



California Hospice Foundation



CHOICES

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Fall 2015

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Hospice Care Goes Beyond the Usual Expectations

Unless a loved one was a hospice patient, hospice can be a mysterious concept. Many people don't understand the full spectrum of hospice care. A common misperception is that hospice providers only deliver medical care for patients who are dying. But those patients are still living, and providers go beyond expectations to help make their days meaningful.

Hospice professionals are constantly developing new ways to serve their patients and communities. They help patients live their last days with peace of mind and dignity, and sometimes help them realize long-held dreams.

Hospices go where they're needed.

Like many cities with beautiful weather, San Diego has a large homeless population. And, like anyone who's nearing the end of their life, "a homeless person wants to be safe, taken care of, have a place to call home, and die with dignity," said Patricia Devlin, MSW, Director of Family and Support Services at Silverado Hospice – San Diego. "Our mission is to give them that."

Since 2013, Silverado Hospice – San Diego has partnered with local nonprofit Alpha Project and its Chief Development Officer, Kyla Winters, to provide hospice services to the homeless. Working together with federal, state, and county agencies, the program has provided services to nine patients so far.

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If you or anyone you know has a need for Hospice Information and Referral services please call the California Hospice Foundation's toll free number: 888-252-1010

CONTACT

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Another partner, the UCSD Medical Center, assists in the early identification of homeless patients in need of hospice when they receive medical care at the hospital. Once identified, the Alpha Project arranges for their housing and provides support services such as transportation, food, and household goods. The Silverado Hospice team provides in-home hospice services including medical, nursing, social work, and spiritual care. This unique partnership provides services to patients that are in their own residence as well as patients placed in skilled nursing homes.

San Diego Union-Tribune reporter Peggy Peattie has been following the project and the lives of a few of the patients. “The stories we’re starting to hear from these patients are amazing,” said Patricia. “They’re examples of how negative stereotypes can be so wrong.”

Because these patients usually don’t have family members nearby, they’re often more isolated than other hospice patients, so Patricia encourages them to accept visits from the entire hospice team. “We become their family. We’re so grateful they don’t have to die on the street alone.”

One Christmas Eve, as one patient was starting to decline, Patricia called the Dream Foundation with a request: “I know it’s Christmas Eve and the planes are full, but is there any way to get his sister out here tonight?” Sister and brother were reunited for one last day together.

“The Dream Foundation is a good partner, and not only with our homeless patients,” said Patricia. “We’ve reached out to them for other patients who needed special support or had a wish.”

Hospice staff and partners make dreams come true.

“Hospices are about so much more than medical care,” said Shirley Sapena, Grief Group, Education, and Outreach Coordinator at the Hospice of Santa Cruz County. “I ask new patients if there’s something they’ve always wanted to do, people they want to see, or anything I can help them with.”

Shirley found out that a new patient wanted to celebrate his 52nd wedding anniversary like he had every year—by taking his wife to their favorite Chinese restaurant. But they no could longer drive or afford to go out for dinner.

“I contacted staff at the Dream Foundation who suggested we make a bigger celebration of it,” said Shirley. With the foundation’s help, Shirley arranged for a corsage and boutonniere, disposable camera and photo developing, and dinner and transportation for the couple and some friends. The restaurant staff, who knew the couple well, decorated the room and presented a cake.

Some dreams are more challenging. A patient told Shirley he



Through partnerships with community groups and government agencies, Silverado Hospice is beginning to serve San Diego’s homeless population. (Photo credit: Peggy Peattie of the Union Tribune)

had always wanted to fly in a World War II fighter jet. “The chances of arranging that did seem pretty remote at the time, but, thank goodness for the Internet.” She found someone a few hours away who could take the patient up for a short ride in his B-51. “This kind man was willing to help my patient’s dream come true.”

Shirley met another new patient on a Friday afternoon. He hadn’t seen his daughter in 20 years. “He gave me her most recent phone number. Area codes had changed but I found her.” The daughter, along with a sister from another state, arrived on Saturday to spend time with their father. He died on Sunday.

“I have the privilege and the ability, sometimes, not always, to make these wishes possible,” said Shirley. “Nurses and doctors address physical issues. I’m very fortunate to make a difference in this way.”

Hospices bring peace of mind to patients.

Adrienne Cason, Volunteer Coordinator at the Community Hospice of Victor Valley, also helps patients with family matters.

Hospice Care, cont'd.

“We’re still searching for a patient’s son. She takes comfort in knowing we’re trying hard to find him. We’ll hire a private investigator if we have to.”

Sometimes ‘family’ isn’t what you’d expect. When Adrienne and the hospice’s social worker, Judy Lux, arrived at a new patient’s home, they met her bedside companion, a pot belly pig. Arnold, who was old, blind, and weighed hundreds of pounds, had been with the patient since he was a baby.

The patient lost sleep worrying about Arnold’s future. Her family couldn’t take care of him and didn’t know what to do. Adrienne said, “We told them to focus on their time together and not worry about Arnold. We’d take care of him. Judy was on it immediately.”

After extensive research, Judy located “a pot belly pig haven.” The patient loved seeing photos of Arnold’s future home. She could finally relax and enjoy her remaining time with him. After the patient died, Judy and her husband picked up Arnold, placed him in a giant dog carrier and drove him to a rescue 70 miles away. The next day, the rescue owner drove him the remaining 135 miles to his new home.

A month later, Judy visited Arnold to make sure he was safe and comfortable. “Unusual? Yes, but it’s an example of the difference hospice can make one life at a time,” said Adrienne.

Like Silverado, Community Hospice also cares for the homeless. “When we first meet homeless patients, they’re usually in bad shape,” said Adrienne. “But now they have seven of us providing care: a doctor, two nurses, home health aide, chaplain, social worker, and volunteer.” Sometimes the patient’s health improves so much they’re discharged from hospice care. “It happens all the time. We call them every month to see how they’re doing. If anything changes, we go back out to reevaluate them.”

“Hospice is a state of mind, a state of heart. We go anywhere we need to go,” said Adrienne. As part of that mission, hospices go beyond expectations to make sure all patients live with peace and dignity.

*Written by Deirdre Reid. Deirdre is a writer, blogger and association consultant at **Reid All About It** in North Carolina. Visit her website at <http://deidreid.com>.*



When their hospice patient lost sleep worrying about her pet pot belly pig, Arnold, Community Hospice found a pot belly pig haven that committed to taking him after his owner passed. This allowed the patient to enjoy her remaining time left her cherished pet.

THANK YOU

Special **thank you** to our hospice contributors, Silverado Hospice, Hospice of Santa Cruz County and Community Hospice.

Please visit their websites to learn more about their special work:

Silverado Hospice:

<http://www.silveradocare.com/>

Hospice of Santa Cruz County:

<http://www.hospicesantacruz.org/>

Community Hospice of Victor Valley:

<http://www.communityhospicevv.org/>

Learn more about the Dream Foundation at:

<http://www.dreamfoundation.org/>

California Hospice Foundation



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We need your help!

The California Hospice Foundation provides information about hospice and gives referrals to care to thousands of patients and their families each year.

Instead of spending money on fundraising, we use our limited resources serving the communities of California and Nevada. We appreciate your past support and are asking for it again, so that we may continue our work.

100% of our work is funded through donations. Whether you can give \$20 or \$200, it all makes a difference.

Please use the enclosed envelope and give TODAY.

Thank you.



Car Donations

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



When your vehicle is sold, the proceeds will go to the California Hospice Foundation (CHF). 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.