

## **30 YEARS OF CARING!**

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Palliative & Supportive Care of Nantucket. Started as a grassroots effort by a small group of parishioners of St. Paul's Episcopal Church who approached Nantucket Cottage Hospital about the idea in 1980, and formalized with the organization of a board and the development of an all-volunteer patient care program in 1982, PASCON has grown and changed in so many ways over the years. So, too, has the composition of the Nantucket community, the nature of disease and treatment, and the healthcare landscape as a whole.

By its second full year of existence, Hospice Care of Nantucket was serving 17 terminally ill patients and about 20 patients with chronic illness, all of whom received compassionate support and practical assistance through its staff of patient care volunteers. Terminally ill patients typically utilized the service during their final month of life, and the majority of patients died from cancer.

Thirty years later, PASCON serves over 150 patients/families annually through its staff of professionals and its volunteers, providing the same compassionate support and practical assistance, but now also providing expert holistic management of pain and other distressing symptoms, as well as coaching for persons facing early stages of life-threatening illness, education and support for parents of grieving children, a Coping with Cancer Support Group, a Caregivers Support Program, and bereavement services for persons in grief. Patients now tend to utilize services earlier in diagnosis and to stay with the program for longer. While cancer is still the major diagnosis of patients we serve, we now also care for many patients suffering from other serious conditions, i.e., heart failure, respiratory disease, and neurological disease.

Today, we're not only helping patients with terminal illness achieve a comfortable and peaceful death, but we're also helping patients newly diagnosed with a life-threatening illness get well again! We truly have become a program that provides an extra layer of support to any patient and family facing a trying period of their lives. Thank you to each of our 30 for 30 contributors who have helped enable us to provide all services free of charge. With continued support, we will be able to provide these invaluable services for another 30 years.