

The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time. *Mark Twain*

The Impartial Friend: Death, the only immortal who treats us all alike, whose pity and whose peace and whose refuge are for all—the soiled and the pure, the rich and the poor, the loved and the unloved.

*Mark Twain, last written statement; Moments with Mark Twain, Paine*

## **Why Hospice, You May Ask?**

**Mery Lossada, MD**

During my adolescence my dream was to become somebody who could change the world. This dream was later readjusted to become somebody who could change something around me that could be meaningful to somebody. The aspiration of influencing the world was changed to a more limited, reachable space and time. Something not that big, I found out I could not reach the world.

When I became a Doctor my dream was to cure all my patients' illnesses. With time I learned I was setting myself up for failure because patients most often seek my attention when their ailments are not treatable or curable. I had to change my goal again. I could not make the disease disappear; I had to learn how to teach my patients to live with their disease. I have to learn to help them face the new paradigm of their disabilities, losses, angst, anger, fears, pain, and challenges. I came to learn probably the most important lesson that is not taught in the medical schools: when we cannot cure we can still heal. And I have been taken by surprise by the awareness that comes from practicing this healing medicine.

My grandfather used to say that we need very little to live, and when we are sick it turns out that very little is really important. We celebrate the breathing, the urinary output, the fact that we can swallow water and that the bowels are still moving even if they are only making noise. A fart is a matter of celebration. When we are not ill, during our busy daily routine we forget that only the most basic things are important. This is true until we lose them. Imagine not being able to eat or to walk, at that moment it will not matter if our face is wrinkled or our hair is messy. We get reduced to our most basic functions. Some of us can accept the situation as part of what life is, some of us will fight the idea, and some of us will be defeated by the fear and the loss of control. I can still try to heal those in need of that much help.

When I started at Hospice of Marion County my mentor, Dr. Elliot, told me something extremely important that I am reminded of every day. The only reason we can do the work we do is because we are not alone on this. The strength comes from having a team, a group, a family, everyone oriented in the same direction, working toward the same goal; that is the strength that allows me to attend the call that comes in the middle of the night when the patient is in crisis and the nurse is at his bed side. Even if I am tired there is a good reason to attend the phone. It is only with the help of my team that I am healing the ill. And to heal the ill it has been the only meaningful reason to have dedicated my life to the practice of medicine. That is the reason I have become what I am, that is more than having a job; I have a mission. This mission is only possible because we all work as one, never alone and always with a unique goal: the patient.

I came because I was in the right place at the right time and I have stayed because I still chase my dream. I dream about becoming somebody who could change something that could be meaningful to somebody. These days I am fulfilling my dream at least once a day...more than once if we had IDT.