

HEARTBEAT

Volunteers are the Heart of Hospice

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Hospice & Palliative Care

a TIME TO PAWS

This is a picture of

Max. Max is a therapy dog for our Phoenix, Arizona site. From his picture alone, you can probably see how he is perfect for his role as a hospice pet therapy dog. He is gentle and sweet. He is a true gentleman and he has brought much joy to so many of our hospice patients.



Many of our patients hold a special place in their hearts for animals and they receive great comfort from having contact with pets. Unfortunately, many of our patients live in places where their contact with animals is limited or non-existent. Therefore, we are very fortunate to be able to offer pet visitation.

There are many benefits to having a pet visit a patient who is dying. The following is a brief discussion of some of the positive impacts we have observed with our patients. A loving pet will love all people. Pets break down many of the barriers that may be present within relationships. An animal is not bothered by physical deformities and for some patients, this is so very important. Also, animals help people forget their current difficulties. The animal brings them back to a happier time and place. Pets can quickly bring a smile to a person who is an animal fan. This acceptance and unconditional love that animals give can be instrumental in providing solace and companionship to a dying person.

Pet therapy is also wonderful as it helps create greater awareness about hospice in our community. The therapy animal brings people in our community together and a dialogue is created about the importance of hospice. All of our sites could use more therapy animals. If you have a pet that would be well-suited for this, please talk to your volunteer coordinator about the process to have your pet trained for pet visitation.

“Celebrating People in Action” National Volunteer Week April 18 - 24, 2010

During **National Volunteer Week** Evercare™ Hospice & Palliative Care honors and celebrates all of the wonderful contributions our volunteers make as well as the 400,000 hospice volunteers in the U.S. who give selflessly of themselves to provide comfort and support to those at end-of-life. They help people nearing the end of life's journey live every day to the fullest. Evercare Hospice Volunteers provided **14,604** hours last year; THANK YOU!

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

www.EvercareHospice.com

Monthly WebEx Education Training

Vivian E. Austin, Hospice Volunteer

Training is a very important aspect in any business. There will always be room for improvement, room for new skills, etc. With any job, and when there are new skills to be learned, effective training should be incorporated. The WebEx training has been received with enthusiasm. One reason I hesitated doing community service of this type was because of the time commitment element. Questions such as “Where will I get the time to do this with a full-time job” and “Will I be good at it?” kept going through my mind as I pondered doing volunteer work. With my schedule, the convenience of WebEx training definitely has helped me stay in tune and

to become more familiar with all aspects of my job as a volunteer. There have been a variety of topics to help us as volunteers gain a better and more complete understanding of behaviors commonly seen in hospice patients and specific techniques to use in providing care to these patients. Also, as a health care educator, some of these training sessions have been a great review for me. Without WebEx training sessions and the convenience I would not be able to devote the time or quality care to patients assigned to me.



Unexpected Blossoms

Daphne Stevens,
PhD., LCSW
Bereavement Coordinator,
Macon, GA

I love to dig in the dirt. The earth-smells as I water and weed, the soil’s generosity as it nurtures root-building - all are small miracles to me.

The real delight, though, is finding an unexpected blossom - a plant that shows up having withstood the winter, an “annual” that thrives another season.

Hospice volunteers are like that. They show up like blossoms in earthy work.

It’s a privilege for me to be a hospice social worker. Gazing into the face of a total stranger in a hospital bed, introducing myself with words like “You’re beautiful,” receiving the gift of a smile, are pure joy. Attending a grieving family, noticing strengths and challenges, sometimes simply offering a “ministry of presence,” are all signals of grace. Addressing concrete problems is also part of my work. It’s less warm and fuzzy, but I see it as detective work. Who can help with this particular problem? Who knows about community services? Who has skills to meet the need?

When I’m stuck with a seemingly unsolvable problem - a lonely patient in a nursing home, a

family overwhelmed with the burdens of caregiving - I turn to Shannon, our volunteer coordinator.

Shannon’s team of angels often discover new needs: lawns to be mowed; errands to be run; furniture to be moved. These are things that are often missed in the professional focus of end-of-life care.

Volunteers often honor a lost loved one by “giving back” to Evercare Hospice. Reaching through one’s own pain to give service to others is one way of healing from grief. But it’s only one path to recovery.

