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## Our Mission Statement

*Our mission is to inform and promote community health. To support people with health and wellness needs by providing information, equipment, and volunteer services. To provide palliative (hospice) care for the terminally ill in order that they may experience death with dignity and limited pain. To create a culture of respect and appreciation within our organization and a rewarding experience for our volunteers.*

**Volunteer**



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## Calendar of Events

- **April 8** – Council Meeting, 10am (The Rock Restaurant and via Zoom) – *Please note change in time and venue.*
- **April 10** – General Meeting, 10am (Animales Event Center, Alto Boquete) – **Mary Ellen Watts** presents "Art as Therapy."
- **April 10** – CPR Workshop, 11:30am following General Meeting (Animales Event Center, Alto Boquete) – preregistration required.
- **April 11** – BHH Tasty Trek Poker Run, 1-4pm (begins and ends at Big Daddy's) – preregistration loved
- **May 1** – Council Meeting, 10am (The Rock Restaurant and via Zoom).
- **May 8** – General Meeting, 10am (Animales Event Center, Alto Boquete) – **Michael Polacek**, DNP, RN-RET, PMH-BC presents "NEAR Sciences: Gaining Mental and Emotional Strength from Understanding our Response to Traumatic Experiences and Toxic Stress."

***PLEASE NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, general meetings are held in person at the Animales Event Center in Alto Boquete.***

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## President's Letter

Dear friends of Boquete Health & Hospice,

February and March have been the months of making connections for BHH. We had a joint meeting with members of the palliative care teams for both MINSA and Social Security. In the meeting we described the services that Boquete Health & Hospice can provide their palliative patients. (Panama doesn't use the term hospice; their palliative care encompasses hospice). They shared information on the cultural differences regarding hospice care to Panamanian patients that we need to be aware of.

A second meeting was held with members of Association Boqueteños Luz de Esperanza. This local organization started six years ago. They provide support to cancer patients in the BHH service area, some of whom may benefit from our help. We explained the services we can provide to their cancer patients. It was agreed that we would try and assist each other in improving the care to cancer patients in the Boquete area as we move forward.

We are continuing to look for volunteers and encourage you or someone you know to check out the various opportunities that are available. We are aware that many of you RETIRED to Panama and are careful to not overload anyone. However, we believe that giving your time and skill to help your fellow human beings can be extremely rewarding.

With gratitude,  
**Rod Gottula, MD**

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## **Join Us for the April General Meeting**

### **Mary Ellen Watts Presents "Art as Therapy"**

Join us Wednesday, April 10, from 10-11am at the Animales Event Center in Alto Boquete for **Mary Ellen Watt's** presentation on "Art as Therapy" at our general meeting. Mary Ellen is a local artist who focuses on "sitting in the experience of creativity".

Mary Ellen will explore ways In which Art Therapy can move you out of a slump and into the true possible magic that both Art and Boquete have to offer.

Embark on a journey into the healing power of art in this presentation, Mary Ellen will use her own artwork and personal stories to illustrate

how creative expression can be a powerful therapeutic tool. Through examples and insights, you'll gain a renewed appreciation for art's potential to aid mental health, process emotions, and facilitate self-discovery. Whether you're an artist, therapist, or someone simply seeking personal growth, this presentation will motivate you to unlock your inner creative juices.

Mary Ellen has been creating art through various media for 20 years. She started her exploration of art in Austin at The University of Texas and has expanded into various mediums by attending workshops and art education on line.

Although this event is free, donations to support our work are gratefully accepted.

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## Win a Two-Night Stay at Beautiful Show Pony Resort at the BHH Tasty Trek Poker Run

**STARTS AND ENDS AT BIG DADDYS**

**SAMPLE GREAT FOODS AT 7 STOPS**

**MEET NEW FRIENDS**

**\$20 EA HAND**

**1ST ANNUAL TASTY TREK POKER RUN**

**BOQUETE HEALTH & HOSPICE**

**GRAND PRIZE**

**2 NIGHTS AT SHOW PONY RESORT LAS LAJAS**

**SILENT AUCTION**

**50/50 RAFFLE**

**April 11 1 to 4pm**



Be sure not to miss the first-ever BHH Tasty Trek Poker Run! The adventure starts at Big Daddy's at 1pm on Thursday, April 11, where you'll grab your wristband for \$20 and embark on the adventure.

You will have three hours (from 1-4pm) to trek to seven great eateries in Bajo Boquete to collect cards to make up your winning poker hand. Some of these restaurants will be offering participants complementary small bites and others special pricing on select food and drink items. Want to up the ante? Purchase one or two additional cards at \$5 each to improve your chances to win. Return to Big Daddy's at the end of the run where the participants with the best seven-card hands will be our winners!

The grand prize for the Poker Run is a two-night stay at the beautiful Show Pony Resort at Las Lajas beach. Check out the silent auction from 1-4pm at Big Daddy's featuring tempting donated items and services you may wish to bid on. Auction items include a framed print by local esteemed photographer/artist **Fran Hogan**, and gift certificates for kayaking for two, several coffee tours for two, a manicure/pedicure from Lady's, paddle boarding, garden stores, and more.

