

**Report on the Mid-South Comfort Care Coalition Arts Event**  
*Creative Passage: Honoring Life, Encouraging Hope*

**March 15, 2008**

**Location: Church Health Center's Hope and Healing Facility**

**Report on the Mid-South Comfort Care Coalition Arts Event**  
***Creative Passage: Honoring Life, Encouraging Hope***

**Introduction:** The Mid-South Comfort Care Coalition's (MCCC) arts event, *Creative Passage: Honoring Life, Encouraging Hope*, was held on April 15, 2008, at the Church Health Center's Hope and Healing Facility in Memphis, Tennessee. The goal of this event was to raise community consciousness about the healing power of the arts at the end of life. The program was offered free of charge for persons with life-threatening illnesses, their family members, professional and family caregivers, and anyone who had lost a loved one. Funding was provided through the generosity of an anonymous donor.

**Event Planning:** The MCCC is a grassroots, not-for-profit coalition that educates the community and advocates for persons with life-threatening illnesses and end-of-life concerns. The organization functions as a bridge and a catalyst between the health care community and the community at large. The MCCC has an active speakers bureau and holds monthly potluck community meetings with speakers who address end-of-life issues and services. The idea for the April arts event was first proposed in the February, 2007 community meeting. Planning meetings were begun in June of 2007. A number of attendees at the first planning meeting were individuals who do not typically attend MCCC community meetings. Among them was Angela Snyder, RN, MSN, PNP-C, who served as chairman of the planning committee. Ms. Snyder is an individualized care coordinator for palliative and end of life care at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

**Event Structure and Presenters** The committee planned for a half-day event that would be sensitive to cultural differences in end-of-life beliefs and practices. Four breakout sessions were scheduled, with participants choosing two of the four sessions to attend. Sessions were designed to spotlight different artistic mediums, with attention also given to grief, stress reduction, and working with children. To model an engaging activity for use with children, the opening session was a puppet show presented by a youth group from the New Hope Baptist Church, under the direction of Angela Snyder. Breakout sessions included: a) *Poetry Writing/Journaling*, b) *Music as a Healing Art*, c) *Movement as a Healing Art*, and d) *Use of the Arts in Grieving*. A plated luncheon was provided. Session presenters were: the Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman Davis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of homiletics and worship, and Hebrew Bible at Memphis Theological Seminary; Barbara Christensen, MA, harpist and co-author of a teaching unit on the use of music with hospice patients; Kimberly Baker, MA, Manager of Child Life Education and Movement with The Church Health Center; and Angela Hamblen, LCSW, CT, Clinical Director for Baptist Trinity Hospice and Center for Good Grief.

The Mistress of Ceremonies for the event was Teresa Cutts, PhD, Associate Director of Faith-Based Initiatives for Methodist Healthcare and Assistant Professor in Preventive Medicine and Psychiatry at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Medicine. The keynote speaker was Wyvonnia Woods Harris, RN, BSN, MS, MDiv, Dmin, Associate Minister at Mt Vernon Baptist Church, Westwood. Her speech was entitled: *Smile, Listen and Touch: Winds Beneath our Wings*. Initially, an ecumenical closing service with a medicine wheel ceremony had been planned. However, the presenter was forced to cancel for personal reasons. At about that time, Dr. Robert Neimeyer, a clinical psychologist with the University of Memphis Department of Psychology, registered for the event and asked if there might be a spot for him on the program. Dr. Neimeyer is an internationally known expert on bereavement, the editor of the journal *Death Studies*, the 2005 UTHSC College of Nursing Cashdollar Distinguished Professor, and the author of *Rainbow in the Stone*, a book of poetry addressing

themes of grief and loss. Dr. Neimeyer graciously agreed to present the closing session, which was a workshop entitled: *Ritual and Remembrance: Grief and the Expressive Arts*.

**Publicity:** The event was publicized through the MCCC's internet listserver, listings in the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Memphis Flyer*, radio public service announcements, church bulletins, and word of mouth.

