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Eating healthy this winter

Hudson Valley nutritionists provide their suggestions

by Cloey Callahan

WHEN THE COLD weather rolls around, stomachs start grumbling for hearty soups, stews and chilis. Freshly baked desserts are plentiful. It's a popular time of year to be in a wonderful-smelling kitchen.

There's nothing wrong with finding comfort in a warm meal. But nutritionists warn that warm shouldn't always mean heavy. They provide meal-prepping tips that will leave you feeling satisfied through the next few months.

In summer, it's easy to throw together salads for the week and feel confident that you are providing a healthy meal. It's different in winter.

Here's what we learned from the local

Make batch-cook soups, stews, or chili packed with vegetables for a healthy choice.



JASON BOVER

nutritionists to whom we spoke.

Hearty dishes

There's a big difference between a baked mac-and-cheese casserole loaded with bacon and a roasted veggie bowl.

"When preparing a meal plan for colder months, focus on hearty dishes that are



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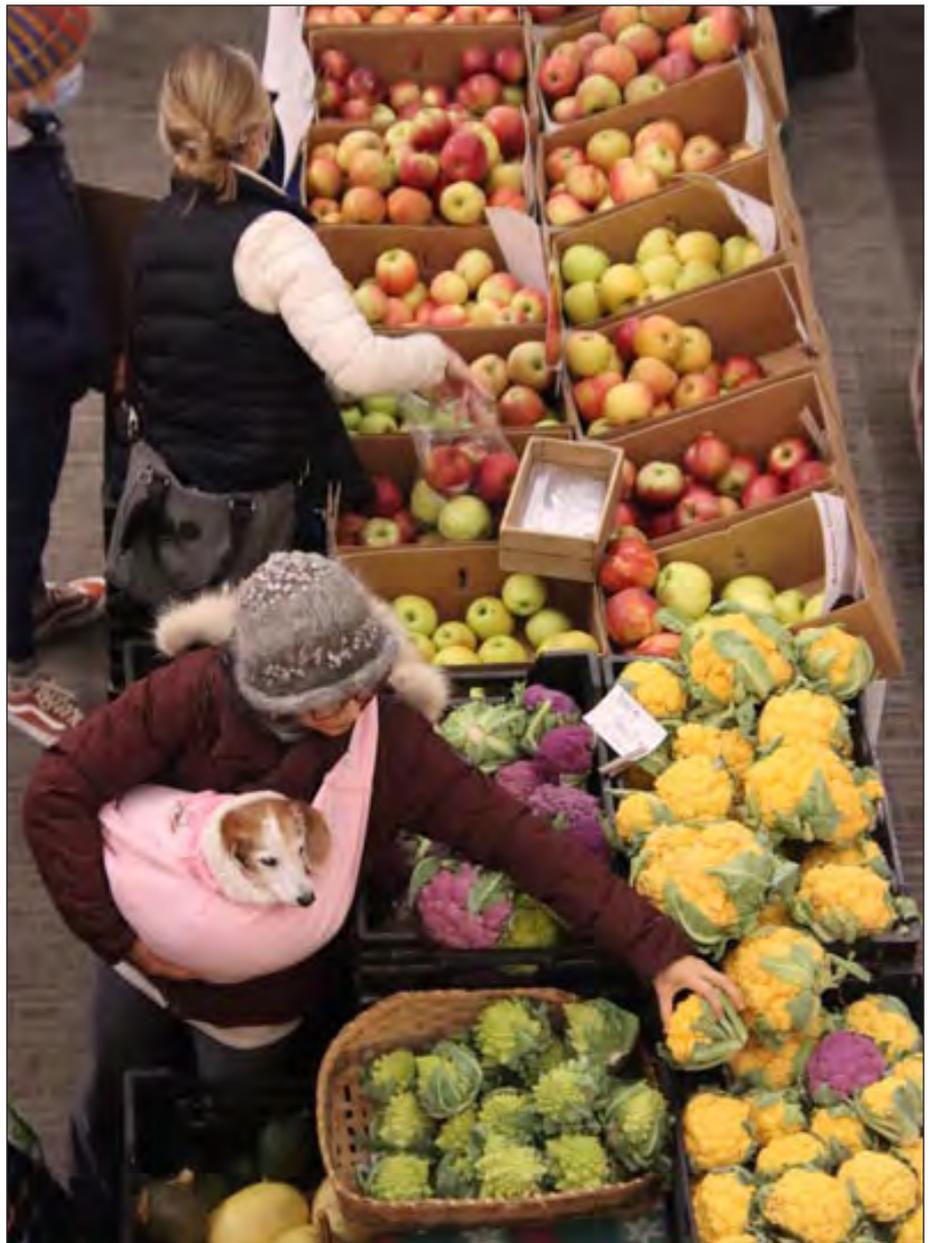
filled with vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins,” advised Sharon McCaskill, registered dietitian, nutritionist and founder of Sharon McCaskill Nutrition. “Roasted veggie bowls, chili and creamy soups made with pureed vegetables make great nutritious options.”

