Wearing a Different Hat

Dr. Robert Backus will be changing roles at Grace Cottage. Although he’ll no longer be seeing patients (some of whom are multi-generational families), he’ll still be actively involved. “My wife, Carol, and I are going away for a few months,” said Dr. Backus, “and then I’ll be back, ready to help with fundraising, Fair Day, and helping to position and promote Grace Cottage as a leader in primary care. This is a role that I’m eager to embrace, for my patients have blessed me over the years, and I was privileged to have been their medical provider. Now it is time for me to step up to a different plate here.

“Grace Cottage’s social capital is ever-growing, as we continue to add creative, useful, proven community health-related programs which are the envy of many in health care. I plan to continue to help with moving Grace Cottage forward in this upward trajectory,” Dr. Backus added.

Born in California, Dr. Backus graduated from the University of Nevada in 1963. He spent several years with the Peace Corps in Brazil, first as a volunteer and then as a program director. He returned to the U.S. in 1970 and graduated from the UVM College of Medicine in 1976. After medical school, he completed a year of a general rotating internship in Australia and then was selected for a year in pediatrics at the prestigious Adelaide Children’s Hospital. When he returned, he worked as a family physician for six months for Dr. Carlos Otis at Grace Cottage. He re-entered UVM for his last two years of residency in family medicine. While in residency, he very often covered for Dr. Otis on weekends, holidays, and once, for over a month. In 1980 he opened his private, full-time practice in Townshend with Sue Clark as his RN, and began “helping out” at Grace Cottage.

Although patients won’t be hearing Dr. Backus say “next victim?!” in the waiting room, they’ll still see him around Grace Cottage and in and around Townshend.

Sue Clark Retiring!

With Dr. Backus’s retirement from medical practice also comes the retirement of Sue Clark, who worked side-by-side with “Dr. B” until three years ago, when she began working part-time in Grace Cottage’s scheduling center. Sue started at Grace Cottage as an RN in May, 1968.

“Nurses for family doctors must, by design, have a hard shell, a soft heart, and know when to tuck in their necks – that’s Sue,” said Dr. Backus. “She has always had an uncanny ability to sense when someone is urgently ill, while deftly getting them into immediate care. She is mistress of multitask, with a wonderful sense of humor. I always knew she had my back. I was blessed to have her as my nurse, my friend, and the bedrock of my practice.”

Grateful patients write:

“My father and Dr. Backus both loved basketball, so when my father was a patient, they watched games together in his room, often at 7 or 8 p.m. Dr. Backus ought to have been home at that time, but he knew how much his companionship meant to my father. As everyone in the community knows well, ‘above and beyond the call of medical duty’ is territory where Dr. Backus has spent a good deal of time.”

Castle Freeman, Jr.
Newfane, VT

“I was finished emptying my shopping cart into the trunk of my car when I felt something tugging the cart away. I turned around, and there was Dr. Backus. Surprised, I blurted out: ‘Are you moonlighting as a Wal-Mart greeter now, Bob?’ He just grinned and returned my cart to the store. Such a kind man, at work and everywhere.”

Claudette Hollenbeck
Wilmington, VT

I came to the Grace Cottage ER, years ago, with numerous bee stings on my arm. After determining that I wasn’t allergic to bees, Dr. Backus recommended a perfect course of treatment: roll a cold can of beer up and down my arm, and then drink the beer!”

Keith Beverley
Stamford, CT & Jamaica, VT
WELCOME, LISA!

LISA EATON has joined Grace Cottage as Chief Nursing Officer, replacing Jeanne Fortier, who retired and moved to Cape Cod. Lisa has an Associate’s degree in nursing from Keene State College, a Bachelor’s degree in psychology from Greenfield Community College and a Master’s degree in Health Care Administration from Marlboro College. She began her career in healthcare in 1987 at the Brattleboro Retreat and, in 1992, she became a staff nurse at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, prior to becoming Director of Inpatient Services there in 2009, a position she held until 2016. She lives in Keene, New Hampshire; in her free time, she enjoys hiking, camping, golfing, and traveling.

