



## **September 2024 Newsletter**

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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

- **October 2** - Council Meeting - Canceled
  - **October 9** - General Meeting - Lyn Bishop - Decadent Delights: Nourishing Your Body and Soul with Artisanal Dark Chocolate
  - **November 6** - Council Meeting - BHH Office
  - **November 13** - General Meeting - Physiotherapist, Jessica Ball
  - **November 20** - Being Prepared Workshop
  - **December 4** - Council Meeting - BHH Office
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# President's Letter

Sept has been another busy month for us. We continue to run a fairly high census of hospice patients and need help to provide the kind of coverage and visits we feel are appropriate for them. My motto is “We only have one chance to do it right”, so we don’t want to mess it up.

In order to “Do it right”, we are still looking for individuals with a “little” health care experience to help with assessments and to just do follow-up phone calls to the families to make sure things are going as smoothly as they can. Please consider calling and talking to us about how you might be able to help.

Our Wine Tasting event was a great success as you will see further down in the Newsletter. Lots of participation and fun. Thank so much to Larry White and John Hinson for generously allowing us to hold it at their beautiful home in Los Molinos. Even the weather cooperated.

Things have settled in at our Hospice home next to the library, and the sign out front has caught the attention of many locals. Equipment loans are being made on a regular basis, and we are close to running out of beds and oxygen concentrators due to demand.

Elections are coming in November, so if you would consider being on the Board, the Council, or several of the team leadership positions, let Kat McKay know so you can be considered. As they say, we could use some new blood.

Lastly, thank you to all the volunteers who help make this an amazing organization. Unfortunately, patient confidentiality doesn’t

let us reveal specific individuals who say Thank You, but there are many who express their appreciation for the help and care they receive.

Rod Gottula, MD

President Boquete Health and Hospice.

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## Lyn Bishop Presents

### **Decadent Delights: Nourishing Your Body and Soul with Artisanal Dark Chocolate**



In this engaging session, Lyn will explore the profound connection between high-quality dark chocolate and holistic wellness. Drawing from her journey from Silicon Valley to becoming a cacao farmer in Panama, she will share insights on how artisanal chocolate can be both a treat and a nourishing experience for the body and soul.

Participants will discover the benefits of incorporating organic cacao into their diets, learn about the meticulous crafting process that makes Quetzal Cacao unique, and understand the importance of sustainable farming practices.

Don't miss this opportunity to indulge in the world of chocolate while gaining valuable knowledge on its health benefits. Join us for a mini

tasting to savor the rich flavors and learn how to elevate your chocolate experience!

**October 9th 10am - 11am**

**Animales Event Center**

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## **Planning for a Grateful Final Exit**

Dr. Roderic Gottula, President of Boquete Health and Hospice (BHH), delivered a comprehensive presentation titled "**Planning for a Grateful Final Exit**" at the local library. Drawing from his 45-year career in palliative and hospice care, Dr. Gottula provided valuable insights into end-of-life planning and care.

### **Presentation Objectives**

The talk aimed to:

1. Encourage attendees to consider end-of-life planning
2. Outline typical trajectories of decline and death
3. Discuss the impact on caregivers
4. Highlight differences in death and dying processes in Panama
5. Educate on services provided by Boquete Health and Hospice

### **Key Points**

#### **Future Planning**

Dr. Gottula emphasized the importance of having a living will in Panama, explaining the necessary requirements for its recognition.

He advised that copies should be distributed to your doctor, attorney, a close friend or caregiver and a copy be placed in your car. To avoid lengthy probate processes, which can take 3-7 years in Panama, proper estate planning is crucial. Designating a doctor to provide a death certificate is also vital.

### **Death Trajectories**

10% of deaths occur suddenly due to unexpected events (e.g., accidents, heart attacks, strokes)

90% result from protracted life-threatening illnesses, including:

### **Cultural Differences in Care**

Dr. Gottula highlighted the distinctions between palliative and hospice care in Panama compared to expat expectations in the US. In Panama, what expats consider hospice care is typically classified as palliative care. Unlike the U.S., where the government provides hospice services for patients with a life expectancy of 6 months or less, and has a fairly robust system to provide that care, Panama provides palliative care through Social Security or MINSA to all individuals with serious chronic illnesses that apply for this service.

### **Boquete Health and Hospice Services**

BHH offers various community services, including:

- Free lending of medical equipment (e.g., walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs, bedside commodes)
- Hospital beds and oxygen concentrators (most requested items)
- Respite care to allow caretakers to get out of the house for a few hours.
- Meal provision for up to 2 weeks
- Shopping and transportation assistance for medical appointments

Approximately 75% of BHH's medical equipment is currently loaned to economically disadvantaged Panamanians.

