

November is National Hospice Month



Hospice

It's about living, not dying

November celebrates the work of English doctor Dame Cicely Saunders. In 1967, Dr. Saunders developed the first modern hospice, dedicated to meeting the physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs of terminal patients, their families and friends.

Hospice care is for persons of any age with an illness that has a prognosis of a life expectancy of six months or less. Hospice is the answer when aggressive treatment options are no longer working or no longer wanted and the patient agrees with the hospice philosophy of comfort care.

“Those closely involved in hospice are quick to say hospice isn't about dying, it's about living,” says Dori Mutch, hospice board member. “The goal is utilizing a comprehensive team of caregivers to allow patients to live their remaining days as completely and comfortably as possible.”

Hospice care is facilitated by a team comprised of the patient's personal physician, the hospice medical director, a

hospice manager, nurses, home health aides, social workers, a chaplain, a bereavement coordinator and volunteers. ***The focus on hospice is comfort - not cure.***

“Once a patient agrees to take advantage of hospice services, the patient is assessed by a nurse and social worker,” Mutch says. “The care team then develops a plan to meet that patient's individual needs for pain management, symptom control and emotional support.”

Hospice is also there to support the entire family and all caregivers. Typically, a family member serves as the primary caregiver and helps make decisions for the terminally-ill patient. Hospice provides the needed medications, equipment, and medical supplies as related to the patient's terminal diagnosis. Volunteers are available to provide respite care so that caregivers are able to rest. Aides are available to provide personal cares and volunteers can take care of light housework, reading, meal assistance, or simply social interaction. Hospice staff is

on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also provide bereavement counseling for family and friends.

“Mayo Health Systems' hospice program serves residents of the Le Sueur, Arlington, Gaylord, Madelia, Mankato, St. James, St. Peter, Waseca and surrounding communities,” says Mutch. “Le Sueur has an advisory committee which works regularly with Mayo Health System Hospice.”

Throughout the next few weeks, a series of articles will tell more about the Le Sueur hospice program, its long history and current efforts, and a visit with two families who have been involved in hospice care. In the meantime, if you or someone you know might benefit from Hospice services, please contact Mayo Health System Hospice at (507) 385-2618; or toll-free, 1-800-321-2721 (extension 2618).



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