And don't miss the 50/50 raffle! Raffle tickets can be purchased at Big Daddy's during the event, or in advance at the BHH table at the Tuesday Market at Tap Out. Winners will be announced at Big Daddy's at 4:30pm.

Spend a fun afternoon socializing with old friends and make some new ones. Enjoy some favorite hangouts and discover ones you never knew about! Your entry fee and silent auction bids will go toward the repair or purchase of oxygen concentrators, which we lend out at no charge to people with COPD, asthma, and other serious respiratory ailments.

The seven participating restaurants (including one ice cream shop!) offer a nice variety of different types of food, atmosphere, and price points. From north to south (downhill!):

- Otto Gastronomia Italiano
- Patrón del Schawarma
- Gelateria La Ghiotta
- VAMOS Brewing Tacqueria y Cerveza
- Big Daddy's Grill (where the Trek begins and ends)
- Mike's Global Grill
- DOBO (Selina Hotel)

Volunteers are needed to help distribute poker cards at the event—your support makes all the difference! Contact Jeanie Miller at [jkmiller46@gmail.com](mailto:jkmiller46@gmail.com) to sign up to help.

So grab a friend (or a group!) and get ready to eat, drink, walk it all off, and maybe win a prize in one memorable afternoon. We look forward to seeing you for an unforgettable event with a meaningful impact on the community.

**Please help us:** To give us an idea of who's participating, please sign up now for the Tasty Trek using the button below or at <https://www.boquetehealthandhospice.org/poker.html>. We'd sure appreciate it, but you can still participate without pre-registering.

[Sign Up Now](#)



## Book Now for April CPR Training

*Learn to save a life and help a family member, friend, or neighbor in an emergency by attending BHH CPR training. This is a popular class, so sign up early!*

Still some spots available for the April 10 CPR training! Sign up today! It will be held at the Animales Event Center in Alto Boquete and will start at 11:30am following our general meeting. The classes last about an hour. During the training, our amazing instructors teach participants hands-on CPR chest compressions (no mouth-to-mouth) and the Heimlich maneuver for airway obstruction.

This is a non-certified course. Preregistration is required and class size is limited to 16 for each class, so please register for training by emailing [CPR@boquetehealth.org](mailto:CPR@boquetehealth.org) or clicking the button below.

Although this event is free, donations to support our work are gratefully accepted.

[Sign Up Now for CPR](#)



## In Appreciation

Thanks to **Kevin Reilly** and everyone who came out to our March monthly meeting. We enjoyed learning the history of the ancient arts of Tai Chi and Chi Gong, got to watch instructor Kevin Reilly demonstrate the "24 forms," and even practiced a few basic moves ourselves.

Tai Chi, sometimes called "moving meditation," can improve muscle strength, flexibility, and balance—all important factors in healthy aging. It can even lower your blood pressure, help you manage depression, and extend your lifespan.





Kevin has been practicing these healing modalities for many decades and is a gifted teacher who teaches beginner's classes through [Tai Chi-riqui](#) (such a great name!) at Club Santa Lucia in Volcancito.

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## Open House at Equipment Locker Great Success

The first open house for equipment returns was held in March. **Chris McCall**, **Lorraine Handler**, and Nicky Scruffington (our four-legged volunteer) manned our equipment locker at the open house, at which two oxygen concentrators, a wheel chair, toilet topper, and a walker were returned. A quad cane was also checked out. Huge thanks to the volunteers as well as **Jan McLellan**, who donated nine gorgeous hand-made lap blankets for hospice patients.

Loaning medical equipment free of charge to our community is one of the most important things BHH does. When equipment isn't returned in a timely fashion, we may not be able to fulfill future requests, and ultimately missing devices must be replaced at significant cost to our small organization.

If you need to return equipment and weren't able to return it at the open house, please contact a Patient Care Coordinator by WhatsApp ([507-6781-9250](tel:507-6781-9250)) to make an appointment to return the equipment.



Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in returning equipment in a timely fashion so that we may assist others in need. We plan to have more open houses for equipment return and will announce them in this newsletter and on social media.

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## Opening Doors with MINSA and Sequro Social Palliative Care

Recently, volunteer members of the BHH Hospice and Family Care team had a rare opportunity to meet face to face with the MINSA Social Security Palliative Care personnel: **Dra. Luz Quirós**, the head of Sequro Social Polyclinic Palliative Care, and **Dr. Ramon Castillo**, Medical director of Palliative Care for Chiriquí province. **Sylvana Gittens** did a superior job of translation, which enabled both English- and Spanish-speaking participants to get a clear understanding of the topics discussed.

**Dr. Rod Gottula** gave a brief history of BHH followed by an explanation of our services. He covered visits to hospice patients, making requests through our PCCs, our medical equipment loan program, and our blood services and bi-annual blood drive.

