



Hildegard  
House



## Mission in Action: Dying with Dignity

One day last fall, Karen Cassidy, our Executive Director, received a call from a Hosparus nurse asking if Hildegard House had a room available. We did have a room and so the nurse asked us to meet her patient, Jim.

The nurse provided Karen his phone number and advised that Jim had end stage liver cancer. He lived in deplorable conditions, a filthy house where he slept on a couch. People came in and out all the time, day and night, some just stopping in for a shower on their way to or from work. He had no privacy. Moreover, he was at the end of his life. Then she explained the biggest challenge. The house where Jim lived had bed bugs.

Karen set up an appointment to meet with Jim. He was clear that Karen could not come in the house and that the meeting would occur on the front steps of his house. As they talked, Jim told his story. He was very weak, dirty and a little shy. He shared that he was a Vietnam Veteran that had served in the Navy.

Karen explained that we would work with him to find a way for him to live at Hildegard House, but that he couldn't bring anything with him. He looked at her sadly and said, "I have already found a home for my dog. I guess I'm not even going to be able to bring my new TV?" It was difficult to say no. But Jim wanted to come to live at Hildegard House.

He took a cab and arrived at Hildegard House the next afternoon.

We met him at the front door. He took everything out of his pockets – wallet and keys. He took off his glasses and watch. We put them in a plastic bag. He left his flip-flops at the door. Two male volunteers took him to the shower and gave him fresh new clothes.

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ISSUE 02

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SPRING  
2017

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# Mission in Action: Dying with Dignity

He settled in happily. We couldn't get him to stop saying "Thank you!" He loved his room, the food, the volunteers, the attention and care. He didn't own a thing in the world, but he was so grateful. He called Hildegard House "the best bed and breakfast in town."

Jim had a wry sense of humor and was a real storyteller. We got attached to him. Did I mention he said "Thank you!" a million times?

Three weeks after he came to live with us, Jim died. We had a small memorial service for him in our courtyard garden. A veterans group assisted us in getting him a proper military burial. A motorcade down Dixie Highway and a color guard at the Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Radcliffe. They took up a collection for his burial plot. Veterans lined the sidewalk as his flag covered casket was carried in for a brief service. Several of his friends attended. One friend brought his dog who sported an American flag around his neck. We all shed a few tears.

This is the mission of Hildegard House. Providing a home and compassionate care for individuals at the end of life who have no home or loved ones to care for them so that they may die with dignity.

Since August 2016, we have had the honor of serving 21 individuals during their last months and days. It would not be possible without the generosity and financial support of so many people. Thank you!



## Interested in Volunteering?

Volunteers are the heart of Hildegard House. Are you interested in volunteering?

Compassionate Companions provide care to residents just as a family member would at home – making lunch, doing laundry, or administering medication. We ask for a commitment of at least one five-hour shift per week. The next training program is Friday May 12, 6-8p.m. and Saturday May 13, 9-4p.m. If you would like to attend, fill out the form on the website [www.hildegardhouse.org](http://www.hildegardhouse.org)

or call Abbie Trowbridge  
at 502-581-8267

or email Abbie at  
[Atrowbridge@hildegardhouse.org](mailto:Atrowbridge@hildegardhouse.org)

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## Wish List

Lightbulbs  
Heavy duty extension cords  
Work gloves

Toilet bowl cleaner  
Dry swifter cloths  
Pledge

Hand soap (pump bottles)  
Plastic cutlery  
Bottled water  
Canned soda

## Executive Director's Message



“You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”

These words are from Cicely Saunders, the founder of hospice care, and this is what we practice at Hildegard House every day.

Recently, the Board of Directors reaffirmed our mission, vision and values.

**Mission** - We provide a home and compassionate care for individuals at the end of life who have no loved ones to care for them so that they may die with dignity.

**Vision** - A world where every dying individual has access to comfort, dignity and someone who cares.

**Values** - We believe.....

- Every dying individual should have as much relief from pain as possible
- No one should have to die alone or lonely
- A loving home enables death to be a part of a personal story rather than a medical event
- Dignity and comfort are an important part of the end of life
- Every person's life is sacred even to the last moment
- Hospice and other organizations are valuable partners
- We are a vital resource to the community and can rely on its support

Thank you for your support of our mission of compassion. I'd love to hear from you! Please let me know how you think we are doing.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Judy Noble & Rosella Rudd



The heart of Hildegard House is our volunteers, especially the Compassionate Companions who commit to at least one five hour shift each week. Currently, over 55 dedicated individuals serve in this role. Every Friday night, Judy Noble and Rosella Rudd serve together, and have done so since September.

### What is your favorite thing about being a Compassionate Companion?

**Judy:** I LOVE becoming a “daughter / mother / sister / friend” to each resident during their final journey in this world. It's like being part of a transition family for someone. I am amazed how each individual resident responds through their pain, giving me the chance to be part of their life.

**Rosella:** My favorite thing connections that are made with the people who are involved at Hildegard House, both the volunteers and staff. To face head on the end of life of any human being requires a certain introspection and acceptance of one's own mortality. To work with people who travel this road on a daily basis is truly a gift.

### What do you admire most about your volunteer partner?

**Rosella:** Judy has a lot of qualities that make her an excellent Compassionate Companion partner...strong and confident but also humble. She's fun and easy to be with. She is respectful. That's what I see each time she approaches any of the residents, regardless of where they are or who they are. That's her gift to the residents, and to those of us who work with her.

**Judy:** My best memories will be when we are walking in the hall from a resident's room and one of us will say “this is so profound what we are doing here! We are really making a difference in that person's life!” I'm so thankful to Rosella for sharing this experience with me. And, she's great at cleaning out a refrigerator!!

## Our Board

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Karen Cassidy, *Executive Director*

## Our Mission

Providing a home and compassionate care for individuals at the end of life who have no home or loved ones to care for them so that they may die with dignity.



Hildegard House  
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Louisville, KY 40255

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Hildegard  
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502-581-8267



## Upcoming Events!

### Compassionate Companion Training

Friday May 12 - 6-8pm  
Saturday May 13 - 9-4  
at Hildegard House

Next training in July TBD