

SUPPORT HOSPICE IN SANDERS COUNTY

Want to support Hospice services in Sanders County? It's easy...all you have to do is purchase a copy of the new "Tried & True - Recipes From Our Roots" Cookbook. All proceeds will go to support Sanders County residents who desire hospice care but are uninsured, underinsured or can't otherwise pay for hospice care. The book includes nearly 200 recipes shared by many people in our hospital family who so generously shared their favorite recipes in order to support hospice in Sanders County.

This little gem is not just a cookbook. It includes educational information about hospice. For instance, did you know that only 23% of the people in this country who could benefit from hospice actually receive hospice services? It's true. And the main reason is lack of information or misinformation. There is also information in the cookbook about how you can become a hospice volunteer or supporter.

To get your copy of the "Tried And True - Recipes From Our Roots" Cookbook, please call Russell Logan at (406) 826-4813 or pick up your copy at the Annual Tree of Life event happening on December 3, 2009 at Clark Fork Valley Hospital.

HOSPICE harmonies

CARING IN ACTION...

Helping our patients and their families cherish the goodness of every day and appreciate the memories of the past.

A REASON TO REMEMBER MESSAGE FROM JANET GATES, RN, HOSPICE MANAGER

Recently, I came across an old file containing news clippings announcing the formation of hospice services for Sanders County, its first year anniversary and many heart felt notes from families expressing their thoughts on care given to their loved ones. Reminiscing in each reminded me of how far our Hospice Program has come over the past 16 years and how many lives we have touched and cared for in our county.

Our hospice program began under the umbrella of Partners in Home Care of Missoula in 1993 and became a department of Clark Fork Valley Hospital in 2001. Since the program began, I have had the privilege of being a part of the wonderful team of professionals and volunteers who care for patients and their families dealing with end of life issues. Notes received from families have a common theme; expressions of gratitude for the care their loved ones received. Phrases such as 'your gentle smile lit up the room for my mom' and 'the sensitive professionalism shown meant so much' brought the faces of those loved ones to my mind and tears to my eyes. Notes such as these continue to arrive at our office each month.

What those grateful families may not have realized is that we in hospice get so much, if not more, from the interactions we have with our patients. Something profound transpires when we open our minds and hearts, when we leave our own concerns and issues at the door and enter the home of someone who is living their final days. We are witness to the beauty and majesty of the mother or father being cared for by the adult son or daughter. We see the looks and smiles, frowns and tears, the real life grief and joy of being open to life's most intimate moments.

I was reminded of an early morning call from a daughter reporting a change in her mother's condition, and from the symptoms described I suspected the end could be near. As the nurse case-manager assigned to this patient, I had worked with the family over several weeks so the daughter knew just what to do until I could get there. As I came over the rise at Dykstra Hill from Thompson Falls to Plains, I could see all the way down the valley. The sky was filled with heavy rain clouds, and I remember noticing a small section of clouds separate to allow one large ray of sunlight through. It seemed to me that ray of sun was only striking Plains and I wondered if it could be striking Anna's home. It seemed to me that ray of sunlight was a metaphor for what might be happening. Those dark heavy clouds had parted to allow the sun through. Anna's daughter had experienced the darkest of days but the sun was still able to get through to her. She had indeed noticed that single ray of sun. (Continued on page Two)

Coming Event

Annual Tree of Life Lighting Ceremony

December 3, 2009

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Outside the front Entrance of Clark Fork Valley Hospital

Please join us to pause, remember and honor our friends and family who are no longer with us.

A REASON TO REMEMBER CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Each of us in hospice has similar stories of how we have been blessed by our interactions with patients and families through the years. Each of us treasures those memories and each of us will recall the faces associated with names to be read at the Annual Tree of Life ceremony coming up in December.

I believe we conduct the Tree of Life Ceremony as much for ourselves as we do to raise money to continue our program. For we have the opportunity to pause and remember each hospice patient we have served over the years and to recall the blessings we received in doing so. So I look forward to this year's Tree of Life ceremony just as I have each year before and hope to see you there.

