Care CONNECTIONS

LifeCare Volunteer Newsletter

www.lifecarevolunteers.org

July 2026

A History of Service!

As our nation approaches the milestone of America 250, we find ourselves here at LCFL reflecting not only on 250 years of history, resilience, and shared purpose of our country, but also on the quiet, everyday acts of kindness that have defined our agency's history. The spirit, compassion, and service that has carried America forward lives on in each of you, our hospice volunteers. Each of you embodies these ideals in the most meaningful way, offering presence, comfort, and dignity to patients and families during life's most tender moments. In this time of national reflection, we are reminded that service does not always make headlines, but it always makes a difference.

We are deeply grateful for the countless ways you serve, whether sitting at a bedside, offering a listening ear, supporting families through uncertainty, or helping strengthen our agency and the broader community. Your commitment reflects the very best of what it means to care for one another, and your impact reaches far beyond each individual interaction. As we look ahead to celebrating America's 250th anniversary, we honor the legacy of service that has defined our nation and recognize that you are an essential part of that ongoing story. Thank you for your compassion, your time, and your unwavering dedication. You truly make a lasting difference in the lives of those we are privileged to serve.

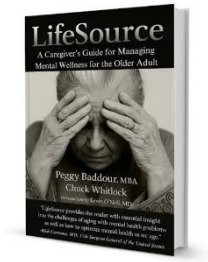
Upcoming Agency Calendar

July 4	Independence Day (LCFL offices closed on July 3)
August 3-4	Camp Voyager Kids' Grief Camp in Wilmington
August 19	Kids' Grief Camp in Jacksonville (in partnership with Hope for the Warriors)
August 29	Last Chance for White Pants Gala

Last Month's Zoom Calls Recap

On our ZOOM calls on June 15, we welcomed **Chuck Whitlock,** an award-winning investigative reporter and author. He is well-known for his work on national shows like *The Oprah Winfrey Show, The View, and Inside Edition.* He retired to Wilmington and has since served as an Adjunct Professor and Interim Director at UNCW.

During the call, Chuck discussed his book*, LifeSource: A caregiver's guide for Managing Mental Wellness for the Older Adult*. Chuck proved to be an engaging speaker who shared real stories, both cautionary and hopeful, exploring insights into the challenges of aging with mental health problems and those who care for them, as well as ways to optimize mental health as we age.



"***The aging process presents unique challenges to the individual, their families, and their caregivers. Reading LifeSource will give you hope, resources, and tools to effectively address the needs of those going through this later stage of life."***

Chuck has graciously donated copies of this book to the LifeCare Volunteer Department and there are copies at each care center including a designated copy for each front desk. If anyone is interested in borrowing a copy, please contact your volunteer coordinator.

This Month's In-Person Volunteer Meetings

Volunteer Spotlight

In Memory of Claire McNaught – Pet Therapy Volunteer

by Laura Long

Claire became a Brunswick Pet Therapy volunteer with LifeCare in August 2015 and let me know in mid-May that she would need to resign. She had an incredible connection with her pups, Izzy and Louie, and could teach them to do things I had no idea were even possible. Louie could actually read – really! Countless fortunate people witnessed that adorable dog perform whatever was written on the cards Claire showed him. Honestly, there were no other prompts – just the words on the card! And how adorable it was to hear him "speak" in his hospice voice.

Claire and Louie would come in every Christmas Day dressed as the Grinch and his dog Max, much to the delight of those spending the holiday at the care center. And who could forget seeing little Izzy on the front page of the *BEACON* in her Ruth "Barker" Ginsburg costume?!

After retiring from a successful career as an attorney, Claire devoted her life to spreading joy to those who needed it most. She and her pups will forever be among my most cherished memories from LifeCare – and from life in general. She came into the care center every Thursday morning to staff who anxiously awaited her visits and could always use her special brand of joy.

To say that I am devastated would be an understatement, but what a privilege it was to have crossed her path. I am thankful that she is no longer suffering and that she has been reunited with Izzy, who passed away a couple of years ago. Everyone who knew her will miss her terribly.

Well done, Claire. Well done.