Boosting the nutrition and taste of your warm meals can be accomplished simply by adding seasonal ingredients like roasted Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, or beans and lentils for extra vitamins, fiber and protein, McCaskill said. If you are craving that mac-and-cheese option, add a few handfuls of kale to lasagna or puree butternut squash for an additional veggie boost. These small additions can give comfort foods a nutrition boost, she said.

Roxi Ocasio, a board-certified health and wellness coach, said that incorporating oven-roasted root veggies and using lots of fresh herbs and olive oil satisfies the urge for heavier meals in colder months.

The slow cooker is one of her favorite ways to prepare lean meats in the winter, using creative spices and a low-sodium or bone broth as their base. This enables folks to prepare “pulled” protein in a quick and healthy way to be used in several different dishes

Incorporate oven-roasted root veggies and use lots of fresh herbs and olive oil in the colder months. Seen here are local vegetables by Maynard Farms.



PHYLLIS McCABE

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Meal prepping

If you're looking to prepare something warmer and more hearty than a salad, there are plenty of options.

McCaskill suggests making batch-cook soups, stews, or chili packed with vegetables on the weekend to eat as leftovers throughout the week. “If you crave more variety, component bowls make a great option,” she suggested. “Meal prep some roasted veggies, whole grains and proteins to mix and match. Add a sauce or dressing for extra flavor.”

Making a larger batch of your favorite nutritious meals to freeze for later use saves time and ensures you will have healthy options available when life is too busy. Keeping a few basics like quinoa,

whole-grain pasta, canned beans and frozen vegetables stocked in your pantry and freezer takes you a long way.

Ocasio said homemade soups were a wintertime staple for her in the winter. She uses an Allstar chopper to make meal prep way faster and a food processor to make restaurant-quality purees with parsnips, butternut squash and turnips.

Freezing meals makes a huge difference to ensuring nutrition in what might seem like gloomier months. Whether it's soups or stews, Jessica Johnson, founder and owner of Hudson River Homeopathy, describes them as the easiest things to prep ahead of time.

"You can even put all of the ingredients into zip-loc bags and freeze them, and when you are ready to use them, just thaw overnight and place them in the crockpot for the day," said Johnson. "Chili is another option, and you can make it vegetarian or choose a meat of

your choice."

Making it work for you

At the same time, stick to what you know will work for you.

"Self-directed meal plans should always be flexible and allow for some enjoyment," said Ocasio. "Having a meal plan that is too strict can often lead to binge eating."

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plan can help a lot. .

“Before going to the grocery store, take some time to plan your list,” said Ocasio. “Think of dishes you’ve loved at restaurants that you’ve been to and Google healthy versions of them. Then

Squash and apples are in season this time of year, so adding an apple or two to hearty butternut squash soup makes for a delicious meal.

build out your shopping list based on those ingredients.”

Leaning into seasonal ingredients is a game-changer in bringing joy to your meals.

Johnson said that using produce that is in season was always a good idea. For example, squash and apples are in season this time of year, so adding an apple or two to hearty butternut squash soup makes for a delicious meal. “You can pair this with a nice homemade sourdough bread,” she added.

