

Caring for Dying . . . the art of being present

Kensington Library Film Screening, March 3, 2008

Event Report

When Dr. Peticolas showed her film at the Kensington Library in March it was much more than just a film screening. First, we had one of our highest turnouts for an adult program. But what made this program so special was what happened after the film. Before the lights went up there was a moment for reflection for the audience. Then Dr. Peticolas very gently encouraged the audience members to turn to their neighbor and discuss their experience with the death of a loved one. I was worried that this would be met with silence and reticence. But everyone took part, and the conversations, between both friends and strangers, lasted a full 10-15 minutes. People seemed very interested in opening up. Finally, Dr. Peticolas brought the group back together and asked individuals to share their comments. Many people offered to speak and there was a very interesting group discussion. As they were leaving many people told me how much they enjoyed the program. It was an unqualified success.

Film Review

Caring for Dying is a very moving look at the struggles and joys of caring for a dying loved one. Filmmaker Dr. Michelle Peticolas interweaves three stories of people who cared for their lover, parent, and friend throughout their final passage and found a deep sense of connection to the process. Dr. Peticolas contrasts this with her own troubling experience with her parents' deaths. This film makes an effective case for more openness, intimacy, and presence throughout the experience of death for both the dying and the living. The frankness and eloquence of the three caregivers and Dr. Peticolas communicate the importance of seeking a more satisfying approach to death than the fear and avoidance too prevalent in our culture.

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