A grateful supporter writes:

“I like to support the best country hospital in the country!”

Judy Mowbray
Shady Valley, TN

A donor writes:

“This gift is in honor of all Grace Cottage personnel with whom we have had contact – all have outstanding, friendly, helpful, kind, and caring personalities!”

Yvonne & Walter Tolley
Yarmouthport, MA and Townshend, VT

THE MISSION OF GRACE COTTAGE IS TO SERVE THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY; TO PROMOTE WELLNESS, RELIEVE SUFFERING, AND RESTORE HEALTH.

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The mission of Grace Cottage is to serve the health care needs of our community; to promote wellness, relieve suffering, and restore health.
For the third year in a row, Grace Cottage has participated in Giving Tuesday, a national day of charitable donations, held on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (on the heels of Black Friday and Cyber Monday). Our goal this year was to raise $5,750 to purchase a bed/stretcher for the new Emergency Department Safe Room. Thanks to Grace Cottage's very loyal and generous supporters, we met that goal by lunchtime, and went on to raise, before the end of the day, an additional $5,400 for the Patient Care Fund.

Wishes Made...

❤ A hands-free binocular magnifier is needed by Grace Cottage Family Health. $90.

❤ Four sets of fitness steps are needed by the Rehab Department. $137.

❤ A refrigerator for the storage of cold packs for Rehab patients is needed by outpatient Rehab. $500.

❤ A StatSpin primary tube centrifuge, which will provide high-quality plasma or serum for patients in two minutes, is needed by the lab. $3,500.

Wishes Granted...

❤ John & Lisa Manuele donated the funds for the purchase of a 6-qt. commercial mixer for the Dietary Department and a specially-adapted walker with 2 wheels for patients recovering from a stroke.

❤ Dr. Marvin & Connie Wool made a donation for the purchase of two commercial digital scales for Grace Cottage Family Health.

❤ Dr. Jesper Brickley & Cara Meinke made a donation for two height measuring devices for Grace Cottage Family Health.

❤ Carol & Richard Steiner made a donation for the purchase of a wide variety of equipment for the Community Health Team, Emergency Department, Grace Cottage Family Health and the Rehab Department.

❤ John & Leslie Rankin donated the funds for the purchase of specific items for patient care at Grace Cottage Family Health and in the Rehab Department.

❤ Richard Veitch and Cindy Leszczak made a donation for assistive tools for Rehab patients.

❤ Bill & Cathy Turner made a donation for a variety of equipment for the Community Health Team and the Rehab Department.

❤ Suzanne Welch made a gift for the purchase of Dietary Department equipment.

❤ The Town of Dummerston donated the funds to purchase an Isolation Station for Grace Cottage Family Health.

❤ Miriam & Larry Lanata donated the funds for the purchase of two large step-open waste receptacles.

❤ The Pollio Family Foundation made a grant to purchase a generator for the Wolff Outpatient Building.

❤ A cardiac probe for the Emergency Department ultrasound was purchased with funds from Ernie Friedli, Frank Stearns & Patricia Gysling, and The Richard & Barbara Whitcomb Foundation.

❤ The Brattleboro Women’s Golf Association, Elaine Lambert & John Klein, and an anonymous couple made a donation for the purchase of pumps used to manage pain for patients in the hospice suite.

❤ Bock & Kim Yeo funded the purchase of three adjustable-height exam stools for Grace Cottage Family Health.

❤ The Robert & Joyce Jones Foundation made a grant, in memory of Bob Jones, for the construction of and equipment for two new examination rooms in Grace Cottage Family Health.

❤ The Crosby-Gannett Fund at Vermont Community Foundation made a grant for a trial telemedicine project for the home monitoring of patients with diabetes and hypertension.

❤ The Windham Foundation awarded a grant to help the Healthy Valley 2040 project get started. Stay tuned!

❤ The Fanny Holt Ames & Edna Louise Holt Fund awarded two grants: one for the Community Health Team and one for the purchase of crucial Information Technology equipment.

