

# The Unity Hospice Heart

## Volunteer Department Newsletter



### *You make a difference...*

Have you ever wondered if the fifteen, thirty or sixty minutes you spend with a patient have made a difference? Together, one-by-one, minute by minute, you have made an incredible impact in the lives of our hospice patients and their families. During the first 11 months of this year, you contributed over 7,859 hours of volunteer services. This averages out to 163 hours a week. The state requires hospice organizations to produce a ratio of at least 5% volunteer hours to staff hours each year. At Unity Hospice, your hours have averaged over 26%. At our highest peak, this ratio reached 40%. Hospice was once an all volunteer organization. Your efforts have helped Unity Hospice recapture that spirit.

Your hours of voluntary service have been spent

praying, singing, laughing and comforting our patients in their last days. They have been spent helping with our bereavement department, making football baskets, sending fliers and newsletters and creating new educational manuals. The hours have been spent on the phone with loved ones who were grieving over the loss of a family member. These hours were spent touching the hearts of so many people. You have made a difference!

I was asked, from an organization I volunteer with, to submit my thoughts on volunteerism. I had just recently produced the table below on your hours of service in our organization. Your efforts helped inspire me to submit this reflection:

“One. The world is changed by one. One person. One hand connected to

one other. One hand wiping the tear from one child’s face. One person reaching down to help one poverty stricken soul reclaim their rightful place in our community. One hand hammering one nail to create hope for one family’s dream. One hand helping eliminate poverty and homelessness from our one world. One dream. One hope. One. Will you be that one, the one that steps forward and connects your hand with my hand? Won’t you help me to make that one difference in this one world WE share?”

Thank you for your inspiration! Together, one-by-one, you and I will continue to make an incredible difference on this planet we share!

-Brenda McGarvey

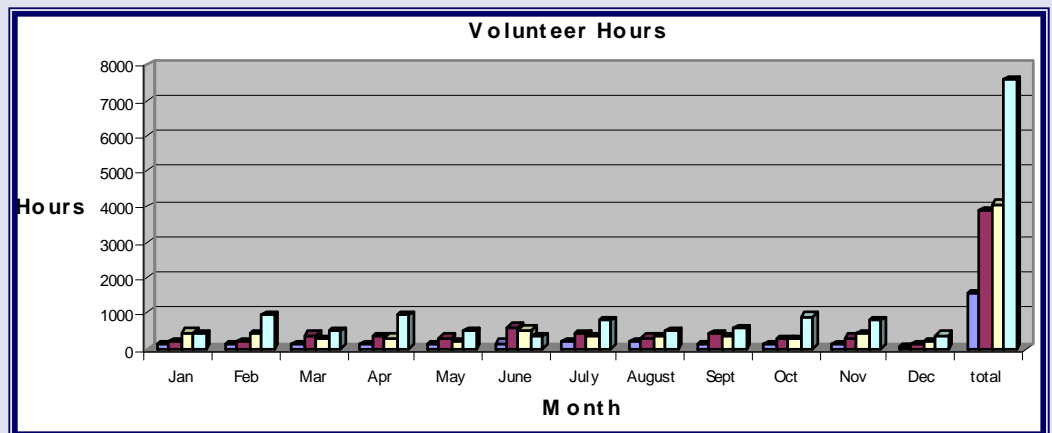
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2005  2006  2007  2008 





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"Hospice volunteers quickly discover that those who are on their journey towards death are wonderful teachers. They show us how important it is to appreciate today—how sacred this life of ours really is. 'At the end of the day, hospice work is not about death, it's about life.'"  
 -A hospice volunteer

*The mission of Unity Hospice is to provide comprehensive care, support, and education to people facing life-limiting disease, those who care for them and our community.*

*We are committed to provide care that exceeds customers expectations by upholding the following values:*

**Respect**  
**Compassion**  
**Integrity**

2008  
 Volunteer Banquet  
 "Murder Mystery  
 At The Hop"



2008  
 Volunteers of the Year



Administration:  
 Jan Claus



Patient Care:  
 Lucy Hollman

Join us on the web  
[www.unityhospice.com](http://www.unityhospice.com)



Jitterbugging  
 at the HOP



Do not hope for heaven after death unless you are willing to find heaven right where you stand.

-- Alan Cohen



Unity Hospice gives back to the community. Gifts were donated to the Hoyleton Home in an effort to make sure every child receives a gift this season!



Volunteers at the 2008 Christmas Party



Mr. Klein (Unity Hospice President) sharing holiday joy with Brenda Henry (CNA)

## Straight From the Heart– “A Volunteer’s Story”



**“They remind me to live and love. That life is simpler than we make it out to be.”**

**-A volunteer’s experience**



**“There are so many times that I hear patients want no other visitors from the (hospice) team—just the volunteer. Volunteers do not poke or prod or take blood pressure or ask hard questions. They are there to support and listen at a time when most people have a lifetime of stories to tell.**

**Dying is hard work and I like to think that volunteers help the process with their presence and listening skills.”**

**-A volunteers experience**

As usual, my time making Hospice calls was well spent on Saturday. A special call on Saturday lasted about 1.5 hrs, and there was no doubt in my mind this 83 year old woman needed a call that day.

The call started out like all calls:

“Hello, I’m just calling to check in with you to see how you’ve been doing the past few months and to offer you some extra support since this was your first holiday season without your husband” I replied. “Well, I’ve been OK”, she said.

