



Hospice Volunteer News

Serving since 1934

The Visiting Nurse Association of Texas

Summer 2003

LOVE IN ACTION

Neva Tharp, Volunteer Coordinator, Kaufman Office

Julie Feltner, Volunteer Coordinator, Dallas Office

"Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do...but how much love we put in that action." – Mother Teresa

Hospice volunteers bring companionship and friendship to the patient, and respite and support to the caregiver. They are drawn from every age group and background.

Marie Ballard, an 84 year-old Texas native who is retired from nursing, has volunteered for VNA's Kaufman office for fifteen years. Mari Notley, a 50 year-old homemaker from New York, just completed her hospice volunteer training. They share a common goal of making a difference in the lives of people when it means the most.

In March 2003, a patient was admitted to VNA Hospice services in the Kaufman office. When she sought medical advice for an arm injury received while mowing her yard, she was diagnosed with lung cancer.

Sixteen years ago, this patient and her husband escaped from a communist country to find a life of freedom in the United States. Leaving all of their family and friends, they settled in east Texas. She found work with a manufacturing company; he became self-employed. They both learned English, he more so than she.

Treatment could not stop the progression of the patient's cancer. After the patient was no longer able to work, it was determined that the cancer had metastasized to another part of her body.

The patient was proud, preferring not to need, much less accept, help from others. Having left her family and friends behind when she came to the United States, her support system was very limited. When she was admitted to VNA Hospice, a volunteer was requested to be on standby in case the hospice family needed assistance. Marie was assigned to be this family's volunteer.

It was important for the patient's husband to be able to spend time working so he could meet the family's financial needs. A request was made for another volunteer to partner with Marie and be in the patient's home while her husband worked. It was at this time that Mari joined the team who was caring for the family. The patient's husband was comforted knowing volunteers were in his home providing care to his ill wife and that she was not alone.

Marie and Mari sat with the patient while her husband worked, talking with her and holding her hand. They also listened to the patient and her husband as they spoke about

their thoughts and feelings about her illness and death. Fresh flowers and magazines were brought to brighten the patient's days. Support was given to ensure medications were taken as the patient needed them.

The patient primarily spoke her native country's language, and the hospice team found communication to be a challenge at times when providing spiritual care. Marie was committed to doing everything possible to ensure that the needs of the patient and her husband were being met in spite of the language barrier. Led by Marie, team members made numerous calls to locate someone who spoke the patient's primary language and would be willing to translate. About a week later, a monk residing in the Dallas-Fort Worth area contacted Susan Adkisson, R.N., and made himself available to assist in the care of the patient. When the monk visited the patient during the remaining days of her life, she was thrilled when they conversed in their native language, while he read a letter she received from her brother, and when he spoke of spiritual issues related to her life and to her death. Because Marie was persistent in finding someone who spoke the patient's native language, support for the patient was broadened to include spiritual care.

About a month into hospice care, the patient's pain escalated and continuous care was started. The patient's pain continued to be aggressive, and she was admitted to the hospital under hospice care. Within a week, the patient was transferred to a nursing facility because she required more care than she could receive at home.

As the patient moved from her home to the hospital and then to the nursing facility, both Mari and Marie continued to provide comfort and support – advocating on the patient's behalf with the nursing facility's staff, washing the patient's feet and hands to calm her when she was experiencing intense pain, and comforting the husband when needed. When the patient expressed her worst fear of dying alone, the volunteers became members of a team that kept a vigil while sitting with the patient.

One early morning in May, the patient died while one of the nurses was caring for her. Her body was cremated and her husband intends to leave her ashes in both countries she called home – the country where she was born and her loving family still lives, and the country where she died and found two hospice volunteers who gladly opened up their hearts and surrounded her with love.