Your Volunteer Department Team

Marti Deeter, Volunteer Services Lead – 910.902.9908/marti.deeter@lifecare.org
New Hanover, Pender, & Onslow Counties

Laura Long, Volunteer Programs & Veteran Coordinator – 910.620.5062/laura.long@lifecare.org
Brunswick, Columbus, Bladen, & Robeson Counties

Megan Campion, Administrative Coordinator – 843.848.6487/megan.campion@lifecare.org
All SC Counties

Susan Gough, Administrative Coordinator – 910.796.7942/susan.gough@lifecare.org
All counties serviced by LCFL

Moments that Matter

It was an honor to participate in the **Lumbee Tribe Veteran Stand Down** in Pembroke this past month. More than 250 veterans attended the event, which included a free catered lunch, health screenings, haircuts, and access to more than 30 organizations offering services and support for veterans. Our team was proud to share information about Lower Cape Fear LifeCare and our We Honor Veterans program, which recognizes the unique experiences and needs of those who have served our country. We also enjoyed raffling off a patriotic America 250 gift basket. Thank you to the organizers, volunteers, and community partners who helped make this meaningful event possible. Most of all, thank you to the veterans whose service and sacrifice continue to inspire us.

Recently, a group of **Cape Fear Community College** LPN students visited the Dr. Robert M. Fales Hospice Pavilion in Wilmington. Little did they know that they were going to get the surprise opportunity to meet one of our pet therapy dogs, Callum. We can tell from the huge smiles on their faces, Callum was a hit with students, as well as our patients and families!

We are grateful to the **B'nai Israel Sisterhood** for their generous $1,000 gift to Lower Cape Fear LifeCare, made possible through proceeds from the Joy of Art Show and Sale held earlier this year at the UNCW Burney Center. Gifts like this help ensure patients and families receive compassionate care, support, and guidance during some of life's most precious and vulnerable moments. As a community-based nonprofit, we reinvest every dollar in the care, programs, education, and services that support those we serve. Thank you to Alane Savod, Felice Zeldin, and the entire B'nai Israel Sisterhood for helping make a difference in our community!

Volunteer Announcements

Volunteer Engagement Survey

As the LCFL Volunteer Department truly values the time, compassion, and dedication you bring to your volunteer role, and we want to make sure your experience is as meaningful and rewarding as possible, we've decided to extend the deadline to complete your Volunteer Engagement Survey to July 15. It should only take you 5 minutes, and you may stay anonymous.

2026 Volunteer Engagement Survey – Fill out form

A Note from Susan

Happy summer and happy Fourth of July, everyone! It's an exciting time to celebrate, especially as our country gets closer to its 250th birthday.

For those of you I haven't met yet, I wanted to introduce myself. I'm Susan Gough, the new full-time Administrative Coordinator for the Volunteer Department. I've been here about a month now, and I'm so happy to be part of this wonderful organization. I'm a Wilmington native and recently moved back home after a 37-year detour through Washington, D.C., and Charleston, S.C. It feels great to be back, and I'm really looking forward to meeting and working with all of you.

One of the things I do is enter volunteer hours into our systems – and with more than 400 volunteers sending in hours, that keeps me busy! I'll be sharing helpful tips and tricks in future newsletters to make the process easier for everyone.

I'll also be helping with annual credentialing for the department. Be sure to check out the related article, "A Word About Annual Competencies & Credentials," in this newsletter for more details. And yes – chances are, you'll be hearing from me at some point! 😊

Most of all, please know how much we love and appreciate our volunteers. What you do for our patients and families matters so much, and we truly feel lucky to have you. I look forward to seeing you soon, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Thanks so much! ~ Susan

Last Chance for White Pants, August 29, 7-11p.m.

Tickets are now on sale for the region's most popular summer event (and our largest fundraiser)! Activities will include fabulous food, dancing, raffles, and oodles of fun. Check out http://www.whitepants.org for more information.

