

# COMFORT CARE

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.

SPRING/SUMMER  
2025

For information  
or to make a gift to  
the Aspirus Health  
Foundation in support  
of hospice care,  
call 715-847-2470.

## A HEARTFELT TRIBUTE TO COMPASSIONATE CARE: A SPECIAL GIFT TO HONOR A SPECIAL TEAM

For over 38 years, a beloved first-grade teacher from rural Wisconsin touched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and her cherished family. She and her husband were just four months shy of celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary when she passed while under the compassionate care of **Aspirus Hospice** in the Spring of 2024.

Her husband, still mourning the loss of his dear wife, soon found himself under the care of Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services. Remarkably, he was cared for by the same team members who had lovingly tended to his wife. The extraordinary kindness and dedication shown by **Jennifer Schreiber, Courtney Jones, Chaplain Michele Rein, and Judy Germain** deeply moved him, inspiring him to make a heartfelt donation to the **Aspirus Health Foundation** in their honor.

In a conversation with Kim Smerda, major gifts officer of the Aspirus Health Foundation, he expressed his profound gratitude for the care team: *"They have given such good care. I am currently enrolled in the program, and my wife passed away while under their care. The things they do signify they are all very good people. They are as kind as they are professional. They show that they care about you, and they are like a second family to me. I couldn't be more happy."*

His words reflect the deep impact hospice caregivers can have on individuals and their families. Jennifer Schreiber, social worker with



Photo left to right: Jennifer Schreiber, Judy Germain, Courtney Jones, and Chaplain Michele Rein

Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services, added, *"The experience of working with a married couple who are both under hospice care is not one we come across often. Fortunately, they both allowed our team to come alongside and help make their end-of-life care as comfortable as possible."*

*After his wife died, he remained at home and was determined to honor her memory and legacy and give meaning to her death - something loved ones often do in many different ways. We are fortunate and honored to have the opportunity to continue to be a part of his care today and be recognized by his loving and generous spirit."*

We extend our **heartfelt thank you** to the grateful patient for his generous donation in loving memory of his wife and in honor of Jennifer, Courtney, Michele, and Judy for their exceptional care. His donation directly supports Aspirus Hospice caregivers in their mission to provide comfort and dignity during end-of-life care and helps others receive the same compassionate support he and his wife received. **Together, we carry forward a legacy of compassion.**

## “TRANSFORMING GRIEF: EMBRACING CHANGE, HOPE, AND HEALING”

*By Troy LaRue, Mdiv, Bereavement Coordinator,  
Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services*

We are changed by a death to the extent the person who died is a person whom we loved. This is why we can go on with our day when the death toll of a catastrophe is listed in the news, and why a single death can devastate us. This is also why cliches and well-intentioned phrases may not be helpful, but hurtful. To experience loss and death is to experience an existential loss of love and a pain that cannot be immediately fixed or healed. We cannot change the outcome.

After the death of a loved one, our experience of life is completely changed. A person's schedule is upturned, which may have revolved for decades around the now deceased. The house where two lived, ate, laughed and sometimes argued is now overflowing with heavy silence. One's identity and the way in which one relates to life is completely impacted by a loss. As one experiences the joy of being able to describe themselves as a husband, wife,

father, mother, one also experiences new woundedness at now stating their status as a widow, widower, etc.

We are changed by these deaths, but change does not preclude the possibility of hope, growth, or even happiness. We carry the experiences of the deaths of our loved ones with us for the rest of our lives. Humans have the capacity for action and thus we can act in our environment. We carry our experiences of loss through our words and actions into every new situation. We carry a love which aches into every new friendship and experience, so in every new circumstance we can act with a fresh perspective about what matters most.

Even in the rawness of grief, there is an experience of undeniable honesty which no longer has time for pretense or inauthenticity. Grief and pain demand truth-telling; authenticity and honesty can bring about healing. In grief support groups, it is common for people to listen to the stories of others' loss and hear something true about their own experience, bringing a sense of connection and catharsis. It is in these small moments where people might witness the first seedlings of hope and growth, their lives have a future filled with new possibilities wherein they do not “get over” their loss but carry their love with them into life.

## ENHANCING COMFORT & CARE: SUPPORT THE ASPIRUS HOSPICE HOUSE WISHLIST

**Your generosity** can help enhance the quality of care and community of support provided to patients at the Aspirus Hospice House.

### WISHLIST ITEMS:

- **Portable Vitals Machine - \$3,200** – Enables quick, efficient health monitoring.
- **Community Bedrooms \$393 per night** – Helps provide compassionate end-of-life care for people who could not otherwise afford to stay in the Aspirus Hospice House.
- **Kitchen Refresh \$10,000** – Upgrading the kitchen to prepare meals in a welcoming, functional space.
- **New Blinds \$1,000 per room (approx.)** – Enhancing privacy and comfort, creating a more peaceful atmosphere for patients.

**Please consider making a gift in the enclosed envelope. Together, we can create a space filled with comfort and compassion.** For more information, contact us at 715.847.2470 or [ahf@aspirus.org](mailto:ahf@aspirus.org).



## UPCOMING GRIEF SUPPORT EVENTS

### SUMMER STEPPING STONE ART EVENT - JULY 31

1:00-3:00pm at Woodson Art Museum Wausau  
*Registration Required. Woodson Art Museum*  
715.845.7010

### FALL CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL WALK - SEPTEMBER 25

4:30-6:30pm at St. Anthony's Spirituality  
Center, Marathon City

### ONGOING GRIEF GROUP FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

5:00-6:00 pm Marathon County Public Library  
in Wausau

## DONOR SUPPORT ENSURES COMPASSIONATE END-OF-LIFE CARE AT ASPIRUS HOSPICE HOUSE

For many patients facing the final stages of life, the Aspirus Hospice House is more than just a place to receive care—it is a sanctuary of peace, dignity, and comfort. Through the generosity of donors, the Aspirus Health Foundation provides funding for community bedrooms at the Hospice House, ensuring patients without financial means can still receive the compassionate, high-quality end-of-life care they deserve.

