

The Pioneer Network  
The Colorado Culture Change Coalition  
Dignity Care

Dignity Care has enthusiastically become involved with the Colorado Culture Change Coalition, a state affiliate of the nationwide organization, The Pioneer Network.

The Pioneer Network's early history originated with concerned individuals able to clearly see what was/is happening to our elders in some of our nursing homes across the country. From their perspective, all too often we see "the devaluation of our elders and those who care for them... the loss of control, loss of choice and loss of relationship that too often characterize late life in America... the separation of the generations from each other... the dynamics of death and dying in America, characterized by avoidance and isolation". The Network realized they needed to help "create places for living and growing rather than for declining and dying".

Since 1997, when the first grass roots meeting took place, the Pioneer Network has spread across the country. Colorado's response was to establish the Coalition. The Network/Coalition advocates a deep system change and transformation in our 'culture of aging'. The Network has instigated "a culture of aging that is humane and meaningful". The Network has established where elders are living and how their lives well lived.

Barry Balkan, a founder of the Pioneer Network and Director of Live Oak Center in Sobrante, CA, has defined an elder as someone "who is still growing, still a learner, still with potential and whose life continues to have within it, promise for, and connection to, the future. An elder is still in the pursuit of happiness, joy and pleasure and her or his birthright to these remain intact. Moreover an elder is a person who deserves respect and honor and whose work it is to synthesize wisdom from long life experience and formulate this into a legacy for future generations."

[www.culturechangenow.com/stories/liveoak.html](http://www.culturechangenow.com/stories/liveoak.html)

Dignity Care has been striving to maintain this quality of care for their clients since the company was formed in 1997. Mary Kirk was determined to establish a company where these standards were unquestionably upheld by the company's care givers. We are proud that we have created a company infrastructure that guarantees this quality of care. It is our heartfelt hope that all elders in Boulder, Colorado, and across the nation are able to live with respect and dignity for the remainder of their life's journey.

Quotes are from the Pioneer Network Website:

[www.pioneernetwork.net](http://www.pioneernetwork.net)

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
You must ask for what you really want.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
People are going back and forth across the threshold  
where the two worlds meet.  
The door is round and open.  
Don't go back to sleep.

RUMI



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Dignity Care, LLC wishes to thank Patricia at AppelfellerARTS for the design of our first newsletter. AppelfellerARTS is a full service graphic design company specializing in packaging design.

Dignity Care LLC  
sends warm  
New Year Greetings

volume one ♦ issue one

Heartfelt Homecare

january 2003

## The Person Within

*When an old lady died in the geriatric ward of a small hospital near Dundee, Scotland, it was felt that she had nothing left of any value. Later, when the nurses were going through her meager possessions, they found this poem.*

What do you see, nurses, what do you see?  
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?  
A crabby old woman not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?  
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply  
When you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try"  
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,  
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe...  
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,  
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill...  
Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?  
Then open your eyes nurse; you're not looking at me.  
I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,  
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.  
I'm a small child of ten... with a father and mother,  
Brothers and sisters who love one another.  
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet,  
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.  
A bride soon at twenty-my heart gives a leap  
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.  
At twenty-five now I have young of my own,  
Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.  
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast,  
Bound to each other with ties that should last.  
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,  
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.  
At fifty once more, babies play around my knee,  
Again we know children, my loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead;  
I look at the future, I shudder with dread  
For my young are all rearing young of their own,  
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.  
I'm now an old woman...and nature is cruel  
'Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.  
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigor depart,  
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.  
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,  
And now and again my battered heart swells.  
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,  
And I'm loving and living life over again.  
I think of the years...all too few, gone too fast,  
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.  
So open your eyes, nurses, open and see,  
...Not a crabby old woman; look closer...see me!!!

## Care Givers Provide Meaningful Service to Humanity

### Caregiving is a Sacred Vocation

— Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Since its inception, Dignity Care has carefully selected its care givers. We look for people who feel that caregiving is more than just a job, that caring for the elderly or the infirmed is something that resonates within their hearts, as a calling or a vocation. In this vein, last September, Dignity Care Director, Mary Kirk and Care Manager, Aundrea Hazen attended a training program entitled "Caregiving as a Spiritual Path" which was presented by The Spiritual Eldering Institute.

(continued on page 3)

## Happy New Year to All,

Reflecting back on 2002, I am most grateful for your giving us such a great year by allowing us to care for you or your family members. I would like to thank the staff and our wonderful care givers for doing such a great job and making it easy for me to be proud of the service Dignity Care provides.