Marti's both/and

Reflections and recommendations on books, shows, and stories that remind us life is rarely just one thing

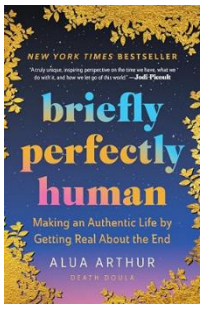
briefly perfectly human

by Alua Arthur

briefly perfectly human is a heartfelt, life-changing memoir by death doula Alua Arthur, who gently invites us to think about death in a way that helps us live more fully. Through intimate storytelling and her experiences supporting people at the end of life, she shares honest reflections on grief, love, and what truly matters. Her work highlights the importance of human connection, creating space for people to share regrets, fears, and even quiet joys in life's tender moments.

Some of the meaningful themes you'll find in this book:

- **A Guide to Living (and Dying) Well**: Thoughtful insights on how reflecting on the end of life can transform how we live each day.
- **Navigating Grief and Loss**: Powerful, personal stories that show the importance of acknowledging life's hardest moments.
- **Finding Purpose Through Service**: A moving example of how caring for others can shape a life's calling.
- **The Power of Human Connection**: Honest, sacred moments that remind us how much it means to truly be present for one another.



Marti's Review

briefly perfectly human resonated with me in many ways. As some of you know, four years ago, I began what I call my "third career" with LCFL, stepping into the world of hospice. I'll admit, I was a little intimidated at first…healthcare, especially hospice, felt filled with rules and structure. After 15 years in corporate America, life had always seemed very black and white. Then my second career as a small business owner in the arts opened me up to creativity, color, and connection. I wondered, *would this new chapter take me back to black and white again?*

I couldn't have been more wrong. And this book helped put words to that realization in such a meaningful way. Yes, there are guidelines and responsibilities, but there is also depth, humanity, and room for learning if we stay open to it. Alua Arthur beautifully captures the emotional, messy, deeply human side of this work, the part that reminds us why it matters so much.

One passage that really stayed with me is this: ***"But there were parts of me that still weren't being used: my emotional sensitivity, my penchant for the absurd, my love for humanity in all its messiness… I want to bear witness to the full, three-dimensionality of life instead: the confusion, the stubborn love and loyalty, the cognitive dissonance of it all. The both/and."***

For me, that "both/and" idea really captures what our work as volunteers (and this book) offers. It's thoughtful, honest, and ultimately very life-affirming. If you're open to reflecting on life, purpose, and connection in a deeper way, this is a beautiful and meaningful read. Thus, the new title of this and future reviews and musings…welcome to the *both/and*.

EDUCATION CORNER: PATIENTS RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Information you need to know!

Freedom, Dignity, and Care: Honoring Patient Rights

With the Fourth of July here, we're celebrating 250 years of the freedoms and protections outlined in our nation's Bill of Rights – principles like dignity, choice, fairness, and the right to be heard. While those rights apply to us as citizens, they also echo strongly in the care we provide every day. At LCFL, our Patient Rights and Responsibilities reflect many of these same values – ensuring every patient is treated with respect, compassion, and autonomy. As volunteers, we play an important role in supporting those rights, protecting boundaries, and helping patients and families feel empowered in their care. Let's take a closer look at how these rights guide what we do.

Did You Know?

Many patient rights mirror the spirit of our nation's Bill of Rights:

- **The right to be informed and involved in care** → just like the right to have a voice and be heard
- **The right to privacy and confidentiality** → similar to protections from unnecessary intrusion
- **The right to refuse treatment** → reflects personal freedom and autonomy
- **The right to file a complaint without fear** → echoes the freedom to speak up and seek fairness

Different setting…same core values.

LCFL Policy Highlight – Patient Rights and Responsibilities

POLICY:

Lower Cape Fear LifeCare (LCFL) has a responsibility to protect and promote the rights of our patients. Lower Cape Fear LifeCare will provide patients and their families with a written description of their rights and responsibilities at time of admission.