Dra. Luz, as she is fondly known, presented the full spectrum of the services for their patients. A three person team covers medical, psychological, and family needs and visits each home for two hours each week. They are able to go to four homes a day. Keeping patients comfortable and without pain to the end is vital. To do so, Sequro Social averages about 600 morphine injections a month.

To be eligible for Sequro Social palliative care, participants must have SC insurance or have a family member who has contributed and has coverage. In Chiriquí about 25% of the people have insurance.

The number of patients being served by Sequro Social is increasing each year and Dr. Luz shared data about the types of medical problems they encounter and the demographics of the patients who receive services. Dr. Luz also oversees SADI, a program that provides

some assistance for bedridden patients. SADI patients can receive 90 Pampers a month or three a day.

To assist Sequro Social's future efforts in providing these services, BHH can provide volunteers to accompany social workers on patient visits on a case-by-case basis and provide medical equipment when available.

This meeting opened the door to communication between MINSA, Sequro Social and BHH and the participants agreed to have regularly scheduled meetings. Perhaps the dream of having hospice organizations like BHH throughout Panamá will become a reality someday.

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## Association Boqueteños Luz de Esperanza is Willing and ABLE

The Association Boqueteños Luz de Esperanza (ABLE) is a group of 32 dedicated women who aspire to help cancer patients—especially those with limited means. **Dr. Rod** and several members of Boquete Health & Hospice recently met with five ABLE members to learn about the services each offers and discuss how we could benefit by working together.

ABLE was established six years ago. 80% of the members have had cancer and understand the challenges facing patients. Members evaluate potential Panamanian patients and select the ones most in need. ABLE provides help to enable patients to travel to Panama City for treatment and the organization covers a percentage of expenses including travel, meals, shoes, Pampers, etc. Funds are raised

through small fundraisers and the support of the local churches. ABLE volunteers also provide companionship to the patient and family to the end.

The ABLE team was pleased to hear that the family of a patient can contact our PCCs to be considered for our hospice program, arrange visits, borrow medical equipment, or obtain needed blood. A patient of ABLE in Caldera recently borrowed a hospital bed from BHH and there are others we can help. The BHH philosophy that all patients should die comfortably aligns with ABLE goals. Morphine and other opioids can be difficult to obtain in Panama; there are a few doctors who can prescribe it.

The prospect of partnering with a group such as ABLE, that has close ties with the local community, is exciting. Working together we can do much more to help patients get the pain medication they need. This was a great first meeting and we look forward to opportunities for ABLE and BHH to work together in the future.

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## Tree of Life

*Boquete Health & Hospice gratefully recognizes the names of our extremely dedicated and very generous donors on our [website](#). Their kindness keeps our Tree of Life growing and strong. A huge thank you to all of our contributors!*

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## Support BHH with a Donation

BHH is supported 100% by donations. We greatly appreciate all contributions and use them in a variety of ways to help our community. There are several ways to donate:

- Make a donation via our [website](#) with Visa and MasterCard, or by clicking the button below.
- Make a direct deposit or an electronic transfer to our bank account:

Bank name: Banco General

Account name: Boquete Hospice and Health Foundation

Account number: 04-48-[96-075844-7](tel:04-48-96-075844-7)

Account type: Savings

- **Donate checks or cash directly (all checks must be made payable to Boquete Hospice and Health Foundation):** at a monthly Council or general meeting, blood drive, BHH workshop or event, at our Tuesday Market tables, or when picking up or returning equipment at one of our storage facilities.

***Thank you for your support!***

[Donate Now](#)



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## Council Business



To bring a topic to the attention of the Council for consideration, please discuss it with your Team Lead, who will ask the Council Secretary to add it to the next monthly Council agenda.

### Council Members

**President – Dr. Rod Gottula**

**VP, Community Engagement – Open**

**VP, Operations – Kat McKay**

**Secretary – Lorraine Handler**

**Treasurer – Bill Hinrichsen**

**Patient Care Coordinator – Bev Tyler**

**Patient Care Coordinator – Liz Baze**

**Patient Care Coordinator – Bill & Cheryl  
Crabbe**

**Past President – John Earle**



### Contact Us

**Monday - Friday: 9am - 3pm**

**Saturday: 9am - 1pm**

**Sunday: Closed**

**Hospice/Health: [+507 6781-9250](tel:+50767819250)**

**Blood Donor Program: WhatsApp**



[+507 6590-2000](tel:+50765902000) or call [+507 6781-9250](tel:+50767819250)

Email: [info@boquetehealth.org](mailto:info@boquetehealth.org)

Website: [boquetehealth.org](http://boquetehealth.org)

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Newsletter team: Natalie Kelly – Editor, Carol Jones – Proofreader, Chris McCall – IT Support, and Deb Hornstra – Social Media Manager/Writer. Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and talent to this issue!

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**Boquete Health & Hospice**

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