Duke Hospice Volunteer Newsletter

May 2009

From the desk of Ron Thompson, Director Duke Hospice...

I have just returned from meetings in Washington, DC, related to hospice management and leadership. I met with members of Congress to discuss proposed changes to hospice reimbursement and health care reform. There is a proposed recommendation in Congress that will reduce hospice reimbursement over the next four years. Currently there is a temporary hold on the implementation of the reductions, but this hold expires in September of 2009.

The proposed cuts are based on the overall growth of the hospice over the past 10 years. To put the growth in terms of dollars—that represents $2.9B in the year 2000 and $10B in 2007 (71% increase). Since its inception in the mid 1980s, the Hospice Medicare Benefit has gone through relatively few changes. In 2007, 38.8% of all deaths in the United States were under hospice care.

Duke University conducted research related to the cost savings or avoidance that the Hospice Medicare Benefit saves in comparison to other care at the end of life. Hospice saves on average $2,300 per beneficiary. If you take 930,000 deaths in 2007, the cost savings or avoidance is $2,139B.

All that being said, I find myself somewhat an activist for what seems to be positive growth, and although more is being spent on hospice care, significantly more dollars are being saved/avoided in other EOL care categories. Unfortunately, I do not think hospice will be spared in the overall budgetary reductions; however we have pretty good data and history to show that our form of care and delivery is both cost effective and, even more important, it is what the patient and their caregivers want.

That is a good basis as we move forward.

Ron D. Thompson, MBA

Note: If you are interested in letting your congressional representative know how you feel about the proposed hospice rate cuts, go to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) website (http://www.capwiz.com/nhpco/issues/alert/?alertid=13069481&type=CO) to get educated on the issue and to send a letter.

The “Durham News” section of the April 25, 2009, News & Observer published three articles highlighting Duke Hospice—one from an editor whose father-in-law had an extremely short stay on hospice service, one from Cindy Mace (a deceased hospice patient’s wife), and the third from the Duke Hospice licensed clinical social worker assigned to the Mace team. The dual perspectives of the family and the hospice team illustrate that the benefits of our work accrue to more than just the patient. If you missed these articles, please go to:

- Melissa McMurry (Duke Hospice licensed clinical social worker assigned to the Mace family): http://www.thedurhamnews.com/viewpoints/story/195859.html
Our next **Staff / Volunteer Memorial Service** will be May 7 (Thursday), 8:30 a.m., at the Unicorn Bereavement Center in Hillsborough to remember those patients who died in March and April. We recognize that the reality of busy schedules may sometimes prevent you from attending the bi-monthly service that follows your patient's death. And although we will continue to organize the service to reflect the recent deaths, you are welcome to attend ANY memorial that fits your schedule. We will give you an opportunity to include your patient by name and to share a memory if you so wish. So please consider coming to honor any patient that you have served. For more information or to RSVP, contact Allison Shultz, Unicorn Bereavement Center at 919-644-6869.

The Duke Hospice Inpatient Care Facility at Hock Family Pavilion opened April 13 and our volunteer ambassador / receptionist program started the same day. Our volunteers have been very committed to working extra shifts to ensure coverage from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week. They are making a difference by answering the phones, greeting visitors, and helping out wherever they are needed. The next **Hock Family Pavilion volunteer training** will be offered May 8 or May 9. If you know anyone who would be interested in learning more about this volunteer opportunity, please have them contact Carolyn Colsher.

Any volunteers who missed the public open houses for the Hock Family Pavilion will be pleased to hear that another tour, this one a **tour of the new ICF for volunteers only**, has been scheduled for May 7 (Thursday) from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. If you are interested in seeing the new ICF in action, please RSVP to Carolyn Colsher.

**Our eighteen-hour Patient/Family Support Volunteer Training** will be offered in late May / early June. If you are interested in working directly with patients and families, call Carolyn for the details.

Whether you are a veteran knitter / crocheter or brand new at the craft, plan to attend our next **Care Shawl Meeting**, Thursday, May 28, 7 p.m., at Chapel Hill Bible Church. (In 2009 we meet on the fourth Thursday of odd months.) Knitting and crocheting lessons, as well as shawl instructions and motivation, will be available to all. This is one of our more popular service projects and has really taken on a life and personality of its own. Many, many thanks to Helen Cooper and Katie Smith for their dedication to keeping the program so focused and on-track. Also, if you would be interested in participating in a daytime group at our Durham office, please contact Carolyn.

Our **Annual Oh What a Night! Gala** is upon us!! This coming Saturday night (May 2) at Hope Valley Country Club in Durham our black tie optional event includes hors d'oeuvres, a plated dinner, desserts, and silent and live auctions. As DHCH celebrates its 30th year, this year's gala is going to be extraordinary! Be a part of it! Tickets can be purchased for $100 each by calling 919-620-3853 and asking to speak to the development department.

We want to thank all the volunteers whose tireless efforts have made this event possible.

Volunteers with huge hearts come in all ages: Leanne Joyce, the 9-year-old daughter of hospice social worker Ellen Joyce, learned about our **Loving Hugs Blanket program** for children being raised by our hospice patients and for our pediatric palliative care patients, and she decided she wanted to help. Sending out 46 letters to describe the program and the need, Leanne reached out to her community and raised $500 (!) to purchase fleece that community groups and individuals will use to create the blankets. Her thank you notes include a charming photo of Leanne with brightly colored blankets hanging from her arms like butterfly wings. Thanks to Leanne for supporting our patients and families and to all who go above and beyond to help those we serve. If you or anyone you know would like to create some blankets or donate fleece or yarn, please contact Carolyn Colsher. Leanne will be glad you did.