HAPPENINGS

Dallas Office

In April 2003, Janet Mack, R.N., was promoted as team manager for South Dallas County. Janet has been a hospice nurse with VNA for four years and comes to this position with seven years of nursing experience, five of which are in hospice care. She has served in a variety of hospice positions that include case manager, evening and weekend nurse, and team manager. "It is a great honor to lead a group of people who are so professional and caring," Janet states. "The team works well together to meet the many needs of our hospice families, and I consider volunteers to be integral members of the team. I look forward to seeing us expand and grow as we provide quality service and care to the South Dallas County community."

VNA Hospice has partnered with the Saturn Road Church of Christ to provide quarterly bereavement luncheons in Garland. VNA continues to sponsor monthly luncheons at the Church of the Incarnation located on McKinney Avenue in Dallas. For more information about either of the luncheons, call Sue Rafferty, Bereavement Coordinator, at 214-689-2922.

Words cannot express the gratitude that is felt for the volunteers and the care and support they provide to VNA's hospice families who reside in Dallas County.

Denton Office

Ann's Haven VNA welcomes its newest direct patient care volunteers: Amanda Bazan, DeAnna Fox, Merisol Espinal, Patty Ryan, Uche' Evulukwu, Amanda Terhune, Cathy Smedley, Pamela Flippen, and Julie Turner. This group of volunteers has named themselves "Sisters of the Heart." They are a unique and diverse group of professional women who were looking for a way to give back to their community. They bonded heart-to-heart during training.

Jean Pekara has supported Ann's Haven for many years through the bereavement lunch program. She is now helping in the office with documentation of volunteer hours and printing of donation letters on a weekly basis.

Nancy Griffin is always willing to do whatever she can to support Ann's Haven VNA and its patients. Physical therapy patients had a need for ankle weights. Nancy went on the Internet, found an example, and started sewing. She has made more than 10 sets that have been shared with the other VNA offices.

Ann's Haven VNA's volunteer recognition evening was a great success with over 25 in attendance. A lovely meal was catered as the spring breezes carried piano medleys outside to the candlelit patio. A heartfelt thank you goes to Cheryl Parton for being a wonderful hostess.

Fort Worth Office

The Fort Worth office welcomes Ruth Landers, Santi Thedford, and Patricia Smith as the newest volunteers on the

hospice team. They completed their training in May and are already hard at work!

In partnership with Fox Run Estates Gracious Retirement Living, social worker Lynne Supple-Young and chaplain Dan Ashley presented a grief support workshop on June 28th.

In July, the hospice team, including several volunteers, visited the North Texas Cremation Society, followed by lunch and fellowship. It was a wonderful team-building opportunity for hospice volunteers and staff to get to know one another.

Monthly bereavement luncheons were held and supported by the presence of volunteers. Volunteer Santi Thedford sponsored all three luncheons held during the summer months.

Fort Worth has a fabulous group of very dedicated volunteers who are appreciated for all the hours they provide.

Kaufman Office

The Kaufman Office welcomes Homer "Bud" Brooks, Altia Condran, Mari Notley, and Eva Smith as the newest volunteers on the hospice team. A support meeting for the volunteers was held in July.

On June 10, 2003, the quarterly bereavement luncheon was held at the First Christian Church in Kaufman. John Cocoris, chaplain from VNA's McKinney office, was the luncheon's speaker.

VNA in Kaufman thanks the volunteers for selflessly giving their time and energy to our hospice families. They could not be served without them.

McKinney Office



In July 2003, VNA welcomed Connie Williams as the McKinney office's hospice volunteer coordinator. As a volunteer, Connie has been affiliated with VNA Hospice since June 2002. For several months last year, Connie volunteered many hours of her time in the McKinney office, tirelessly working to keep the volunteer program running smoothly. As a result of her efforts, VNA patients and families experienced the benefits of her diligence after receiving volunteers assigned to them by Connie.