Lower Cape Fear LifeCare complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Lower Cape Fear LifeCare does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

PROCEDURE:

1. The agency will provide the patient or appropriate representative with a written description of the Patient Rights and Responsibilities information. Admission staff will review Patient Rights and Responsibilities verbally at or prior to admission.
2. The agency will ensure that the Patient Rights and Responsibilities information is written in a language that is easy to understand.
3. Minor patients and patients that are judged incompetent will have the Patient Rights and Responsibilities read to them and their representative.
4. Patients will also receive information regarding their right to develop an Advance Directive. The agency's policy on advance directives is provided upon admission.
5. The Patient Rights and Responsibilities information includes, but is not limited to:

    - To understand what services will be provided and the scope of those services
    - To know if there are limitations on the services for any reason
    - To receive the right care without discrimination as ordered by the doctor
    - To know beforehand the types of staff that will be providing the care, the frequency of visits, and any changes to the care plan
    - To be able to identify visitors and/or staff through proper identification
    - To participate in the development and updating of the plan of care
    - To refuse any care or treatment after getting an explanation of what may happen as a result
    - To refuse to participate in experimental research
    - To be informed of the expected outcome (s) of treatment and any barriers that will prevent reaching the outcome (s)
    - To know whether the services will be reimbursed under Medicare or other payer before care starts
    - To get verbally and in writing what the services will cost, including any anticipated payment from Medicaid, Medicare, insurance, or other third parties as well as how much you may be expected to pay
    - To be informed of the agency's ownership status and any relationship to another agency you are referred to
    - To be informed of any financial or other benefit to this agency when you are referred elsewhere
    - To receive effective pain and symptom management for your condition
    - To have one's person and property treated with respect, consideration, and dignity along with recognition of your individuality and cultural values
    - To choose your health care provider (s) and to change provider (s) without fear of reprisal or unfairness
    - To be informed of your rights under state law regarding Advance Directives
    - To be free from mistreatment of any kind, including exploitation, whether verbal, mental, sexual, or physical abuse as well as neglect, injuries of unknown source, and loss of property

- To be free to file a complaint or grievance regarding your care or lack of care including lack of respect for property by any person and not be subjected to discrimination for doing so
- To expect that your complaint or grievance will be considered and investigated
- To recommend that there be changes to policies and procedures, treatment, or staff
- To be informed of my responsibilities as a patient which is to participate in the plan of care process and comply with the recommended treatment
- To be free from physical restraint using medications unless they are prescribed by a doctor
- To have all your medical information kept confidential and private
- To be informed of the agency's policies and procedures regarding disclosing of clinical information and records

6. All LCFL staff and Volunteers are oriented to and become familiar with the hospice's policies and procedures on Patient Rights and Responsibilities during orientation, annual education, and through periodic updates as needed.

Volunteer Best Practices – Witnessing Legal Documents, Healthcare Power of Attorney

Witnessing Legal Documents – If comfortable, volunteers may be used as witnesses to health-care related documents such as Living Wills, etc., but are free to refuse for any reason. Volunteers shall not serve as a to witness documents related to financial/legal matters. Volunteers should not serve as a witness to any documents for patients/families to which they are assigned with whom they have had a prior or existing relationship.

Health Care/Power of Attorney Agents/Executors – Volunteers may not serve as a patient's or patient's family member's health care/durable/general power of attorney agent, or as a patient's or patient's family member's executor of the estate. If a patient or family member requests this, the volunteer will direct the patient and family member to discuss with the assigned social worker.

Volunteer Suggestion – Be Proactive

Be proactive – Offer tangible assistance to patients/families. Many people are afraid to ask something of a volunteer, but if it is offered, they will accept it. Also, they might not understand what a volunteer can even do…give them some options.

Preparing for the upcoming ACHC Accreditation Survey

Just a quick reminder that we are anticipating our next accreditation survey to occur for our NC service area later this summer. To prepare, we ask that you review the following information (it will also be placed in the binders at the Volunteer Front Desk at each Care Center for reference). If you have any questions, please contact the Volunteer Department!

ACHC Accreditation Survey – General Questions

What is ACHC?

- Accreditation Commission for Health Care
- ACHC is a nationally recognized accreditation organization (AO) with greater than 40 years of experience
- CMS (Medicare) Deeming Authority

How will you know the surveyor is arriving?

