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Your life
Your death
Your choice



FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

A guiding principle: 'We are there when you need us'

Many, many people say to me "I want you there when I need you." Those words guide and motivate me to ensure that we are indeed there - however you need us.



Kay Longhi
Board president

The variety of topics in this newsletter reflects the range and depth of End of Life Washington

activities. We sincerely believe in our mission, and carry it out in multiple ways.

Though the majority of our work is devoted to supporting those using the Death with Dignity Act, we are there to advise and advocate for the full range of end-of-life services.

A highlight in our ability to do this work is the presence of our interim Executive Director, Ms. Joan Eads. She has brought

years of professional management experience to support our transition to a new permanent Executive Director. I encourage you to read her introductory statement. She has provided enormous guidance and expertise to our Board and staff. We have truly benefited from her considerable skills and advice.

The future for End Of Life Washington continues to be secure and positive for all of you.

End of Life Washington

Client Data 2009-2019

— Clients served — New clients — Used DWD — Natural death



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
— Clients served	187	202	380	347	456	557	577	521	499	620	697
— New clients	174	152	304	270	365	438	427	404	405	495	515
— Used DWD	36	51	70	83	119	126	166	192	164	203	194
— Natural death	57	58	73	55	98	108	141	163	133	157	115

Sources: Washington Health Department, End of Life Washington (2019 figures are projections).

New Clients are those who were assigned to work with a volunteer during the calendar year;
Clients Served are those who worked with a volunteer during the year, regardless of when they signed up.

EOLWA grows along with aid-in-dying law

Since 2009 – when the state’s Death with Dignity Act became law – the number of people seeking End of Life Washington services has soared.

In that decade, EOLWA’s volunteer client advisers have seen their workload jump by 430 cases per year while the number of clients using the Death with Dignity Law rose 144.

In 2009 there were about 17 active volunteers, three of whom – Gretchen DeRoche, Arline Hinkley, and Monte Burke – are still helping clients. Most were clustered in the Seattle area.

Today there are more than 65 volunteers from Bellingham to Portland and Seattle to Winthrop.

Growth in the use of the Death with Dignity Act is likely to continue apace as more people become aware of the law. Leading that group: well-informed but aging Baby Boomers who make up 16% of the state’s population.

Interim executive director steers steady course to stability

As the interim executive director for End of Life Washington (EOLWA), my role is to help navigate through the transitions that have occurred over the past year. Today I can report to you, our stakeholders, that we are stable and thriving in the work to walk with individuals who contact us regarding end of life choices.



Joan Eads
Interim E.D.

In determining how best to implement the mission: “End of Life Washington upholds your right to the full range of end of life choices, including Death with Dignity, through advocacy, education, and support,” it has been important that we all are open to various options and new strategies to ensure the vision and mission.

I have been an interim executive director for more than 10 years, serving as an interim with 8 different nonprofits. I have also been an interim board member.

I have a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and formerly was the founder of a national organization, providing technical assistance to nonprofits across the United States.

Some of the highlights of what we have accomplished recently include:

- Improving operations with necessary protocols in place.
- Developing a financial manual and updating the operations manual.
- Moving bookkeeping online for easy sharing among stakeholders and accountability for the board treasurer.

- Beginning the process of improving and upgrading the website for easier access. A committee of staff and board will assist in development.
 - Retaining an Information Technologist to assist staff with database and other application needs.
 - Adding ten new volunteers in areas of need including Sequim, Port Townsend, Olympia, Shoreline, and Pullman.
 - Adding two physician VCAs, one in Seattle and another in Pullman. Both are licensed to practice.
- See **INTERIM**, inside page

ANNUAL MEETING NOTE

With serious work remaining on End of Life Washington’s reorganization, the board of directors has elected to move the annual meeting to early 2020, rather than hold it on its traditional October date.

At that time we hope to be able to introduce a new executive director and outline plans for moving forward in a time of substantial growth (see graphic on page 4).

Ample notice will be sent out once a meeting date is decided.

