Care CONNECTIONS

LifeCare Volunteer Newsletter

www.lifecarevolunteers.org

June 2026

Hello Summer!

June always feels like a bit of a shift…longer days, warmer air, and a natural invitation to slow down and take things in. In hospice care, that reminder hits a little deeper. It's in simple, meaningful moments that you make such a difference.

We're often reminded of that through the words of the families you serve. One shared, *"You didn't try to fix anything—you just showed up, and that meant everything to us."* Another wrote, *"Your kindness brought a sense of peace into a really difficult time. We'll never forget it."* These small acts of presence and compassion stay with people long after the moment has passed.

As we move into summer, we just want to say thank you. The warmth you bring to each visit reflects the season in the best way. You truly make a difference, even in ways you may never fully see.

Finally, we'd like to extend a heartfelt Happy Father's Day to all the amazing dads in our volunteer family. Wishing you all a day filled with well-deserved appreciation and gratitude.

Upcoming Agency Calendar

June 6	Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event – Jacksonville
June 15	Volunteer Zoom calls (10a.m. and 6p.m.) – notice change of date
June 19	Begin the Conversation clinic (10a.m.) – Wilmington home office
June 21	Father's Day
June 23	Camp Voyager (kids grief camp) – Robeson County
July 4	Independence Day (LCFL offices closed on July 3)

Zoom calls recap

If you were unable to attend the calls in May, here is a short summary for your reading enjoyment:

Volunteer Support Meeting Summary – May 11

Volunteer Support Meetings were held via Zoom on May 11 at both 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Jason Clamme facilitated both sessions in the absence of Marti and Laura, who were on vacation.

During the morning session, we were pleased to welcome new CEO Karen Miller, who introduced herself to volunteers and shared a brief overview of the agency's goals and vision for the coming years.

The featured speaker for both calls was Doronda Garm, who leads the Quality Department here at LCFL. Doronda provided an overview of ACHC, our accrediting organization, including why accreditation is important, what survey results indicate, and how staff and volunteers play a role in maintaining compliance. She also outlined ways volunteers can help ensure readiness for our upcoming accreditation audit this summer. (There is more later in the newsletter as well as last month's edition.)

Jason shared additional organizational updates, with more detail and conversation during the evening session. Topics included current census trends, average length of stay, market share, and information related to the Certificate of Need.

Both meetings concluded with general agency announcements and updates.

This Month's Zoom Calls

Monday, June 15, at 10am and 6pm

Please note that this is one week later than we usually meet!

Meeting ID: 294 719 8640
Pass code: Volunteer (this password is case sensitive)
Phone only: 646-931-3860
https://us04web.zoom.us/j/2947198640?pwd=q08fyXsaP2S02AdquJqlPCB7TCdjQ8.1

We look forward to seeing you all on this month's calls.

Volunteer (and now staff) Spotlight

Susan Gough: Administrative Coordinator – Volunteer Services

Please join us in welcoming **Susan Gough** to the LCFL team! Susan brings with her a wealth of life experience and a heart for service that aligns beautifully with our mission. Born and raised right here in Wilmington, Susan recently returned home after spending the past 18 years living in Washington, DC and Charleston. We're thrilled to have her back in the community she knows and loves.

Susan's professional journey has taken her in several directions. She spent time as a flight attendant with American Airlines, owned and operated her own wedding planning business, and worked with a hospice organization, where her passion for caring for patients and families developed. In fact, Susan first joined LCFL as a volunteer, dedicating 4–5 weeks of her time before stepping into her new role as a coordinator. Her desire to serve and connect with patients and families has already made a strong impression.

Outside of work, Susan enjoys a variety of creative and social activities, including mahjong, floral design, and dancing. She is also a proud mom to her 23-year-old son, a recent graduate of Appalachian State University, and she shares her home with Mellie, her beloved 14-year-old basset hound. Susan lives by the words, *"Be kind to everyone you meet—you never know what someone is going through,"* a philosophy that shines through in her approach to life and work.

Susan is excited to be part of LCFL because of our impactful mission and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of patients and families. We are so fortunate to have her on our team and look forward to the compassion, energy, and dedication she brings. Please join us in giving Susan a warm welcome!

Your Volunteer Team

Marti Deeter, Lead Volunteer Services Coordinator – 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 - 910.602.9993/susan.gough@lifecare.org
All counties service by LCFL

Moments that Matter

Our patient, Ms. Etta, worked as the Transportation Coordinator at Laney High School many years ago, where one of the students she knew well was Michael. Ms. Etta had a special bucket list wish... to hug Michael's neck one more time. After several attempts to reach the former student, Wendy, a LifeCare social worker, received a call from an unknown number and heard, "Is this, Ms. Etta?" It was Michael Jordan.