- The surveyor will show up unannounced at the office of their choice typically at 8 am.
- Upon arrival they may ask the following questions:
  - What are normal business hours?
    - 8-5 M-F; On-call staff are available 24 hours a day, 7days a week.
  - How would someone contact the hospice after hours?
    - Dial the hospice on-call number 1-800-379-4880
  - If you are asked about any patient's PHI when the surveyor arrives – do not provide the surveyor with any specific patient information/PHI information. Once the surveyor has completed the initial conference, patients will be selected for review.

What should you do and who should you notify if you are the first person to greet the surveyor upon their initial arrival?

- Introduce yourself to the ACHC surveyor and ask them for ID
- Ask the surveyor to wait in the waiting room and locate a staff member immediately

How do you introduce yourself to an ACHC surveyor?

- Always wear your ID name badge
- State your name and advise them that you are a volunteer and locate a staff member

How should a surveyor introduce themselves to you?

- State their name
- State what agency they are from
- Show you their ID information (ask for this if they do not willingly show this). Do not answer any questions or allow them access to the office if they do not show ID.

How are patients informed of their rights and responsibilities?

- Patients are informed of their rights at the admission visit.

What are some examples of patient rights?

- Dignity and Respect
- Decision Making (i.e. developing a plan of care, advanced directives, change of staff)
- Pain & Symptom Management
- Quality of Care
- Privacy (i.e. confidentiality of medical record, release of information)
- Financial (i.e. charges not covered by insurance, hospice ownership status)

Where can a patient find a list of their rights?

- The Patient's Bill of Rights is in the "Your Guide to Hospice" Admissions Handbook

What is the mission statement? (it is okay to read this, no need to memorize)

- LCFL MISSION: To provide access to the highest quality LifeCare, education and supportive services to our patients, their families, and the communities we serve.
- *This is also on the back of your badge/name tag*

What is HIPAA and PHI?

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
- Personal Health Information

Who can see patient information?

- Remember PHI is on a "Need to Know" basis. If it is essential that you need to know this information for the care of the patient to do your job. If not, you do not need to know.

What do you say if asked questions about a patient by someone outside of LCFL?

- Let them know - *We cannot give any information per HIPAA rules.*

ACHC Accreditation Survey – Reminders from June issue of Care Connections

- We ask you to be diligent in your patient visits. We submit *frequencies* as part of care plans that state volunteers are to visit 1-4 times per month. If we don't do that, if volunteers visit more or less than 1-4 times, we are operating outside the care plan and consequently, we are out of compliance.
- We ask you to be diligent in your documentation. If it isn't documented, it didn't happen.
- We ask you to be diligent in your annual competencies, credentials, and training. These include things like TB forms, evaluations, policy reviews, and ongoing education.

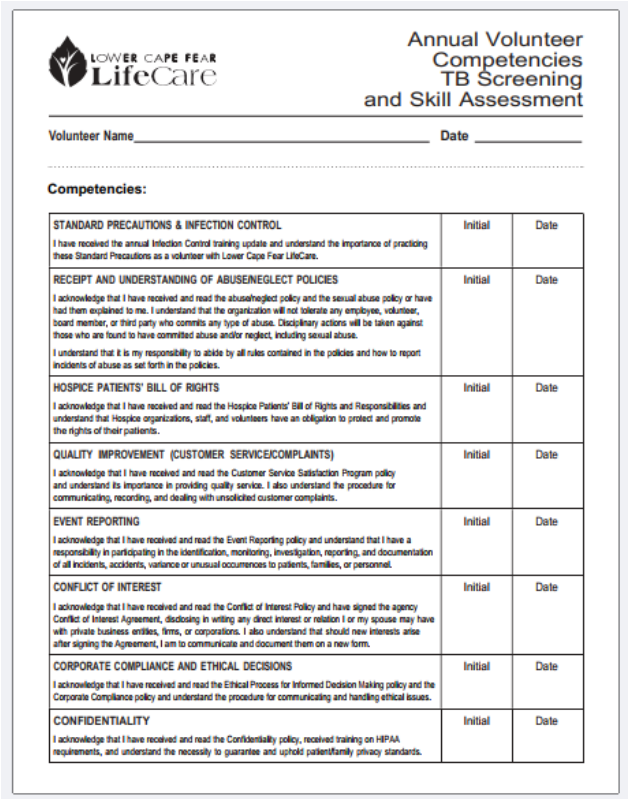
A word about Badges/Name Tags:

