



Crossroads House Newsletter

Spring/Summer
2024



A Journey to Crossroads Becomes A Journey Home

Tracy Ford - Executive Director

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life". That quote may date back to Confucious, but I have just learned of its true impact. I am incredibly blessed to love what I do and lucky enough to do it alongside such an amazing team of caregivers and volunteers.

Little did I know it at the time, but my journey to Crossroads House began way back in 2013 while I was working in a nursing home. It was February 8th, and we were in the midst of a winter storm. Administrative staff had been asked to take shifts sitting with a gentleman who was actively dying so he wouldn't pass alone. I had never witnessed a death and had absolutely no idea what to do. Ernie drew his last breath on my watch...just four days shy of his 102nd birthday. He died in an institutional room with a stranger. I read Ernie's obituary days later and was hit with a profound sadness. He was a fascinating man with a rich history...a legacy. And I hadn't known any of it in his final hours. I should've been comfortable holding his hand, talking to him, celebrating the incredible life he had lived.



Ernie's Obituary Photo

I have worked in healthcare for many years. The entire industry focuses on the creation and preservation of life...fertility, in vitro, millions of dollars spent on maternity ward renovations. Even the term "doula" is widely credited only to childbirth. I was present when my Goddaughter entered the world. We were in a beautiful room with ambient lighting, soft music and comfortable furniture for friends and family. The staff was alert and attentive to our every need. By comparison, very little is done to support patients and families throughout the dying process. Patients still pass away alone in nursing homes. Families might be offered some folding chairs and a snack tray. But there is no longer time for a bedside vigil. The extremes of support I have witnessed between life and death have always felt like an injustice.

Then, I found Crossroads House. It is a magical, ethereal, wondrous, charming place where all who enter are treated with kindness, dignity, respect, support and LOVE. The staff and volunteers truly do "help you live your best life until you take your last breath". If there is a model for the perfect death, THIS is it. Ernie's death continues to affect me...his legacy lives on. And I am home.

In this issue:

Insights from
our Staff and
Volunteers

Volunteer
Spotlights

Stories of Impact

Fundraiser
Updates

Upcoming
Events

News and Plans



*Left: Kathy cuts the cake at the first volunteer appreciation dinner in 1997
Above: Kathy plans to spend more time with her husband, Frank, and grandchildren Declan and Easton*



A New Chapter for Our Founder

At Crossroads House, we lead with compassion. And no one embodies compassion more than our beloved founder, Kathy Panepento. For the past twenty-six years, she has challenged us all to find new and meaningful ways to support families with dying loved ones. Under her guidance, the community has rallied around and lifted up the families of Crossroads House.

We are incredibly thankful for Kathy's contributions, and it is with warm hearts that we share the news of her decision to embark on a journey of travel and quality time with her husband and grandchildren this summer.

Don't call it a retirement, but rather a new way to share her compassion with her own family. Kathy will be available to us as a consultant this fall as we continue moving this organization forward.

Please join us in wishing her well on her much-deserved hiatus. We will be gathering at The Legacy Living Center, 409 East Main Street, Batavia on Friday, June 21st 4pm-7pm. All are welcome to stop by for hors d'oeuvres and cake! Please let us know if you are planning on joining us by emailing tracyford@crossroadshouse.com or by calling Tracy at 585.297.8937.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO GRACED OUR HOUSE ON THEIR END OF LIFE JOURNEY

Since our Last Edition

Dieter Baumann
David Boyle
Michael Conditorio
Milton Cummings
Clara Galliford
Lester Gill
Agnes Hume
Edward LaValley
Megan McNally
Florence Pontillo
Winston Pottle
Linda Reilly
Samuel Reynolds
Sharon Rissinger
Thomas Tiefel
Wanda Wolfley



Our Board of Directors

Tom Finn, President
Steven Johnson, Vice President
Donna McJury, Secretary
Wendy Morse, Treasurer
Kelly Bermingham
Dr. Mary Obear
Jackie Swinarski
Joni Patri
Tom Staebell
Robert Friedman, Legal Counsel

.....
Dr. Mary Obear, Volunteer Medical Advisor
Kathy Panepento RN, Founder
Tracy Ford, Executive Director
.....