With eight private bedrooms, the Hospice House offers a home-like environment where patients and their families can spend meaningful time together in a setting designed for comfort and support. In the past year, Aspirus Health Foundation has provided assistance to more patients than ever before, with as many as six of the eight rooms at a time occupied by patients receiving support through donor gifts that totaled more than \$200,000.

*“This incredible generosity allows us to care for patients who may have no other option,” said Carrie Hawro, Hospice Director at Aspirus. “The financial burden of end-of-life care should never stand in the way of dignity and comfort. Because of our donors, patients and their families can focus on what truly matters—spending their remaining time together in peace. We are beyond grateful for the gifts that make this possible.”*

The Aspirus Hospice House provides round-the-clock medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support, ensuring that each patient’s final days are met with comfort and respect. The need for this support continues to grow, and donor generosity is making a greater impact than ever before.

*“Helping patients at such a vulnerable time is one of the most meaningful ways we can make a difference in our community,” said Lanna Scannell, Aspirus Vice President of System Philanthropy. “Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we have the privilege to help offer this compassionate support, ensuring patients receive the care and comfort they need when they need it most.”*

## THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATIONS

In 2024, the generosity of our donors made a profound difference at the Aspirus Hospice House. Thanks to your donations, **1,528 days** of community bedroom stays were covered and each patient was provided comfort, support, and dignity with end-of-life care. Your gifts are truly making a difference in the lives of others when they need it most. ***Thank you for your continued support!***

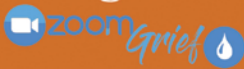
## DONATING YOUR TIME – HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services, bringing warmth, compassion, and joy to our patients and their loved ones. From providing companionship to bringing activities for families; from home cooked goodness to bringing gardens to life - our volunteers donate their time and make a tremendous impact every day in a variety of ways. Hospice volunteers spend their time at patients’ homes, at the Aspirus Hospice House in Wausau or the Seasons of Life Hospice House in Woodruff, and by supporting the *We Honor Veterans*® program for hospice patients.

Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services is always looking for more dedicated individuals to join our team and help us continue this vital work. If you have a passion for helping others and want to make a difference, we invite you to become a volunteer today. ***Your time and effort can truly change lives!*** For more information, call Gabrielle Theilman 715-847-2000 ext. 52436. Thank you!



## Wings Grief Groups



## AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2025

Registration is required for virtual groups and for in-person groups.  
In-person groups meet at the YMCA-The Landing.  
All sessions are open to members AND non-members.



**In-person: TUESDAYS**  
August 19, 26, September 2, 16, 23  
3:30 – 4:30 p.m. at the Landing

**Virtual: THURSDAYS**  
August 21, 28, and September 4, 11, 18  
6:00 – 7:00 p.m. CST

We live in a culture that avoids talking about loss and one that wants us to move quickly through mourning to become our former self. It's not easy to be comfortable with the uncomfortable subject but avoiding it will get us nowhere. Grief needs expression so it doesn't cause greater physical and emotional problems. Let's talk about how grief affects the body, mind and spirit. And how it affects relationships, challenges our common sense, and forever changes our lives. Giving sorrow words exposes the mysteries that make us feel vulnerable so we can move forward to embrace life in front of us. In this series, learn how silence defeats healing. Silence is not golden.

### SEPTEMBER 8 - 9 INPERSON-FALL SEMINAR: INVITED GUEST SPEAKER BEN WOLFE



**Seminar One:**  
**How Death Changes a Family through Grief, Loss, and New Beginnings** - A free community seminar offering Hope and Healing  
Monday, Sept 8, 2025 6:30–8:00 p.m.

**Seminar Two:**  
**Helping Individuals and Families Move from Coping and Surviving to Being Transformed and Thriving**  
A community seminar for self-care and professional development  
Tuesday, Sept 9, 2025 10 a.m.–Noon  
Pre-register to save a spot. Pay at the door. \$40  
Refreshments provided.

**Holiday Inn & Suites,**  
**1000 Imperial Ave., Rothschild WI**  
CEUS applied for both programs. For description and objectives, see [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

### HEALING THE WOUNDED HEART



**In-person: TUESDAYS**  
October 21, 28 & November 4  
3:30 – 4:30 p.m. at the Landing, YMCA

**Virtual: THURSDAYS**  
October 23, 30 and November 6  
6:00 – 7:00 p.m. CST

Grief isn't just an emotion. We may feel as though our heart is wounded and that affects every part of us. The pain can't be denied or ignored. Time can't 'fix it'. It may hurt less but it hurts differently. In every grief experience there is a connection between two forces that signal how we manage our pain. When we understand them, we can soften our approach to healing and live in a more heart-centered way. This program reveals the mystery behind those forces that everyone should know. The wisdom we gain from understanding these forces can restore peace and harmony. Trust that your heart was designed to grieve and heal. Grieving is a gift of the heart that teaches us to move from a heartbreaking experience to live with more empathy and inner strength.

3 Ways to Register: Online [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org) | Email [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com) | Phone 715.845.4159



Certified Grief  
Educator | Facilitator:  
Nan Zastrow  
[wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)  
715.845.4159

*Wings*<sup>™</sup>  
A Grief Education Ministry

  
**ASPIRUS**<sup>™</sup>

Thank you to our sponsors:

Brainard Funeral Homes  
Helke Funeral Home  
Peterson Kraemer  
Funeral Homes  
Ascend Funeral Home