Grace Cottage’s Wish List is updated monthly on our website, at www.gracecottage.org, or call 802-365-9109 for more information.
Healthy Aging Conference
Grace Cottage’s first-ever Healthy Aging Conference at the Grafton Inn, held on November 15th and 16th, was a tremendous success, judging by surveys filled out by the 44 participants and 14 presenters. “All of the presentations were thought-provoking and stimulating,” said Lee Petty of Townshend. “Some of them even started me on different pathways to better health. It was excellent!”

The Conference included presentations about how to thrive physically, mentally, and financially as one ages, but participants agreed that all of the advice was pertinent for younger people as well. The second annual Healthy Aging Conference is in the works for this autumn – stay tuned for more details.

Eighth Annual Tee It Up for Health
For the first time ever, Grace Cottage’s Tee It Up for Health golf benefit will be held on a weekday! Save the date, Friday, June 9th, and sign up now at www.gracecottage.org/events to be on one of the 32 teams at The Hermitage Club at Haystack in Wilmington, VT. Registration, $150 per golfer, includes greens fees, cart, dinner, logowear, golf balls, and contests. All proceeds benefit Grace Cottage’s Patient Care Fund; last year’s event raised over $31,000 after expenses.

Not a golfer, but want to support this great event anyway? Sponsorships are available, ranging from $2,500 to $250. Call 802-365-9109 for more information.

Come join us at the beautiful Hermitage Club at Haystack Mountain.

Spring into Health 5K
Grace Cottage’s eighth annual Spring into Health 5K will be held on Saturday, May 13th, beginning on the Townshend Common at 8:30 a.m. Registration is $5 for kids up to age 18, $12 for adults until Thursday, May 11th, after which the cost increases to $10 for kids/$20 for adults. Online registration is open now, at www.gracecottage.org/events. The first 100 registrants will receive a free Spring into Health performance t-shirt, designed by Allura Cameron. The popular, free Fun Run For Kids, ages six and under, will begin at 9:15 a.m. on the Townshend Common. Call 802-365-9109 with questions, or to register by phone. The 5K is professionally timed and suitable for racers, but walkers of all ages are also enthusiastically welcomed. Over the years, participants have ranged in age from a few months (in strollers or backpacks) to more than eight decades young!

A grateful spouse writes:
“I want to take this time to thank all the doctors and nurses who took very good care of my wife, Martha, in her final days of her life. The care she received was excellent and made her as comfortable as possible. It goes without saying that this is the best hospital in this area and I’m real glad to have it here.”

Richard Desrochers
Grafton, VT
Tour de Grace

The 12th annual Tour de Grace, a 19-mile bike rally, will be held on Saturday, July 8th. This year, after a long reconstruction process, the Scott Bridge will be open for riders, thus giving us back some scenic mileage that we’d been missing. Registration is open now for this mostly-downhill beautiful family-friendly ride on dirt and paved roads, so sign up at www.gracecottage.org. $25 per rider until July 5th; $30 at the event. Riders may choose to take the bus before or after the ride. Don’t forget your helmet and mountain bike! For more information, call 802-365-9109.

Auxiliary News

67th Annual Hospital Fair Day
Saturday, August 5, 2017

Yippee!!! Grace Cottage Hospital Fair Day has been named one of Vermont’s Top 10 Summer Events by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce. If you’ve been to Fair Day, you know why this well-deserved honor has been awarded. If you haven’t been, why not make this the year that you come to check out what makes Fair Day so unique and fun? Save the date: Saturday, August 5, 2017. Free admission, free parking, booths open at 9 a.m. and the Fair and Auction last all day.

Fair Day always welcomes volunteers for a variety of tasks before, during, and after the Fair, so contact me at 802-365-9992 or e-mail lauras9992@svcable.net. This year, we are also looking for a suitable space for volunteers to sort and store household items between now and August 5th. If you know of such a place near downtown Townshend, please contact me!

— Laura Smith
Fair Day Chairperson

A grateful patient writes:

“When I went to Grace Cottage Family Health in September to have an analysis and culture done, the staff was very cooperative and speedy. I would like to especially commend nurse Holly [Domanski] and PA Natalie Harding for their kind and helpful care. In addition, when I called on a Saturday, I was able to speak with someone who gave me the results. My experience at Grace Cottage was exemplary.”