Our Staff

Gail Smith, Office Manager
Ashley Manuel, Coordinator of Volunteer Services

.....
Crossroads House
PO Box 403
11 Liberty Street
Batavia, NY 14021
Phone: (585) 343-3892
Fax: (585) 343-7517

Fundraiser Highlights



Love Cones

Our sale of personalized memorial and honorary Love Cones was a great success! We were especially pleased that Eli Fish Brewery hosted our tree lighting ceremony, and displayed our Love Cone decorated Christmas tree throughout the holidays for all the community to enjoy.



Christmas Sale

Jackie Swinarski runs our Christmas sale that grows in popularity every year! Held the weekends before and after Thanksgiving, Jackie saves donated holiday items for this special event, that also features donations of new, giftable items. It's a great way to find holiday deals, while supporting our mission.



Community Events

We are blessed with community partners that contribute to Crossroads House from the bounty of their own fundraising events donated since our last newsletter.

Thank you to Graham Mfg., Batavia First Presbyterian Church, Sandy Howard and Pavilion Friends, Le Beau Salon, Licata Chiropractic, Hesperus Masonic Lodge, Batavia Downs, Polish Falcons, Kathy Blair/Pampered Chef, Max Pies, Declan's Desserts, Town of Batavia, the Paul Townsend Memorial Bowling Tournament, Ascension Parish's St. Joseph Table and more throughout the year.



Sucker Sale

Joni Patri has grown this fundraiser each year, and revived it since Covid to a record sales amount of 10,000 suckers this year! The sale coordinates with Valentine's Day, and we couldn't do it without the support of Oliver's Candies during this busy holiday! Thanks a million to Joni, and all the schools, businesses and individuals that helped us meet that milestone number!



Bowling Event

Our bowling event is another fundraiser that took a hit during Covid, but is clearly a community favorite! We had 57 teams at this year's event held in early February, and record proceeds from this yearly fundraiser. Watch for next year's event - its a family friendly event, with fun competition for novices and more serious bowlers alike!

News from Our House

Crossroads Offering End of Life Doula Services in the Home

BY KATHY PANEPENTO

Crossroads House is so excited that one of our long-term goals has come to fruition, thanks to a grant we received from Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund for Caregivers, administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Crossroads House is now able to provide End-of-Life (EOL) Doula services in homes in our community, with no charge to the families. This is like bringing the "Crossroads House experience" to those who wish to die at home or are unable to be cared for in other Comfort Care homes.



Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds

At the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

We are so thankful that the grant allows us to train more volunteers from our community to provide EOL Doulas in their homes, at Crossroads House, or wherever they reside.

An EOL Doula supports, educates, and guides people through the dying process, bringing deeper meaning and greater comfort to the dying experience.

They also provide emotional and spiritual support to the dying person and their family, BEFORE, DURING and AFTER the death. The Doula is specifically trained and experienced in deathbed guidance and support, ensuring an atmosphere of peace and calm.



Kathy Panepento with the February end of life doula "Graduates"

As of this writing, we have held two classes of 20 hours of instruction, and by the time this is published we will have completed a third during April. Another is planned for May. We then allow our "graduate" doulas to be mentored at Crossroads House to gain real world experience.

If you are interested in becoming an EOL Doula or have questions, please **call Kathy @ 585-201-0048**. If you are interested in having your dying loved one's "final act of living" enriched with EOL Doula services at home, please call the number listed above.

As you can see, our vision is to fundamentally change the way people prepare for and participate in the dying process. We believe that every human being deserves a good dying experience. EOL Doulas help to facilitate this.



Follow us on Facebook and watch our events page for details on our fundraisers and other important events! Share with your friends!
We'll be most grateful!

May 10 & 11th - Annual Spring Basket Raffle at Batavia First Presbyterian Church

June 11, 4-8pm - Settler's Restaurant Dine In to Donate

July 24-27 - Annual Tent Sale at Crossroads

Aug 11 - Alex's Chef Russell Golf Tournament

Aug 15 - Hesperus Lodge Van Hulburt Golf Tournament

Aug 24 - Meat Raffle - Venue TBD

Sept 15 - Fall Festival Kiwanis Car Show/Crossroads Hots Hamburgers and Basket Raffle - Pembroke Town Park

Oct 16 - Spaghetti Western Dinner Batavia Presbyterian Church



Stories of impact: a Crossroads House forever family comes full circle

BY LINDA CONROY

On January 10, 2024 my beloved dad breathed his last breath at Crossroads House. I was so grateful to be with him and holding his hand in his final hours of life. During the early years at Crossroads House, I was privileged to hold the hands of many dying residents; it is so different to now be the family on the receiving end of such unconditional love and care.