Volunteering is an ultimate way of “walking one’s talk.” It’s human to agonize about pain and suffering. It’s another thing altogether to move into action.

So here is my message to Evercare Hospice volunteers: You give service that extends beyond the limitations of our time or abilities. You encourage our team. You are the heart of our program.

I hope we give back to you, too. Being part of a caring community feeling, supported as you express your own gifts and strengths, knowing the team is available to meet your needs - these are my hopes as we work together.

“Thanks” is a small word, but I offer it anyway. Like the volunteer-blossoms in my garden, you show up. You offer new splashes of color. Like the soil that nourishes those blossoms, you deepen the roots of our mission.

You are a present to Evercare Hospice. We acknowledge your gifts. We want to give back to you too.

The Power of Mentoring

Jen Jackson
Manager, Volunteer Services

January was National Mentoring Month. Although the initiative is emphasized more on mentoring youth, I believe it holds true to a broader context of mentoring in general and is applicable to the hospice industry. Mentors can give us that extra nudge, confidence and skills to help us become more fully who we are capable of becoming in a given role. Mentors walk along side of us to also challenge us beyond our comfort zones. I can humbly attest to the richness of being mentored by a few key individuals both professionally and personally. The energy invested and challenges continue to impact and influence my investment with others today. Perhaps you have had the opportunity to be mentored as well.

Our hospice staff and volunteers also need mentoring. The hospice volunteer orientation program, while really good, doesn't provide enough training for a new volunteer to be proficient in the field with a patient and or their caregiver. New volunteers need the additional layer of support with the actual application process from the training program. We are always looking for seasoned and skilled volunteers who would be willing to serve as a mentor. We look for volunteers who have had successful experience being present at the bedside of a hospice patient. This benefits our newer

volunteers as they work through the challenges of their first patient, establishing rapport with their patient, working through their competency and learning to companion the hospice patient within the context of the plan of care, scope and frequency. This "walking along side" relationship will ultimately improve patient outcomes and their satisfaction as well as increase volunteer satisfaction and retention. One of our Atlanta volunteers, Susan Tucker shared with me: "I was mentored as a new volunteer. In a new situation, you have hesitations about what to say, what to do. I needed the mentoring to give me the confidence to visit with hospice patients." Two years later, Susan now serves as a mentor to new volunteers on a regular basis. Susan quotes "I make the mentoring session interactive, fun and we learn from each other. I realized that my way isn't the only way. New volunteers have lots of ideas as well."

Mentoring programs are also cutting edge within the National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization's (NHPCO) National Council Hospice and Palliative Professionals communities. Several hospice disciplines have already begun mentorship programs and I will be working with NHPCO to start a program for Volunteer Coordinators later this year.

The Season of Spring

Mencita (Carmen) Monoi Angel

the season of spring
weather seems to sing
lovely lovely days
are coming our ways

the season of spring
blooming blossoming
of nature of all kind
let roots unbind

the season of spring
birds unfold their wings
diving high into sky
wish one could fly

the season of spring
careful hearts love sting
reaching out towards others
some persons might bother

the season of spring
nice sound bells ring
new wave new style
faces have on a smile

the season of spring
an new awakening
busy humanity on earth
as if it's a new birth

listen listen to my words
the season of spring is near
now a look into your lovely eyes
and one can see spring is already here

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Athena Lord, Companion & Complementary Care Practitioner

Lynette Reiling
Volunteer Coordinator, Denver CO



Willingness to serve, approachable, compassionate, intuitive, openness to ongoing learning... all words that describe Athena Lord. Athena has been a member of the Evercare Volunteer

team for 2 years as a companion and practitioner of the complementary care of Reiki.

Athena has used her caring heart and her Reiki skills to support patients in their end-of-life journey in many ways including:

Being dependable in providing ongoing regular visits with clients. This becomes a bridge for building communication. Her reassuring presence becomes an invitation for patients to open up to her. Patients share their fears, stories about their lives, and just rest in Athena's care. Family members also are supported by Athena's presence. As a patient who has been institutionalized for several years due to MS, Mrs. W. does not open up easily or respond willingly to new people in her environment. Athena began seeing Mrs. W. just slowly stepping into the relationship at the patient's pace. Over time, Mrs. W. really began to rely on Athena's visits for relief of pain, emotional support and friendship. Lack of appetite and difficulty swallowing has rendered Mrs. W. very thin. Athena brings in special treats

for Mrs. W. things that are appealing to her and encourage her to eat.