- Please always wear your badge during any volunteering activity with LCFL
- On the back of the actual badge is the mission statement and agency contact information (note: you will need to take the badge out of its plastic sleeve as it may be covered by the Volunteer Department QR code you use to submit your activity logs)
- Agency contacts have changed in the past few weeks, and we will be providing small stickers to update the information during the in-person volunteer meetings this month
- Lost your badge? Please request a new one by contacting the Volunteer Department

A word about Annual Competencies & Credentials (aka Annual Assessments):

- Definition: Volunteer credentials are the requirements to volunteer. There are three standard credentials required, along with any optional dependent on volunteer role. Every volunteer has a different date when these annual credentials are due.
    - **Competencies**: Volunteer acknowledgement of LCFL policies
    - **TB Screening**: Six questions related to current health status to rule out TB
    - **Skills Assessment**: Completed by the Volunteer Coordinator
- It is important that you are up to date on your annual credentials, and we have many that are outstanding so please help us in completing these as soon as possible.

- The form looks like this:



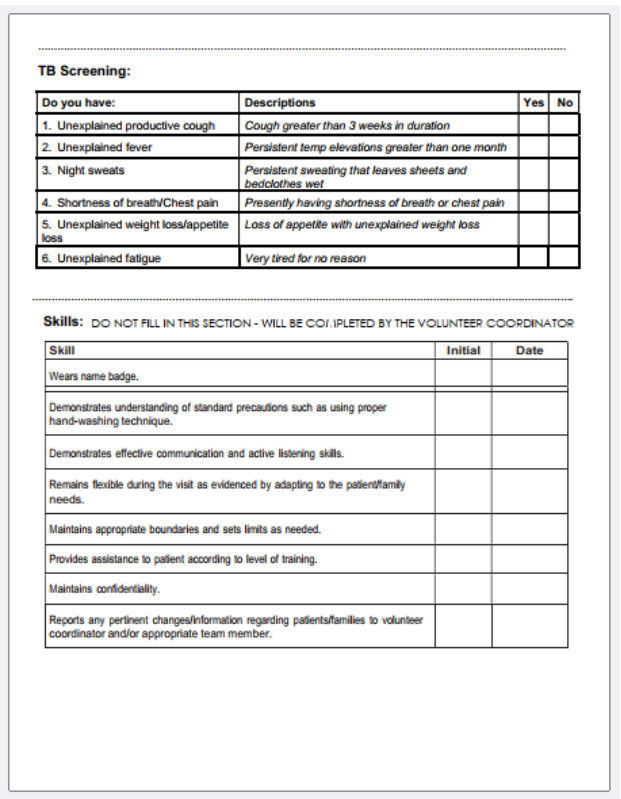
LOWER CAPE FEAR LifeCare

Annual Volunteer Competencies TB Screening and Skill Assessment

Volunteer Name_____ Date _____

Competencies:

STANDARD PRECAUTIONS & INFECTION CONTROL I have received the annual Infection Control training update and understand the importance of practicing these Standard Precautions as a volunteer with Lower Cape Fear LifeCare.	Initial	Date
RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF ABUSE/NEGLECT POLICIES I acknowledge that I have received and read the abuse/neglect policy and the sexual abuse policy or have had them explained to me. I understand that the organization will not tolerate any employee, volunteer, board member, or third party who commits any type of abuse. Disciplinary actions will be taken against those who are found to have committed abuse and/or neglect, including sexual abuse. I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by all rules contained in the policies and how to report incidents of abuse as set forth in the policies.	Initial	Date
HOSPICE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS I acknowledge that I have received and read the Hospice Patients' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and understand that Hospice organizations, staff, and volunteers have an obligation to protect and promote the rights of their patients.	Initial	Date
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CUSTOMER SERVICE/COMPLAINTS) I acknowledge that I have received and read the Customer Service Satisfaction Program policy and understand its importance in providing quality service. I also understand the procedure for communicating, recording, and dealing with unsolicited customer complaints.	Initial	Date
EVENT REPORTING I acknowledge that I have received and read the Event Reporting policy and understand that I have a responsibility in participating in the identification, monitoring, investigation, reporting, and documentation of all incidents, accidents, variance or unusual occurrences to patients, families, or personnel.	Initial	Date
CONFLICT OF INTEREST I acknowledge that I have received and read the Conflict of Interest Policy and have signed the agency Conflict of Interest Agreement, disclosing in writing any direct interest or relation I or my spouse may have with private business entities, firms, or corporations. I also understand that should new interests arise after signing the Agreement, I am to communicate and document them on a new form.	Initial	Date
CORPORATE COMPLIANCE AND ETHICAL DECISIONS I acknowledge that I have received and read the Ethical Process for Informed Decision Making policy and the Corporate Compliance policy and understand the procedure for communicating and handling ethical issues.	Initial	Date
CONFIDENTIALITY I acknowledge that I have received and read the Confidentiality policy, received training on HIPAA requirements, and understand the necessity to guarantee and uphold patient/family privacy standards.	Initial	Date