My dad, lovingly called Dr. Dieter by Kathy Panepento, was the first volunteer Director of Buildings and Grounds at Crossroads House. He volunteered too many hours to count. He repaired, installed, built and rewired countless things in the house. Dad said, "all of the electrical wiring is to code, I had a certified electrician check the work." That was my dad, and he was amazing.

My dad wasn't the only volunteer from my family. My mom, Helga also volunteered many many hours with personal resident care.

She was someone to behold. The gentleness and love which she poured out onto the residents was awe inspiring. She was also known to "remind" other volunteers "Ve are not here to sit around; ve help de residents and keep de house clean!"

Those were not typos, my mom had a pretty thick German accent! To this day, volunteers who knew my mom say that the laundry is not folded the same perfect way that Helga did.

I was the first person in my family to volunteer at CH. I was there as a resident care volunteer for our first resident, dear sweet Jean. After about a year Kathy asked me if I was interested in helping her. I became the first Office Manager. My sister Birgitt joined the "family" business; she was a resident caregiver and an office volunteer. When dad came to live and then die at Crossroads House it was like things had come full circle.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

BY ASHLEY MANUEL

Volunteering benefits the organization AND the Volunteer

Volunteering reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings by releasing dopamine. By spending time in service to others, volunteers report feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received, which can have a stress-reducing effect.

The work that volunteers provide is essential to everyday activities, giving volunteers a sense of purpose, especially when giving their time and talent in the areas they find meaningful. Older volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and self-esteem.

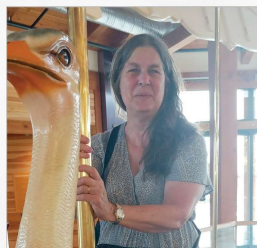
Volunteering increases social interaction and helps build a support system based on common interests. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to participate in a shared activity.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer?

There is a wide variety of volunteer opportunities at Crossroads House! From resident care, gardening, household chores, fundraising, and much more! Contact our Volunteer Coordinator Ashley Manuel today at Ashleymanuel@crossroadshouse.com



Volunteer Week Celebrating Our Awesome Volunteers Thank You All



Jane Schmieder

Jane is an angel who cares for residents at 3 comfort care homes! She's been with us 5 years, and is a family court attorney with a huge family of her own, including a 5 yo grandchild she is raising. Fave memory - train trip to NYC w/Crossroads entourage!



Mary Hutchison

A caregiver since 2017, Mary has taken a hiatus to care for her husband following a stroke, but plans to return ASAP. She's learned you never stop being a nurse entirely, and loves the relationships built with staff and residents.



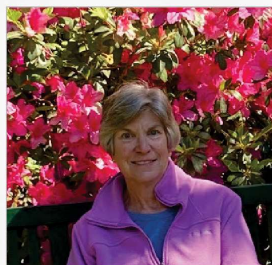
Judy Lusky

A caregiver here since 2006, as a longtime nurse used to helping people recover from illness, Crossroads taught her that we must learn to accept and make the most of a resident's time here. A former skier, Judy gardens, reads, and loves movies.



Kathy Sammons

A volunteer since 2014, Kathy's time here has taught her to not fear death, and to appreciate that family is everything. She gardens, cares for her pets, and is trying "to keep her 76 year old body in shape" (psst...she is succeeding so far!)



Sue Chiddy

Sue has volunteered since 2015, a year after her mother passed away at Crossroads. Volunteering in our gardens is her tribute to her mother, an avid gardener herself. Sue is gratified when she sees residents and their families enjoying the garden.



Julie Marcuso

Julie graced our house in 2021, as a caregiver and then end of life doula, discovering there are many measures that can be taken to bring someone peace and dignity during their most difficult time. She stays active, playing with kids, travelling and cooking.



Mary Fauth

Mary diligently keeps our house clean - every Tuesday she arrives ready to keep everything spotless. She sometimes engages with a resident, and says she is "awed" by the devotion of the volunteers and staff. She also gardens, and helps with her church's fundraising.



Erika Hare

Erika has been a volunteer caregiver for 7 years. She has learned the great lesson that most of our troubles in life are small. Erika enjoys cooking and raising chickens.