Providing Reiki, a type of energy bodywork that reduces stress and promotes relaxation. As a skilled practitioner, Athena assists patients in relaxing, which helps patients manage pain more effectively. Her Reiki work also assists patients in dealing with the emotional stress of dealing with end-of-life issues. For example - Evercare Hospice recently had a patient named Ken make his transition. Athena had been working with him for a year. In the end, Ken was terrified and anxious when facing his own death. He had unfinished business that was plaguing him. Athena provided daily Reiki treatments and support as Ken moved into the active dying stage. Her work made a noticeable difference in his ability to die more peacefully. These are the words of the Case Manager of Ken's team. *"I recently had a patient who had been experiencing significant turmoil and unrest as he began transitioning to the end. Athena was able to help him find comfort and obtain a sense of peace at the end of his life. I truly believe that her presence at this most vulnerable time in his life was essential in his peaceful passing and with aiding the family to accept his death."*

Athena has displayed ongoing commitment to expanding her knowledge and skills as a hospice volunteer. Whatever the training or opportunity to learn, Athena is there, open minded and ready to learn.

It is an honor to work with Athena. She is a consummate professional and an excellent hospice volunteer.

Our Volunteer Testimonies and Heartbeat Volunteer Newsletter are now live on the Evercare™ Hospice & Palliative Care website. When you have a few quiet moments, view and listen to the top and bottom clips noted on the link below. Thank you to our volunteers: Tricia, Art, Atul and Athena for their willingness to share the impact volunteering makes on their lives and could make on others considering this opportunity. It is a pretty powerful testimony.

http://www.evercarehospice.com/volunteer_with_us.jsp

Gift Bags from Houston

Diana Hughes
Volunteer Coordinator, Houston, TX



The 2009 holiday season was a time for a little more in Houston – more joy in the present, more delight in the simple, more gratitude for being remembered. Tucked within the frenzy of the holiday activities, the volunteers and staff of Houston’s Evercare™ Hospice & Palliative Care delivered the *little more* – donated gifts for our patients.

What began with an, “It would be wonderful if...” led to “I want to help make that happen.” The if – gifts for each of the patients cared for by the Houston site, became reality through the generous contributions from both members of Community Christian Church under the leadership of Beth Walker, and employees of Evercare (the Institutional health plan) organized by Glenda Mudd, Sr. Administrative Assistant. Both of these women inspired those within their separate circles to donate items for the gift bags. This was not the first time our UHG sister company partnered with us to provide items for our patients, but it was the largest endeavor so far and the success a shared delight.

Forty-six patients received a gift bag filled with a blanket, slipper socks, lotion, tin of cookies, candy, and a book. Dianna E., a volunteer currently working on her Divinity Degree said, “It was an opportunity

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to extend God’s grace.” Other volunteers shared that the experience enhanced their training by allowing them to meet a range of hospice patients who were located in diverse settings.

Our patients received the gifts with an array of reactions, but the words surprise, delight and gratitude sum it up. Here are a few of the stories...

Mrs. B. has lived 90 plus years. She is bed bound, but alert. Her fingers seemed to dance as they gathered the soft folds of her cornflower blue blanket. We opened the tin filled with candy, and immediately she expressed delight. She savored the butterscotch candy. What memories did that candy recall?

Mrs. L. was looking forward to moving home to live with her family. The trip involved a plane ride to upstate NY. My mother asked me if I had a blanket for the trip. She said, “Now I do!” As she cuddled her hot magenta colored blanket she said, “I do love pink...this is perfect. Tell them thank you.”

The home-baked cookies Mrs. D. received rekindled the hostess within as she graciously shared her treats. We, the humble deliverers enjoyed her hospitality.

Peso, Mr. S.’ rescued Chihuahua accepted the doggy treats in dog fashion, but when he saw the blanket he went wild. Mr. S. shares everything with Peso, but this time Peso wanted it all for himself. To the giver of the crimson throw – Mr. S. and Peso together - thank you! As our visit came to a close Mr. S. added, “This will be my only Christmas present this year – I sure do thank you.”

At a time when their lives have become more defined by less – less friends to visit, less energy for living, less life to be lived – this was a time for a little more.