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Thank you for my mother's dignified death

The following was excerpted from a letter by a son about his mother's death (she was an End of Life Washington client):

On May 18, 2017, my mother took her life under the Washington Death with Dignity Act. As someone who has lived through what that law allows, I wanted to share my experience.

Mom had her first multiple sclerosis attack in 1980 just after I was born. She was 23. Eight years later she went to bed a walking person and woke up paraplegic.

Mom's residence was extraordinary. She was determined to prove, especially to her children, that having a disability does not have to stop you from living. She sang, skied, hiked, rode a paraglider, and skydived. Still, the very real threat of death always loomed over our family. Growing up was a never-ending parade of hospitals, doctors, and surgeries. Every day I woke up thinking: this could be the day Mom dies.

As the quality of her life waned Mom started talking about taking her life. She'd say, "when the pain becomes too great, I'll take my stash of pills and go it alone. No accomplices. No one to prosecute." New York, her home, did not have the Death with Dignity Act.

Later, she would join me in Washington State and qualified for the Death of Dignity Act. By then she had outlived her body and was suffering almost all of the time. Her body had decayed around a still very active mind.

And then it happened. The final day we had been bracing for all those years. Everything went smoothly, calmly. No sad descendo of electronic beeps, no frantic rush of doctors, no words left unsaid. She died a peaceful dignified death, on her own terms.

Thank you, Washington voters, for giving Mom the freedom to die with dignity. It was a gift.

Our work depends on your help ...

Washington is the only Death with Dignity state that offers free and individualized client services statewide.

During 2018 End of Life Washington helped more than 600 clients statewide (an increase of 23% over 2017):

- More than 150 clients used Washington's Death with Dignity Law.
- Volunteers averaged eight contacts with each client.
- More than 3,000 hours were donated to clients by volunteers.

Volunteers and staff at End of Life Washington have helped 4,345 clients since the Death with Dignity Law went into effect in 2009.

We need your help.

The cost of rent, printing, travel, and personnel is about \$500,000 per year.

Please use the enclosed envelope to keep the momentum going.

For information, call our office at (206)- 256-1636

Thank you!



Your life.
 Your death.
 Your choice.

news
 LETTER

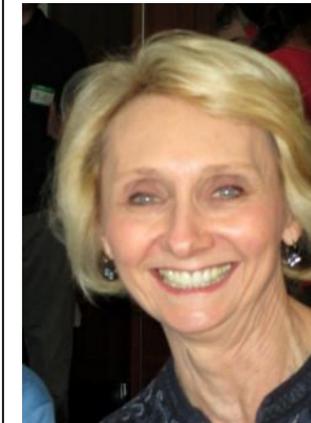
Spring 2019

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

End of Life Washington undergoes major change, but remains focused on clients and core mission

By Kay Longhi
 Chair, EOLWA President

Since it was incorporated 26 years ago, End of Life Washington has never veered from its focus of direct client support, public education, and legal and policy advocacy to ensure access to end-of-life options.



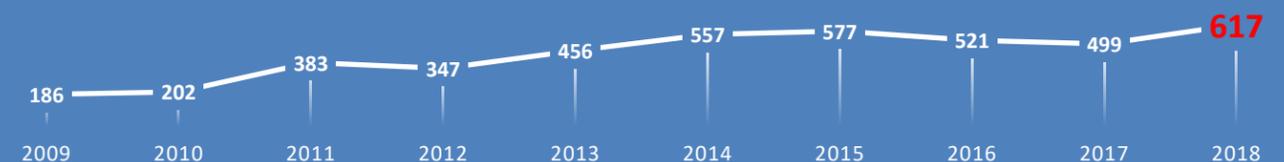
This critical mission has not changed with the recent resignations of our former Executive Director Sally McLaughlin and our Director of Development Kathleen Sparkman. They both made significant contributions and will be missed.

Moved by these resignations and the impact of significant demand since passage of the Death with Dignity Act, the Board of Directors has decided it is time for a full review of our organization. To that end we have initiated a strategic planning process which will cast a critical eye on everything we do from initial conversations with clients to the makeup of the board to fundraising practices. We hope to maximize our financial, staff, and volunteer resources to continue carrying out our mission. We have hired a management consulting company which specializes in working with nonprofits on transitional change issues.

LovellPrice & Associates is currently conducting an assessment to gain an understanding of End of Life Washington, its culture and its strengths and opportunities for growth. It is reviewing all our business documents and practices, as well as conducting interviews with staff, board members, and volunteers. Once we receive the results of the assessment and recommendations, LovellPrice staff will lead us through a decision-making process to move forward. We will, of course, share our future plans.

In the meantime, our important work on behalf of everyone in the state, proceeds. Our volunteer client support team is still responding to individuals needing help with the Death with Dignity Act; our public speakers are still available for advanced directive workshops, professional group discussions, classes, and resource fairs; and we are still advocating against efforts to undermine your full options for end-of-life choices. We will be there when you need us.

CLIENTS SERVED BY END OF LIFE WASHINGTON



BOOK RIEVIEW

Author recommends making death a part of our life's conversation

It used to be there were two absolutely unavoidable events in one's life: death and taxes. Now, with a proper accountant, the latter can be neatly dodged.