Wendy was home during this early evening, but she jumped in her car and drove to Ms. Etta's so they could FaceTime. They laughed, reminisced, picked at each other, and shared a moment that brought tears to everyone in the room. A memory her family will carry with them forever.

UPDATE: The Facebook version of this story quickly spread far beyond our region, becoming the most viewed and shared social media post in LifeCare history. **More than 500,000 people have now viewed the story**, with 95% of those views coming from people who did not already follow our page. The post has generated more than 10,000 interactions and nearly 800 shares, reaching communities well beyond southeastern North Carolina.

More importantly, people connected with the heart of this hospice story.

Comments poured in from across the country praising Wendy and other LifeCare teammates, celebrating Ms. Etta, sharing personal hospice experiences, and expressing gratitude for the compassionate moments that happen every day across our organization. Several news outlets reached out to share the story, helping shine a light not just on this special moment, but on the heart of hospice care itself.

Earlier last month, LCFL helped celebrate Ms. Jane with a special **Bucket List** wish. She celebrated with three parties and a gathering of her entire neighborhood in her front yard to sing Happy Birthday!

In her honor, her family also gave back to the community through donations to local organizations she cared about. LifeCare staff donated four bags of food and four bags of gently used clothing to support her wish, including donating to Vintage Values, where she once worked.

Last month, a group of LifeCare teammates participated in another community volunteer activity. Our team spent a day supporting **Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity**. Working alongside the homeowner, Simone, they enjoyed the opportunity for team building while installing hardware and fixtures in the new home. LCFL is proud to support other nonprofits making positive impacts on the lives of others!

Volunteer Announcements

Volunteer Engagement Survey

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. To help us do that, we're inviting you to complete our Volunteer Engagement Survey. Your feedback plays an important role in helping us understand what's working well and where we can grow, so we can continue to support you in the best ways possible.

The survey should only take a few minutes to complete and will be open throughout the month of June. You're welcome to submit your responses anonymously, or you can choose to include your name if you'd like us to follow up with you directly. You can access the survey via your computer below or scan the QR code above on your phone.

Thank you for taking the time to share your voice. Our volunteers are incredibly important to us, and your input makes a difference.

2026 Volunteer Engagement Survey – Fill out form

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. What does that mean for you as volunteers? Thanks for asking. It means…

- 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.

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 TV Series Review – The Big C

At first glance, *The Big C* might make you think of confidentiality—our very important "C" here at LCFL. But in this case, the "C" stands for something else entirely: cancer. Recommended to me by two of our wonderful volunteers (thank you, Carrie Bogart and Bev Case!), I recently watched this series on Netflix—and I absolutely loved it.

The show follows Cathy, a woman navigating life after a terminal cancer diagnosis. While there are plenty of moments of humor (and yes, some scenes are a bit raunchy), what makes this series so powerful is how real it feels.

It doesn't shy away from the hard parts:

- The emotional weight of a life-limiting illness
- The complexity of family dynamics
- The reality of hospice care
- The quiet, often unspoken experience of anticipatory grief

One line that really stayed with me was, *"You can't control what happens to you, but you can control how you respond to it."* Does this sound familiar?

As volunteers, we are invited into these deeply personal spaces in people's lives. One of the most striking themes in *The Big C* is how much of this journey happens behind closed doors, shared only with a trusted few. That's where our "other C" comes back into focus: confidentiality.

Cathy's story is a reminder that:

- People process illness in very personal ways
- Not everything is meant to be shared widely
- Trust is built when sensitive information is respected and protected

Just like in the series, the individuals and families we serve are living through profound, vulnerable moments. Our role includes honoring that vulnerability by keeping their stories private.

Marti's Final Thoughts

The Big C will make you laugh, tear up, and reflect…sometimes all at once. It's not always polished, and it's not always comfortable, but it is deeply human. If you decide to watch, just know it's a little edgy at times, but also incredibly honest and, in many ways, beautifully aligned with the work we do every day.

💙 Have something you've watched, read, or listened to that connects to hospice care or volunteering? I'd love to hear your recommendations!

EDUCATION CORNER: CONFIDENTIALITY

Information you need to know!