Carol Schulhof
Brooklyn, NY & West Wardsboro, VT
The Gift of Giving

Grace Cottage is the beneficiary of two bequests this year, from individuals who had close and enduring ties to this organization, and their generosity is so greatly appreciated.

Herman “Ham” Wondrofski was born and raised in Bristol, CT. After serving in the Korean War, he worked for General Motors in Connecticut and moved to Vermont in the mid-1970’s. From 1978-1992 he was a school bus driver in the town of Jamaica, and is fondly remembered by the many students he transported over the years. After his retirement, he enjoyed anything and everything outdoors: farming, gardening, hunting with his brother and friends, and filling his many bird feeders. Ham died in April, 2016 at age 87.

Vance Hosford was raised in California, graduated from UCLA and received his Master of Architecture at the University of California in Berkeley. After a longtime partnership at the architectural firm of Payette Associates in Boston, Vance relocated to his second home on the Jamaica/West Townshend line, while remaining active with Church of the Advent on Beacon Hill. A member of the Grace Cottage Foundation Board, Vance volunteered his expertise to design Grace Cottage’s Community Wellness Room, where a plaque now hangs in his memory. He died in August, 2016, at age 70.

A grateful patient writes:

“I recently participated in a very inspiring and educational free twelve-week health and weight-loss group at Grace Cottage that my doctor suggested I join because of my health issues that included a new diagnosis of a pre-diabetic condition.

Nutritionist Liz Harrison and therapist Caroline Chase divided the class time. Each week, we examined issues such as how our metabolism works, the role of sleep, chewing, and emotions, and how our personal history affects how and why we eat. We were also able to meet privately with Liz and Caroline.

Liz’s cutting-edge information on diet and Caroline’s deep insights into our health issues provided a powerful and unique way to help us see changes we needed to make in order to lead healthier lives.

In class, I was surrounded by honest and courageous folks who shared strategies, personal insights, and compassion. We finished up with new tools to maximize our wellness, along with significant measurable health improvements.

Grace Cottage is working to change lives for the better, and I am deeply grateful for that. I am sharing my experience to encourage others to use the Community Health Team’s free services.”

Cindy Leszczak
West Townshend, VT

A grateful patient writes:

“I am always impressed by the genuine warmth, interest, and concern shown by Grace Cottage staff at all levels.”

Bock Cheng Yeo
Townshend, VT

Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. The mission of Grace Cottage Foundation is to raise funds on behalf of Grace Cottage. Donations to Grace Cottage Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Grace Cottage Foundation’s Federal Tax ID # is: 03-0343282.

Donations may be made by cash, credit card, check, stocks, bonds, or other tangible assets. Call Andrea Seaton, Executive Director, at (802) 365-9109.

An audit of Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation is available upon request.
When memorial gifts are received by Grace Cottage, the donor is thanked, and the next of kin is notified of the gift. (The amount given is never divulged.)

Donations have been received between August 16, 2016, and December 31, 2016 in memory of the following individuals:

