

Cordt Kassner

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<subscriptions@hospicepalliativecaretoday.com>
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December 1st, 2023

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Headlines

[Chris Comeaux, nationally recognized Hospice leader, announces the release of first leadership book.](#)

News Release

November 30, 2023

Hendersonville, NC—Chris Comeaux, President/CEO of Teleios Collaborative Network announces the release of his timely book, *The Anatomy of Leadership*, on November 30, 2023. The Anatomy of Leadership provides a framework for leadership while providing tools and strategies for leaders to develop their skills. Comeaux provides a common definition of leadership to establish a beachhead for other works aimed at leadership development and finding one's purpose. He draws on his life experience of studying leadership and working as a hospice and serious illness leader for more than 28 years to create this guide for anyone in a leadership position. Whether leading a Sunday school group or a multi-national corporation, *The Anatomy of Leadership* will help readers understand the deeper meaning of being a leader and reveal the path to building one's leadership style and living one's cause and purpose. According to Quint Studer, founder of the St uder Group and author of *The Calling: Why Healthcare is So Special*, "The question at the heart of this book is one I've studied all my life: What is leadership? I've met leaders in many areas—healthcare, community revitalization, education—and find Chris's thoughts on the subject compelling. Chris walks us through his framework while encouraging us to think, journal, envision, and keep doing the unending (lifelong) work of learning to be a leader." *The Anatomy of Leadership* is published by Teleios Communications and will be available on Amazon and in print on November 30, 2023.

Hospice Provider News

[A Broward hospice nurse stole from a widow-to-be. She's living and licensed in New York](#)

Miami Herald

November 29, 2023

Stealing money and identification from a senior citizen while caring for the woman's dying husband got the Florida license of a Coral Springs practical nurse revoked this month. It also led to her arrest and probation in 2022. What Lainé Caroselli didn't lose: her license in New York state nor her freedom to move there. A check of New York state online records shows license No. 187941 still belongs to licensed practical nurse Lainé Caroselli as it has since Nov. 25, 1986. Under Laine Moskowitz Caroselli, she held Florida license No. PN892781 since June 15, 1993. Caroselli, 58, also can be found under Florida Department of Corrections ID No. K31573 as a felon on probation until June 22, 2026, for criminal use of personal identification information of a victim 60 years or older; grand theft from a person 65 or older; and fraudulent use of a credit card. Though the city on Caroselli's New York license is Coral Springs and Broward property records says she still owns a condominium there, the property records indicate she doesn't live there. Corrections records say she lives out of state. A database says Caroselli is living in Castleton on Hudson, about 2 1/2 hours on the Taconic State Parkway from Manhattan. A phone message left on Caroselli's cellphone number hasn't been returned. ... Caroselli was arrested Oct. 2, 2020. She pleaded no contest on June 23, 2022, to the charges. She still owes \$3,770 in court fines and fees.

[Community Foundation Gives \\$500K in Grants to 49 Nonprofits](#)

Keys Weekly (Marathon, FL)

November 28, 2023

The Community Foundation of the Florida Keys is awarding \$500,800 in grants to 49 Keys nonprofits for projects in all areas of the Keys that will directly benefit residents, communities and the environment. ... The 2023 grant recipients are:

Chapters Health Foundation, Inc.: \$5,000

[UnitedHealth Group to advance value-based, home care missions in 2024](#)

McKnight's Home Care Daily

November 30, 2023

UnitedHealth Group, the nation's health largest insurance company, continues to see the home as a key part of the healthcare continuum. During an investor conference Wednesday morning, it touted its commitment to delivering care in the home for its members and raised the stakes for continued growth in the coming years. "This year we will complete more than 10 million home visits and deliver fully accountable care to more than a million dual and chronic special needs patients. That is twice as many as last year," said Kristy Duffey, chief nursing officer at United's subsidiary Optum, which provides healthcare, pharmacy services and financial services, during the conference. "You should expect strong growth in the years ahead as we continue to invest in and expand out home care capabilities to provide these critical services." Home care offerings are one way UnitedHealth seeks to broaden its value-based capabilities, company leaders noted. The firm's long-term goal is to transition as many people as possible into value-based care, according to Brian Thompson, CEO of the UnitedHealthcare division. The company is using home care to advance this mission. ... The insurance giant, which bought LHC Group and is in the process of acquiring Amedisys, is part of a growing list of companies that are investing heavily in the home care market.