## Living Wills

Dr. Gottula stressed the importance of communicating one's wishes when they are no longer able to make decisions. Although it's not uncommon for expats to have a living will, it needs to be translated into Spanish and notarized to be legal here in Panama. He recommended visiting [www.fivewishes.org](http://www.fivewishes.org) for a tool to facilitate these important conversations and a Google search for the POLST form. Both these documents will give you an idea of the kind of information you want to include in a living will and who should have copies to show to doctors and hospitals so that they will honor them.

The presentation concluded with an engaging Q&A session, allowing attendees to seek further clarification on the topics discussed.

Video of complete talk below.





# Boquete Health & Hospice

*Helping Hands • Caring Hearts*



## BEING PREPARED IN BOQUETE

Take the FEAR out of an unexpected health crisis!  
Join this valuable discussion



**Wednesday November 20th**  
**10:00 am to noon**  
**Animales Event Center**

**Now is the time to Be Prepared for Accidents,  
Illness and End of Life in Boquete.**

**The workshop will offer guidance to:**

- Navigate the paperwork that will put you in legal compliance with Panama laws.
- Think about the difficult questions on your end-of-life care.
- Get your affairs in order.
- Provide peace of mind for yourself and your loved ones.

**You will need: .**

A Being Prepared for End of Life in Boquete Manual:

Hard copy available in English and Spanish for a \$10.00 donation at the BHH table at the Tuesday & Thursday Markets, Mail Box etc. or at the door.

Sign-up by clicking below or replying to: [prepared@boquetehealth.org](mailto:prepared@boquetehealth.org)

**Expect the Unexpected – Be Prepared!**

Boquete Health and Hospice operates on donations and is an all-volunteer organization.

Sign Up



# **Wine Tasting a Fantastic Success!**

In this edition of our newsletter, we want to express a gigantic THANK YOU to everyone who made our fundraiser for Boquete Health and Hospice (BHH) such a fantastic success! We couldn't have done it without all of you! There are many people to thank, as putting together something like this requires a lot of help from both volunteers and business partners. Below are our heartfelt thanks:

## **A Special Shout-Out**

First, a heartfelt thanks to Larry White and John Hinson for graciously allowing us to use their beautiful home, which provided the perfect setting for our event. A huge shout-out goes to Ted Hannig for his generous donation of vacation getaway in his casita and matching the funds donated—your support truly made a difference! All these men work tirelessly in our community on behalf of quite a few charities. They give of their time and talents to all who ask for help, and we as a community are better for their participation.

## **Delicious Contributions**

We are also grateful to Boquete Inclusion for creating those delicious Charcuterie Trays that everyone enjoyed. Your culinary skills added a special touch to the evening! Please consider them if you are looking for a catering partnership. Everything they do is done with love and enthusiasm. Contact Chris Young for more information at Big Daddy's Grill in Bajo Boquete.

## **Incredible Sponsors**

Our event was made possible by our amazing sponsors. Without

community business leaders, no organization would be effective at fundraising. These businesses are asked almost daily to contribute, and they step up. It is critical that we acknowledge their partnership with not only BHH but other groups as well.

- Casa Solutions
- Rivera-Gonzalez Law Firm
- Big Daddy's
- Hacienda Los Molino's
- Hotel Panamonte
- Odonto Smile
- Sugar and Spice Restaurant
- The Rock at Riverside Inn
- Mailboxes, Etc.
- Morton's Bakehouse

### **Silent Auction Heroes**

We cannot forget the generous donors who contributed items for our silent auction. This fundraiser had two women who not only stepped up to the plate to get silent auction items they also self-funded through sponsorships that food we had. Without their hard work, this wouldn't have been possible. We would like to thank Jeri Siegel and Shelley Etlin. Especially Shelley, who worked on this with no affiliation with BHH. She saw a need and stepped right into that role. We are personally very grateful for her organizational skills.


### **Special thanks to:**

- Sherry Scurr with Tasty Home Cooking for gift certificate
- Manana Madera for the coffee basket
- Kathleen Fredrick for Dinner for Four to Your Door
- The Rock at Riverside Inn for gift certificates

- Don Rocco for the gift basket
- El Pug for gift certificates
- Big Daddy's Grill for the Beach Club certificate
- Mike Webber for the Smart watch
- Nela Physio & Sport for the gift certificate
- Finca El Oasis for the gift certificate
- Dog Camp for a 4-night pet stay
- Holy Cow Food Truck for a Gift Certificate
- Jane Hampton for the Nutri Bullet
- Amy Saunders for the Training Session Gift Certificate

### **To Our Volunteers**

Finally, a massive thank you to all our volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this event shine! A special shout-out goes to Fran Hogan for capturing all those great moments with her photos and videos. Also, to another community member Holly Carter who created the beautiful flower arrangements for the event. Our event would not have been as lively without Mike Webber, who was the musician for the party. Perfect backdrop for us all. There is nothing as heartwarming as people generously offering up their time and talents to make a real difference in the community, we all share.