I am excited about the possibilities of two of my dreams coming true and I want to share them with you. Dream #1 is that the Dignity Care Foundation would be funded and become active. I believe I have found a way to fund it. First let me tell you about my Aunt and Mom. My Aunt Pat (84 years) has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and is in a care facility slowly deteriorating. My mother (80 years) was following closely in her footsteps. However, I have found a line of products that I truly believe has reversed her deterioration. The products are in the Oasis Wellness System. Previously when talking with Mom on the phone, she would just stop mid-sentence, forgetting what she was talking about. Since she has been using these products, we can carry on normal conversations once again. My story is that I was having pains in my brain at least weekly. I started taking the products and my pains are gone along with my magnifying glasses, which I used to have to wear to read the telephone book.

Because these products work on the genetic level, I am banking on protecting my brain so that Alzheimer's or severe dementia are not in my cards as I age. Having been in the nutrition field for 35 years, these are the best products I have ever come across!!! If you'd like to hear more about these products, please call me at 720-563-0417. Another exciting part, is that any income generated from the sale of these products will go toward funding the Dignity Care Foundation. The foundation is designed to provide care for clients who run out of money and still need care, for care giver emergencies (such as serious illness) and to help us with Dream #2.

Dream #2 is that Dignity Care would have one of the first homes based on the Eden Alternative concept in Boulder, Colorado – see article page 3. This would mean several elders living together in a home full of music, plants, animals and lots of life in whatever form might be appropriate for them. Is there ANYONE out there who would HAVE or who would KNOW of SOMEONE who would be WILLING to have their HOME turned into an experiment in gracious, fulfilled living for their elder years? Of course the person whose home is used would have a reduced home care bill along with a lot of joy filled days.

May 2003 be a year filled with YOUR dreams coming true.

Lots of Love, Peace and Laughter,  
*Mary*

## The Journey

by David Whyte

Above the mountains  
the geese turn into  
the light again

painting their  
black silhouettes  
on an open sky.

Sometimes everything  
has to be  
enscribed across  
the heavens

So you can find  
the one line  
already written  
inside you.

Sometimes it takes  
a great sky  
to find that

small, bright  
and indescribable  
wedge of freedom  
in your own heart.

Sometimes with  
the bones of the black  
sticks left when the fire  
has gone out

someone has written  
something new  
in the ashes  
of your life.

You are not leaving  
you are arriving.

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The thrust of the training program was how to bring the sacred to caregiving. If a care giver can bring spiritual consciousness, in a form that feels right for them, to the forefront of their day to day contact with the person they are working with, the essence of their work will shift to a higher level of relating.

"The sacred is a sense of connection with the divine. Sacred space is physical space which is transformed into an environment which invites one to go deeply inward or to feel connected to something greater than the surface of our everyday existence... Ritual is an intentionally planned series of actions which acknowledges and honors life changes and transitions." (training handbook) By creating a sacred space in which to practice personalized sacred ritual, care givers can breathe the sacred into all aspects of their work. They can bring something of the divine to those they are caring for. Care givers can transcend the daily grind of routine and the hardships of caregiving when they hold a spiritual vision of the tasks/work they perform.

When care givers recognize that simple daily routines can become sacred life events for those who are being cared for, they will have brought the divine into their caregiving. Washing a face, brushing hair, holding a hand can all become 'holy' acts. The smallest gesture imbued with spiritual consciousness can uplift both the care giver and the person being cared for. It creates a time – a space – of calm and peace and tranquility for both.

Mary and Aundrea have already held one training workshop with the Dignity Care staff and others are planned for the new year.



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## What Dreams May Come?

Mary and I attended a lecture given by Dr. Bill Thomas at the Jewish Cultural Center in Boulder last fall, which we both felt was inspiring.

In looking at long term care and the situation facing the elderly in our country, Dr. Thomas feels strongly that the American Medical Association and the population in general, have the wrong view: that the human body is a marvelous 'machine'. For Dr. Thomas, being human is merely a temporary state; our bodies are on loan from the earth and our souls are on loan from heaven. Dr. Thomas, by the way, graduated from the Harvard School of Medicine.

Dr. Thomas said that as children, we organize ourselves around being and playing, but as adults we organize ourselves around 'doing'. Doing. Doing. Doing. He believes that for the elderly, 'doing' should begin to take a back seat and that the elderly should be allowed to flow into just 'being' once again. He strongly recommends that we create centers for the elderly which encourage 'being'. He calls these centers "The Eden Alternative". These centers are to be 'gardens' full of life - full of plants, full of animals, full of children. They are to be "high touch" not "high tech". Dr. Thomas insists that we need to offer our elders a vibrant elderhood: one that is attractive, appealing, rewarding and satisfying.

Mary has begun to envision creating such a home for Dignity Care's elders. We are dreaming of creating such a home by uniting several elders "under one roof". This would reduce the cost of care for our elders and increase the quality of life around them. A home with these goals, would not only eliminate loneliness and boredom, but would also help elders overcome feelings of disconnection and isolation. Mary's letter explains our dream of creating such a home in the future.

– Nina Hvoslef