INTERIM –

- Onboarding of volunteers has been streamlined to be completely electronic.
- Training volunteers in person across the entire state by the end of the year.

I also want to let you know that the Board of Directors is a true working board, hands-on help to deal with all of the transitions. As noted above, I have worked with many nonprofit boards and have been a board member myself. I have never met a more committed board than the EOLWA Board of Directors. It is inspiring to work with such committed individuals with the sole purpose of ensuring EOLWA is meeting the needs of individuals seeking end of life choices. Highlights of the board's work to date include:

- Holding a board retreat to reflect on the transitions, grow in competence as a result and plan for the future.
- Establishing or reviving eight working committees, including Governance, Personnel, Development/Fundraising, Public Policies and Law and Finance.
- Deciding to postpone the Annual Meeting until a permanent Executive Director is on board.
- Approving a public awareness campaign to start in January. An announcement will be provided in the near future.
- Committing to self-assessment and good governance.

The board has some extremely important work to do in the next few months. A Search and Selection Committee has been formed to hire the next Executive Director of EOLWA. Staff will be part of this process and we welcome your ideas about suitable candidates. We anticipate requesting applications by mid-November.

I want to take the time to thank everyone who has helped serve clients through various roles with the Death with Dignity movement over the past 26 years. Please know that each person, current and former staff, board and volunteers have contributed to our mission.

We are looking forward to a future for EOLWA to provide the best possible support and services to residents in the state seeking end of life choices.

We need your help: End of Life Washington offers all state residents the most professional and compassionate service of any Death with Dignity state. This year we will work, at no charge, with nearly 700 clients, more than 200 of whom will use the aid-in-dying law.

New hires keep EOLWA running smoothly

Interim Executive Director Joan Eads has brought three temporary, part-time employees into the organization, and the trio is working tirelessly while keeping our clients' welfare at top of mind.



Kathleen D'Amelio, office manager, comes with excellent skills and customer/client care. Kathleen's strength is working with individuals calling for information, or seeking to have one of our volunteers walk with them because they have decided to use the Death with Dignity Law. Imagine you or a loved one has been diagnosed with 6 months or less to live, and you are seeking information and assistance in using the Death with Dignity Law. How important is it that your first point of contact is competent and compassionate? I believe this first contact is critical to the person calling or emailing, and Kathleen always provides compassion with her competence in addressing the individual's needs.



Sally Thomae, client support coordinator, is also a Volunteer Client Advisor. She knows how sacred it is to be with someone who has chosen to use the Death with Dignity Law. She has a Master's Degree in Social Work and once was a grief counselor. Sally is support to our Client Support Director, Jillene MacCreery, taking information from clients, assigning volunteers, and providing general information as needed. It is important for you to know that during the time of transition, no client had to wait for support, which meant Jillene had to be available nearly 24/7. This unsustainable situation has eased so Jillene can do other work, such as adding physicians and pharmacists to our volunteer list.



Linda Estes, community outreach coordinator, is helping schedule and provide presentations and assure their quality. Linda is also responsible for many other outreach strategies. She lives in the Tri-Cities and has great experience in obtaining resources that are lacking for EOLWA in central and eastern Washington. Linda also has agreed to be a team leader for us with other volunteers in the region. It is important to share that prior to Linda joining EOLWA, our board member, Midge Levy, scheduled and coordinated all of our presentations. Again, because of Midge's assistance and expertise, our outreach via presentations continued successfully throughout all the transitions.

Aid-in-dying loses one of its pioneers

Kirk Robinson – the Seattle man who led the world's first initiative effort for legalized Death with Dignity – has died. He was 65.

Robinson is remembered by his End of Life Washington colleagues as a gregarious and happy soul whose passion for end-of-life choice never wavered.

In 1991 Robinson was chairman of Washington Citizens for Death with Dignity in support of Initiative 119.

He endured massive opposition

from many organizations across the country and even death threats from some of the initiative's foes.

Despite being wildly outspent by powerful institutions, the initiative failed by just 4 points.