[Editor's Note: For additional coverage of UnitedHealth Group's Investor Day, see "[Principles Underlying Optum's Home-Based Care Deals](#)" in Hospice News and "[LHC Group Gets Center-Stage Treatment At UnitedHealth Group's Investor Day](#)" in Home Health Care News.]

Palliative Care Provider News

[How Providers Can Develop a Culture of Integrative Palliative Care](#)

Palliative Care News

November 29, 2023

Integrative palliative care is growing popular among patients as well as providers seeking non-pharmacological methods of controlling symptoms and improving quality of life. These types of programs involve a range of complementary therapies, including aromatherapy, massage, acupuncture, dietary changes and mindfulness-based treatments, among others. The evidence base for these therapies has been growing in recent years, Leila Kozak, director of the Integrative Palliative Care Institute, said at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization Annual Leadership Conference. "Integrated palliative care is patient-centered care that recognizes that pharmacological interventions are extremely useful, but sometimes can also produce overwhelming side effects," Kozak said. "By using integrative therapies along with conventional pharmacological interventions, we can frequently decrease the dosage of drugs, decreasing side effects and providing a higher quality of life."

Clinical News

[The U.S. pharmacy industry is crumbling. Here's how to fix it.](#)

By Robert Gebelhoff, Assistant editor and Opinions contributor

Washington Post

November 28, 2023

Canby Drug & Gifts, a pharmacy in rural Minnesota, is a paradox. It does good business, yet it is always on the verge of shutting down. "I'm one bad contract from closing," says owner Mark Whittier. His drugstore, one of a few in his county of more than 9,000 people, exemplifies the struggle many independent pharmacies face. The store is a lifeline for customers, most of whom are on either Medicaid or the state's health-insurance program. Yet profitability is now near-impossible because of the preposterous way the United States distributes pharmaceutical drugs. Without serious reforms, businesses such as Whittier's could disappear. The tectonic plates beneath retail pharmaceuticals are shifting, and drugstores are falling. The total number of drugstores has been falling since 2015, but the trend has been particularly pronounced in rural areas, which have lost about 10 percent of their pharmacies in two decades. There are plenty of reasons for this: As for many other businesses, revenue for pharmacies cratered during the pandemic. Labor shortages, especially among pharmacists seeking better pay and working conditions, further strained operations. Meanwhile, online retailers provided new competition, and large opioid settlements have battered many chains. ... Mail-order services can help address the problem but can't solve it. Retail shops are essential for immunizations, for example. And drugs coming through the mail come without face-to-face guidance from pharmacists on how to take them. Plus, not all drugs can be shipped; some must be refrigerated or not shaken. An elegant solution to these problems is to make it more profitable for pharmacies to serve low-income patients. This would require a heavy hand from the government. One way to do it: raise reimbursement rates for drugs covered by Medicaid or Medicare. States should also confront PBMs. These middlemen have concocted a devious way to profit from the byzantine drug system at the expense of pharmacies.

[Oregon's legal psilocybin clinics draw hundreds—mostly from out of state](#)

Washington State Standard

November 28, 2023

Hundreds of people have used psilocybin legally in Oregon since the first licensed center opened in Eugene in June. But only a minority appear to be from Oregon. Though data about clients is protected by confidentiality rules, several magic mushroom entrepreneurs told the Capital Chronicle that most customers have traveled to Oregon from out of state to take the drug in a safe setting. ... Oregon is the first state to legalize psilocybin use at licensed businesses. The new industry is expensive, costing as much as \$2,500 out of pocket for an hours-long psilocybin trip. ... The new industry is generating so much interest in psilocybin that some centers have indefinite wait lists of thousands of people.