That leaves death, and author Michael Hebb wants us to consider it a natural part of our life. He wants us to talk about death and he thinks the best place to do that talking is over plates of good food.

"We don't think about improving our lives in the context of death, and we don't talk about improving our deaths," Hebb notes early in his book.

What Hebb says is that we need to "face our mortality as a village, not as individuals." And if we fail to explore our feelings about death in the company of our friends or colleagues, we are destined to try to face the topic in a hospital or at a funeral where we are already overwhelmed by events.

He also makes the point that early and open conversations about death with family and caregivers often leads to better care and a willingness to delve deeper into the topic in the event of a terminal diagnosis or other serious setback.

Says one reader of Hebb's book: "I can't imagine having to navigate such a devastating loss without having built our family philosophy around death, which we did by sitting around and just openly talking about it over the years with our little kids (they can handle it better than most adults, and their insight is magical)."

So why over dinner?

Hebb reminds us that the dinner table is "the most important crucible of culture we have...."

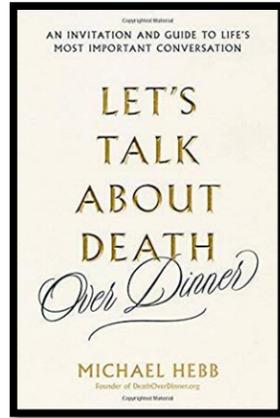
After all, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton decided the nation's financial future over dinner. Since then millions of dinners have spawned conversations remarkable and forgettable. Discussions of death, says Hebb, are as critical as talk of life, with just as many nuances.

Some of dozens of questions he recommends:

- Would you consider a doctor-assisted death if you had a terminal disease?
- What does a good death look like?
- Is there a way you would like to feel on your death bed?

One more thing: Hebb does practice what his book preaches. He has hosted or led thousands of dinner table discussions about death. You can find more on his website: deathoverdinner.org.

- Chris Fruitrich, EOLWA volunteer



Let's Talk About Death Over Dinner by Michael Hebb; Da Capo Press; 246 pp; \$26

POLICY NEWS

Patient protection bill stalls; other key issues win approval

The legislative session adjourned at the end of April without passing the Patient Protection Safety bill. The bill would protect willing health care providers from retaliation by their employers for providing information, referrals, and services - specifically the Death with Dignity Act.

The Patient Protection Safety bill would also protect patients by ensuring access to medically accurate and comprehensive information and resources. End of Life Washington is a member of the coalition which plans on continuing its efforts in the next session.

The good news is that HB 1607 Notice of Hospital Mergers is awaiting the Governor's signature. It will alert the attorney general if there are antitrust implications resulting from hospital mergers - specifically around decreased access to care or increased patient costs.

Additionally, the Governor signed SB5001 which will legalize the green burial option of recomposition (converts human remains into soil).

OTHER NEWS

N.J. passes death with dignity law

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy said in a statement: "Today's bill signing will make New Jersey the eighth state to allow terminally ill patients the dignity to make their own end-of-life decisions - including medical aid in dying. We must give these patients the humanity, respect, and compassion they deserve."

Oregon studies DWD changes

During its current session, the Oregon State Legislature has been studying bills that could alter the time patients must wait before ingesting their death with dignity medication; refine the definition of "terminal disease" and expand the definition of what constitutes "self-administration" of the lethal medications.

Death with Dignity dynamo determined to make law available to everyone

Linda Estes started her quest to help her father die on his own terms.

The End of Life Washington volunteer continues her tenacious fight to make sure everyone in Washington has that same opportunity.



Linda Estes

Eastern Washington advocate for the state's Death with Dignity Law

After taking some time off to mourn her father, Linda went to work. Over the next two-plus years - among other things - she has:

- Convinced the local hospital that had blocked her father's wishes to alter its policy.
- Took her story public via video, newspaper articles, and public speaking engagements to organizations like the Rotary Club and the Estate Planning Council.
- Found cooperative doctors after an appeal to members of the Benton-Franklin Medical Association.
- Prepared booklets that give people an educated overview of the law.
- Responded to more than 40 calls and emails from people who shared her feelings.
- Organized a Tri-cities team of volunteers who will help Death with Dignity clients across a wide swath of Eastern Washington.

"I can't say enough about these gals," she says of the volunteer group. "They have just stepped up to the plate," driving miles at all hours to sometimes just offer assurances about end-of-life choices. Already the Tri-Cities team has served more people in 9 months than had sought help in all of Eastern Washington in the year Linda's dad died.

Linda says the dedication of the volunteers -- Kelly Doyle, Colleen Kandle, Brandi Diaz, and Stephanie Kolowith - has allowed her to "take the view from 30,000 feet." She continues to work on multiple fronts to expand the reach and acceptance of the state's Death with Dignity Law.

"My grand vision is to get Tri-Cities up and stable on its own, then take my show on the road to help others in underserved areas," Linda says.

All this from someone who once described herself as "terrified" with the subject of death and "not an advocate."

"I feel like it *had* to be done," Linda says. "And it turned out I was the one to do it."

Going forward, that spirit and energy is going to help a lot of those seeking help with their end-of-life circumstances.

- Chris Fruitrich, EOLWA volunteer