Imagine coming home from work to the aroma of a nice home-cooked meal. “I always make enough to last a few days,” said Johnson.

Hudson Valley Health

Fall/Winter 2024

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Dealing with teen illness

The mental-health crisis in America today

by Karlie Flood

A 2021 FEDERAL SURVEY estimated that 99 of every 200 adolescents ages 13 to 18 have or have had a mental disorder or illness. That was an incredible increase from the 30 out of 200 recorded just two years before.

Covid proved to be more than a contagious illness that caused serious physical symptoms, Mandatory quarantines led to unprecedented social isolation, as schools and workplaces turned to remote learning and working.

Surgeon general Vivek Murthy’s advisory on youth mental health cited “the pandemic era’s unfathomable number of deaths, pervasive sense of fear, economic instability, and forced physical distancing from loved ones, friends, and communities.” These stressors exacerbated what young people already faced.

Don’t blame it all on the pandemic alone. Youth suicide attempts and hospitalizations were on the upswing well before Covid. The rapid evolution of social media broke through societal



Many experts in the field of adolescent mental health defend awareness campaigns and school-based trainings. Here students at Rhinebeck High School complete a Teen Mental Health First Aid training with Maya Gold Foundation co-founders Elise Gold and Mathew Swerdloff.

guardrails.

When the pandemic reached the United States, however, mental-health problems roughly doubled. The gaps in the care system for mental health became more and more apparent. According to “Why American Teens Are So Sad” by

Derek Thompson, the United States is facing an extreme teenage mental-health crisis. Thompson cited a 2022 CDC study among high-school students for the period from 2009 to 2021. The number of American high-school students who said they felt persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness rose from 26 percent to 44 percent. The suicide rate among people aged 10 to 24 increased 62 percent from 2007 through 2021. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for teens and young adults. For children aged ten to 14, the suicide rate tripled since 2007. Teen sadness was at the highest

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level ever recorded.

What's causing the crisis?

The Jed Foundation, a nonprofit that protects emotional health and prevents suicide by teens and young adults in the United States, offered insights into some of the challenges the younger generations face. Young people are not only at a critical time in their development, but are also grappling with challenges different from previous generations, including constant digital connection. Some 46 percent of teens ages 13 to 17 said they used the Internet "almost constantly."

Young people ages 15 to 24 are spending less than half as much time in person with friends as they were two decades ago. The pandemic, the climate crisis, school shootings, and widely broadcast incidents of violence toward, LGBTQIA+ youth are blamed,

At the same time, mental-health care is difficult to access, and lethal threats such as firearms are too often easy to access." The Jed Foundation found that three in five college students face some type of essential needs insecurity, including housing insecurity, food insecurity, or lack of access to affordable health care. Among youth with major depression, 60 percent do not receive any form of treatment.

British social psychologist Jonathan Haidt and a group of researchers hypothesize a different scenario, explained reporter Ellen Barry in the May 6 edition of *The New York Times*. We talk about mental disorders so much, they said. Students who self-label as anxious or depressed are more likely than similar

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A screening at the Woodstock Film Fest youth film lab.

students who don't self-label to view themselves as powerless over the disorder. Our society has become so saturated with discussion of mental health that young people may interpret mild, transient suffering as symptoms of a medical disorder.

What can we do?

Many experts in the field of adolescent mental health defend awareness campaigns and school-based trainings. The main reason, they say, is that traditional, one-on-one therapy and psychiatric care is not easily available. Teenagers in crisis often land in emergency rooms as a last resort. For that reason, the field has gravitated toward preventive models.



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Talking openly about mental illness to destigmatize the topic and learning what support is available in your school and community can be helpful. Mental-health organizations stress the importance of education for parents, family members and anyone else who works with young adults. Listening actively, responding supportively, and knowing when and how to connect a young person to professional help if needed can play a vital role in supporting youth mental health.