[Lawmakers put off consideration of psilocybin bill until new year](#)

NJ Spotlight News

November 29, 2023

State lawmakers plan to introduce a new bill allowing for the regulated use of psilocybin mushrooms for therapeutic purposes in the upcoming legislative session that starts in January. Lawmakers had planned to consider the Psilocybin Behavioral Health Access and Services Act for discussion only in the Assembly Health

Committee last week but that bill—the Assembly version of legislation introduced by Senate President Nick Scutari in June 2022—was pulled from the agenda. ... The bill lawmakers had planned to discuss last week aimed to regulate the production and use of psilocybin for behavioral health care, to decriminalize its production, dispensing and use by people who are over 21 years old and to expunge past and pending offenses involving psilocybin. ... There is still concern among advocates and some lawmakers about how the bill is written, which prompted work on the new legislation they promise to unveil in January. All bills that do not pass before the end of this legislative session must be reintroduced.

M&A News

[BJC, Saint Luke's of Kansas City merger to close soon](#)

Modern Healthcare

November 29, 2023

BJC HealthCare and Saint Luke's Health System of Kansas City have signed a definitive merger agreement and plan to close the proposed transaction Jan. 1, the nonprofit health systems said Wednesday. BJC and Saint Luke's executives said they have received all regulatory approvals. There are no state regulatory requirements, but the organizations have kept state officials informed throughout the process, executives said. The two systems signed a letter of intent in May. The combined system would have roughly \$10 billion in revenue and 28 hospitals across Missouri, southern Illinois and eastern Kansas. Each health system would maintain their respective brands and operate from dual headquarters—St. Louis, where BJC is based, and Kansas City, Missouri. ... The merger would allow the combined health system to boost investment in treatment, expand recruitment efforts, add locations, bolster research and improve population health initiatives, executives said.

Post-Acute Care News

[Hospital margins hold steady in October](#)

Becker's Hospital CFO Report

November 28, 2023

Hospitals' median operating margin was 1.2% through October, marking the third straight month with the same year-to-date median and signaling growing stability. The latest figure comes from Kaufman Hall's November "National Hospital Flash Report," which is based on data from more than 1,300 hospitals. Kaufman Hall said the 1.2% year-to-date median operating margin for October reflects "continued stabilization" among hospitals. In the first 10 months of 2023, hospitals' net operating revenue per calendar day was up 6%, and total expense per calendar day was up 4% compared to the same time period in 2022. ... Discharges stayed unchanged from September, while average length of stay ticked up 1% and operating room minutes increased 6%.

[Losses continue at struggling Independence Health System](#)

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

November 29, 2023

Ken DeFurio had a good year in 2021, with a bonus and retention award of \$245,000—the highest in a decade—driving his total annual compensation as president and CEO of Butler Health System to \$1.26 million. Meanwhile, the network of hospitals, doctors' offices and clinics he headed began a struggle that continued into September: Butler Health System reported losses from operations of \$13.2 million in 2021, followed by \$22.4 million in 2022 and \$43.2 million for the year ending June 30, 2023. The issues continued for the three months ending Sept. 30, with a \$12.97 million operational loss, up from the \$1.6 million loss posted for the same quarter in 2022, according to results released Tuesday. In January, Mr. DeFurio, 59, helped negotiate the merger of Butler Health System and Excelsa Health, a five-hospital system that was envisioned as a health care powerhouse to keep competitors at bay. Based on its financial results, the new system is off to a rocky start. Excelsa Health in Westmoreland County reported operational losses for the three months ending Sept. 30 of \$9.69 million, up from a loss of \$2 million a year ago. The end of COVID-19-related government grant funding and higher temporary staffing expenses were among the reasons the system cited for the losses.