**Program:** The program was created, printed, and donated by MCCC member Wendy Santee.

**Community Resources:** Display space was offered free of charge to MCCC partnering organizations. In addition to a table for the MCCC, displays were provided by Methodist Alliance Hospice and Odyssey Hospice. The Alzheimer's Day Services of Memphis brought a display of paintings done by their clients. Dr. Neimeyer, the author 20 books, provided his books for sale, including *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss*, *Lessons of Loss: A Guide to Coping*, and *Rainbow in the Stone*. Also, on a love-offering basis, Dr. Bridgeman-Davis donated copies of her book, *In Search of Warriors Dark and Strong and Other Poems*, with proceeds going to the MCCC.

**Attendance:** Sixty-four persons registered for the event by telephone or e-mail. Twenty staff members attended, including planning committee members, volunteers, and community resource vendors. The day of the program was stormy and windy. Some registrants called to ask if the event were still going to be held and/or to cancel. Only 44 of those registered attended. However, an additional 23 individuals registered at the door. Thus, 67 participants and 20 staff members attended, for a total of 87 persons. A demographic breakdown for participants can only be estimated by the number of evaluation forms turned in. A total of 38 evaluation forms was submitted. Tables 1-3 show participant demographics by gender, race, and age.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Female</b>	34	90%
<b>Male</b>	2	5%
<b>None specified</b>	2	5%

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>African American</b>	14	37%
<b>Caucasian</b>	13	34%
<b>Hispanic</b>	1	2.6%
<b>Asian American</b>	1	2.6%
<b>Mixed</b>	1	2.6%
<b>None specified</b>	8	21%

<b>Table 3</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>35 years or younger</b>	4	10%
<b>36-50 years</b>	11	30%
<b>51-65 years</b>	19	50%
<b>66 years or older</b>	2	5%
<b>None specified</b>	2	5%

Participants were drawn largely from the health care and faith communities, with some family caregivers and a few recently bereaved individuals and cancer survivors. Many fell into multiple designations, such as health care provider, family caregiver, and member of a faith group. Ninety percent were women, with 80% being between the ages of 36 and 65 years of age. The distribution of racial groups closely resembled that of the community. The unexpectedly high African American attendance may be attributed to the support of the African American faith community, with a significant number of attendees from at least four different churches: Greater White Stone Baptist: Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Westwood; New Hope Baptist, and the World Redeemers. The Catholic Dioceses of Memphis was also represented.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation was done using a modified version of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's *Caring Connections* LIVE Campaign Participant Feedback Form<sup>1</sup>. A copy of the feedback form is provided in the Appendix. Response rates for each item are listed below. Many respondents endorsed more than one item

**1. What was your *main* reason for attending this event?**

- 11%** I am currently coping with an end-of-life situation in my personal life.
- 26%** I want to be prepared for the future.
- 16%** I am concerned about the availability of quality end-of-life care in the community.
- 16%** I thought it sounded interesting
- 45%** I was invited by a friend, family member, or colleague

**Other:**

- Desire to incorporate into my own long-term care practice.
- I am a member of a Health Ministry with my church.
- Interested for personal and professional growth.
- Breast cancer survivor, wanting to help others.
- New ideas to help families with end-of-life experiences.
- Serving others.
- Information gathering for my new role of parish nurse.
- Methodist Alliance Hospice in-service hours.
- Seeking opportunities to learn more about helping people coping with loss through the arts.

<sup>1</sup>The MCCC is a *Caring Connections* Founding Partner. Please see [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org) for information about *Caring Connections*.

- To learn additional ideas of how to incorporate the arts when working with dying children and their families.
- Work in end-of-life matters.
- My son suffers from muscular dystrophy.
- Personal.

**2. What was your overall impression of the information provided? (Check the statement that best applies)**

- 76% I learned many new things that will be useful to me.  
24% I learned a few new things that will be useful to me.  
 I learned new things, but nothing of use to me.  
2.6% I did not learn anything new, but it was a good review.<sup>1</sup>  
 I did not learn anything new and was disappointed

**Other:** Movement: need more. The journaling and poetry was excellent.

**3. After attending this event, which of the following are you likely to do within the next month or two? (Check all that apply)**

- 50% More thinking and/or reading about this topic  
47% Talk to family members and/or close friends about this topic  
37% Use the arts with someone for whom I am caring.  
53% Use the arts to take care of myself.  
24% Talk with the leader or someone in my faith community about this topic  
26% Complete an advance directive or written statement of my end-of-life wishes  
18% Write down my wish to have the arts as part of my end-of-life experience.  
18% Help someone I know to complete an advance directive form or written statement of end-of-life wishes  
45% Get involved in efforts to improve end-of-life care in the community

**Other:**

- Find program ideas for expanding creative opportunities in our programming.
- Include the arts in long-term care setting.
- To invite the president [? of the MCCC] to come to our meeting.
- Attend future presentations.
- Listening to music.