Thank you once again for your incredible support! 

Jeanie Miller Team Leader



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## Health Update: August/September

Dra. Shannon Tuer

### Respiratory Infections

Our area continues to experience a high incidence of respiratory infections. These infections are characterized by the following symptoms:

- Nasal and chest congestion

- Persistent cough
- Fever

**Seek medical attention if you experience:**

- Difficulty breathing
- Production of discolored or excessive sputum

**Annual Physical Examinations and Cancer Screening**

If you have not yet scheduled your annual physical examination, including recommended cancer screenings, we strongly encourage you to do so promptly. Regular check-ups and screenings are crucial for maintaining good health and detecting potential issues early.

**Importance of Annual Physicals**

Annual physical examinations provide several important benefits:

- Assessment of overall health status
- Early detection of developing health conditions
- Opportunity to discuss health concerns with your physician
- Review and update of vaccinations
- Monitoring of vital signs and key health metrics

**Cancer Screenings**

Regular cancer screenings are vital for early detection and improved treatment outcomes. Common cancer screenings that may be recommended during your annual physical include:

- Mammograms for breast cancer
- Pap smears for cervical cancer
- Colonoscopies for colorectal cancer

- Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests for prostate cancer
- Skin examinations for skin cancer

The specific screenings recommended will depend on factors such as your age, gender, family history, and personal risk factors.

### **Taking Action**

We urge all community members to prioritize their health by scheduling their annual physical examination and recommended cancer screenings. Early detection and prevention are key to maintaining optimal health and well-being.

If you have any questions or concerns about scheduling your annual physical or cancer screenings, please contact your healthcare provider for guidance.

Respectfully,  
Shannon Tuer MD  
BHH Medical Director

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## **New Year - New Location**

### **January 2025**

### **Change of Venue**

The Boquete Health and Hospice monthly meetings will be at the Boquete Library starting January 2025. Dr. Rod contacted Elsa to discuss having our general meetings at the library. She agreed to let us have a standing meeting time at 10am the 2nd Wednesday of the month in the library meeting room. There may be a rare glitch when they have someone from outside who can only come at that

time, but they will usually know 2-3 weeks ahead of time, allowing us to change to another slot. It's air conditioned with little outside noise and has a TV and audio set up. See you in January at the Library.

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## **The Blood Clot That Stole Christmas**

### **What Does a Blood Clot Feel Like?**

A few weeks before Christmas 2021, Christine DiBugnara woke up with a burning sensation in her chest. Being an active person, she dismissed it as something exercise-related. Then, she had “really random jaw pain” — which she blamed on all the turkey jerky she had been eating. She also started experiencing frequent, terrible headaches.

As the weeks progressed, Christine’s pain moved into her back, and she went to the emergency room (ER). The doctors there assumed she had pulled a muscle and sent her home with steroids. “It was this terrible spasming pain in my rib area, like nothing I'd ever felt before,” says Christine, 46, who lives in Redondo Beach, California.

[\*\*Read the Article\*\*](#)

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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

AccountName:

Boquete Hospice and Health Foundation

Account number: 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 Table or Thursday Market table, or when picking up or returning equipment at our office across from the Library.

*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 – Jeanie Miller**

**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**

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## MEETING MINUTES

Council minutes are now on the BHH website at [BHH minutes](#). All future minutes will also be posted there.



The policies of the organization are posted on our website and are updated as needed at [BHH policies](#).

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### We Respect Patient Confidentiality.



All patient information shared with any Boquete Health and Hospice volunteer is kept in the strictest confidence. *When names are used in testimonials or other marketing materials, we have obtained permission from those mentioned.*



### 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)

Check us out and like us at: Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube!

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**Newsletter team: Chris McCall – Editor, Lorraine Handler - Support, and Carol Jones – Proofreader. Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and talent to this issue!**

**Subscribe [here](#) to receive our monthly newsletter and send submissions to [BHH newsletter](#).**

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**Boquete Health and Hospice**

Across from the Library  
[nfo@boquetehealth.org](mailto:nfo@boquetehealth.org)  
Panama

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