



VIEW*S*&VISIONS

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Shaping the Face of Philanthropy

Maria Lorensen, Development Director
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Since 2008, Maria Lorensen has been development director at Hospice of the Panhandle, where the primary focus of her work is coordinating the agency's "Building the Dream" capital campaign. From 1996 to 2008, she was the editor of *The Journal*, the daily newspaper in Martinsburg, West Virginia. She also worked for six years as the first public information coordinator in Jefferson County Schools.

Ms. Lorensen is active with community and nonprofit organizations. She is a member of Blue Ridge Community and Technical College's Board of Governors and the United Way Day of Caring committee. She is a former director of the Martinsburg/Berkeley County Library Commission, a member of the noontime Rotary Club and sits on the board of MVB Bank. She is a former director of the Martinsburg/Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce.

It was the spring of 2008 when Hospice of the Panhandle officially embarked on its "Building the Dream" capital campaign. In all reality, however, the campaign began years earlier, when forward-looking staff and Board members recognized the need to provide inpatient care to patients suffering life-threatening illnesses.

And so the dream was born, to offer comfort-oriented care not only in patients' homes, but in a free-standing facility that provides hospital-like care in a home-like setting.

The campaign to "Build the Dream," now entering its fourth year, not only will construct a 14-bed hospice house to serve patients in Berkeley, Jefferson, Hampshire and Morgan counties, but it also will consolidate four hospice offices on one 19-acre campus. Both the hospice house and offices will be constructed on land that straddles the Berkeley-Jefferson county line, a little more than a mile from the VA Center outside Martinsburg.

The campaign has been exciting as well as challenging. After completing a feasibility study months earlier that determined that the four-county community would support the project, Hospice launched the early phases of the campaign in fall 2008. At that time, I was hired as development director. Having spent most of my professional career in newspapering and as a community volunteer, I was familiar with Hospice of the Panhandle and its stellar reputation as a non-profit in the region, so I was confident that this project would succeed. However, this was about the same time when the stock market began its record roller-coaster ride. Some wondered about the wisdom of moving forward with a capital campaign, which had as its groundbreaking goal a hefty \$3 million, when nearly everyone was fretting about the economy. Nevertheless, we hoped that the community

would continue to support Hospice. We weren't disappointed, but were in fact awestruck by the response.

Now, three and a half years later, the campaign has raised more than \$2.85 million in pledges and gifts from more than 450 donors, with the groundbreaking goal clearly in sight. Most of those 450-plus donors – all of them local residents and businesses – have made three to five year pledges, many of them making "stretch gifts" because of their commitment to Hospice's mission. The largest gift came from West Virginia Lottery winner and former Berkeley County Sheriff and Magistrate, Randy Smith. Smith donated \$500,000, telling local media in November 2010 that "Hospice was there for him" in the care of his mother and sister, and now it was time for him "to be there for Hospice."

Others stepped forward in large ways as well. Staff at Hospice has pledged more than \$160,000 – giving back to the organization where, they say, they are privileged to work. Additionally, Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races made a \$100,000 gift; Farmers and Mechanics Insurance made a \$100,000 gift; and Henry and Louise Willard made a \$100,000 gift. Bowles Rice made a \$45,000 corporate gift and its Martinsburg partners added their own pledges, to make that a \$100,000 gift. The Center for Orthopedic Excellence made a \$75,000 gift.

What has been inspiring for me to watch is how residents, even in challenging times, want to be a part of making Hospice's long-time dream come true. Many of them, like Randy Smith, have been touched personally by the care Hospice has given to their loved ones. I have often told donors that my job is really very easy. Those who do the front-line work in this organization – the nurses, aides, chaplains, social workers, grief support staff



An office building (above) and inpatient facility (below) will be built on the Hospice of the Panhandle's 19-acre campus

and others who take care of patients and families – do the very challenging work.

Those who have been touched by that work, and have signed on to support the campaign, include contractors and builders, developers and real estate agents, bankers and financial planners – all of whom have been especially hard-hit during the recession in the Eastern Panhandle. Pharmacists, dentists, car dealers, attorneys, funeral home directors, orchardists, doctors – individuals from all professions and walks of life – have made commitments to Hospice because they recognize the project's significance to the communities in which we live.

I believe that the “Building the Dream” campaign has helped to mold and shape the face of philanthropy in the Eastern Panhandle. Residents have shown us that they will support a non-profit organization that they believe in – in a big way. And

when the non-profit does excellent work in the community, it can excel at fundraising, even in the face of difficult odds. Hospice of the Panhandle is pleased, proud and privileged to do the important work of caring for critically ill patients and their families during a vulnerable time in people's lives. “Building the Dream” will allow us to continue that important work for many, many years to come. ♾

CONTRIBUTING TO THE VITALITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES



Billy Atkins
Morgantown, WV

Billy is a member of the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce and the Monongalia Health System. He is a past president of the Greater Morgantown Community Trust, a past president and board member of the Cheat Lake Rotary and a past president of Monongalia County Habitat for Humanity.



Robert J. Kent
Parkersburg, WV

Bob is the president and a member of the Economic Roundtable of the Ohio Valley and a board member of the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation. He serves on the Board of Governors of the Defense Trial Counsel of West Virginia.