

HEARTBEAT

Volunteers are the Heart of Hospice

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a ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEER QUOTES

"I wanted to make a difference and feel useful in others lives, and what better way than to volunteer. I am happy to come in and help once a month making someone else's' live a tad easier by what I can do for them."

Rita Cioppettini, Volunteer, Cincinnati, OH

"I get a warm and fuzzy feeling in my heart anytime that I can help someone else. It brings joy, and a feeling of accomplishment. When I am doing administrative help for hospice, I am not only helping the hospice employee, I am still helping the patient and their family. When making phone calls, there is a human contact. Someone who has feelings, not a machine that just leaves a cold monotone message. Sometimes people just need to

hear a kind voice and they are grateful that you called. Being a hospice volunteer has broadened my horizons. I have had my eyes opened to new surroundings, new life styles, and fascinating people. It has been a win, win situation for me."

Mary Murray, Volunteer,
St. Louis, MO



NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

APRIL 10 – 16
2011

Inviting Volunteer Input...

Heartbeat is a newsletter for you, the hospice volunteer. We would love your input for articles, reflections, book and movie suggestions and more! Please contact your local Volunteer Coordinator with any ideas you have. Within all of you is a wealth of resources!

For more information or to learn more about Evercare™ Hospice and Palliative Care, please visit us online at:

EvercareHospice.com

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Volunteering is meaningful to me by fulfilling some very personal needs:

To do good. I feel all people have a desire to help others, either directly or indirectly. This can be by donating to a charity, volunteering in the community, or helping an elderly neighbor. My opportunity at Evercare allows me to indirectly help someone (and their loved ones) in the last steps of life's journey.

Pride. To be a part of a very unique team that provides a special service in the community.

Role model. Volunteering sets a good example of 'giving back' and 'helping those that need help', to my children and those that know me.

Making a difference. Tom Brokaw once said "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." I have personally witnessed with my own family the good that hospice provides. Although I cannot volunteer directly with patients, I can support the staff that does.

Having a good life. According to Winston Churchill, 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give'. Life is more than just work, it is the satisfaction of helping others. Doing good for others are things that we remember in our lives, and how we will be remembered.

Good feeling. "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else." – Booker T. Washington Yes. It's true, volunteering and helping others does lift your spirits.

Skills. By volunteering, I increase my skill set and knowledge base. A job supervisor early in my career always said "Everyday is school day". I lived that phrase throughout my career. Every day we are exposed to new things, and we learn things as if we are back in school.

Last but not least, Camaraderie. I enjoy the privilege of working with talented and compassionate individuals with a shared goal of making someone's final days comfortable and peaceful.

Rowland Toth, Volunteer,
St. Louis, Missouri



Run to Remember®

Jen Jackson, Manager,
Volunteer & Bereavement Services

Evercare Hospice & Palliative Care is partnering with the National Hospice Foundation's (NHF) Run to Remember athletic fundraiser that will take place in 11 of our hospice locations either late April or during the month of May. This is Evercare Hospice & Palliative Care's first athletic fundraiser and we are excited to partner with NHF in hopes to support our bereaved, fellow colleagues and local communities as we come together and run/walk a 5K in memory of a loved one and help raise money for the National Center for Care at the End of Life. This unique opportunity will serve as the quarterly bereavement memorial services for our hospice sites and will include either a pre or post memorial activity to provide opportunity to come together in spirit and support of our lost loved ones. I have had the privilege of working closely with all of our sites who are each organizing teams in their respective hospice locations. It has been neat to see the initiative unfold in our respective communities

as the team captains recruit family and friends to participate, hearing the creative fundraising activities taking place at the hospice site and to hear others talk about preparing athletically for the specific races in our communities around the country. We would be honored to have our volunteers be part of this teambuilding and strength building experience as we support one another throughout the Run to Remember initiative. I encourage you to read the articles in our latest Heartnotes edition, which discusses the benefits of exercise on mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health as well as the Run to Remember initiative in general. If you would like to learn more about the details of your hospice site's community involvement and race information, please visit www.runtoremember.org/evercarehospice and contact your local Volunteer Coordinator. I look forward to participating in the event itself as I will be running/walking in memory and honor of my own father who received hospice care services eleven years ago. I also look forward to hearing the post-race stories and the healing/growth that takes place in each of you who participate. See you on the track...

Highlighting Our Volunteers

Bobbi Patterson,
Volunteer, Tucson, AZ

When I was asked to write an article for the Evercare National Newsletter I was both thrilled and honored. I have been working with Evercare patients here in Tucson, AZ for over a year. I thought about the wise and wonderful people I have had the privilege of sharing precious moments with; their stories, so rich with history, wisdom and memories. I don't really know if it's possible for me to put into words how profound and meaningful these experiences have been for me. My only hope is that I have comforted, supported and listened with my heart to the people I visit. I hope I have been a true friend. I have constructed a poem dedicated to the life of the people and their families who have graciously allowed me to be a part of such a personal, as well as intimate time in their life.