David Abolafia  Rose & Joe Aivano  David Allbee  Harlan & Jessie Allbee  Alwin Ameden  Dale Ameden  Kjell Anker
Gene & Marie Avenia  Donna Ayers  Shirleean Babcock  Sylvia Ballantine  Christopher & Priscilla Ballou  Larry Ballou
Martha Banzinuk  Harold & Flossie Barber  Russ Barber  Theresa Barbeau  Joyce Barnes  Mollie Beattie  Jack & Shirley Benson
George & Marie Bibler  Burdette Bills  Cecil & Lydia Bills  Len Bills  Susan Wright Bristol  Michael Brooks  Mort Brooks
Norman Brooks  Roy & Margaret Brooks  Gladys Brown  William Edward Brown  Sam Bunker  Burbee Family  Dennis Butchko
Francis Capen  Charlene Clayton Carey  John & Emma Castle  Henry Conseguilla  Jan Chamberlain  Effie Chamberlin
Nancy Chard  Donald Clark  Bartholomew Clayton  Raymond & Charlotte Clayton  Jean Coburn  Harry & Luella Conklin
Chris Coleman  Phil Coleman  Ralph Coleman  Janice Cominoli  Walter & Doris Comstock  Neva Corse  Wendell Covey
Dottie Coyle  Robert Culver  John Daigle  Brian & Anna Marie Decker  Martha Desrochers  Richard & Mary Dexter
John Dittrich  Richard Dowley  Jean Drake  John & Geraldine Easton  Lilian Ebeling  Marjorie Eginton  Don Elliott
Victor English  Jacqueline Erwin  Brian D. Evans  Bryan & Ruby Evans  Doug & Alice Evans  Father John D. Evans  Jim Faas
Edith Field  Kenneth Flynn  Richard Flynn  John C. Follett  Hugh & Mary Folsom  John & Dorothy Formuto  Mary Evans Fox
Bertha Frothingham  Harold Fuller  John Kenneth & Catherine Atwater Galbraith  Gale Family  Roland Gould  Ellis Greenwood
Eric Griffiths  Dr. William Grossman  Val & Betty Guimond  Richard Haas  Bernice Hall  Charles & Ruth Hamilton
David Hamilton  Jim Heal  Emo Henrich  Florence Hicks  Jack Hill  Gerald Hoffman  Les & Ann Hohmann
George & Therma Holden  George Holden, Jr.  Laura Holobob  Stan Holt  Vance Hosford  Jean Hotchkiss  Herbert & Louise Howard
Lin Hecempra  Andrew Hudock  Ed Hurley  Silver Husky  Dr. John & Marge Jacobs  Jack & Hope Johnson  Bob Jones
Arnold & Claire Judd  Arnold Judd, Jr.  Jack Judge  Joe & Rose Keller  George & Eda Kent  Carlton Kenyon  Frankie Kershaw
Melba Harlan King  Everett Kingsbury  Henry Kingsbury  Thelma Kingsbury  Jan Kirby  Don Kessel  Otto & Bea Kleppner
Richard Lang  Richard Lapan  Murice Laselle  Frederick & Kathleen LaTaille  Frederick LaTaille, Jr.  Sally Lawrence  Don Leigh
Betty Ann Leonard  Sue Jane Lescher  Richard Libbey  Melissa Lipani  Barbara Litchfield  Joan Locke  Howard Lott
Warren & Irene Marcucci  Charlotte Marcy  Bill & Joan Martin  Gary Martin  Larry Martin  Lucille Martin  David & Pamela Mayer
Lester & Susan Mayer  Corwin & Gertrude McAllister  Joan McConnel  Dawn Brooks McCormick  McGee family members
Jim & Barbara McMennamin  Eva Merryman  Hans & Mary Meyer  Edward Miller  Verne Moberly  Art Monette
Arlo & Eleanor Monroe  Florence Moore  Esther Moseley  Jack Henry Murray  Edith & Ernest Nagel  Juanita Neathawk
Shirley Neathawk  Connie Nelson  Edward Nelson  Oscar Newell  Thomas Nicholson, Sr.  Lisa Young Noble  Linda Noyes
Mavis Oliver  Dr. Carlos & Ruth Otis  Janice Page  Mary Paradis  Lore Parks  Marion Parks  Jane Partilan  Phyllis Patrick
Jeremy Paulus  Chuck Pearson  Neil & Ruth Pelsue  Kim Perry  Mildred Danielski Petelle  Gladys Petersen  Esther Peterson
Iver Peterson  Kelli Peterson  Oliver Peterson  Irene Phelps  Earl Pickering  Celia Theresa Romano Pike  Hilary Williams Pike
Oscar & Bernadette Plumpay  Dick Plunkett  Ernest & Virginia Pomroy  Eli & Marge Prouty  Roy Putnam  Ann Rabinowitch
Betty Radens  Donna Rae  Leonard Randall  Gerhardt Rast  Jerome & Purlys Rawson  Dick Raymo  Helen Recchi
Bernard Record  Betsey Regan  Eva Reich  Marianne Reinemann  Lois Penner Riley  Esther Robinson  Ruby Robinson
Scott Robinson  Shirley Robinson  Frank Russ  Kenneth & Marguerite Ryan  Helen Salt  Hank Sanders  Beverly Scott
Patricia Seaton  Lorraine Meyer Schoelhorn  Donald Severance  Brinton Shine  Heidi Shine  Nathan & Anne Slater
Barbara Sclocum  Joan Smidt  Mildred Smith  Nelson Smith  Eric & Gert Spafford  Elizabeth Spencer  Ray Spencer  Targ Spencer
Donald Staib  Kirby Staib  Dr. Houston Stevens  Della Stowell  Janet Stowell  Kay Stratton  Jakov & Iva Sucic  Dan Sweet
Leona Tabell  Donna Tat  Ruth Teke  Edson & Mildred Tefft  George Temple  Lillian Thayer  Anne Tobey
George & Molly Tomlinson  Mary Torrey  Elaine Touchette  Samuel & Ruth Traison  Jim & Marjorie Trousdell  Henry Turner
Bill Uptegrove  Dr. Bill Wallace  Euphemia Wallace  Henry Wallstein  Miki Wasung  Larry & Mary Weir  Lenny & Bernice Welch
Irene Wener  Mona West  Barbara Whitcomb  Arlene P. White  David Williams  Doug Williams  Gus Williams
Jean Williams  Myrtle Wilson  David Winot  George & Jean Winston  Grace Wisnieski  Harry & Phyllis Wolff
Catherine Wright  Polly Wright  Bob Wysocki  Joan Zully