Confidentiality might not sound exciting, but it *is* one of the most important ways we care for patients and families. Think of it as a promise: what you learn in your role as a volunteer stays protected. Let's break it down:

A few acronyms to know

- **PHI**: *Protected Health Information* - anything that could identify a patient and relates to their care
- **NPP:** *Notice of Privacy Practices* - explains how patient information may be used and shared
- **HIPAA:** *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* - the federal law that protects patient privacy and health information

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LCFL Policy Highlight – Confidential Information

POLICY: Lower Cape Fear LifeCare (LCFL) and its employees will treat all information relative to patients and LCFL business as confidential, and employees will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge for breaches of confidentiality or violation of the organization's privacy/security practices. Training in confidentiality is mandatory for all employees….and volunteers!

Definition of Terms:

a. Confidential Patient Information: Information that concerns the patient's presence or relating to the diagnosis, medical or mental history, prognosis, treatment, personal finances, personal data, family situation is to be considered confidential, privileged and not subject to disclosure. It is to be discussed only by those involved in the planning and delivering of care.

b. Confidential LCFL Information: Confidential information and types covered by the policy include electronic and computerized information, telephone and cell phone communications and verbal and faxed information. Information that is considered to be confidential is involving LCFL and its operations. It includes personnel actions, home addresses or phone numbers, work schedules, salary or financial information and operational matters that would not be matters of public record. These may be discussed only in the normal course of business.

c. Breach: A breach of confidentiality occurs when an employee of LCFL reveals or makes available information that is confidential in nature to individuals who would not normally have reason, need to know, or have access to this information.

PROCEDURE:

1. Confidential information may be related to patients or to the business aspects of LCFL. All information considered to be confidential must not be revealed in any way. This information is only to be discussed or used as required in the normal course of business.
2. All patient information is to be kept confidential unless there has been written permission given by the patient or appropriate family member for the release of that information. Refer to Medical Records policies.
3. Information regarding employees will not be given (verbally or written) without permission of the employee.
4. All inquiries from the news media about LCFL and/or its patients will be referred to the President & Chief Executive Officer or Chief of Marketing and Engagement. It is not the intent of this policy to prohibit the disclosure of information that is routinely available to the public.
5. All information located in LCFL information systems is to be held in confidence in accordance with the policies and procedures developed by the Information Systems Department.

Volunteer Best Practices

- **Keep it private:** Any patient/family information you learn as a volunteer stays with you.
- **Pause before you share:** Even casual conversations (in elevators, restaurants, or at home) can unintentionally reveal private information.
- **When in doubt, don't share:** It's always okay to say, *"I'm sorry, I'm not able to share that information."*
- **Redirect questions:** If someone asks about a patient, kindly guide them to contact the patient or family directly.
- **Protect details:** Avoid using names, locations, or identifying details—even in stories meant to be positive.
- **Documentation:** Be sure to secure any notes or paperwork that may have patient information on it.

A Simple Rule to Remember

If you learned it through volunteering, don't repeat it outside of care.

Confidentiality isn't just a policy, it is respect, dignity, and trust in action.
And every time you protect it, you're making a meaningful difference.

EDUCATION CORNER #2: HEAT SAFETY

Even more information you need to know!

Outdoor events:
To prevent heat-related illness while volunteering outdoors, drink about 1 cup of water every 20 minutes and take frequent, shaded breaks or get into cool air when possible. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing and broad-spectrum sunscreen.

Indoor patient visits without A/C:
During periods of excessive heat, visiting patients with no air conditioning can put you into similar conditions as being outside. Although you may have shade, the heat can still take a toll.

Tips to remember:

- Stay hydrated – bring a water bottle. Avoid sugary and/or caffeinated drinks. Water can be combined with savory snacks to replace salt & minerals.
- It's OK to shorten a visit or schedule for earlier in the morning when temps are cooler.
- Don't rely solely on fans to keep you cool. While fans might provide some comfort, they won't prevent heat-related illness during extreme conditions. *In temps above 90 degrees a fan can increase body temperature!*
- Open windows for ventilation
- Dress for the weather - wear loose-fitting and lightweight clothing.

Personal risk factors
Some people are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Personal risk factors include medical conditions, being 65 years or older, lack of physical fitness, previous episodes of heat-related illness, alcohol consumption, drugs, and use of certain medications.

Concerned for your patient?
If you have general concerns, please reach out to the patient's social worker or nurse. If you have urgent concerns, please call our 24/7 triage line at 1-800-379-4880.

And don't forget the pets! A cool (not ice cold) bowl of water can ease their discomfort as well!

Did you know?
Heat stroke doesn't always involve heavy sweating. In fact, the skin can actually be dry! In severe cases, the body's cooling system fails, which may stop it from sweating altogether. This is a critical warning sign that help is needed.

Useful Information
For additional information and resources related to heat-related safety, visit the American Red Cross at: https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/extreme-heat-safety.html

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 (910.796.7943) 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.