

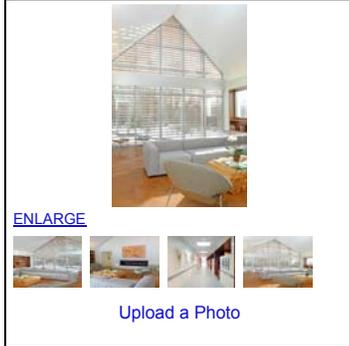
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Hospice Inpatient Care Tends To The Spirit

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By Marion Wolberg Weiss



It's a cold winter day in a residential neighborhood on Quogue. The season's first blizzard is still making its presence known, with snow and barren branches everywhere. On the street corner on Meetinghouse Road strands a newly constructed, low-slung structure, the surrounding woodlands and creek barely visible.

Yet the inside of the building is comfortable, warm and welcoming. Contrary to a first impression, this is not a business center,

local hotel or apartment house.

Rather, it is East End Hospice's new Kanas Center for Hospice Care, which will be ready to open as soon as a certificate of occupancy has been issued. The new center will allow Hospice to offer end-of-life care on an inpatient basis, as well as at patients' homes, in hospitals and in nursing homes.

Hospice care concentrates on the psychological and spiritual needs of the patient, rather than on the disease itself, and East End Hospice has been providing care to terminally ill patients, primarily in their own homes, since 1991. Now, the Kanas Center for Hospice Care will provide eight patient suites, each with a private deck and a woodland view, a library, living room with a fireplace and an adjacent kitchenette and play area for visiting children.

This additional space will allow East End Hospice to better serve patients as well as their family and friends, a goal that has always been essential for Priscilla Ruffin, the organization's president, CEO and founding director.

"We want people to know the importance of what's going to happen to them—that they will be well taken care of," said Ms. Ruffin, who draws upon her experience as a nurse and as creator of botanical watercolors which says capture the beauty of things.

"We want to provide a quiet, strong environment but one that is not so overwhelming," she said. "We cannot change the fact that patients are dying, but we can change the process of their dying."

This idea manifests itself in many ways. Consider, first, the liberating space and light that spills out from each separate room, pervading the entire building. While each suite is compact and protected, a small foyer connects each area to the main hallway, establishing the individual suites' psychological proximity to each other.

Quiet places for meditation and reflection are here, too, like the library and living room with a striking fireplace. These same areas are appropriate for family gatherings as well.

An integration with nature prevails, as the interior design reflects the exterior settings complete with gardens, native plants and seasonal flowers. The subjects in the striking wall art come from nature. Curated by Arlene Bujese, an East End Hospice board member and gallery director, the paintings mirror colors of the sun, sky and land in hues of orange, blue and green.

The architect, Roger Ferris, who worked on the project for eight years, features similar colors in his furnishings. Natural materials like cork walls bring nature inside the building as well.

"When I walk through the hospice's spaces, I can feel the people there, the warmth, the family members," said Ralph Lambert, owner of Axis Construction Company, which worked on the project for two years. Mr. Lambert had worked previously with Ms. Ruffin at the Visiting Nurse Service of Suffolk County.

Ground for the center was broken in July 2014, after more than a decade of fundraising that ultimately raised about \$10 million in donations, including \$2 million donated by John and Elaine Kanas of East Moriches, for whom the building is named.

"Fifteen years ago, we were willed the Westhampton Beach property by Elmo Monfrede,

and the project got started," Ms. Ruffin explained. "There was so much red tape involved, we could fill a room with paper."

Ms. Ruffin also needed to find an art and design team that showed empathy and trustworthiness.

That, she said, is what she found in Mr. Ferris and Mr. Lambert, as well as in Tim Rumph, a Southampton landscape designer who needed to obtain various environmental approvals even as he planned gardens, placed plants and maintained an ecosystem over two years. "Landscaping is never over," Mr. Rumph said. "It's always evolving."

Ms. Ruffin's collaboration with her creative group has yielded a setting that is uplifting for everyone involved. And the organic integration of architectural design, furnishings, landscape and art, form a complete entity.

While associations with the environment abound, there is one particular object that captures the East End Hospice's message. It's an abstract painting by Southampton artist Carol Hunt that hangs above the fireplace in one living room. Titled "Festivale di Bambino ("Festival of the Baby"), it was painted the week Ms. Hunt's grandson, J.B., was born.

And it seems a fitting metaphor: a celebration of the beginning of life even as another life is ending.

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