Diane Snyder

Diane has volunteered since 2015, and is always amazed at the kindness and appreciation of the families of our residents. She brings delicious dishes for all to share at the house, and enjoys babysitting her great granddaughter, and hosting family at her lake home.



Pauli Miano

Volunteer caregiver since 2012, Pauli is also a passionate end of life doula. She is grateful for the positive impact caring for others has had on her own life journey. Pauli volunteers tons - for her parish, her town of Elba and with Alzheimer's respite at Batavia First Presbyterian Church.



Sue O'Connor

Since 2022, Susan has been one of our tent sale die hards, after donating items for years to the sale. Susan has admired the caregiving and mission of the house, and plans to train to be a caregiver and end of life doula in the near future.



Val Bartholomew

Val has been with Crossroads House in several capacities for over 20 years! Caregiver and tent sale worker, she is a kayaker, a world traveler, gardener and loving grandma. Her life lesson from the house and the Bible - "use your gifts to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace"

Volunteer Week Celebrating Our Awesome Volunteers Thank You All!



Jim Gardner

Volunteer Caregiver since 2018, Jim is an ordained minister who cherishes memories of praying with residents and their families. He loves motorcycling and has taken 3 cycling trips to Denver and back in the last 3 years!



Jackie Gardner

Brand new wife to Jim and volunteer caregiver at Crossroads, Jackie's motto is "when life is hard, let God" Jackie is a retired NP who offers diabetes education classes, and joins Jim in a Pastoral Ministry for their neighbors at the Manor House.



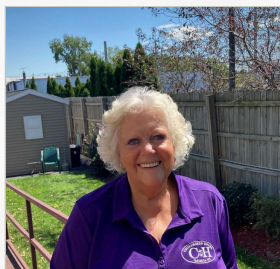
Patty Hughes

A volunteer caregiver for over ten years, Patty had several family members that had been under hospice care at end of life. She was touched by the difference in the Crossroads House experiences she witnessed, and is proud to be a part of our mission.



Sue Ann Reed

Sue joined Crossroads as a volunteer caregiver, and continues to help with fundraisers. She cherishes a memory of a resident that had favorite song lyrics taped above her bed, and volunteers gladly sang it to her! Sue is also an avid reader, and hiker.



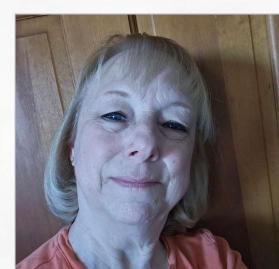
Norma Jensen

Norma started as a volunteer caregiver in 2014. She loves the bonds made with volunteers and staff, and has too many memories for any one to stand out! She feels volunteers are there to bring joy, laughter and compassion, and she is proud to provide that at Crossroads.



Lolly Hittle

Lolly has been a caregiver since 2002! She notes that our residents come from all walks of life, and all end up like family while here. She feels it is a great pleasure to provide comfort to our residents in any way we can.



Cindy Lowder

On board in 1996, Cindy has a long history of service to Crossroads. Board member, chair of multiple fundraisers, and memorial garden development, Cindy's faith in our mission was deepened when her mother lived her final days here in 2008.



Lisa Targent

Lisa began volunteer caregiving in 2012, and was able to utilize her skills when navigating the end of both of her parents lives. It has instilled a sense of compassion in Lisa for the sick, the dying and their families. Lisa enjoys boating, exercising and organizing.



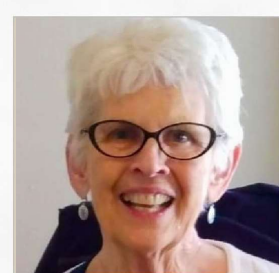
Jenn Schaffer

Jenn says "I'm a newbie", coming to Crossroads in 2023. She has hit the ground running, serving as caregiver, fundraising helper and doula! Her favorite memories are of resident's deathbed "visits" from deceased loved ones. She helps out at her daughter's school, and enjoys time in nature, and meditation.



Jeanne Beck

Jeanne came to Crossroads as a volunteer caregiver in 2008 after serving with the Red Cross. After a dear friend died at Teresa House Comfort Care home, Jeanne knocked on the door of Crossroads and said she wanted to volunteer, and the rest is history.



