



Hildegard House

dignity has a home



SEASONS OF *Life*

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Perhaps you've heard the philosophy that people come into your life for a reason, a season or a lifetime? A reason could be to meet a need we have; a season could be to share or to grow or to learn with us. People who are part of our world for a lifetime often provide us with solid emotional foundations.

Resident Shirley Long was 85 years old, raised a family, worked as a switchboard operator and enjoyed pets and crafts. She never met a stranger in those 85 years. She lived alone after her husband's death. When deteriorating health made it clear Shirley could no longer safely take care of herself and her home, she found her "reason" to make a new home at Hildegard House. But what Shirley found at Hildegard House turned into a "season" during her nearly four-month stay.

Shirley's first day at Hildegard House (appropriately, Valentine's Day) was a busy one. Almost immediately the Compassionate Companions noted how alert and friendly she was. Her activities that day included a wheelchair tour of Hildegard House – its friendly dining room, comfortable chairs, wealth of books and activities, the striking artwork and



Compassionate Companion Martha Eirners with Shirley.

the tantalizing smell of bacon frying in the kitchen. Shirley was a HUGE bacon fan and enjoyed it for breakfast on many mornings. At bedtime, Shirley chose her own pajamas and a Compassionate Companion helped get her comfortable in her new surroundings. She spent the rest of that evening and many to follow talking to volunteers, watching television and calling friends and family on her ever-present cell phone.



A Word from our Executive Director

Dear Friends of Hildegard House,

If I said to you, “We have a caregiver crisis!” would I get your attention?

Let me tell you about it from where I sit. We have six beds at Hildegard House. They are always full. The average length of stay is three weeks, the range is one day to six months. Currently, we have eight people on the waiting list – people who are at the end of life but have no one to take care of them. What does that mean for them?

They have fallen through the cracks. There is a gap in end of life care. To access hospice care, you must have family support or 24-hour caregivers or have resources to pay for caregivers.

How can we support the struggling family members who are trying to care for their loved one? Or who have just learned that they must switch gears and now become a caregiver? Or the ones that have been doing it for sometimes weeks, months, or years and are tired, burnt out, lonely, and exhausted.

The passionate Board of Directors of Hildegard House has envisioned The Centre for Caregiving Education, a part of Hildegard House. We are experts at training regular folks to become caregivers for our neighbors. We want to help support those that we are unable to serve but that are struggling at home.

The need is only growing. Seniors are the fastest growing population, with the volume of people in this age cohort rising by 13% between 2020 and 2024, according to the US Census Bureau. This swelling population is outpacing the growth of other age groups, leaving fewer individuals to care for them as they approach the end of life. An estimated 2.3 million family caregivers provide an average of twenty hours of support each week to loved ones at the end of life, according to Health Affairs.

When I was a palliative nurse practitioner at Sts. Mary and Elizabeth Hospital, I would see many people that needed hospice care and couldn’t access it. At the end of the day, it was enough to make me shed tears in the parking lot. How could people be dying without hospice care? Hildegard House was born to serve these neighbors. But the feeling is back! Our six beds are always full, and today we have a waiting list. I do shed a few tears at times when I have to say one more time, “I’m sorry. All of our beds are full.”

My heart breaks for those dying alone or without hospice care. And now it aches for those that are trying to care for someone at the end of life who don’t feel confident or secure in the caregiving role.

We have made birth and death a medical event. We know in our bones how to be with someone who is dying. They are someone we love or care about. They are our neighbor that is deserving of dignity.

Can you help us continue to develop this valuable community resource! We have purchased the building and are beginning renovation now. It is a good investment in our community and our neighbors. And we hope to alleviate some of the crisis in caregiving.

With gratitude,

Karen

*Karen Cassidy
Executive Director*



Viriditas Society



THE VIRIDITAS SOCIETY is a special group of people who notify Hildegard House in writing that they have included Hildegard House in their estate plans. Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th Century mystic, herbalist, musician, and healer is the namesake of Hildegard House. She coined the word *Viriditas*. It means “the greening power of the Divine.” Members of the Viriditas Society provide a greening – or renewing – power to Hildegard House. No matter the size of the gift, it all is part of the legacy you leave.

For more information www.hildegardhouse.org
or call Karen Cassidy 502-797-7411

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Shirley was a bit of an ambassador at Hildegard House. Anyone who visited, volunteered, dropped off donations or provided care “surely” noticed her sitting at the dining room table enjoying the company and conversation of passersby. Over and over, Compassion Companions commented about Shirley, “She is so pleasant”, “She’s tired... but happy”, or “She wakes up in a great mood.” Shirley’s sunny disposition was appealing to so many Compassionate Companions because many Hildegard House residents are unable to chat for long periods or enjoy foods they once enjoyed, let alone dine at the dining room table.

Over the next weeks and months Shirley had her ups and downs but, perhaps like her 12-year-old cat Gracie, she seemed to land on her feet after every episode. She told Sierra, a Compassionate Companion, “Thank you for taking care of me.”

My whole life I’ve just wanted to take care of people and make a difference. Hon, look at me, I’m the one being cared for. Everyone is so kind and I love that you’re here with me.”

When people are with us for a “lifetime” they usually see us at our best and at our worst, at our highest and lowest. In these short months, dozens of Compassionate Companions, Hildegard House nurses helped Shirley live an entire lifetime with dignity. We laughed together, enjoyed each other’s company, shared meals and stories, sang and prayed together and, in the end, held onto each other until Shirley’s last breath. Her special time at Hildegard House will not soon be forgotten and it’s what gives all of our Compassion Companions the surety that their time with each precious resident makes a difference – whether for a reason, a season or a lifetime.

In Loving Memory



On Thursday, August 14, our beloved Board Member, **Dr. George Webb** died. He was born July 31, 1937 in Freeport, IL. He went to medical school, served in the Air Force, worked as an anesthesiologist and educator for 28 years when he entered his

second act as a palliative care and hospice physician. And what a second act! He spent the next 25 plus years as a medical director, board member, educator and author dedicating himself to end of life issues. He was a father, doctor, musician, painter, sculptor, dancer and prodigious grower of orchids. He loved baseball games and the opera. We will miss his wisdom! Rest in peace, Dr. Webb!



*We welcome Molli Gottbraith
as our House Manager.*

Our Board

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UofL Trager Institute
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Our Staff

Karen Cassidy, Founder & CEO
Amara Mui, Volunteer Coordinator
Molli Gottbraith, House Manager



HILDEGARD HOUSE

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We provide 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.

www.hildegardhouse.org
502-581-8267



Pictured on the left is outgoing Board Chair, Carl Herde, and incoming Board Chair, Larry Grossman. We can't thank Carl Herde enough for his tremendous service to Hildegard House. Carl served as Finance Chair before taking on the Board Chair role for two terms. In honor of his dedicated service, we are naming the Board Room at the Center for Caregiving Education "The Carl Herde Board Room". Many thanks, Carl. And thanks to Larry Grossman for stepping up in the leadership role. We appreciate both of you!

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Ways to Give:

- SCAN this code to donate on our website
- or MAIL using the enclosed envelope
- Join the Compassionate Care Circle by committing to a monthly gift to Hildegard House
- Make a gift in memory or in honor of someone special
- Consider a legacy gift by making arrangements with your financial planner to join the Viriditas Society



Hildegard House
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