*"Make your life a rose that speaks silently
in the language of fragrance."*

– An Indian Saint

Submitted by Charley Welhausen
Hospice Volunteer, Dallas County

PROFILES

Pamela Flippen



The needs of a hospice patient and his or her family are not limited to the clinical realm. There are many supportive measures that do not require a background in medicine or nursing. This support can ease the burden of the caregiver or break the cycle of boredom and loneliness experienced by a patient who has been ill for an extended time.

Hospice volunteers have one common thread and it has nothing to do with clinical training – it is a willingness to be available.

Pamela Flippen is an Ann's Haven VNA volunteer whose family experienced the benefit of hospice care. Pam's uncle, Robert D. King, was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1994. Prior to his death, Mr. King was a hospice volunteer himself and worked to establish the first hospice program in Seguin, Texas.

Pam manages the Law Firm of Kevin H. Good P.L.L.C. in Dallas and has a minimum of spare time for volunteer work. When she came to Ann's Haven VNA, she had no idea how she could help, but she wanted to place herself where the needs were great. Pam found wonderful new friends in her volunteer training classes. So strong were these bonds that she formed the "Sisters of the Heart" volunteer support group to maintain these relationships and find strength through each other to do the often emotionally draining work of hospice care. She has also been able to lend her business and computer skills, as well as organizational support, to the Ann's Haven office and remains available to hospice patients in whatever capacity she may be needed.

Pam says, "A willing heart may be the only area of expertise required to be a hospice volunteer."

Johnny Martinez

In October 2002, Johnny Martinez was recognized during VNA's annual Employee Recognition event (continued on page 4)

THE HOSPICE HANDS

My hand dispenses healing – it's an oath that I live by;
But there comes a time, in every life, when healing is to die.
When all my skill and medicine no longer heal the strife,
I bring relief which quiets pain and gives quality to life.

My hand dispenses peace and strength, I teach and I guide.
I support you and your family as we care side by side.
When all my nursing skills have done all that they can do,
I'm willing to be helpless and see your last breath through.

My hand dispenses answers to problems big and small;
I'm an expert in connecting folks with the best for each and all.
I'll listen to your worries and to your deepest fears,
Confirm your strength and hold your hand, when you are blind with tears.

My hand dispenses loving touch as you deal with routine care.
I'll change your bed and keep you clean, I'll brush your teeth and hair.
I'll bring a laugh, a wink, a breath of sweet, fresh air;
I'll scold you when you need it as you go from here to there.

My hand dispenses sweet relief in the form of volunteer.
I run your errands, give you time, and bring a bit of cheer.
I have many ways to serve you, if you but let me know;
I'll be right there all through the end and stay when others go.

My hand dispenses a safe place to examine all your life;
A look at what the years have meant, your success and all your strife.
Your questions, your experience, your faith, I will respect,
I'll be a mirror so you can see the God that you reflect.

My hand dispenses understanding as you go through pain and grief.
I'll stay by you from start to finish, from denial to relief.
I'll be there through your ups and downs and all the time you mourn;
I'll be there through the pain and death until new life is born.

(continued from page 3) for his 10 years of service as a home health aide, eight of which have been caring for hospice families. He also has served home care and CLASS patients.

When asked what he finds meaningful about working with hospice patients, Johnny responds, "It is the relationships I have with patients and their families – comforting the patients when they aren't feeling well, supporting and encouraging caregivers, and providing companionship to lessen people's loneliness. As I spend more time with the families, I see what else I can do to help them."

The Dallas office of VNA Hospice is fortunate to have Johnny as part of the South Dallas County team. His

generous spirit is felt not only by hospice families, but also by other team members with whom he works. All who know Johnny, especially VNA's Hospice families, are truly blessed by his gentle nature and compassionate heart.

HOSPICE VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

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Hospice Volunteer News

A publication of

THE VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS
1440 West Mockingbird Lane, Suite 500
Dallas, Texas 75247-4975
214-689-0000



VNA is a United Way Affiliate
in many of the areas we serve.