Seasons

*The delicate seedling takes root in the rich soil.
As Spring subsides, Summer approaches.
The seedling grows stronger, stretching its youthful
leaves towards the warm, embracing sun.
Fall nurtures the seedling to maturity.
A fully blossomed flower.
Perfect in all its grandeur.
Its shape and color are like no other.
Its radiance, everlasting, even with the bite of Winter.
Spring is coming.
The beautiful flower becomes a seedling once again,
gently floating into the next season...*

Presence is the Greatest Presence

Demetrius Burns, Volunteer,
Phoenix, AZ



Yesterday I had the most empowering experience with my Hospice patient. We were discussing our Thanksgiving experiences, and all the great food we ate, when he offered to show me some of the leftovers he had. Naively, at first I thought that he simply wanted to show me his bounty, but after opening his Tupperware he offered me to partake.

Due to my fixation on never being a burden to others, I quickly said "No, thank you." But he asked again, and I obligingly agreed.

As I sat and watched him slowly shuffle his feet around the kitchen to share his food with me, I experienced love. Love that endured the pain and shortness of breath forever accompanying someone with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), undoubtedly accentuated during activity. Love, in the sense of empowering him to love and serve me...and love in allowing myself to simply take and eat (sound familiar?).

It was as if Jesus himself was serving me, taking all the strain and labor necessary to nourish my body

and soul. All that I could give back was gratitude. As I enjoyed the broccoli casserole and candy-tasting cranberries, he sat and watched contently.

In retrospect, my entire experience with my hospice patient has happened to me in this vein. I constantly come to Him on my knees, and always end up with my feet in a bowl.

Since my patient holds his independence as Atlas with the globe, there is nothing tangible that I can offer him in the realm of service except for my presence, though now I am wondering if that is the greatest gift we can ever give another human being, or maybe even ourselves?

Providing presence is the most basic thing we can give another person, but the hardest to come by in a world seemingly designed as an obstacle course for individual, like me, with ADD. Presence, as my third-grade teacher would call "undivided attention," is the diamond in the rough, ever available beneath the surface of our kaleidoscopic existence.

When we re-discover the diamond in the rough, we may even understand the grace and liberation that comes with unveiling the reality that our greatest gift to ourselves and the world is in our ability to be present.

Evercare serves all faith traditions. Our volunteers and staff serve without imposing our individual beliefs on patients, family or staff members.

The Spirit of Volunteering

Rabbi Mimi Weisel,
Evercare Volunteer Coordinator & Chaplain,
Concord, CA

Kayla Sheehan is a young woman filled with spirit – the spirit of giving and the spirit of music. Kayla has been able to bring these two inspiring qualities together by volunteering at Evercare Hospice and Palliative Care in Concord, California.

Kayla came to us as a volunteer when she thought about some important lessons her mother taught her throughout her youth. Kayla's mom is a nurse who practices home health care and inspired Kayla to study medicine. Kayla had never been around terminal illness and wanted exposure. She wanted to witness the emotional and spiritual experience of the doctor and patient first hand, so hospice was a good choice. Watching her mother in action increased her interest in seeing patients in a one-to-one environment because Kayla believes "that is the most effective form of medicine. The patients know you are theirs, you care for them, and you are not just a name."

Not one to sit by, this past Christmas holiday season Kayla offered to lead our group of volunteers in making wreaths for the patients. Then she led caroling at patients' bedsides and in the halls of the facilities we serve. Kayla, a trained soprano, sees how music is effective in bringing wholeness. "You know that it is always there. You can use it for anything, for entertainment, spiritual purposes, for relieving distress." After our afternoon holiday visits, Kayla said that singing for a 102 year-old woman was the most meaningful Evercare experience she has had. With the sound of joy in her voice, this caring volunteer said, "When we walked in the patient was just lying there. Yet you could tell she was trying really hard and was responding to us. It was important seeing how much the music affects the families in an emotional way, in a good way."

Through Kayla's – and our entire team of volunteers' – efforts, our patients, families and staff receive gifts that truly lift their spirits. And of course, the volunteers themselves have grown through their experiences. For example, Kayla says her experiences will hopefully influence how she practices medicine. "It is such a personal moment. I don't know why. You can connect in a personal way;

it is different than walking in holding a clipboard. You can build commonality and trust in hospice and that is the kind of bond I want to create with my patients."

The lessons of volunteering for Kayla go beyond professional preparation, they have transformed her worldview. After singing to celebrate a patient's birthday, she says, "I'm not an emotional person by nature. Hospice volunteering has made me think a lot more about feelings in general. It has made me a more sympathetic person, focusing more on the internal, seeing the world differently. How can you not visit someone knowing it is their last birthday and not have it change you?"

Kayla has truly internalized the spirit of hospice volunteering. Her words remind us all of what is the true hospice heart; "This work is important to help anyone realize that life does end. Those at end of life need just as much care as someone who is going to get better – maybe more so."