[Nurses weigh in on proposed Tenet lease for Desert Regional; special meeting date set](#)

Desert Sun

November 28, 2023

As the Desert Healthcare District renegotiates a contract between Tenet Healthcare and Desert Regional Medical Center, more than a dozen health care workers urged caution during Tuesday night's board meeting. Other hospital employees, meanwhile, defended the facility. Tenet Healthcare, the private company that runs Desert Regional Medical Center, proposed another 30-year lease with the hospital during a special meeting with the district in September. ... Dallas-based Tenet's current 30-year lease expires in 2027, and under the new proposal, the company would have the opportunity to purchase the hospital from Desert Healthcare District at the end of the new lease. About 15 local members of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses United union, wearing red shirts and scrubs, attended the meeting. Several addressed the board during public comment, alleging that the hospital needs repairs and additional staff members to meet standard. They also urged the district to take its time and not rush a renegotiated contract. Rachel Garcia, an ICU nurse at Desert Regional Medical Center, has worked at the hospital for 15 years. She said that she and her colleagues have "a lot of significant concerns about the constant and recurring state of disrepair" at the hospital. ... "If we are wanting them to extend this lease, we should be holding them accountable," Garcia said. ... Other health care workers praised their time at the hospital.

[Fired after helping a resident call 911, nursing home worker sues care facility](#)

Iowa Capital Dispatch

November 28, 2023

A certified nursing assistant who claims she was fired from a nursing home for helping an injured resident call 911 is now suing her former employer. Kandus Jellison is suing Care Initiatives of West Des Moines, one of Iowa's largest nursing home chains, in Polk County District Court. Jellison had worked at one of the chain's nursing homes, Oakwood Specialty Care in Albia, since February 2021 and was fired in June 2022. According to her lawsuit, on the morning of June 22, 2022, a "blue call light" sounded at Oakwood, signaling an emergency and that all available nurses were needed. Jellison and a coworker assisted a resident they were with and then responded to the emergency in the room of a resident identified in court records as "V.K." Olivia Oshel, the director of nursing at Oakwood, was in the room along with three other workers. The resident, who suffers from a bone density disorder, had fallen from his wheelchair and told Jellison that he had felt several pops in

his shoulder which led him to believe he had broken something. The man allegedly told everyone present he wanted to go to the hospital. One of the workers told V. K. that she would get to work on that immediately, but Oshel allegedly stopped her and said that they'd treat the resident in-house first and would call for a mobile X-ray unit. ... One week after the incident, Jellison was notified by Care Initiatives that she had been fired for failing to follow a supervisor's direct orders. Her lawsuit seeks unspecified damages for wrongful termination in violation of public policy, the infliction of emotional distress, and the willful violation of Iowa laws that prohibit employers from disciplining a person for either reporting dependent-adult abuse or assisting with a state investigation into alleged abuse. ... Care Initiatives and Oakwood have yet to file a response to the lawsuit. ... Currently, Oakwood has a one-star rating from CMS for its overall performance—the federal agency's lowest possible score.

[Legislation to Block CMS' Nursing Home Staffing Mandate Gaining Steam Among Senators](#)

Skilled Nursing News

November 29, 2023

Companion legislation to block the nursing home minimum staffing proposal is due to be introduced next week by Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE)—more co-sponsors are anticipated, delaying the bill's introduction to some time next week. That's according to Sen. Fischer's office. It's a good delay to have, a spokesperson said in an email to *Skilled Nursing News*. The increased co-sponsor interest means that the legislation is gaining momentum. The upcoming legislation will coincide with H.R. 5796, Protecting Rural Seniors' Access to Care Act. ... Fischer has been outspoken about the Biden administration's "misguided mandate," especially as it disproportionately affects rural communities with alternatives few and far between in parts of rural states like Nebraska.