Elaine Page

Joining our family in 2017, Elaine holds a fond memory of accompanying a resident who loved the outdoors on a road trip to the Genesee County Park. Elaine is also a valued end of life doula. She enjoys keeping fit through exercise, and energy programs.



Bev Hoy

A caregiver since 2009 and staff nurse since 2010, Crossroads House has made Bev grateful every day, and believes you live a better life when you show love, kindness & respect for everyone. She is also a dedicated Court Appointed Special Advocate for abused or neglected children in Genesee County.



Spiritual Support at Crossroads House

by Ed Spence - Chaplain and
friend of Crossroads House

PART 1 OF 2 *The Need for Spiritual Support*

Spiritual care at the end of life (EOL) is of paramount importance as a component of holistic care for patients and their families. Spiritual support involves addressing many needs, fears and concerns.

- **Existential Concerns:** As individuals approach end of life, they often grapple with profound existential questions about the meaning and purpose of life, the nature of suffering, and what lies beyond death. Spiritual care provides a supportive environment for patients to explore and find meaning in these existential concerns, offering comfort and solace amidst uncertainty.

- **Providing Comfort and Support:** Facing the end of life can be an emotionally and spiritually challenging time for patients and their loved ones. Spiritual care offers a source of comfort, support, and companionship, helping individuals navigate their fears, anxieties, and grief.

HAVE THE TALK

Dr. Mary Obear
Volunteer Medical
Advisor



We've all had the experience of having tough conversations with loved ones. Remember the "birds and the bees" talk? All kidding aside, some of these conversations are very difficult. One of the most important talks we need to have is a discussion of end of life. It is so critical that everyone understands individual wishes about the way in which we spend our final days. I find that often older folks don't want to talk about planning their last months or even years. They don't want to upset anyone, particularly their spouse or children. And some feel that if we don't talk about it, it won't happen.

Fostering Connection and Belonging:

Religion and spirituality play a central role in many people's lives, providing a sense of community, belonging, and connection to something greater than oneself. Spiritual care cultivates these connections, whether through religious rituals, prayer, or simply being present with patients and families in their time of need.

• **Promoting Healing and Wholeness:**

Healing at the end of life may not always mean curing a physical ailment but can encompass emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing. Spiritual care addresses the whole person, promoting inner peace, acceptance, and reconciliation, which can contribute to a sense of wholeness and well-being.

• **Respecting Diversity and Individual Beliefs:**

End-of-life spiritual care should be inclusive and respectful of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs, as well as those who identify as atheist or agnostic. Chaplains at facilities like Crossroads House play a crucial role in honoring and accommodating these diverse beliefs, tailoring their support to meet the unique needs of everyone.

In our next newsletter, Ed will address how spiritual support is individualized for each person.

But we all come to the end at some point and it's important that we express our hopes if those who are involved in our care are to follow our wishes. Anyone with a life-limiting illness should be talking to their family and their physician about the kind of interventions they wish to receive whether it be aggressive with a focus on possible cure or a more palliative approach to care focusing on quality of life rather than life prolongation. It saves everyone a lot of grief in the end if this discussion takes place before there is a crisis. Planning ahead means that we don't have to try to figure out what our loved one would want done in the event that something happens. It is very sad when family says "I hope we did the right thing. She never talked about what she wanted or what we should do". So let's get it out in the open and have "the talk".

April 16 is National Advanced Directives Day, an opportunity to "have the talk".

Also heard around the House...



Star Fundraiser

What does our Tent Sale master and Board of Directors member Jackie Swinarski have in common with Shaquille O'Neal, Jimmy Carter and Walter Cronkite? She's a recipient of the prestigious Jefferson Award that honors public servants, one of only five recipients in the Finger Lakes Region. WHEC Channel 10 and ESL Credit Union partner to sponsor the award in our region, and we are thrilled they chose to recognize Jackie with this honor. Jackie's friend and former teaching colleague Elaine Gurrant nominated her for the award, having witnessed Jackie's selfless and tireless personal sacrifice fundraising on behalf of Crossroads House. Under Jackie's leadership, the tent sale, Christmas sale, and online sales of donated items combine to be the highest earning of any of our fundraisers! Jackie is quick to show gratitude and appreciation and to deflect praise to her crew of helpers, and doesn't like to accept the attention she deserves for her hard work. But all of us at Crossroads House are glad to see her win this well deserved honor for all she graciously does to support our mission.



Free Trial!