Robinson's efforts directly led to Death with Dignity in Oregon in 1997, Washington's law in 2008, and, today, aid in dying laws in nine states and Washington D.C.

His vision, organization, and friendship will be missed by all who knew and worked with Kirk.

EOLWA is totally dependent on grants and donations remain afloat. Please consider helping us keep the Death with Dignity promise alive by visiting endoflifewa.org and clicking on the DONATE link or responding with the enclosed envelope.

A wild media ride with 'Uncle Bob'

By *Stephanie Murray*
Volunteer Client Adviser

When I came to End of Life Washington three years ago, my intention was to help people navigate our state's Death with Dignity Law.

I did not expect to land in the middle of a media maelstrom.

"Uncle Bob" changed all that.

Let's start at the beginning. I joined End of Life Washington in 2016 as an Evergreen Hospice volunteer wanting to be more actively involved in helping people end their suffering. During my tenure, I have worked with more than 50 clients, more than two dozen of whom have used the Death with Dignity Law.

Robert Fuller was the 13th person I helped die using medication prescribed by a physician under the state law. Everybody knew Fuller as "Uncle Bob" – a 75-year-old man with a huge personality and a legion of friends all over the region.

Unlike most clients, Bob had his date of death (May 10, 2019) in mind the first time I visited in February. He also wanted to get his story out to the public, so more people would know about Death with Dignity.

And he really did.

Uncle Bob's story was told by three news agencies following his journey. Each published fantastic accounts in the eight months after he made his decision public. I helped with an Associated Press article and a KING5 documentary. Both are wonderful windows into the Death with Dignity landscape. The Seattle street newspaper Real Change also published a series of three articles on Fuller's journey.

My own relationship with Bob began slowly.

In general, I'm conscious about maintaining boundaries with my clients and, as such, cautiously accepted Bob's Facebook friend request. It allowed me,



Stephanie Murray with KING newsmen John Sharify (L) and Joseph Huerta

Uncle Bob's story: Read it or watch it

- Watch the KING5 documentary by going to youtube.com and searching for "Bob's Choice."
- Read the Associated Press story by searching the web for "Associated Press Bob Fuller."

though, to see how he was coping over the months of his very public journey.

I was concerned about the amount of pain he was experiencing and I counseled him that he didn't HAVE to wait until May 10th. He held firm as he had friends coming or leaving in May and he was bound and determined to have his huge party, and send off, on that particular date.

On the day of his passing, there were hundreds of people at the party and when it came time to take his lethal medication, there were 40 people in the room with us – at least 35 more than I've ever experienced at a client's death. I had to repeatedly say "excuse me, pardon me, excuse me" as I made my way to Bob's bedside with the syringes of life ending meds mixed with Kahlua.

The room was hushed as I spoke to Bob, confirming he knew if he took the meds he would go to sleep and not wake up, and that he was sure this was the right time to take them. He was very sure on both

counts. He self-administered the meds with his feeding tube, lay back, and closed his eyes.

Ever the prankster, about 30 seconds after he closed his eyes he popped them open and said "I'm still here!" The folks in the room let out their bated breath and felt some relief with Bob's ever-present humor.

As his consciousness waned, he reached for a piece of paper by his bedside and read/sang the closing song from The Carol Burnett Show, "I'm so glad we had this time together..." with folks in the room joining in the singing. A few minutes later he was asleep and people stayed singing and loving him until he passed 4 ½ hours later.

Since his passing, I've been able to participate in a number of media programs telling Uncle Bob's and End of Life Washington's stories. I was with the producers of the KING5 documentary, John Sharify and Joseph Huerta, when it aired in September, answering online questions. Additional promotion of the documentary included appearing on New Day NW, responding to questions on the Ask Me Anything Reddit, and appearing on a live Facebook feed with John and Joseph.

I'm proud to be a volunteer for End of Life Washington and to have known Uncle Bob – and through his story helping to bring awareness to more people that they have an option to die with dignity.