

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION FROM Heartland Hospice

# Volunteer Voice

## Volunteers Helping Patients and Families in 2007

*By Thomas Files, Manager of Support Services*

### Special Points of Interest:

- I began my hospice career some 15 years ago as a volunteer.
- For some, volunteering may not seem important, but for me it was truly life changing.
- As Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "The only gift is a portion of thyself."

I began my hospice career some 15 years ago as a volunteer. I was proud to serve others. For some, volunteering may not seem important, but for me it was truly life changing. Volunteering left me with a feeling of making a real difference and changed the direction of my life. I found I received more than I ever gave. Some of my favorite moments in life were spent

holding a hand and listening to clients tell their life story. The opportunity to be present during their last days in a calming and comforting manner is the most gratifying

form my hospice involvement has taken. Dan Zadra in "The Heart of a Volunteer," wrote, "When it comes to helping others, there are no little things...the accumulation of a lot of little things isn't little...it takes each of us to make a difference for all of us...none of us can do everything at once, but all of us can do something at once... one person can make a difference, and every person must try...just concentrate on helping one person, giving hope to one person, and that person in turn may give

hope to somebody else and it will spread out."

This quote reminds me that one volunteer can make a difference and many can bring about substantial change. I recently visited Biloxi, Mississippi and was reminded by locals, that if it were not for volunteers, very little would have been accomplished.



In 2007, Heartland Hospice volunteers made a difference in many hospice patients lives; they devoted over 238,658 hours of their time. This was an increase of 28,125 hours from the previous year. This is not just a large number but represents

the efforts of many giving their best - one visit/project at a time. Our goal is to continue to increase the effectiveness of our volunteer programs by reaching a level where every client is touched in some meaningful way by volunteer services. It is our strong belief that volunteers make a difference.

I hope in some small way that I have been able to communicate the importance of the invaluable service that volunteers provide.

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## Second Annual Season of Giving was a Huge Success

By April Green, Heartland Volunteer Coordinator, Broomfield, CO

In Colorado, the holiday season has inspired the volunteers and staff of Heartland Hospice to share some joy with the patients and families they serve. Beautifully wrapped gift baskets decorated with handmade bows helped to bring a little happiness and good spirit to those struggling to find joy in their days.

The "Season of Giving Angels" gathered on Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, when over 30 volunteers and staff began to sort hundreds of donations, and assemble and wrap 53 gift baskets.

One was delivered to each hospice patient that we serve.

The spirit of the season started early in the year, when I let staff and volunteers know that they could start saving items for the baskets. In early November awareness was cranked up via fliers, staff discussion and one-on-one reminders of the special purpose of this mission. I also invited the community and local businesses to collect items for the baskets. This created much excitement in the community, resulting in two local businesses collecting items from their employees and one business recruited their entire team to assist in the day of assembling the baskets.

Excitement was generated immediately after Thanksgiving when holiday

wrapped boxes for collected items were placed on a decorated table in the front of the office. It was fun to see what new items were added to the display each day and to marvel at the great finds people contributed.

Donations from the community, were sorted to tailor these thoughtful baskets to our patients and their families' personal interests. Warm and cute, fuzzy socks, men's socks and handkerchiefs, slippers, lotions, chap-sticks, knit hats, gloves, holiday tea towels, candles, holiday cookies, nuts, cocoa, candy and diabetic treats, stationary gift sets and lots of little, furry stuffed animal friends brought holiday cheer and some

tears of gratitude to our patients and their families.

Numerous calls came in to the office from caregivers expressing how "phenomenal and thoughtful" these holiday gift baskets were. One patient told his CNA with tears in his eyes, "I wasn't expecting anything for Christmas this year." Patients and caregivers that did not initially request a volunteer have called to request a volunteer now. The holiday basket project is truly the gift that keeps on giving by opening the doors for ongoing positive relationships between our patients, our hospice team and the community-at-large, leaving everyone touched by the spirit of kindness and caring.



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## A Shining Example

By Diane Demers, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, Bay City, MI

Ten dedicated Heartland Hospice Volunteers are taking a “break away” from the winter weather in Michigan to help at in-patient units in the Atlanta, Georgia area. “The group has completed training with flying colors. They will bring a healthy attitude and a lot of energy with them” says Diane Demers, Volunteer Coordinator at the Bay City Heartland Hospice office. The Center for Responsible Leadership at Alma College in Alma, Michigan helps to arrange alternative spring break options for their students. Alma College gets assistance from Break Away, the national non-profit organization that works with colleges and communities to promote active citizenship.



These compassionate students will get a week long immersion in Hospice care, helping with tasks such as friendly visiting, gardening, and respite sitting which will be supervised by Cheryl Ann Burney, Volunteer

Coordinator in the Dunwoody, Georgia Heartland Hospice office.

It’s a great opportunity for these students to make a difference in the lives of our terminally ill patients as they get exposure to a variety of professions in the healthcare field. They go for a variety of reasons. “I thought this would be a great experience to help people,” Jaimee Bolda said. “Dying can be frightening and I hope I can make it easier for them.” Abbie Zukauskay hopes that the trip “... might help me discover my vocation”. Meghan Perry wants to help and comfort people in need.

These students are going with the spirit of service and adventure. We certainly expect this exchange will be beneficial for all those involved.

## Reminder of the Month: Getting the Notes Right

Volunteers are key members of the hospice team. When a volunteer meets a patient and summarizes the details of his/her visit on the Volunteer Note, this document becomes a part of the patient’s medical record.

The medical record is a legal document and entries in it must be made thoughtfully and in keeping with documentation rules. Please take a minute and review the rules below, being mindful of the notes you have made and will make regarding your volunteer visits!

- Write clearly in black pen
- Never erase or white out
- Cross out errors with one line and initial
- Never write your opinions, medical information or an interpretation of what was seen or heard
- Avoid words like “seems to,” “appears to” (These are opinions)
- Turn in (mail) notes by the end of each week
- Follow *Documentation Principles and Guidelines*

**We are on the Web at  
[www.heartlandhospice.com](http://www.heartlandhospice.com)**

*Heartland Hospice  
Where Caring Comes  
from the Heart.*

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Champion tennis player, Arthur Ashe once said, "True heroism is remarkably sober,  
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very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others, but the urge to serve others whatever the cost." I would like to thank and celebrate the accomplishments of all our volunteers who have given their time and en-