

## End-of-life Doulas: Providing companionship and guidance through life's final transition

The Madison County Rural Health Council (MCRHC), a local non-profit organization, is supporting Chenango, Madison and Oneida residents who are facing a terminal illness. With funding from Excellus BCBS and the United Way of Mid-Rural NY, MCRHC offers these services at no cost to support a dying person and their family and loved ones during a difficult time. Christine Paul, Executive Director shares, "We want to provide doula services to help community members navigate a confusing, scary and challenging time in their lives - for both the person nearing the end of life and their loved ones and have the guidance of a compassionate, resourceful and trained end-of-life doula." Our doulas are available, at no cost, to support a dying person and their loved ones at the time of a terminal diagnosis with a prognosis of six-months or less.

An End-of-life (EOL) doula is a trained, non-medical professional who provides companionship, support, and guidance to those facing a terminal illness and death. They provide care, expertise, and support during all stages of dying by offering comfort and listening, presence during active dying and early grief support. Additionally, EOL doulas offer resources and information to help the dying person, along with their family and loved ones, to make informed decisions in a supportive environment.

One of our trained doulas, Karisha Solomon, shares, "As a death doula, I offer supportive, compassionate and non-medical care to gently guide you up to and through death and dying. My specialty is helping families feel at peace and part of the planning process."

The role of the end-of-life doula is personalized to meet the needs of the dying person and their family. Deb Hirsch, trained doula, shares, "My goal as an End-of-Life Doula is to listen and provide support. Every person and family are different. I want to learn as much as possible about each individual and provide the support and assistance they are looking for."

Additional support may include respite for caregivers and loved ones, facilitation of discussions on end-of-life planning and creating legacy projects. Legacy projects are a meaningful way to honor a person's life and share their story, values, and experiences, such as creating a scrapbook, writing letters, or recording life stories. Alison Boinsanna, trained doula, shares, "My passions are holding space and story crafting. I believe in the power of narratives to transform experience. I value the opportunity to work alongside people as they work through life's transitions."

Another trained doula, Meg Tobin shares of her doula work, "I offer a holistic approach that attends to the body, mind, and spirit, helping individuals and their families navigate this profound journey with compassion and support."

Our doulas are passionate about supporting community members during their end-of-life transition. Janna Weldum, trained doula, shares "My heart's work focuses on supporting the person in the transition process, along with their families, through my end of life work, my knowledge of the dying process, and my experience as an energy medicine practitioner."

MCRHC, along with our doulas, recognize the need for support and guidance in our community when it comes to conversations and support around death and dying. Debbie Goodfellow, trained doula, shares, "I feel drawn to be an End-of-Life Doula because everyone is sacred. I want to help families understand the dying process and it doesn't have to be a sad time. Most important if the dying person has something they still need to resolve in their life so peace comes to them freely."

The MCHRC End-of-Life Doula program accepts self-referrals and referrals from family members, friends, neighbors, community organizations, healthcare providers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, palliative care and hospice. This program is available to residents of Chenango, Madison or Oneida County, at no cost.

For more information or to make a referral please contact Stephanie Henry at [henry.s@mcruralhealthcouncil.org](mailto:henry.s@mcruralhealthcouncil.org) or (315) 313-4399. Visit [www.mcruralhealthcouncil.org](http://www.mcruralhealthcouncil.org). ➡



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