I was then silent for awhile. I’ve found this to be the key in getting people to continue talking. After a few seconds of silence, she shared with me that this was her deceased child’s birthday and she was very sad that day. The deceased child was not our patient. I asked her if she would like to talk about it for a while, and she accepted my offer.

We talked about her child’s birth, and how it was so different from her other child’s birth. We talked about how he died many, many years ago, and how she and her husband (our patient) would go visit his grave every Sunday. We talked about how her husband is buried next to him and there’s a space for her when her time comes.

Eventually, we talked about her relationship with her beloved husband. They were high school sweethearts who grew up, had children, and grew old in the same town.

She shared lots of stories about their dating years; how they were jitterbug champions and continued dancing every week at the local town hall until her husband started suffering from Alzheimer’s three years ago.

It was so fun to listen to all of the things they did back in the 40’s, and I could tell that she was enjoying herself in revisiting the past.

She then told me about the last time she visited her husband. He had no concept of who she was for about two years, but she visited him three times a week anyway. This last visit was a special one. It was their 62nd wedding anniversary.

She brought balloons and a big sign reading “Happy Anniversary”. She said that about twenty minutes into the visit, he looked at her with a look of recognition; something she hadn’t seen in years. Then just as quickly as it came, that spark left.

Holding back the tears, I offered to her that she was given quite a gift by her husband. She acknowledged that this was indeed a gift, before sharing the rest of her

story.

Her husband died the very next day.

I truly believe that something within his sub-conscious kept him going until he was able to give her this good-bye gift. Just another testament in how much control we humans have over our death experiences, whether we consciously know it or not.

She buried him in his letterman’s jacket; something she’d been wearing frequently after he’d been placed in a nursing home. Even though it brought her comfort to wear the jacket, she knew it was special to him.

We talked more after that, about things like how she danced with her girlfriends, how she is still best friends with her girlfriend from first grade, town history and other chit-chat. By the end of the call, she was a very different person than the one I spoke with in the beginning of the call.

When I hung up the phone, I knew that it was time to go home. I felt that I’d lightened her load that day, and in return I was able to hear an up close and personal Nicholas Sparks-type story.

I can’t imagine a better ending.

## Tools for the trade.....

Volunteers perform a variety of tasks. One of those tasks involves creating manuals to help educate our patient care volunteers. Three students from SIUE Speech Communications Dept (pictured to the right) created a manual to help our volunteers communicate with our patients through sensory stimulation (vision, taste, touch, hearing, smell). We will be sharing these manuals with you shortly. In the meantime, I thought I would share a few of their ideas!

From "The Caregiver's Activity Calendar"

Using activities can improve the individual's mood as well as his or her memory. Research has shown that the use of activities is important in preventing the progression of dementia. Activities are a helpful way to improve self-esteem as well as create positive communication between the individual and his/her caregivers. The objective is to improve brain activity and memory recollection through the use of a variety of activities.

### Winter

**Listen to "Walking in a Winter Wonderland". Touch snow, ice, scarves, mittens, coat. Taste hot chocolate, cider. Watch snow fall. Look at pictures of snow. Smell fire burning, cinnamon. Build a snowman or throw a snowball.**

### Football

**Listen to the NFL Theme song. Touch a football. Taste nachos, soft pretzels, popcorn. Watch an old game they have seen. Throw a football.**

### Valentines Day

**Listen to love songs. Touch a teddy bear. Taste chocolates. Smell perfume or cologne. Look at roses, Valentine's Day Cards. Slow dance with a loved one.**

### President's Day

**Listen to patriotic songs. Touch American Flag. Taste hot chocolate. Look at pictures of previous Presidents. March around the room.**

### St Patrick's Day

**Listen to Irish music. Touch a clover. Taste cabbage and sauerkraut. Smell sauerkraut cooking. Look at pictures of leprechauns, clovers. Toss a green ball.**

### Earth Day

**Listen to nature sounds. Touch grass, soil. Taste gummy worms. Look at pictures of the Earth and nature. Smell pine. Plant a garden, cut flowers.**

### 1920's

**Listen to music from the time period (jazz). Touch artifacts and wear clothing from the time period. Taste tea, grape juice. Look at pictures of old automobiles (Ford Model T or A). Dance to the Charleston.**

### 1930's

**Listen to music from the time period (big band). Touch artifacts and clothing from the time period. Taste chicken noodle soup and coffee. Look at pictures from the time period. Dance the "Lindy Hop" and the "Jitterbug".**

### 1940's

**Listen to big band music. Touch artifacts and clothing from the time period. Taste Coca Cola, Ritz Crackers, Funnel Cakes. Look at pictures from the time period. Swing Dance.**

### Lifestyle

**Read a book out loud. Fold laundry, wipe off table with wet cloth, use tools from a toolbox. Taste cookies. Smell cookies baking. Bake cookies, go for a walk, garden.**



*Speech  
Communication  
volunteers  
Brittane Wilson,  
Matt Trelow & Sara  
Carr*

**Do not pray to become a good person. Pray to recognize the goodness within you that is already there.**

**—Alan Cohen**



**Life begets life.  
Energy becomes  
energy. It is by  
spending oneself  
that one becomes  
rich.**

**—Sarah Bernhardt**