TB Screening:

Do you have:	Descriptions	Yes	No
1. Unexplained productive cough	*Cough greater than 3 weeks in duration*		
2. Unexplained fever	*Persistent temp elevations greater than one month*		
3. Night sweats	*Persistent sweating that leaves sheets and bedclothes wet*		
4. Shortness of breath/Chest pain	*Presently having shortness of breath or chest pain*		
5. Unexplained weight loss/appetite loss	*Loss of appetite with unexplained weight loss*		
6. Unexplained fatigue	*Very tired for no reason*		

Skills: DO NOT FILL IN THIS SECTION - WILL BE COMPLETED BY THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Skill	Initial	Date
Wears name badge.		
Demonstrates understanding of standard precautions such as using proper hand-washing technique.		
Demonstrates effective communication and active listening skills.		
Remains flexible during the visit as evidenced by adapting to the patient/family needs.		
Maintains appropriate boundaries and sets limits as needed.		
Provides assistance to patient according to level of training.		
Maintains confidentiality.		
Reports any pertinent changes/information regarding patients/families to volunteer coordinator and/or appropriate team member.		

- When the due date approaches, we send a 'heads up' email prior to sending the DocuSign for you to complete electronically (it takes no longer than 5 minutes!)
- Our new Volunteer Department Administrative Coordinator, Susan Gough, will be handling annual credentialing going forward. Please watch for emails from Susan with the subject "LCFL Volunteer Annual Assessment due" and the subsequent DocuSign documents to complete. The body of the email reads:

You will receive an email from "Susan Gough via DocuSign" with the subject "Annual Lower Cape Fear LifeCare Volunteer Assessment" with one document to complete. Please note the link does expire, and we request that this form be completed as soon as possible upon receipt. The form should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

Volunteers Needed – Sign Up Here

Wilmington Care Center (HCC)

Front desk coverage: Sign up here
Visit patients and families: Sign up here
Pet and music therapy: Sign up here

Brunswick Care Center (BCC)

Front desk coverage: Sign up here
Pet and music therapy: Sign up here

Whiteville Care Center (WCC)

Front desk coverage: Call (910) 642-9051

Wilmington Corporate Office

Assembly of admission packets: Sign up here

Almost Done

A few important reminders and announcements before you go

- Reply "I read it" to this email so you can get credit for your time; **DO NOT** "reply all".
- Be sure to log your volunteer hours in a timely manner so they are officially documented: https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=AiIQ3MDJZUqrlesoy5OuDJEJNQJkCLhMvE_E6EH0sbxUNjI5VUwzNDVSQkE3WElSVlA2WU9DNEo2Wi4u
- If you know of a local professional looking for a meaningful career in end-of-life care, please contact us. We are looking to fill open positions for nurses, nursing assistants, and several clinical roles across our entire service area.
- If you are part of a church, civic club, or other community organization, contact Jason Clamme (Jason.Clamme@LifeCare.org) for possible education and outreach programs.
- All things LCFL volunteering can be found here: Volunteer website
- If you are on social media, please like and follow Lower Cape Fear LifeCare.