



Connecting and empowering not-for-profit hospices throughout California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Board Members Join Coalition of Nonprofit Hospices

Leadership from all levels of end-of-life care strengthens statewide hospice network

May 2, 2022 – At a time when the healthcare landscape for nonprofit hospices is rapidly changing, the California Hospice Network (CHN) – a strategic partnership committed to sustaining local nonprofit mission-driven hospice care in California – welcomes new board members from across the state. Led by Chair Dr. Robert Roe, the CHN board includes representatives from its member boards, and brings together expertise in all aspects of serious illness care, from quality and clinical education to financial oversight and strategic planning.

“These distinguished leaders are deeply committed to the success of CHN, its individual member hospices, and to the future of nonprofit hospices throughout California,” said Michael Milward, CEO. “They share our belief that every person in California deserves the highest quality care at the end of life, delivered by the mission-driven, community-based nonprofit hospice of their choice.”

Julia Muennich Cowell, PhD, RN (Hospice of Santa Cruz County)

Julia Muennich Cowell is Professor Emerita of the Department of Community, Systems and Mental Health Nursing, at Rush University College of Nursing, Chicago, Illinois. In addition to her research, she led departmental faculty in advancing innovations in public health and psychiatric nursing, including palliative care, and managed two school-based health centers as part of her faculty practice. Prior to Rush, Dr. Cowell was a professor and researcher at the University of Illinois Chicago for 25 years. She served on the Board of Directors of the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago for 20 years and is Executive Editor Emerita of The Journal of School Nursing. Dr. Cowell has a BSN from the University of Cincinnati and holds graduate degrees from the University of Illinois at Chicago in Public Health Nursing and a PhD in Public Policy Analysis and Administration.

Jeff Gerard (Mission Hospice & Home Care)

Jeff Gerard is a healthcare operations executive and corporate officer with extensive experience in integrated healthcare delivery systems, health insurance and contracting, finance and accounting, strategic planning and business development. His career in healthcare operations includes positions as COO and CFO of Mills-Peninsula Health Services, President of the Sutter Health Peninsula Coastal Region, President and CEO of Sutter Health Bay Area, and finally Senior Vice President, Strategic Services and Chief Strategy Officer for Sutter Health.

Virginia Joyce, MD (YoloCares)

After many years as a surgeon with a special interest in breast disease, Dr. Joyce recently retired as Medical Director for Quality and Safety for Sutter Medical Group & Sutter Medical



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Foundation. Personal and professional activities brought her in contact with YoloCares, where her patients reported a positive experience. She feels that the organization is an essential resource for the community, providing services that are “supportive and very effective.” Her clinical understanding and medical expertise are valuable assets to the YoloCares Board and to the QAPI Committee on which she serves.

The new members join experienced directors who have served CHN since its founding in 2019:

Richard Clark (Hospice of Santa Cruz County) – Treasurer

Richard Clark is a retired high-tech, corporate executive who has been an advocate for nonprofit, community-based hospice care for more than 30 years. He is currently president of the board of Hospice of Santa Cruz County and was closely involved with the creation of CHN. He volunteered for the CHN board to foster his belief of universally available community-based hospice care in today’s changing medical and end-of-life care environment.

Robert Roe, MD, FACP (Mission Hospice & Home Care) – Chair

Dr. Roe has more than 40 years of experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, serving in senior executive positions at Syntex, Chugai Biopharmaceuticals, Cytel, Allergan, and Corcept Therapeutics. After completing his BA at Stanford University and his MD, residency and fellowship training at UCSF, Dr. Roe also taught at UCSF, San Francisco General Hospital, and Emory University in Atlanta. He brings strategic development, operations, and regulatory expertise to his leadership of both Mission Hospice & Home Care and CHN.

Keith Volkerts (YoloCares)

Keith Volkerts brings a strong knowledge of finance and hospice operations to his leadership as Board President of YoloCares, formerly known as Yolo Hospice. He previously served as Yolo Hospice’s CFO for seven years and as Executive Director from 2013-2014. Prior to his time with Yolo Hospice, he acted as the Director of Finance for Napa Valley Hospice and Adult Day Services and was the owner of Physician Billing Specialists. Keith and his wife, Lynn, are longtime supporters of YoloCares, including as administrators of the George and Lena Valente Foundation, established by Lynn’s late parents.

Together, CHN member hospices serve 10 counties in Northern California with a collective population of approximately 6.3 million residents. Their combined annual budgets total \$50 million, and they represent a collective workforce of more than 350 employees and an equal number of professionally trained volunteers. CHN is actively recruiting nonprofit hospice partners to join the network in order to serve more families across the state, and help ensure that Californians continue to have access to nonprofit, mission-driven, and community-based hospice care long into the future.

About California Hospice Network

California Hospice Network is a strategic partnership committed to sustaining local nonprofit community-based hospice care in California. The Network’s member organizations, Hospice of Santa Cruz County, Mission Hospice & Home Care, and YoloCares, are each recognized as



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trusted leaders in the communities they have served for more than 40 years. Aligned in their mission and values, Network members are working, sharing, and planning together to create stronger community-based hospices that deliver exceptional patient care and end-of-life services.

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