['Operating Pressures Are Very Intense'—Ohio Living CEO on Skilled Nursing Strategy and Mega-Trends](#)

Skilled Nursing News

November 29, 2023

Operational pressures continue to shape the landscape of the skilled nursing sector as many organizations with assets across the care continuum are divesting nursing homes in favor of other service lines. Responding to pressures from staffing and low reimbursements, Ohio Living decided to act "proactively" and downsize its skilled nursing segment while growing its services in other areas. The move has also allowed the organization to achieve a scale large enough to accommodate some good sense value-based care measures, according to its CEO, Larry Gumina. Ohio Living cut its skilled nursing beds by 350 this year alone, Gumina said. ... Currently, Ohio Living offers skilled and rehabilitative nursing care as well as assisted living facilities, independent living, home health care and hospice—including continuing care retirement communities with multiple service lines—across 48 Ohio counties. ...

Skilled Nursing News: Can you share more about Ohio Living reducing its skilled nursing facility assets?

Gumina: Three years ago, we had over 1,000 skilled nursing beds. And now we're going to be operating just over 500 of those beds. This was a proactive move for us because we were spending exorbitant amounts of dollars on agency staffing. And so now our commitment continues to be caring for the existing resident base. And again, it's [because] costs of operating that very important segment of our delivery system are just getting increasingly expensive and the staffing mandate will just promote that expense. ...

Skilled Nursing News: What are some of the other trends that you are following?

Gumina: Part of the mega trends that are taking place with respect to operational complexities are [related to] leadership turnover, access to capital and the scaling within our industry segments. These are going to continue ... for Ohio Living and other providers.

General News

[Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter bring needed attention to hospice care—and questions](#)

By Cara L. Wallace, Ph.D.

USA Today

November 29, 2023

The Carters perhaps will join other longtime couples who die within days to months of each other. But the drastic difference in their lengths of hospice care brings attention to this question: Can someone “outlive” their hospice stay? End-of-life care advocates have championed the Carters’ willingness to publicly share their decision to enter hospice because it brings needed education and attention to the extended benefits of hospice care, such as home visits from interprofessional team members, equipment and supplies, and access to on-call support. But what happens when someone enters hospice expecting to live six months or less—a requirement for admission—The simple answer is that hospice patients must be reevaluated for care every 90 days within the first six months, and then every 60 days thereafter, with a physician documenting that the patient remains eligible. However, recertifying patients for care, or removing them from care if their condition is not declining, is anything but simple. ... Ultimately, I wonder whether there are additional questions we should be asking beyond what happens to people if they live “too long.” These concerns include whether hospice is appropriately structured to care for people dying from chronic illnesses—heart disease, cerebrovascular disease and Alzheimer’s disease all fall in the top causes of death for those 65 and older—when it is nearly impossible to predict when they are six months from death. ... Though it has been more than 40 years since hospice was established in health care policy, we still have a long way to go before it is fully embraced by patients, families, clinicians and communities. ... “Hospice” and “death” are not dirty words. Perhaps the more we talk about them, the better off we all will be—in life and in death.

[Editor’s Note: The author is a professor at the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing at Saint Louis University in Missouri.]

[Lawmaker proposes funds for Tampa General Hospital to build employee apartments](#)

WUSF-FM (Tampa, FL)/Health News Florida

November 28, 2023

A Florida lawmaker has asked the state to budget \$25 million to help Tampa General Hospital build a 160-unit, multifamily housing project for health care workers in the greater Tampa Bay region. The hospital plans to use the development to help attract and retain health care workers by providing affordable rental units, according to a budget request filed Nov. 14 by Sen. Jay Collins, R-Tampa. Collins’ proposal (Senate Form 1186) for the 2024-25 fiscal year says the money would be used for architectural design, civil engineering, planning, permitting and construction. ... Housing priority would go to employees of the hospital, its subsidiaries and

teaching partner University of South Florida Health with incomes between 80 to 120 percent of the region's medium income of \$89,400, the proposal reads. The development would include a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments with space for child care services and other standard amenities, the proposal says.

Books

[Chris Comeaux, nationally recognized Hospice leader, announces the release of first leadership book.](#)

News Release

November 30, 2023

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