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# Monroe County Health & Wellness Newsletter

ADDRESSING THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE.

*Hospice of Southern Illinois is the author of the featured article in our Monroe County Health & Wellness Newsletter. Read more about them below!*

## Feature Article

**An Aging Population:  
Roles are Reversing  
What Caregivers Need to Know  
About Hospice**

Baby boomers, a term that describes those born in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, are finding themselves in the role of caregivers for their parents. They are now responsible for helping assist their parents with day-to-day activities, healthcare decisions, and financial planning.

They might be thinking, “When did I switch from child to caregiver?” As their parents age, baby boomers are faced with making decisions and getting educated on topics they haven’t needed to consider in the past, hospice being one of them. Everyone should consider healthcare options and determine healthcare wishes before they need them to ensure respect and dignity at the end-of-life.

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### August is National Immunization Awareness Month

Immunizations have been one of the top 10 public health accomplishments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). While immunizations have significantly reduced the incidence of many serious infectious diseases, vaccination rates for some diseases are not meeting national public health goals. And we need to remind people that immunizations aren’t just for children. They are needed throughout our lifetime.



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## Featured Article Continued...

The following considerations will help lead baby boomers and their aging parents in the right direction when faced with terminal illness or end-of-life decisions.

Just like you choose your dentist, pharmacy, and doctor, you can also choose your hospice provider to ensure a proper fit for each individual person or family. Hospice is a special healthcare option for individuals touched by a terminal illness with a prognosis of 6 months or less to live. All hospices offer a similar philosophy and are regulated by Medicare. Each hospice organization has special services that make them unique. For example, Hospice of Southern Illinois has an on-staff, full-time Medical Director, Dr. Ellen Middendorf, who provides our patients with a doctor whose only practice and focus is on Hospice of Southern Illinois' patients end-of-life needs; our employees direct access to a physician for on-the-spot medication and symptom consultation; and our community as an advocate for end-of-life options. We also have several other programs and services including the We Honor Veterans partnership, a *Hospice Home* in Edwardsville, Illinois, and exclusively providing hospice care since 1981.

As a hospice provider, the largest struggle Hospice of Southern Illinois hears from families after their loved one has passed is, "We wish we would have chosen hospice sooner." We wish we could have helped them sooner. It is a misconception that choosing hospice is giving up. Really, it means choosing end-of-life care that foregoes aggressive treatments. Some are not aware every medication, piece of equipment, and all medical needs related to the hospice diagnosis are covered at no cost under the Hospice Medicare Benefit. Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance often provide reimbursement for the costs. Generous support from fundraisers and donations allow Hospice of Southern Illinois, a not-for-profit hospice, to provide care in the absence of insurance coverage. In addition to saving families money, caregiver support is another valued benefit of hospice services.

When a physician tells a loved one they have a terminal diagnosis and that hospice needs to be called, it is not easy as you could imagine. The emotions become overwhelming. After that conversation, everything the patient and caregiver hear about how hospice can help most likely is not heard. Hospice of Southern Illinois is committed to patients and families through the dying process and grief experience. We want to get symptoms under control, provide volunteers to visit with patients, offer counseling services for peace of mind, and support and educate the caregiver to release some of the caregiver stress to be more of the family role they want to be.

The most important thing for caregivers and their aging parents to remember is no one has to go through the end-of-life journey alone. We understand this is one of the most emotional journeys you will experience. Hospice of Southern Illinois can make sure patients die with dignity, respect, and comfort they deserve and want. Hospice of Southern Illinois' mission is *to enhance the quality of life for individuals and their loved ones touched by a terminal illness*.

For more information, visit [www.hospice.org](http://www.hospice.org).



*Our goal is to partner with our members to help you promote and grow your business while also serving as an advocate for you within our wonderful community.*

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