

# Compassion for Clientele and Community

## The CareFirst Story

COOPERS PLAINS | Some of life's most sensitive subjects, including managing end of life and the grief that accompanies it, are the day-to-day business of one IHS member.

CareFirst provides complete hospice, palliative care and grief support services to residents of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties.

Their mission of, "Affirming life through extraordinary, compassionate support and care for the seriously ill and grieving" speaks to the level of care given, which begins with a dedicated staff that provide individualized care to patients and their families, primarily in the home.

While the organization's name and branding have changed over the years to better reflect their work, its mission has remained the same since the organization's founding in 1981 --- a consistency its leadership views as a point of pride.

"Everything that we do is mission-driven and has purpose. Our support and care for those dealing with a serious illness impacts entire families during a very intimate time in a person's life. It is rewarding and truly meaningful work." – Jeff Yockavitch, CareFirst Chief Executive Officer.

While palliative care and grief services are currently funded through public support, hospice services are covered by the Medicare Hospice Benefit, Medicaid, and Private Insurance. All expenses that are related to the primary terminal diagnosis – including medical equipment in

the home, medications, nursing/social work visits, are usually covered with little to no cost for the patient. Families can utilize hospice in the home, the nursing home, assisted living facility, or hospital.

The team at CareFirst is made up of Medical Director Dayakar Reddy, MD, certified hospice and palliative care RN's, LPN's, social workers, spiritual care coordinators, administrative support and volunteers. This interdisciplinary approach to end of life ensures that everyone who enrolls in CareFirst services feels empowered and in control of his or her final months.

“Attaining personal goals when life span is short is a cornerstone of our services; by turning hope into a tangible goal, you can begin creating an action plan to help make it happen for the patient. It’s okay to hope for a miracle, yet it’s also good to have a plan if the miracle doesn’t happen. Enrolling in hospice doesn’t mean one has to give up hope, rather we help to redefine what one is hoping for – perhaps instead of hoping for a cure, individuals can identify a tangible



goal to hope for- staying out of the hospital, seeing a grandchild graduate, etc.” – Mary Mosteller, Director of Development and Public Relations.

For their efforts, CareFirst has earned a stellar reputation among those using its services.

Testimonials

offered by patients and their loved ones praise the level of care and personal attention given by the CareFirst team of professionals.

“I thank God for such an organization, with such wonderful people. It’s so good that I look forward to seeing them coming every week,” said one palliative care patient.

Another user of the hospice service expressed thanks for the ability to have her daughter cared for at home, especially on days when her pain was not manageable.

“You think you can deal with everything yourself, but you can’t. They’re there emotionally for you, they’re there medically for you. If you need something and they don’t have the answer, they will find it for you. They are angels from above.”

In addition to the care provided to patients, CareFirst is an active member of its communities, using their public platform to forward its mission of compassionate care, and acting as a lead public education agency in their medical specialty.

“CareFirst is privileged to partner with many local businesses not only in providing care to individuals, but also in educating the general public about end of life care through advocacy. We are honored to work with area hospitals, nursing homes, Office for the Aging, arts and entertainment outlets, elder law experts, and many other service based organizations in an effort to inspire the community to think outside of the box, and truly champion for, their own end of life wishes. We welcome new partnerships with organizations and groups who believe in the power of grassroots education and advocacy.” – Mary Mosteller, Director of Development and Public Relations

Most recently, they hosted their Ready, Set, Glow 5k event in downtown Elmira, which raised nearly \$14,000 in funds to help families throughout the region who are coping with serious illness.

On Oct. 27, CareFirst will be partnering with the Schuyler County Italian Americans Club to host Designer Purse Bingo at the Watkins Glen Community Center, where individuals can play bingo to win one of

20 designer purses, each valued at \$300 or more.

CareFirst Grief Services regularly hosts therapeutic events that are open to the public, even if a loved one was not on hospice. Particularly during the holidays, these events sell out



quickly, so it is recommended individuals register early.

To learn more about the medical, spiritual and compassionate care services offered by CareFirst, or to view a calendar of upcoming events, visit their website [www.caresfirstny.org](http://www.caresfirstny.org), email [info@caresfirstny.org](mailto:info@caresfirstny.org), or call 607-962-3100.