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Summer 2016

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Hospice Volunteers Share Their Time and Talent in Unexpected Ways

When imagining what it's like to be a hospice volunteer, most people picture themselves sitting next to a patient's bed providing companionship and conversation. That picture is accurate for some hospice volunteers, but there are many other ways to contribute to patient care if you want to remain behind the scenes. You can make an impact on a patient's or caregiver's life in a way that's the right fit for you and your talents.

The sunshine team at Hospice by the Sea

After Patrick Vincent retired from his position as head of cancer drug discovery at a pharmaceutical company, he wanted to spend time helping patients during a different phase of their disease management. As a hospice volunteer, he knew he could help people live with dignity during a difficult time of life.

During volunteer training at the Hospice by the Sea in Solana Beach, he found out the hospice needed help delivering flower arrangements to patients—a volunteer duty he could start right away. Every Monday, he handpicks and delivers flowers to several patients. "Patrick himself is a ray of sunshine delivering a ray of sunshine," said volunteer coordinator, Phyllis Fogel.

"Flower delivery is an easy introduction to hospice patient support," said Patrick. Volunteers go to a patient's home for a quick visit, but can take the time, if they're comfortable, to get to know the patient and caregiver. It's a good way to figure out

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whether a volunteer role in patient support is for you.

Although Patrick knew he wanted to interact with patients, many of his fellow volunteers prefer a behind-the-scenes role. One of them picks up the mason jars from the week before and someone else cleans and decorates the jars so they're ready for flowers.

While in volunteer training, Geri German wasn't quite sure what her niche would be as a volunteer. "Once the weekly flower deliveries started, Geri discovered the ideal job," said Phyllis. Every week, Geri loads up her car with flowers donated by local grocers and spends the day making arrangements along with other volunteers. "Receiving handwritten notes from patients thanking us for the flowers makes this even more rewarding for the volunteers dedicated to it," said Phyllis.

Wrapped in comfort thanks to Compassus-Placentia

"Years ago, after a friend's husband died, someone made her a memory quilt out of swatches of fabric from his shirts—that idea stuck with me," said Nancy Lindsey. Sewing has always been Nancy's passion so she asked a friend who worked at the Compassus Hospice in Placentia whether the families of their patients might like memory quilts. Once Compassus started offering Nancy's quilt service, the orders came pouring in. Nancy is now working on her 75th quilt for Compassus families.

Nancy receives all types of clothing from families. "I originally imagined quilts made from plaid shirts and bathrobes, but I've worked with t-shirts, patches, sweaters, even a down coat," she said. "I'm breaking all the quilting rules!"

Each unique quilt is designed so the fabric from the loved one's clothing is the focus. "When I get home with the clothing, I lay it out to plan the design," she said. "Sometimes I have to send up a prayer—Lord help me create something beautiful out of this because I don't see it yet."

The result is always "something beautiful." Hospice chaplain Greg Anderson said, "Nancy spends about 20 hours on each blanket. When it's finished we schedule a time to give the quilt to a surviving family member."

"I've been told they take the quilt and wrap themselves in it," said Nancy. "It's giving the person comfort, that's why I do it."

Sharing your gifts with the hospice community

Nancy, Patrick, and Geri each draw on their unique interests and talents to contribute to the care of hospice patients and their families. Hospices provide many opportunities to volunteer beyond the patient support role. Hospices need help with community outreach programs, fundraisers, and bereavement programs for adults and children. Hospice offices and stores



Nancy Lindsey, a volunteer with Compassus Hospice, makes beautiful memory quilts for the families of hospice patients.

also rely on the help of volunteers.

Like Nancy, many volunteers bring their hobbies and skills to their hospice work, for example:

- Housekeeping and errands
- Writing and editing
- Photography and videos
- Gardening
- Home repairs
- Pet care

"When you volunteer, you should enjoy what you're doing," said Nancy.

Most hospice websites have a section dedicated to volunteer opportunities. "Research what it means to be a hospice volunteer," said Patrick. "Call your local hospice's volunteer coordinator. They'll be happy to chat on the phone or in person about different volunteer roles and how each role helps patients."

Volunteering for a hospice is a unique experience. Hospice volunteers talk about their work using very different language than other types of volunteers—words like transformational, privilege, blessing, and gift come up frequently. "Hospice volunteering is about celebrating life," said Patrick. "That's a tough one to wrap your mind around, but you get so much back, it's kind of amazing."

Deirdre Reid is a writer based outside Raleigh, NC. Find her online at deidrereid.com.

Shining a Spotlight on Hospice Volunteers



Carlos Gorostieta, a stand-out volunteer for Hospice of Santa Cruz County, visits hospice patients and their families. Bilingual, he also translates for the hospice chaplain.



Eli Hollander, also a volunteer at Hospice of Santa Cruz County, provides grief support to survivors with one-on-one counseling. His depth of compassion is felt by all.



Mary Chavez, a volunteer with VITAS, has donated more than 1,400 hours of volunteer time, helping in the office, working on projects and even making blankets for hospice patients.



Patrick Vincent, a volunteer with Hospice by the Sea, is part of their flower delivery team. More than a "delivery man" Patrick creates a bond with each patient he visits. He even gets to know their flower preferences and picks arrangements especially for them.



Nancy Johnson, a volunteer with Salus Hospice, owns a salon. On her days off, she offers cuts, color, styles and friendship to hospice patients.



Michelle Menjivar was the very first volunteer for Brookdale Hospice. She provides companionship and has been a great support to their patients.



Joyce Tracy, a volunteer for Aseracare Hospice, visits hospice patients, mentors other volunteers and inspires staff.



As a volunteer for Corona Regional Medical Center Hospice, Dawn Stallmo visits patients like Mr. Aldrich with her therapy dogs Maggie Mae and Farley.



Scott Eschbach, a volunteer Visiting Nurse & Hospice Care of Santa Barbara, delivers flowers for the Bouquets of Love program... and anything else they need!



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CHF Has a New Name

Since 2000, the California Hospice Foundation (CHF) has had a sister organization, the California Hospice and Palliative Care Association (CHAPCA). With a shared staff and office, the two organizations shared the same goal of improving access to quality end-of-life care, with CHF's focus on the public while CHAPCA worked with hospice providers and staff. In an effort to reduce administrative overhead, this January, CHAPCA was dissolved and its assets were transferred to CHF. The board of directors then changed the name of the organization from the California Hospice Foundation to the California Hospice and Palliative Care Association.

You won't notice any obvious changes, other than the name. By merging our resources, though, we hope to increase our community outreach and expand on our mission to bring quality end-of-life care to all communities of California and Nevada.

Our updated mission reflects this:

Our mission is to promote the value and quality of end-of-life care for patients and their families through education and advocacy.

Car Donations

If you have a vehicle that you are thinking of trading in or selling, please consider donating it to CHAPCA's Donate a Car Program.



When your vehicle is sold, the proceeds will go toward CHAPCA's community outreach and education efforts. You may also be able to deduct the fair market value of your vehicle as a charitable contribution for income tax purposes.

We have partnered with Car Program, which accepts most vehicles, including cars, trucks, trailers, boats and RVs. The donation process is easy by fax or by phone.

If you have questions or would like to learn more, please visit our website at www.cahospicefoundation.com or call us at (888) 252-1010.

PLEASE NOTE that our new website address will be www.calhospice.org. Until we have redesigned the site, however, please continue to visit www.cahospicefoundation.com.