Locally, the Maya Gold Foundation provides teen mental-health first-aid training throughout the Hudson Valley in an effort to “enhance emotional awareness, build mutual support and caring among teens and adults, strengthen inner resilience, and teach mindfulness practice. Its youth action team is composed of teens who offer guidance and insight in planning and implementing events and programs and in generating ideas for new initiatives.

Another local initiative comes from the Youth Lab Short Film Screening at the Woodstock Film Festival. Teens are encouraged to create a new conversation around mental illness by making films about difficult issues such as grief, depression, anxiety, etc. Lucy Fitzgerald-Van Loan created a film about the dangers of social media on teens. She talks about how “It can have a negative effect on health and well-being and it often

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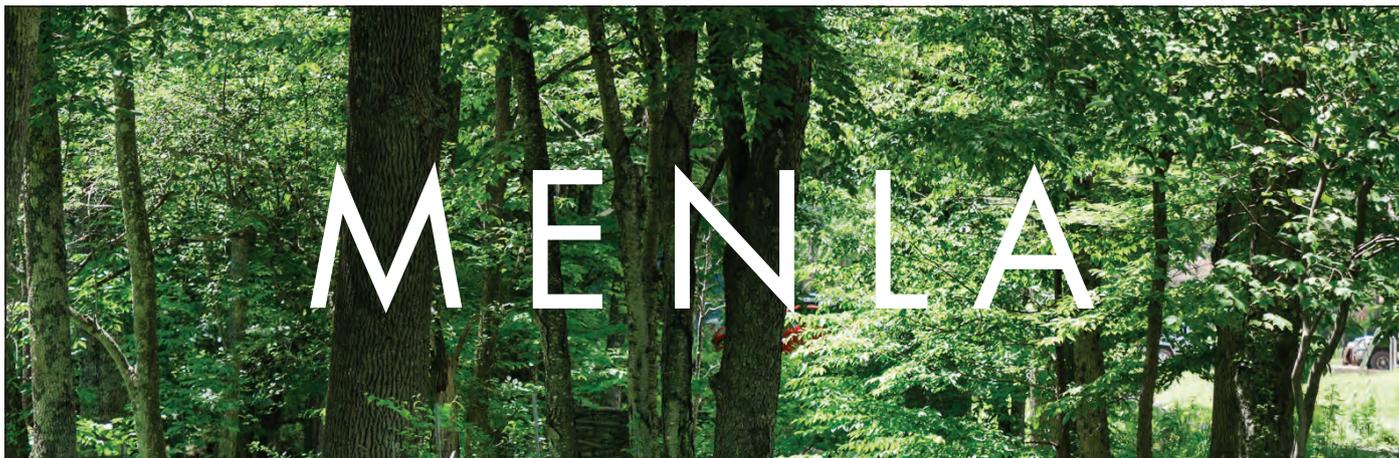
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goes unaddressed.” This program takes it a step further by ending its program with a call to action to support a bill that would accept Art Therapy with a Medicaid Plan, pointing out that art has the ability to help kids process their emotions in a healthy environment.

Emotional support

Research suggests that increasing coping and emotional support skills serve as preventive tools for mental-health crises. “Self-awareness and interpersonal skills help young people better solve problems, manage emotional stressors, and control impulses, improving their ability to move through challenges as they arise,” noted the Jed Foundation.

The CDC has suggested some healthy ways to cope with stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media. It’s good to be informed, but hearing about the traumatic event constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple

Mental-health resources

The Hudson Valley

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- Take care of yourself (and your body): eat healthy, exercise, and get plenty of sleep.
- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Talk to others; talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling; share your problems and how you are feeling and cope.



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Located in Hyde Park and Walden, People USA Rose Houses has free, 24/7 short-term crisis residences that are home-like alternatives to hospital psychiatric ERs and inpatient units. The homes are operated by peers who have their own personal lived experiences. Patients can come and go voluntarily. A community crisis response hub where people of all ages will connect immediately with an integrated team of counselors, peer specialists, and behavioral-health professionals is expected to be opened soon in Ulster County.

Connection and community are vital to healing. That's a core principle behind Holding Space, a new community art space and shop in the Rondout neighborhood in Kingston. Business owner and photographer Bridget Badore noted the importance of community in our cur-



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rent culture, in which healing is often individualized and private.