**Playmakers Repertoire Company Spotlight on Service (S.O.S.)** program has concluded for this theater season. We want to thank Playmakers for acknowledging the contributions of community volunteers including those of Duke Hospice by providing tickets to their outstanding performances this year. The volunteers who attend these plays routinely rave about their quality.
MAY CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES:

May 1 “Religious Belief and Practice: good for you in the United States, less good in Europe,” a presentation and discussion by Michael King, MD, PhD, professor of Primary Care Psychiatry, University College London. Noon - 1:30 p.m., Duke Medical Center Board Room 1170B. Free. Lunch will be provided. To register or for more information, e-mail elizabeth.alford@duke.edu or call 919-660-7556.

May 1 Fall Prevention Inservice, DHCH Main Office, Durham, 8:30-10 a.m.

May 10 HBO premieres “The Alzheimer’s Project,” a groundbreaking four-part documentary series about Alzheimer’s disease. Check your television listings. And if you’d be interested in joining other hospice volunteers in viewing / discussing this series, please contact Carolyn Colsher.

JUNE CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES:


Brick Dedication and Service of Remembrance Volunteers Needed. The Unicorn Bereavement Center (UBC) is requesting your help with our next Brick Dedication and Service of Remembrance to be held in the lovely Carver Gardens behind the UBC on Thursday evening, May 14. The Brick Dedication is for those families who have donated for a memorial brick, but the SOR is open to all grieving persons in our community, and usually lasts less than an hour. Though not specifically religious in nature, it is a spiritual and moving event that includes readings and music, and a time for individual commemoration of the deceased. The Brick Dedication starts at 5:30 p.m., followed by the Service of Remembrance at 6:30 p.m., and we will need volunteers at varying times throughout the afternoon. Outdoor set-up (some heavy lifting) starts at 3:30 p.m., reception / food set-up begins at 5 p.m., and clean-up can take until 8 p.m. We have other jobs within this timeframe (parking, ushering), so you can stay as little or as long as you like, and enjoy the service as well. We could also use donations of baked goods for the reception—always a hit! Mitzi Quint is in charge of these logistics and can be reached at the UBC at 919-644-6869, or by e-mail: mitzi.quint@duke.edu. We always have a good time together, and look forward to hearing from you. Special note to our new Hock Family Pavilion volunteers: Our new HFP volunteers have been working a great number of shifts and are therefore suffering a significant number of losses in a very short period of time. This event will give you an opportunity to process these losses in a supportive and understanding venue. Please make time to take care of yourself.

Five of our “limited edition” patios have been claimed already! Only 1 left! If your itchy green thumb needs a project, have we got the project for you. The Inpatient Care Facility at the Meadowlands is looking for individuals or groups to “Adopt a Patio” this spring. Each of the 6 patient rooms at the ICF has a wonderful little private patio for the view and use of patients and their visitors. We are looking for sponsors to do seasonal plantings and maintenance for each of these little patios to bring an added bit of color, delight, and distraction to people who might really enjoy it. If you can see yourself bringing Mother Nature’s gifts to bear on this project, please give Carolyn a call.
Swine Flu Update As you have likely read and heard in various news reports, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is reporting that increasing numbers of cases of the human swine influenza (H1N1) virus have now been reported in 10 states and as of this writing there has been one confirmed swine flu-related death in the US. These and other reports have prompted the declaration of a public health emergency in an attempt to limit the spread of the virus and enhance access to resources by local communities in their preparations for any potential outbreaks.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to practice the same kind of hygiene that is recommended every year during flu season:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw the tissue in the trash after use, and wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as germs are spread this way, and regularly wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who appear to be ill, and regularly wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Lastly, if it hasn't been made clear enough, it is essential at a time like this to regularly wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Symptoms: If you experience a runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, myalgia (muscle soreness), or fever you should stay home. Don’t volunteer, don’t grocery shop, don’t go to your granddaughter’s dance recital. STAY HOME!! Volunteers who develop any of these symptoms should contact Carolyn so we can arrange for your volunteer assignment to be covered. If your patients or their caregivers are experiencing symptoms, please encourage them to talk to their hospice team immediately.

For more information, please monitor the following sites:
* CDC's Swine Influenza Page - http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm
* CDC's Tips for Preventing the Flu - http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm

We are having another monster Packet Assembly Work Day at the Durham office on Saturday, May 2 from 9 a.m. to noon. We are again making up packets agency-wide and will need a great deal of help that day. If you know anyone who is interested in helping (students age 14 and older are welcome), please give Carolyn a call.

A RESOURCE FOR YOU . . . Continuing Education for May – Dr. Richard Payne and Duke’s Institute on Care at the End of Life.

For more information contact:
Carolyn Colsher, DHCH Volunteer Services Supervisor
(919) 620-3859 ext 235 or e-mail carolyn.colsher@duke.edu
Website dhch.duhs.duke.edu

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong -- because someday you will have been all of these.

---George Washington Carver (1864 - 1943)

And thank you, as always, for everything you do for our patients and families. Carolyn

Mission Statement: Duke HomeCare and Hospice will provide innovative, thoughtful care, using an interdisciplinary team approach, to achieve the best possible outcomes for the patients, families and communities we serve.