

# Offering a helping hand, locally

Seneca County residents work to establish SF hospice

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SENECA FALLS — The last eight weeks of Donald Cramer's life were spent in a serene, beautiful place.

The Seneca Falls man died Dec. 1, 2008, of a rare blood cell cancer in a home called Pines of Peace.

The problem was that Pines of Peace is in far western Wayne County, making it a long drive for his wife, Ann, and their daughter, Heidi, to visit him.

"It would have been nice to have such a nice hospice-type facility in this county," said Ann Cramer, who nevertheless praised the care her husband received in his final weeks.

There is now a group working to establish such a place in Seneca County.

They've selected a name for the comfort care home — Pathway Home — and were close to obtaining a house to use, but that fell through and they continue to look.

Diana Becker, of Seneca Falls, is president of the board of directors of the Pathway Home Comfort Care Home, a Seneca County United Way agency.

"To make this a reality, we will accept the support of the entire community," Becker said.

"All gifts will be enthusiastically received, whether a monetary gift, construction materials, landscaping, furniture, fundraising help or becoming a trained volunteer to staff the house," Becker said.

Plans call for a two-bedroom home for the terminally ill, people who have been medically determined to be in the last three months of life and have chosen hospice care instead of curative treatment in a hospital or nursing home.

Preference will be given to those who can no longer be cared for in their own home, Becker said. Admission will be based solely on need; age, gender, religion or race are not factors.

The families of the people admitted to the house will not be charged.

"There is a need for this. We actually had two different groups working on this. Jim Clark and myself go to the same church and we talked about it one day and realized we were working for the same thing and it would be better to combine forces," Becker said.

She said the house's location can be anywhere in the county, but will most likely be in the northern end where the population is greater for drawing volunteers.

A lawyer and an accountant are volunteering their time to get the organization set up as a not-for-profit agency. Others are working on a Web site and a logo.

Becker said Ontario County has the House of John in Clifton Springs; Cayuga County has



Gabrielle Plucknette / Finger Lakes Times

**Ann Cramer (left) and Diana Becker stand together in Becker's yard at her house in Seneca Falls. Becker is part of a group formed to establish a hospice home in Seneca County. Cramer, a Seneca Falls resident, helped her husband through hospice care at the Pines of Peace in Wayne County and would like to see one created closer to home.**

## Pathway Home board of directors

**Diana Becker**, Seneca Falls, president

**James Clark**, Seneca Falls, vice president

**Tina Sullivan**, Waterloo, secretary

**Robert Kernan Jr.**, Seneca Falls, treasurer

**Karen and Stephen Beals**, Seneca Falls

**Roderick Coe**, Waterloo

**Michael Kelly**, Seneca Falls

**Gail Lohr**, Seneca Falls  
**Gerald and Diane Macaluso**, Seneca Falls

**Debra Maher**, Waterloo

**Martha Shields**, Ovid

**David Swenson**, Seneca Falls

**Judith Young**, Waterloo

**Joseph Siccardi**, Ovid

Matthew House in Auburn; Wayne County has Pines of Peace in Ontario; and Yates County has Keuka Comfort Care in Penn Yan.

She wants Seneca to join that list.

"It's important to have families close by to visit and provide that sense of community," Becker said.

Ann Cramer, who doesn't drive, had relied on her daughter to get them to the comfort care home in Ontario.

"It's a beautiful facility and it made Don's last days, and our last days with him, the best possible under the circumstances," she said.

Becker said word is getting out about the Seneca County comfort care home project. She said it may take two to three years to raise the money, find an existing home for renovation or buying a lot and building a new home, plus get volunteers organized and trained.

Becker, who works with the Lifetime Care Visiting Nurse Program, said that agency will provide nursing staff and training for the home.

"The aim of this setting

### To know more ...

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is to make it as home-like as possible, to give the patient a quality of life in their final days in a supportive and loving atmosphere," she said.

"We want their family to again be family and not caregivers," said Becker, who envisions a guest room for family to stay overnight, if needed. Several other homes also offer a play room for children who come with a family member.

"We will address a person facing the end of a terminal illness with their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, allowing them to leave the world with dignity. Our support will continue into the bereavement process," Becker said.