

# Behind the list with Steve Knaub

## President and CEO of Hospice of Lancaster County

By [Tim Stuhldreher](#)

In the late 1970s, the Rev. Donald Wilson wrote a series of articles for Lancaster's newspapers about the illness that would end his life. The series was titled "Terminal Candor."



Steve Knaub is president and CEO of Hospice of Lancaster County. Along with operating two inpatient facilities, the organization offers bereavement counseling and support to the community at its Pathways Center for Grief and Loss, in photo, adjacent its Rapho Township hospice care facility. Photo/Amy Spangler

[Wilson's writings](#) inspired the creation of [Hospice of Lancaster County](#), which began admitting patients in 1980.

Today, the hospice provides end-of-life care for more than half the patients who die in Lancaster County each year, said President and CEO Steve Knaub. It also serves patients in Berks, Chester, Dauphin, Lebanon and York counties.

Hospice care teams include nurses, aides, social workers and volunteers, and the hospice employs 12 physicians as well. Care is provided regardless of ability to pay.

In most cases, caregivers visit patients at their residences or in nursing homes. Two inpatient facilities totaling 36 beds admit patients needing around-the-clock

care. The hospice's [PATHways Center](#) for Grief and Loss bereavement is considered a model nationwide, Knaub said.

**Q: How did you get involved with hospice work?**

**A:** I was in public accounting for nine years. For seven of those years, Hospice of Lancaster County was one of my clients.

When the opportunity arose for the vice president and CFO position, the president of the company talked to me about it. I thought, "How wonderful an opportunity it would be to be associated with an organization with such a wonderful reputation in the community as well as providing such important care to so many people."

**Had you had a personal connection with hospice caregiving?**

My personal experience of hospice was my grandfather (in 1992). My grandfather was only cared for by hospice for a very short time, but I knew how much of a difference it made to him. ... I knew how much it meant, especially to my mother.

**Is the concept of hospice care more accepted these days?**

Absolutely. When I first came here, you'd run into an acquaintance who'd ask, "Where do you work?" and you'd tell them, and they'd say, "Hospice. Isn't that ... ?" and they'd describe their view of hospice.

Now when I tell someone I work for a hospice, I get, "Oh, my, you cared for my ... ." People understand what hospice can do now. Fifteen years ago, that wasn't the case.

**What are the business challenges in running a hospice?**

We face the same challenges as all businesses. We also are heavily reliant on the Medicare system. As every provider understands, the Medicare system is (facing challenges) through reimbursement reductions, and we've been hit with that.

Medicare recognizes that the utilization of hospice services has grown. ... It looks like it's grown tremendously, and the expenses are so much higher. But the reality is, if a patient uses a hospice, [a recent study](#) shows it actually saves Medicare \$2,300 per patient. They're keeping themselves out of emergency visits. Pain and symptoms are under control because of what the hospice can do.

**What issues does health care reform present for you?**

The biggest area is reimbursement. There are cuts in various aspects, and they're looking at making changes to the reimbursement system itself. Any cuts to us, operating on a very tight margin, come back to patient care. ... We have to find ways to cut back expenses so we can offset the revenue decreases and not impact quality of care.

**How important is fundraising?**

It's a huge part for our organization. Our biggest event is our [Labor Day Auction](#),

which raised nearly \$400,000. ... We rely on fundraising dollars to provide the care that we do that is uncompensated, for those without insurance. Also, community support allows us to go the extra mile for our patients. We can provide what sometimes are very expensive treatments, but ones the patient benefits from, because of that community support. If we did not have that, we would not be able to do those types of treatments.

**Is Lancaster a good place to find hospice staff?**

It's excellent for us. We have over 370 staff members. Many of our staff will say they look at hospice as a calling. You have to want to be in this profession to do it with the compassion and the brilliance that they do it every day.

**About Steve Knaub**

Steve Knaub joined Hospice of Lancaster County in 1998 as vice president and chief financial officer and became president and CEO this past March. He and his wife, Cindy, live in York County and have a teenage daughter, Courtney.