So maybe you've thought "I'd love to volunteer at Crossroads House, but I just don't think I could handle (fill in your biggest fear here). Believe us - we get it! Most of our volunteers felt the same way before coming here to serve. That's why we've implemented a new "Shadow a Volunteer" program to allow potential volunteers (maybe you!) to spend some time at Crossroads, without commitment, to see what volunteering is really like. We're confident there's a very good chance you'll find it is much less bleak and depressing and much more spiritual and communal, and you'll want to come back. Maybe as a caregiver, but if not, in one of the many other ways one can volunteer, such as gardening, office operations, fundraising, or even board membership.

Sign on to Shadow a Volunteer

Just send an email to our Coordinator of Volunteer Services at ashleymanuel@crossroadshouse.com She'll be more than happy (and quite excited actually) to give you a call and talk about our shadow opportunity, and/or send a form you can complete to sign up. Don't overthink it - just send that email to Ashley right now!



A Serene Legacy

Crossroads House has become the forever home for the inhabitants of this beautiful aquarium bequeathed to us by Lester Gill, a resident that passed away here in March. Lester was a gentle soul and an animal lover, who started his aquarium when he was diagnosed with cancer last year. While he only spent 6 days with us, his family expressed their gratitude as well as their amazement at all that Crossroads provides for our residents. In Lester's case, this included a place for him to know his aquarium would be well tended, and bring joy and serenity to others. At Crossroads House, we are always pleased when we can help someone "live their best life until they take their last breath." When we can share in creating a legacy for them, especially within our walls, it is all the more rewarding.

Easy Peasy Ways to Support Crossroads House



Recycle

Both the Batavia Bottle and Can Retrieval Center adjacent to Aldi's Plaza and Casella's Recycling Center on West Main St Rd. offer the opportunity to donate your bottle and can returns to Crossroads House. They will either provide a label for your bagged returns, or record your donation, and we get periodic check payments. Easy!



Have Fun

Follow us on Facebook and always be in the loop for our activity fundraisers. Family friendly, get out of the house events that will leave a smile on your face. Whether you love to shop, bowl, golf, dance, or are always ready to take a chance on a themed basket raffle - you can support our mission while partying. Win, Win!



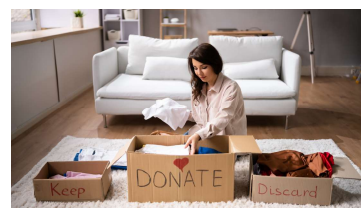
Dine and Donate

Joni Patri of Valentine Sucker fame also coordinates several "Dine to Donate" fundraisers every year. Local restaurants including Settlers, Town and Country, and Miss Batavia host the events. They agree to donate a portion of the revenue for a given night of the event to Crossroads. Hey, you gotta eat, right? Easy!



Support our Supporters

Check out our business sponsors on the next page - these hard working folks are the lifeblood of Crossroads and our community at large. Please support them where possible, so they might support us! They have goods and services, you need goods and services. Easy!



Spring Clean

Clear out the garage, purge the shed, empty those storage bins and donate any usable items for our annual tent or Christmas sale. Drop off at Crossroads Mondays and Tuesdays 9-3. Or call 585.734.0125 with questions. Easy!



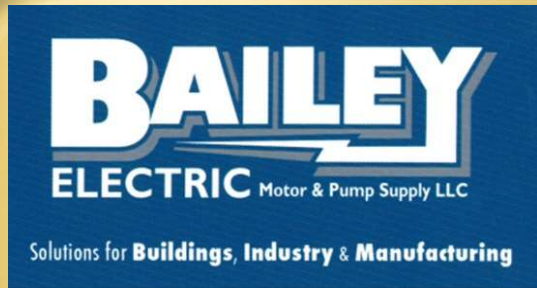
Like and Share

The easiest way to support us is to follow us on Facebook @Crossroads House. All of our fundraisers are promoted there. Like and share our posts to help spread the word far and wide! SO easy, SO helpful!!

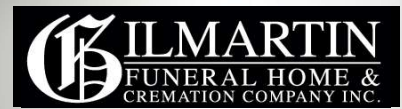


Donate Now

Scan the QR code above and make an easy, quick donation, or set up a monthly donation. Easy peasy!



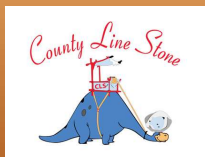
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