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# GUEST OPINION

## Hope Hospice supports recommendations for Alzheimer's patients' care

**BY SAMIRA K. BECKWITH**

President and CEO, Hope Hospice and Community Services

In the past year, Hope Hospice cared for nearly 500 people in our community with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, and as with all of our patients, we constantly seek new and better ways to serve them and support their families.

The national Alzheimer's Association has just released new recommendations on improving care for people with these types of illnesses. We at Hope Hospice welcome their suggestions on issues unique to people with dementia at the end of their lives, and we hope all health care providers will take note.

Among the Alzheimer's Association's key recommendations:

- The need for advance care planning as soon as possible after diagnosis of dementia: This includes documenting the person's wishes regarding medical treatments in advanced stages of demen-

tia and designation of a proxy decision maker. To aid in this process, Hope Hospice provides Advance Directives information and forms on our Web site, at [www.hopehospice.org](http://www.hopehospice.org).

- Provision of person-centered care to people with advanced dementia: When there is no cure, the role of hospice is to provide comfort and enable the person to live in dignity. This is a time to focus on the person, not the illness.

- The importance of dementia-specific training for residential care workers on end-of-life issues: For example, understanding the signs of end of life, pain management issues, and communicating with families. Over the past 26 years, Hope Hospice has worked closely with other local health care agencies and providers, including the Alvin A. Dubin Alzheimer's Resource Center in Fort Myers, to better educate the community on caring for people with dementia.

We applaud the Alzheimer's Association for helping to raise community

awareness in this way.

The number of people affected by Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia will continue to increase. Whether the patient is living at home, in a nursing home or other kind of facility, specialized high-quality care is essential to their well-being. No one in our community, patient or loved one, should go through this difficult experience without the ample support available to them. To receive our help with the dementia patient at the end of life and their family caregivers, please call Hope Hospice at (239) 482-4673, or (800) 835-1673. ■

— Samira K. Beckwith, LCSW, FACHE, is President and CEO of Hope Hospice and Community Services, a not-for-profit, community-based health care agency. Hope Hospice provides services to all people with complex needs related to transitions, loss and end of life.

## Red tide and coastal pollution campaign

**BY MARTI DALTRY**

The Sierra Club, Fort Myers

Summertime in Florida means rampant growth of all plants, trees, shrubs and grass, fueled by plentiful sun and regularly scheduled showers. Gardeners in Southwest Florida are busy tending their yards — trimming, weeding, and applying pesticides and fertilizer.

However, our daily deluges wash grass clippings, pesticides and fertilizer into our waterways, canals and rivers. This provides the ideal food for all types of toxic and nuisance algae such as red tide, red drift algae and blue-green algae to grow. In addition, excess nutrient runoff from animal waste, seepage from over-burdened sewage and septic tank systems, agriculture and industrial runoff all create a nutrient-laden stew that research strongly suggests is responsible for the increased intensity and duration of some harmful algal blooms in Southwest Florida. These blooms can kill fish and other marine life. Furthermore, they jeopardize the health of coastal residents and visitors, closing down beaches and negatively impacting our tourist economy.

Recently the South Florida Water Management District board voted not to back-pump any more polluted water into Lake Okeechobee; an action that was applauded by environmental groups across the state. The Sierra Club - Calusa Group, was among the 30 organizations and individuals who made public comments on this issue, and presented their opposition to this harmful practice. However, additional public policies

need to be implemented to insure that not only the Lake but all our waterways are not compromised in regards to water quality. It is imperative that our waters be restored and protected from future degradation.

The Sierra Club has launched a Red Tide and Coastal Pollution Campaign to help reduce excessive nutrient runoff in Southwest Florida. Through partnerships with residents, environmental and civic groups, local government, church groups, homeowners associations and schools, Southwest Florida can take several common sense steps to solving these problems of coastal pollution. Public education is one component, such as teaching newcomers and long-term residents alike how to achieve a Florida Friendly Yard and incorporating water conservation techniques to existing yards.

Another crucial step is passing local fertilizer ordinances that protect our waterways by prohibiting fertilizing during the rainy season, using time-release or slow-release fertilizers that contain no phosphorus, requiring buffer zones between yard and water and training and certification in best management practices for lawn care professionals. Sanibel and the city of Naples have already passed fertilizer ordinances. On Aug. 27, the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners made a landmark decision, passing a countywide fertilizer ordinance that 29 local businesses, community and environmental organizations supported. The Sarasota Fertilizer Ordinance and the Sanibel Ordinance provide excellent models that other coastal communities need to adopt in order to reduce our footprint on the environment.

From an environmental perspective, from

an economic perspective and from a health perspective now is the time to be proactive and take the necessary steps to reduce coastal pollution. This problem of red tide, red drift and blue-green algae is not a South Florida problem, nor is it a state problem; it is a global problem. Throughout our nation and the world, along the coasts or on inland lakes, our beaches are closed and our water resources are threatened by harmful algal blooms. In Quebec, Canada, 98 lakes have been affected by blue-green algae, prompting members of legislature to propose a bill that bans phosphates in dishwashing and clothes detergents. Worldwide, ocean dead zones, where little or no oxygen and therefore no marine life exist, have increased to over 200 in number.

The impact on our coastal environment, both from individuals and businesses, for good or bad, is significant. The environmental slogan from the 1970s, "If you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the pollution," is still true. The challenges are great but solutions can be found; better public and private practices can be implemented. It just takes that first step and it begins with you and with me. Our natural water resources, our river and its watershed, our beaches and the Gulf of Mexico are Southwest Florida's greatest natural treasures and should be protected for future generations to enjoy. ■

— Marti Daltry is the Regional Community Organizer for the Fort Myers office of the Sierra Club. She can be reached at 246-3478 or [Marti.daltry@sierraclub.org](mailto:Marti.daltry@sierraclub.org).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Organs should go to donors first

**Regarding Florida Weekly's Sept. 6-12 story Hospital honored for organ donation rate**

Your story about Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center highlighted the tragic shortage of human organs for transplant operations.

Over half of the 97,000 Americans on the national transplant waiting list will die before they get a transplant. Most of these deaths are needless. Americans bury or cremate about 20,000 transplantable organs every year. Over 6,000 of our neighbors suf-

fer and die needlessly every year as a result.

There is a simple way to put a big dent in the organ shortage -- give organs first to people who have agreed to donate their own organs when they die.

Giving organs first to organ donors will convince more people to register as organ donors. It will also make the organ allocation system fairer. People who aren't willing to share the gift of life should go to the back of the waiting list as long as there is a shortage of organs.

Anyone who wants to donate their organs to others who have agreed to donate theirs can join LifeSharers. LifeSharers is a non-profit network of organ donors who agree to

offer their organs first to other organ donors when they die. Membership is free at [www.lifesharers.org](http://www.lifesharers.org) or by calling 1-888-ORGAN88. There is no age limit, parents can enroll their minor children, and no one is excluded due to any pre-existing medical condition. LifeSharers has 9,720 members, including 888 members in Florida. ■

— David J. Undis, Executive Director, LifeSharers, [www.lifesharers.org](http://www.lifesharers.org)

Send letters to the editor to [news@florida-weekly.com](mailto:news@florida-weekly.com), or mail them to 4300 Ford Street, Suite 106, Fort Myers, FL 33916 or call 333-2135