other for over twenty-five years, but I recognized his voice immediately, even though it was weak and strained. He’d had cancer for years, both of whom actively supported his choice.

He was happy that he could use the Death with Dignity law, which he had decided to commit suicide. He’d been put on a dive boat with only two other people, a honeymoon couple, and couldn’t bear to leave them with an anniversary that would always be associated with a suicide.

A move out of the city seemed to help right Perry’s life but now an illness was about to take even that away.

We reminisced about our long relationship over several phone calls. He was happy that he could use the Death with Dignity law, which allowed him to retain his dignity and his autonomy, core values throughout his life. Perry died in the loving presence of his brother and the close friend he had stayed connected with through the years, both of whom actively supported his choice.

I used to tell Perry’s story as an example of how clients who are suicidal are sometimes helped, not by a psychotherapy intervention, but by the intervention of life itself.

(Judith Gordon is member of the EOLWA Board of Directors.)

Read the full story of Judith and Perry at www.EndofLifeWA.com.

Jessica has had many memorable experiences since joining End of Life Washington. Assuming that her first planned death would be attended only by EOLWA volunteers, the client, and his wife, she was surprised to find that “there were friends, neighbors, cousins -- the client essentially gave his own eulogy then died peacefully.”

She was touched by the incredible love, respect, connection, and opportunity for healing that occurred in the hour before his death.

Jessica has also found allies for her work and has even recruited a second dynamic volunteer to help her.

When asked what would help her most, Jessica called for more volunteers and more education for residents and providers in her community, as well as more EOLWA staff to support and expand the organization’s important work.

When she is not serving her community as a social service professional, you can usually find Jessica enjoying her 15 beautiful acres on the Palouse where she lives with her husband, 14-year-old son, 4 dogs, and 2 cats. She likes “going to church” in nature wherever she can hike, camp, or roll. We are grateful for all that Jessica brings to EOLWA: her infectious laugh, her can-do spirit, and the unflagging compassion that she brings to her clients.