<sup>1</sup>This respondent endorsed multiple items.

**4. Are there things you expected or hoped to hear about that did not come up in the discussion? No: 84% Yes: 11% No Response: 5%**

**If yes, what were they?**

- More about singing.
- Missed not hearing Kimberly Baker.
- Rituals and grieving.

Kimberly Baker is a Hope and Healing employee who conducted the session on *Movement as a Healing Art*. Due to her work schedule, she was only able to present the first of two sessions billed in the program and registration materials as being on movement. The Hope and Healing Facility agreed to provide a therapist to conduct the second session, but was unable to supply the name of the therapist or the topic of the session until the day of the event. The second session turned out to be on relaxation. In retrospect, although we could not make changes in the program, the change should have been reflected in the on-site registration materials and in opening announcements, but was not. Therefore, some people expressed disappointment about not getting to hear Ms. Baker.

It is not clear what is meant by the comment about rituals and grieving, as Dr. Neimeyer's session addressed that topic. However, the session was a workshop with much time devoted to small group work. It may have been that the writer would have preferred more didactic presentation on rituals and grieving.

**3. Additional comments:**

- An excellent day filled with meeting old and new friends of our community, as well as gaining new experiences.
- It would have been awesome to have been able to partake of all four sessions.
- It was great!!
- Great speakers, great day!
- I would have like to have started earlier and heard everyone! Wonderful program!
- Have more of these. I only heard one speaker. I want to hear more. Do more arts events.
- It was good.
- Everything was wonderful!
- Barbara Christensen – outstanding! Learned a lot. I attended Wyvonnia, Niemeyer, Christensen. All great!
- It would have been helpful to have a bag to carry materials in.
- Great.
- Would have enjoyed (and learned) from more time with Kimberly Baker.
- Movement session was disappointing.

**Summary:** This event exceeded the hopes of the planning committee in its quality, the caliber of presenters, and the feedback we received afterwards. We were particularly pleased with the ethnic diversity of the audience. The event was well funded, and we were able to provide an honorarium of \$50 to each presenter and to the Alzheimer's Association. Overall, the day was a resounding success.

# APPENDIX

**LIVE Campaign  
Participant Feedback Form**

**Mid-South Comfort Care Coalition Arts Event**

**March 15, 2008**

2. What was your **main** reason for attending this event?
- I am currently coping with an end-of-life situation in my personal life
  - I want to be prepared for the future
  - I am concerned about the availability of quality end-of-life care in the community
  - I thought it sounded interesting
  - I was invited by a friend, family member, or colleague
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What was your overall impression of the information provided? (Check the statement that best applies)
- I learned many new things that will be useful to me
  - I learned a few new things that will be useful to me
  - I learned new things, but nothing of use to me
  - I did not learn anything new, but it was a good review
  - I did not learn anything new and was disappointed
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. After attending this event, which of the following are you likely to do within the next month or two? (*Check all that apply*)
- More thinking and/or reading about this topic
  - Talk to family members and/or close friends about this topic
  - Use the arts with someone for whom I am caring.
  - Use the arts to take care of myself.
  - Talk with the leader or someone in my faith community about this topic
  - Complete an advance directive or written statement of my end-of-life wishes
  - Write down my wish to have the arts as part of my end-of-life experience.
  - Help someone I know to complete an advance directive form or written statement of end-of-life wishes
  - Get involved in efforts to improve end-of-life care in the community
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are there things you expected or hoped to hear about that did not come up in the discussion?     NO     YES
- If yes, what were they?
6. Additional comments:
7. Please provide some demographic information:
- Male     Female     35 or younger     36-50     51-65     66 or older
- Race/ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_