

Documentary Captures Hospice Experience

By Sue Henninger

A documentary about end-of-life care has an unusual title, but viewers aren't left wondering for long. "Beets and Beans: Living and Dying with Hospice" opens with a Hospicare affiliate describing a patient's last wish, to garden, and how staff and volunteers made it possible for their terminally ill patient to spend some of his last days outdoors in the residence garden doing what he loved best for one last season.

Hospicare's mission is to preserve the quality of a person's life up until the end. The new documentary by Sue Perlgut (Close to Home Productions) captures this, showing how staff and volunteers accomplish this difficult task by offering the most important gifts: their time and compassion.

There are countless examples of this in the film, from the massage therapist who lovingly soothes a woman's aching muscles, to a college student who carefully purees a meal in a blender before offering it to a client who has trouble swallowing, to a woman who plays a beautiful, soothing melody on her harp at her patient's request.

Many of the documentary's scenes are filmed in Ithaca, but Perlgut explains that the movie was made with the intention of educating the nation, not just New York residents, adding "We're really lucky to have such a model program here in Tompkins County."

Perlgut isn't just the film's creator; she was also a service recipient as both of her parents were hospice patients. Later, she took the

volunteer training at Hospicare, and in one of the lighter moments in "Beets and Beans," Perlgut and a wheelchair-bound woman struggle to understand each other, but finally give up. Determined, Perlgut tries again but ultimately is the first to admit that she wasn't cut out for volunteering, noting, "As you can see, not everybody makes it as a volunteer. I didn't."

However, rather than abandoning her desire to give back to the organization that she had found so helpful, Perlgut searched for another way to contribute, and the documentary was born.

Nina Miller's personal story is also poignantly portrayed in the film. Miller was the executive director for Hospicare for a number of years, retiring to enjoy time and travel with her husband. Soon afterwards, in a sad twist of fate, he became ill and required Hospicare services himself. Miller speaks movingly about how it felt to change roles from being the person in charge to the wife of a patient, saying that when she first walked back in the doors she wasn't sure what it would be like, but it felt like she was coming home. Miller continues, "I knew I'd get good care because that's what we give everyone who comes here."

Hospicare director Dale Johnson says that if there's one thing he'd like documentary viewers to come away with it's that, "Too often patients come to us for only hours or a day so we can't do as much as we'd like to. The right time to contact us is when you first have a question about terminal illness."

Though New York State's eco-



Photo by Sue Henninger

Assistant director Nils Hoover and director Sue Perlgut at the screening of "Beets and Beans: Living and Dying with Hospice" at Cinemapolis.

omic future may seem uncertain in many areas, hospice and palliative care are in good shape. Medicaid helps pay for people to live in a place like the Hospicare residence in Ithaca, but upstate New York has an average of one hospice per county. These settings accept patients who could be turned away at other places for not being able to pay.

Johnson says Hospicare is also significantly less costly than traditional hospital care, and there's a much higher level of patient satisfaction associated with it. He praises Perlgut for having the "energy and drive to put this film together."

Making a documentary about a pressing social issue like Hospicare is a crucial piece of the public education process. Distributing it and making sure it's shown where peo-

ple will see it is just as important.

The premier screening of "Beets and Beans" was held at Cinemapolis, the local independent movie theater. Theater Director Lynne Cohen explains that the documentary's assistant director, Nils Hoover, works at Cinemapolis, so when Perlgut and Hoover wanted to screen her film, Cinemapolis was happy to help out.

There will be another public screening of "Beets and Beans" at the Tompkins County Public Library on Thursday, March 3, at 6 p.m. Hospicare will show the film to community groups, schools and other agencies as well. Call 272-0212 for more information.

DVDs are also available for \$15 at the Hospicare residence, 172 E. King Road, Ithaca, or from www.BeetsandBeans.com.

ECK Worship Service

February 20, 2011 11 a.m.
Best Western University Inn,
East Hill Plaza, Ithaca
Topic: "Cycles of Change"
Discussion of topic.
Opportunity for all to
share love of God.

ECK Public HU Song

February 16, 2011 7-7:30p.m.
Women's Community Bldg.,
100 W. Seneca St., Ithaca

Public Invited,
Families Welcome
Info. 800-749-7791
www.eckankar.org
Sponsored by
New York Satsang Society Inc.
Chartered affiliate of ECKANKAR

TOMPKINS CORTLAND HOME BUILDER & REMODELER ASSOCIATION
23RD ANNUAL TCBRA
HOME & GARDEN Show
MARCH 4-5-6

Kids under 17 Free! \$5 admission good for all 3 days
\$1 of each admission is donated to Habitat for Humanity

With special guest appearances by
Bob the Builder & Amy Dickinson
at the 2011 TCBRA Home & Garden Show

© 2011 HIT Entertainment Limited and Keith Chapman

TC3 Borg Warner Morse Tec Sports Complex
for more information tcbra.com
info@tcbra.com

Proudly Sponsored by:
Builders & Remodelers Association
AVALON HOMES

Vitamin L

Character Education Through Music

Award winning songs about empathy, gratitude, appreciating diversity, endurance, human rights, friendship and more.

Concert for families and visiting teachers on President's Day!



Complimentary Refreshments from Starbucks!

Door prizes for teachers!

Monday Feb. 21 1:00 P.M.

Unitarian Church - Corner of Buffalo and North Aurora St.

\$5.00 suggested donation per person is optional but appreciated!

With grant support from the Community Arts Partnership and sponsored by:

community arts partnership
more info: 273-4175 or vitaminLproject@hotmail.com

SP ITHACA CHILD THE CAT'S PAJAMAS PULLY ICE CREAM

Scouting the World



The World of Scouting

February 19th, 2011 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.
The Shops at Ithaca Mall

Brought to you by the Taughannock District of the Baden-Powell Council, BSA.
For more info please visit www.tompkinscortlandscouts.org or call Bill Albrecht at (877) 674-8876