Dead Parent Club, founded in 2017 in a Brooklyn apartment, hosts two regular grief groups at Holding Space: one for

individuals who have lost a parent, and a more general grief group. Participants may bring a dish to pass or just themselves. Nobody is required to share more than they would like to, and crying is welcome.

Siena Meeks, a ritualist, deathworker, and energy healer, has also been envisaging a space with “all sorts of healing modalities and backgrounds to come together. The next clinic will be held on May 18 at 10 a.m.

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Life's passage to death

Hospice eases the last voyage

by Susan DeMark

HOSPICE CARE BRINGS comfort and dignity to dying. As frightening and difficult as illness and death can be, ultimately hospice affirms and enriches life, care, love, and the unique journey of each of us.

For Diane Congello-Brandes, calling

on Hudson Valley Hospice in 2020 for care of her 96-year-old mother, Frieda Congello, during her final days created comfort for her parent and a level of care and expertise Diane had scarcely been aware existed.

In my own sister Joanne DeMark's final weeks before her passing at the age of 75 last spring, our family witnessed how a hospice in Washington State helped keep

her comfortable, imparted vital information on the process, and gave an incredible range of support to her and to her dear ones -- more than we could have envisioned.

Hospice not only provided an excellent healthcare facility staff, but also bridged that space across the country. These caregivers and Joanne's loved ones worked as a team.

For more than 40 years, Hudson Valley Hospice has given a spectrum of compassionate care and support services to individuals and families in Ulster and Dutchess counties. This private nonprofit agency has contracts with 14 nursing homes and the area hospitals. It delivers services to patients who are at home and to those who are homeless.

Today, Hudson Valley Hospice has more than 600 patients on its service every day.

Last year marked a major milestone, the opening of a state-of-the-art, home in Hyde Park for end-of-life care. The first free-standing hospice facility in Ulster and Dutchess counties, the \$10-million Hudson Valley Hospice House has 14 private rooms for general inpatient care, respite care and home care. It is the first free-standing hospice facility in Ulster and Dutchess counties.

Each room has access to the facility's meditative garden.

An interdisciplinary team

To Lisa Wilson, the range of compassionate care and family support services means "meeting people where they are" in all aspects and with the many difficult challenges faced each day with a life-limiting illness. Hospice care is for people whose life expectancy is six months or less. When treatments to cure are no longer an option, and the aim of care becomes to help sustain quality of life, comfort, and symptom management for whatever time remains. Hospice aids the patient and loved ones in management and understanding.

Hudson Valley Hospice's services include pain and symptom management, treatments geared toward comfort

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and quality of life, trained nursing and social-work staff, spiritual care, family support (for example, home health aides, volunteers, and end-of-life doulas), grief support and counseling, music therapy, art therapy, pet therapy, and other complementary supports that can help sustain quality of life and comfort.

Wilson, executive director of the Hudson Valley Hospice Foundation and in charge of marketing for the hospice, emphasizes that patients and their dear ones should not hesitate to reach out to Hudson Valley Hospice to explore what hospice care is and does. "There are no bad questions," she said, "and it doesn't mean you're ready yet." Many families say that they wish they had called Hudson Valley Hospice sooner.

Hospice care is a benefit provided under Medicare Part A, Medicaid, Veterans Administration benefits, and most commercial insurance plans.

Each person's and family circle's circumstances and needs vary, of course. However, basically, an interdisciplinary team comes together in each case of end-of-life care.

A crucial outcome of hospice care, Wilson said, is reducing stress on the patient's body and mind. Layers of support entail everything from pain relief and home healthcare to visits with a chaplain, music therapy, and aid with day-to-day tasks from trained volunteers.

Individual situations

With her mother's hospice care, Congello-Brandes learned a great deal. Her mother Frieda was diagnosed with MDS (myelodysplastic syndromes), a disease in which the bone marrow does not produce enough healthy blood cells. Her mother did not want advanced treatment. As time went on, she began experiencing weakness and labored breathing. With Diane taking care of her mother 24/7, the doctor recommended contacting Hudson Valley Hospice.