How a Volunteer Handles the Deaths of Her Patients

Gina Falick, Volunteer, Elkridge, MD

When my mom was under hospice care in our home, we had an aide that came every day to assist in daily personal care for her. There was no doubt that Mom was dying. There was no doubt that this aide had developed a relationship with her. She helped me care for Mom for 3 months with gentleness, kindness, and dignity. I asked her how she does it, how does she deal with and continue to provide this service knowing that every patient she visits will die? Her answer was simple and completely honest. She said, "I visit each patient knowing full well that this could be my final visit. And if it does turn out to be my final visit, I want that visit to be a good one. I want that person to meet Jesus freshly bathed and clothed. I feel as though I am helping that person prepare to meet Jesus. Even though I know your Mom will die, I know that I helped her and you make her final days as pleasant as possible."

The deaths of my parents were the most difficult things I have had to deal with in my life. I would give anything to have them back for even 5 minutes—but not as they were at the end. I miss them as much today as I did when they died 12 years ago—4 months apart. I know that there is no more pain, no more sickness, and that Dad was waiting for her on the

other side. I know that because she told me that he was getting impatient waiting.

So when Mr. M. died, I knew that the incredible pain he was experiencing on my last visit was over. I hope his wife was there to greet him on the other side. Did I make my last visit pleasant for him? I don't know. I hope so.

When Mr. L. died, his pain was also over. Did I make my last visit to him a good one? I do believe so. I spent my last visit with him, listening to his mom talk about him and who and what he was. I believe that he heard every word. That time with his Mom reminded me of my Mom's last visit with my Dad. He, too, had fallen into unconsciousness. But she spent her last hour with Dad telling the clergyman who came to deliver last rights, who her husband was, and what kind of man, husband, and father he had been.

Each patient's passing will be different and affect me differently. Each final visit will be different. But I will let them go, knowing that they are leaving the pain of this world behind, and at least I was able to give them a touch, a story, or just sit holding their hand while they slept. That is enough for me.

Professional Guidance From Our Evercare Staff

I'm Only a Stranger Once

Cris Kinney, LCSW, Social Worker & Bereavement Coordinator, Concord, CA

How do we go from being strangers to people who are invited back to support others when they're most vulnerable?

How do we start the conversations that no one ever thought or wished they would be having?

What do you say when someone is starting to cry or worse yet, is completely silent?

Being present is simple, but that doesn't mean it's easy.

- Miller and Cutshall

To have a healing experience with bereaved you must start with yourself. Take a deep breath and center your own thoughts and feelings in order to be truly present with someone else's experience. Your eyes can reveal your warmth and caring. Open arms, mirroring body gestures modestly, can also increase comfort and the sense that someone is feeling understood.

Open your heart to feeling empathy to another's pain, leave your expectations at the door. People can sense if you are being genuine with them. Be adaptable, clear a space for your healing presence. Create an atmosphere of calm.

When you meet someone and introduce yourself, do you share a bit about yourself? Sharing just enough

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to ease the other person's discomfort may help. But not so much that they are feeling that they need to take care of you instead. Self-disclosure is only therapeutic if it is consciously shared in order to ease someone else's discomfort. Less is more...

Respect that the bereaved has everything inside themselves to heal. Your companionship can reflect them to their own healing. Honor their natural healing ability, their sacredness, their humanity.

"Your healing presence can take many forms."
- Miller and Cutshall

You become a healing presence when listening, holding your focus and attention on the other, speaking very little, being silent with another, being still, being in your body, being receptive... One of the most important ways is to believe in their ability to heal even when they do not. Remember your own healing process, when you were lost and felt alone, when you couldn't see an end to your suffering, and how you had to do the healing for yourself, no one could take away your pain but you.

"Mistrust your zeal for doing good to others."
- Abbe Huvelin

When I meet someone new, I may or may not reach out my hand. I try to follow their lead regarding touch or with eye contact. Some cultures find it rude to look directly in the eyes, and will defer their gaze until better acquainted.

The next thing I do is try to be aware of who is in the room, their recent story and their expressions. I may then start off by commenting that it might feel strange at first to speak with someone they don't know very well, but it might help to have someone who could understand.

"Tell me your story of what has happened?" Reflect back what you hear "This is what I'm sensing from what you have said," using as few words as possible with as much clarity as possible, then be still and listen some more.

"It takes two to speak the truth- one to speak, and another to hear." - Henry David Thoreau

Self-Care for the Hospice Volunteer

Emily Johnson, Volunteer Coordinator,
Reston, VA

Care for Yourself!

- Recognize your own limits
- Be kind to yourself
- Know what you need and make sure you meet those needs at work and at home

- Utilize team and relationship resources
- Respect choices of others
- Lighten up
- Check your perspective
 - Not everyone is dying
- Reclaim the rewards of the work
 - Why do you love what you do?
 - Stay humble
 - Be amazed
- Build a life that sustains you