

PEACEHEALTH PREPARES TO ‘LIGHT UP A LIFE’ THIS DECEMBER

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month, and PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center is gearing up for its 23rd annual Light Up A Life ceremony, which raises funds for these vital services.

This year’s ceremony will be on Dec. 8, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Florence Events Center.

The Light Up A Life ceremony offers local residents an opportunity to remember and recognize their loved ones. Stars may be purchased to honor a loved one who has died or someone special. The names will be attached to the stars, which are hung on a holiday tree. Stars of David are placed on a menorah table.

Recognition is also given during the “reading of the names” segment of the ceremony.

Peace Harbor’s Hospice and Palliative Care programs are overseen by Medical Director Stephen Kerner, DO. Although the hospital has provided hospice services for many years, the palliative care program is just two years old.

Dr. Kerner, who joined Peace Harbor 13 years ago, is a passionate promoter of palliative care and

tients who aren’t able to travel to the hospital.

Together, Dr. Kerner and his highly motivated team have built a successful community-based palliative care program that has bridged the gap for many patients who did not qualify for home health services and were not yet ready for hospice.

The program has greatly improved access to care for the most vulnerable patients, thereby reducing emergency department visits,

boosting home health and hospice referrals and improving end-of-life care across the care continuum.

Dr. Kerner attends all Hospice Advisory Board meetings, collaborating on ideas for providing hospice in rural, remote locations. He also helps with fundraisers — in fact, he’s in the process of compiling a memorial video for the Light Up A Life ceremony.

For more information about Peace Health Peace Harbor Hospice or the annual Light Up a Life celebration, call 541-997-3418.

Heartfelt House to open in June at RiverBend

As they celebrate Thanksgiving this week, families from as far away as Benton, Douglas and Coos counties say they’re grateful for the Heartfelt House, which is under construction on the RiverBend campus. The 20,208-square-foot house is slated to open in June. It will be a home away from home for out-of-town patients needing treatments in Eugene-Springfield and families of patients who require long stays at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Centers at RiverBend or University District.

The Heartfelt House will have 20 rooms: a 10-room wing for families of pediatric patients and a 10-room wing for families of adult patients.

“It’s one of the best things that could happen to RiverBend,” said Heather Swesso, a Sutherlin resident whose two daughters were born prematurely, requiring stays in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Her youngest, Paisley, born at 30 weeks, spent 78 days in the NICU at RiverBend after her birth in January 2016.

Swesso said she was lucky to be able to stay at her aunt’s house in Springfield during that time. But even the short drive from her aunt’s house to the hospital felt too long for the new mom eager to check on her fragile newborn.

When the Heartfelt House is completed, visiting a loved one will be as simple as a 5-minute walk across the street.

“It’s going to put so many peoples’ minds at ease because they’re going to be able to be right there,” Swesso said.

The Heartfelt House is a \$8.4 million project funded entirely through philanthropy. It is a collaboration between PeaceHealth, which will own the land and building, and Ronald McDonald House Charities, which will oversee day-to-day operations.

Guests will pay from nothing to a modest fee, depending on their circumstances. No one will be turned away because of inability to pay. That lessens the financial blow to families who already are dealing with the stress of illness, injury or other medical conditions.

Following a diagnosis of prostate cancer and surgery in June, Larry Wood, of North Bend, needed 40 radiation treatments over eight weeks.

He wanted to have the treatments in the Eugene-Springfield area. But he couldn’t commute from North Bend and the cost to stay in a hotel for two months — even at a discounted rate — was pro-



COURTESY IMAGE

hibitive.

Wood ended up staying at the Children’s Miracle Network/Lions Patient Family Guest House on Patterson Street, near University District.

“It was really nice,” Wood said. “They provide just about everything a hotel provides. You could do your own laundry. You share the kitchen. It’s kind of a family.”

Wood said he’s glad to hear that the Heartfelt House will have room for even more families.

The Heartfelt House anticipates serving up to 1,500 families a year, much more than the 300 a year the Patterson Street House could accommodate.

Dave and Sarah Hokama, of Corvallis, have been dedicated advocates for the Heartfelt House after their youngest daughter, Gracie, was born 13 weeks early at RiverBend in November 2015.

Sarah stayed at the Patterson Street guest house during Gracie’s three months in the NICU. She

said she wished she had been closer, so she could have spent more time at Gracie’s side.

“It’s exciting to be part of this, to see the pieces come together, and to think of the future families who will benefit from this,” she said after a recent tour of the Heartfelt House construction.

For more information on PeaceHealth and its programs, visit peacehealth.org. For more information on Ronald McDonald House Charities, visit www.rmhc.org.

Free native plants available for Siuslaw region waterfront properties

Since 2000, the Siuslaw Watershed Council (SWC) has given away thousands of free native plants every year to riparian landowners throughout the Siuslaw and Coastal Lakes Watersheds to promote water quality, salmon habitat and healthier streams.

Any property owner who has a creek flowing through their property, or who lives along one of the area’s lakes, may be eligible to receive free native plants from the SWC to help support water quality and fish habitat.

River and lakeside landowners also may be eligible to receive free native plants from the council this year, free of charge.

Native plants growing

along streams help reduce erosion, filter nutrients and keep the water cool for salmon, trout and other aquatic species.

Native plants are adapted to specific site conditions; the SWC has some resources available to help identify which plants will thrive alongside backyard creeks or lakes. Staff can also help advise landowners on plant selection and placement.

Call the SWC office to receive a brochure with more information on each available plant or visit www.siuslaw.org/native-plant-distribution.

Then determine which plants will work best for your site conditions and let the SWC know which

of these plants are on your wish list.

SWC staff can also help advise landowners on plant selection and placement. Send us your requests early because supplies are limited.

Priority is given to requests placed prior to Dec. 15, although the SWC will accept requests after this date. The distribution date is Saturday, Feb. 9, 2019.

For more information, visit siuslaw.org, call 541-268-3044 or email nativeplants@siuslaw.org.

This project is made possible through a grant from the Coast Range Stewardship Fund with the U.S. Forest Service and private individual donations.

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