

Nantucket's blooming daffodils are an island-wide sight of blankets of sunny flowers that delight natives and visitors alike. But they are more than cheerful beacons of the warm weather and sunshine to come. The history of the daffodils and what they have come to mean within our island life are truly a continuing story of community collaboration and civic pride. It all started in the 1970's with the late Jean MacAusland. Now in their fifth decade, she is widely credited with the inspiration and the substantial initial efforts in planting daffodils along our roads as well as instituting the attendant activities such as the antique car parade and the daffodil show. Today one of the champions of continuing and expanding the blooms across the island is Palliative and Supportive Care of Nantucket (PASCON), a non-profit organization devoted to easing the burdens on patients and families facing critical illness and end-of-life challenges

Initiated in 1982, originally as Hospice Care of Nantucket, PASCON provides a vital service to the island community. PASCON's team of interdisciplinary professionals and volunteers cares for individuals with life-threatening illnesses. They offer physical, psychological, social, and spiritual care to patients and families from the time of diagnosis onward. And they do it all for free thanks to the fundraising efforts of the PASCON Foundation and the generosity of the Nantucket community.

Families and individuals living with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses face so many challenges. These illnesses take a toll on the whole person – body, mind, and spirit – and patients and families need the extra layer of support that PASCON provides, especially with the added constraints of living on this beautiful island. PASCON works in concert with the Nantucket Cottage Hospital and other human service agencies to provide much needed care and support to these neighbors, and it is all done at no charge to those receiving the services. Efforts include providing pain control and symptom management, individual counseling and support groups, and even Reiki and mind body therapies. Volunteers often play a crucial role in patient care and the services offered.

Back to those daffodils. Jean MacAusland spearheaded the planting effort with David Champoux of Champoux Landscape. It started with planting thousands of bulbs along roads and in areas visible to walkers, bikers, and motorists alike. The hardy bulbs were a perfect choice for the island. Naturally spreading and shunned by browsing deer, they continued to return and proliferate over the decades. Supported and championed by the Nantucket Garden Club in the 1980's and continuing to work with Champoux Landscape, the effort has just kept growing. Splotches of brilliant yellow could be seen along longer and longer stretches of bike paths and roads.

PASCON joined the effort in 2007 when board members working on their annual Dreamcatcher event decided daffodil planting would be a wonderful way to honor and recognize the invaluable efforts of the family caregivers and the PASCON patient care volunteers. And with a whole new cadre of community members becoming involved in this annual planting effort, the scope of PASCON volunteerism has grown.

Champoux Landscape continues to play an active role alongside J&M Landscape Services, and new planting is an annual fall rite for the energetic students, parents, and staff of the Nantucket New School. Between 5,000 and 7,500 bulbs are planted each year, thanks to the generous

donations from Champoux Landscape, J&M Landscape Services, and several others over the years. As the island has grown with new development, so has the opportunity to find new places for those daffodils to bring their annual cheer. In addition to those early daffodils still popping up every spring, new batches have been planted along Milestone Road, Hummock Pond Road, Sconset Village, Amelia Drive, and Old South Road. PASCON has added more than 50,000 bulbs to the island landscape since 2007. Since the bulbs and materials are donated, any money raised in tribute to the family caregivers and the PASCON patient care volunteers goes directly to PASCON programs and services.

It is very satisfying to see a million plus bulbs come up to brighten the landscape every spring. Not only is it a beautiful sight to behold, but they also are living symbols of how a community comes together to create something special in the landscape and in the lives of island residents facing some of life's most harrowing challenges. These daffodil blooms each spring serve as a symbol of renewal and hope as well as a reminder of the hard work and dedication of PASCON volunteers and of the entire community.

Please consider becoming a part of the tradition of the island-wide bulb planting. Enjoy the blooms this spring and check PASCON's website for details in the fall. All are welcome to join in the planting in November.