

Group looks at end of life care options for Chemung County

Jeff Murray, Elmira Star-Gazette Published 7:00 a.m. ET Aug. 23, 2019

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Organizers believe there is a lack of end-of-care options in Chemung County.
- Bampa's House, a comfort care home in Corning, has been in the planning stages for almost three years.
- A Chemung County group wants to work closely with Bampa's House to ensure adequate services for the Elmira area.

As a "comfort care home" in Corning moves closer to opening its doors for people who need end of life care, a group in Chemung County is looking at the possibility of a similar facility in the Elmira area.

In the meantime, the ad hoc committee studying that possibility also promises to support [Bampa's House](#), the new Corning facility, and look at ways the two organizations can cooperate now and in the future.

The comfort home concept is an alternative for people who can no longer be cared for at home but don't want to spend their remaining days in a nursing home.

In the Southern Tier region, there is a comfort care home known as [The Vincent House](#) in Wayland, and [The Mercy House](#) in Endicott.



Jim Hare (Photo: File)

While Bampa's House plans to provide services to residents of Steuben, Chemung and Schuyler counties, the Chemung County group is looking at the possibility of creating its own facility, said group member Jim Hare.

"It's because of the passing of a member of our church and her experience with end of life," Hare said.

"Hospitals do not hold people if there's not an acute need to be there. There are no places in Chemung County," he said. "We pulled together a group to talk about end of life care and the need for a comfort care facility in Chemung County."

The ad hoc committee includes representatives from several area churches, the [Chemung County Department of Aging and Long Term Care](#), end-of-life doulas — people who provide individualized support for families regarding end of life matters — and [CareFirst](#), which provides hospice services in the three-county area.

"There is a real need for people who are in limbo who can't go home or don't have caregivers but don't want to die in an institution like a nursing home," said CareFirst Access Coordinator Kate Hembrooke. "People prepare for labor and delivery for months, but they don't prepare for death. We hope to get some interest in the community — volunteers, grant writers, anything."

The committee has also had regular contact with Joan Wilson, president of the Bampa's House board, about how to get started and how the two organizations can work together.

The idea for Bampa's House came about following the death of Wilson's brother Jim Dugan, of Painted Post, who died of cancer in 2016 at age 68. "Bampa" was a nickname bestowed on Dugan by his grandchildren.

Bampa's House [purchased a house on East First Street in Corning last year](#) and is carrying out renovations with hopes of opening by the end of the year.

Once open, the facility will utilize volunteers who will offer round-the-clock care and support for two hospice patients and their families, along with professional staff from CareFirst who will provide hospice services.

While the mission of Bampa's House is to provide services to all three counties, Wilson is eager to collaborate with the Chemung County group.



Joan Wilson, right, president of the Bampa's House board, stands in front of the Corning comfort home's new location on East First Street, along with acting volunteer coordinator Rosemary Mullaney, left, and board Treasurer Charlotte Dugan. (Photo: JEFF MURRAY / STAFF PHOTO)

"Our math showed this area could support four comfort care homes. So this will give us two and I think we could easily support two more," Wilson said. "Jim came to our group and invited us to talk about how to start one. I'm disappointed we haven't reached far enough into Chemung County. This would give us an incredible support system in Chemung.

"I'm thrilled they are thinking along the same lines. We don't want to compete for the same funding. We're only 17 miles apart," she said. "I'm hopeful their group will lend support to Bampa's House so we can get the first local comfort care home up and running."

One thing the Chemung County committee learned in discussions with Wilson and other Bampa's House board members was that establishing a comfort care home is a long and arduous process, Hare said.

Finding a suitable location, raising funds to operate the home and attracting enough volunteers will all take time, he said.

It makes sense to take a regional approach to the comfort care concept, and that's why Hare said his committee will work closely with Bampa's House and support its operation in any way possible, both before and after a Chemung County facility is finally established.

"There are challenges. The average cost is \$225,000 a year. We learned ideally 100 volunteers would be advisable, along with two or three professional staff," Hare said. "Where would the facility be located? We've been wrestling with how to address it.

"In the short run, it makes sense to support Bampa's House, so that's what we're going to do," he said. "People need options to have a graceful death."

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How to get involved

- To learn more about plans for a comfort care home in Chemung County and to become involved in the process, contact Jim Hare at 607-733-7659.
- For more information on Bampa's House, go to [bampashouse.org](#).