We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of these loved ones, and our appreciation to those who have given in their memories. When memorial gifts are received by Grace Cottage, the donor is thanked, and the next of kin is notified of the gift. (The amount given is never divulged.)
A great cure for the winter blahs is Grace Cottage’s Cabin Fever Online Auction, at www.32auctions.com/gracecottage. All proceeds from the Online Auction benefit Grace Cottage’s Patient Care Fund. Thanks to donations from individuals and businesses far and wide, a variety of gift certificates and items await your bid. A luncheon sail for four on the Mystic Whaler, a catered dinner at your home for 6 guests, mention in mystery writer Archer Mayer’s upcoming book, a week in a private waterfront home in Mexico, a photo safari in South Africa, a 2017/18 season ski pass at Mount Snow, a localvore dinner for 4 at the home of Grace Cottage’s CEO, artwork by local artists Caryn King and Georgie Runkle – over 70 items are included in this year’s Auction.

Go to www.32auctions.com/gracecottage to register so that you can be part of the exciting bidding process. The Cabin Fever Auction will end promptly at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28th.

A donor writes:

“This donation is in honor of the staff of Grace Cottage for all their friendly and loving care that I wish a New York hospital would provide!”

Arlene Ribler
Brooklyn, NY & Wardsboro, VT

A supporter writes:

“This gift is named in memory of my late husband, Jack Lambert, as well as in honor of Kerry Caponcelli, a wonderful, compassionate nurse. While Jack was in the Grace Cottage hospice room, on the last day of his life, Kerry not only took care of his physical comfort but was able to bring a smile to his face. I’m forever grateful to her for that wonderful memory in a time of such sadness.”

Elaine Murice Lambert
Newfane, VT

A grateful patient writes:

“I would like to take this opportunity to commend the wonderful work done at Grace Cottage. Marvelous care was provided to my husband Ray at the time of his death, and my care for years under the care of Louise McDevitt has been marvelous.

As a former nurse it has been my privilege (and sometimes not) to work with many medical care providers. Those from Grace Cottage are far and away among the very best and I feel very privileged to call Louise my provider. I’ve been in nursing 50 years and I still learn things when I go to Grace Cottage!”

Julie Merrigan
Brattleboro, VT

A luncheon day-sail for 4 people on the Mystic Whaler is up for bid.

Artist Georgie Runkle’s “Williamsville Covered Bridge” will go to the highest bidder.