Hospice was immensely helpful in her mother's final days. Her mother had fallen out of bed once, so the hospice personnel arranged to have a hospital bed set up in Congello-Brandes' home, ensuring her mother was comfortable and safe upstairs.

During home visits, hospice aides could relieve Diane in taking care of her mother. The nurses explained what was happening with her mother's decline.

They helped guide Diane to assist family who lived at a distance to make the trip to see Frieda -- something that meant a great deal to her mother.

When our family engaged a hospice on behalf of my sister, we found that the easy-to-understand way that the staff communicated, the in-depth expertise, day-to-day support, and various services fundamental to my sister's care in the weeks before she passed.

A social worker coordinated the nursing and complementary services. A nurse made frequent visits to my sister and worked with the team concerning the medications she was receiving and help with the pain she was suffering. A chaplain made visits to Joanne at her facility.

Meeting people where they are

Communication was the key. The nurse communicated to our family about her

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Hudson Valley Hospice House, opened in 2023 in Hyde Park, is a state-of-the-art, serene, and homelike setting for end-of-life care that serves residents from Ulster and Dutchess counties.

condition, the medications she was receiving, and the assessment of their effectiveness. Help from the hospice brought us great peace in those final weeks of my sister's life.

We were almost taken aback by just how much and how varied the ways that the hospice sought to support my

sister and her dear ones. This hospice care provided a going beyond that was frankly awe-inspiring. Many patients and families are still unfamiliar with what hospice offers and its range of care and support.

In Wilson's view, for hospice care to truly bring compassionate care and



Lisa Wilson, Executive Director of the Hudson Valley Hospice Foundation and Vice President of Marketing for Hudson Valley Hospice.

dignity, "It's meeting people where they are." That can mean hospice care being present everywhere from skilled nursing facilities and hospitals to people's homes and homeless shelters.

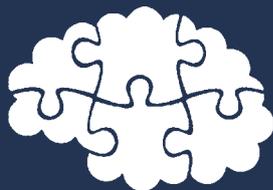
The patient's and family's needs can be many. Wilson spoke of a family in which a young professor was ill and facing the end of his life. The family had three children of elementary-school age. The hospice team worked to maintain his quality of life and support the family by taking care of funeral arrangements and completing the patient's paperwork for

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Veterans are an important population of Hudson Valley Hospice outreach services. The program is a Level 5 hospice provider, the highest level achievable in the We Honor Veterans Program, a collaboration of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The program seeks to raise awareness among veterans of access to hospice and palliative care. With the last remaining veterans of the World War II generation, who are ages 90-plus, “we pin them for their service one last time.” Some veterans are in their own homes while others have ended up in homeless shelters. For the vets (as well as for others receiving hospice care), maintaining quality of life is comprised not only of ensuring pain relief and managing symptoms but also taking care of basic day-to-day needs such as clean clothes and a good supply of foods.

Grief support, too

For those who have lost a loved one, hospice care does not end with that person's passing. Hudson Valley Hospice offers grief support, with options for individualized counseling services, support groups, and/or workshops. The service is through tailored programs to meet the needs of adults, teens, and children, and is available for 15 months. In a children's grief support group, Wilson recalls, an eight-year-old was asked, “What made you come?”

The child replied, “I came because my friend said it would help and told him, ‘It helped me.’”

For those who work in hospice care, it's a calling. As Michael Kaminski, president/CEO of Hudson Valley Hospice, noted when the Hudson Valley Hospice House opened last year, “We who work in hospice are privileged to touch eternity every day. We are honored to meet with and care for people and their families at the most vulnerable and serious time in their final journey.”

Four years later, Diane Congello-Brandes remains grateful for the care of her mother and the support Diane received from Hudson Valley Hospice. With her mother gravely ill, she says, “If it wasn't for [hospice], I would have been sitting on my hands saying, ‘What am I supposed to do?’” As she concluded, hospice “is so amazing and so invaluable for your own peace of mind.”

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