GIVE BACK BY BECOMING A HOSPICE VOLUNTEER

Hospice volunteer training is an important part of any Medicare certified hospice program. Clark Fork Valley Hospital Hospice started a new independent study program in 2008 including the use of new educational venues. Core training is consistent, cost effective and more readily available enabling a volunteer to begin and complete their training much more quickly. Four individuals have completed the new program since it was introduced including Pat Farmer, Margaret Olmstead, Sherry Balison and Vern Posio.

Pat, Margaret and Sherry, all Plains residents, have been busy visiting Hospice patients and families and assisting with the Annual Tree of Life Event. Sherry has also been assisting with Hospice Bereavement Services. Vern lives near Dixon and has been visiting with Hospice patients and families in that area.

Anyone interested in becoming a Hospice Volunteer should call (406) 826-4873.

HOSPICE FAMILIES

It's hard to imagine the kind of help hospice can provide until you have experienced a death or prolonged illness. John Bouma, Vern Posio and Sally Wiebe all had spouses on the Clark Fork Valley Hospice program. Their experiences and thoughts are shared below:

When John's wife first heard of the referral from her doctor, she started crying. But, it was her wish to not go to the hospital unless they could make her better.

"It's hard because when hospice comes it means it's near the end," comments John. "Hospice is great because they walk the whole family through. Don't do it without hospice; don't even try."

"It is better to die in the home because that is where you live and it is more comforting," shares Vern who has since become a hospice volunteer.

He says, "You guys helped me so much. Maybe this is a way I can help, and it makes me feel good too."

Sally has had family members die with and without hospice.

She says, "It was the right choice to have hospice for my husband. He absolutely did not want to be in the hospital. Hospice provided support for the whole family and family members could participate in his care if they wanted."

She thinks now that they have the knowledge of what good things hospice can do. "The message is getting out. It's trickling down," she says.

The Tree of Life ceremony helps support her and gives her an opportunity to grieve.

November is National Hospice Month

We encourage you to share your stories with others so they know what Hospice can do for them

HOSPICE CAREGIVER

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES



Jennifer Steward, CNA

We were delighted to welcome Jennifer Steward, CNA, as the newest member to our Hospice family in 2007.

Steward, sometimes referred to as our "CNA extraordinaire", spends hours on the road traveling from one end of the county to the other to care for many of our hospice clients in the comfort of their own homes. Her care is endless as she assists clients with anything from bathing to pedicures. She is also well known for her relaxing massages.

"I always try to go the extra mile for my hospice families who each find a way into my heart," says Steward. "Each case is unique but it is never easy nearing the end of life. I try to keep things light so my clients focus on the joys of living rather than dying."

Steward says she has discovered more vocabulary from her patients describing body parts than she ever imagined. She laughs and shares, "like 'undercarriage' and 'girls'." These times when she can laugh with her clients are some of her most cherished memories.

"I am lucky to have found a career I am passionate about and that brings me a feeling of accomplishment," shares Steward. "I have had the opportunity to develop relationships with hundreds of families that have let me into their lives and I wouldn't give it up for the world."

The Clark Fork Valley Hospital Hospice Agency offers bereavement services to the family members of our hospice patients as well as community members who have lost a loved one. Medicare regulations require that all hospice agencies provide bereavement services to hospice family members but due to the positive response to follow up services we decided to offer them to any community member who has lost a loved one.

Follow up contacts are made to hospice family members by Lisa Talcott, Clark Fork Valley Hospital Social Worker, Sherry Balison, Hospice Volunteer in Plains, Janet Young, Hospice Chaplain in Hot Springs and Rusti Leistad, Hospice Volunteer in Trout Creek. We are currently welcoming bereavement volunteers from Thompson Falls and the west end of Sanders County.

The bereavement program consists of monthly mailings of the Journey's newsletter published by the Hospice Foundation of America and bereavement support groups that are offered two times a year. Support group meetings are offered in varying communities to ensure all Sanders County residents have an opportunity to attend.

If you are interested in being a Hospice Volunteer or would like to learn more about our bereavement support groups please contact Lisa Talcott at 826-4863.

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