

Open Hearts, Opens Doors

Hospice Caring Offers Help and Hope

Facing the grave illness of a loved one can turn life upside down.

Medical treatment and support often just scratches the surface of patient and family need. Penny Gladhill recognized this and in 1989, she founded Hospice Caring, Inc. Today located in Gaithersburg, this non-medical hospice has provided support and assistance to terminally ill patients and their families in the Montgomery County area for 23 years.

"We give the gift of presence to the patients and families," says Jeannette Mendonca, executive director of Hospice Caring, "and ensure that whatever they need, they get." Staff and more than 350 volunteers provide countless services to patients and their loved ones.

Hospice Caring knows that every situation is special and every family's needs are uniquely different. The organization's dedicated volunteers are asked to open their hearts in many ways, and their jobs are as demanding as they are rewarding. Volunteers bring patients to the doctor, and help families with grocery shopping and light housekeeping. When young children are involved, volunteers help parents to keep up with sports and other after-school activities, pitch in to get kids to and from school and even help with homework. Through it all, volunteers give emotional support to families going through the challenging end-of-life journey.

Continual Healing

Understanding that the need for support does not end with the passing of a loved one, Hospice Caring, Inc. helps family members to say goodbye, find hope again and remember. At The Cottage, the organization's main office located in Bohrer Park, Hospice Caring offers adult bereavement services and special programs like The Good Grief Club and Camp Caring that work specifically with children.



All services, regardless of where they take place—at home, The Cottage, hospitals, nursing homes or assisted living facilities—are completely free. Individual and corporate donations, grants, and endless fundraising efforts ensure that families will never have to pay one penny out-of-pocket for the services provided to them. Heartwarming fundraising events are held at The Cottage throughout the year. The Tree of Love encourages people to place a light on a tree in honor of a loved one who has passed. Wings of Caring is a special memorial ceremony held throughout the year where a butterfly is released for each remembered loved one. Families can purchase memorial bricks and pavers to be placed along the paths at The Cottage. Everyone is encouraged to visit The Cottage's peaceful outdoor garden, which is adorned with walkways, a gazebo and secluded benches where one can rest and remember.

Paying It Forward


Hospice Caring, Inc. provides a safe environment for people to grieve, share,

remember and move forward. For Dave Marks and Diane Marcus, it was also a place for new beginnings. Dave and Diane met while participating in a bereavement group following the loss of their spouses, and though their individual situations were very different, they found comfort in the common bond they had with other members of the group and with each other.

Dave discovered Hospice Caring, Inc. when his wife was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. His next door neighbor was familiar with the organization and urged him to call. Although Dave had a large support network through work, church and family, he believes that you can never have enough. "Hospice Caring was very critical to us," he says.

Diane came to Hospice Caring following the loss of her husband. A friend recommended she attend one of the organization's bereavement classes and Diane says the value of the group was immeasurable. "They saved my life," she says, "and when I was ready to move on from the group, I knew I wanted to do more. I wanted to give back to the place that had given me so much." Diane decided to become a volunteer at the center, and today she co-facilitates a bereavement group for spousal loss.

Together each year, Diane and Dave attend the butterfly release in the fall and the Tree of Love ceremony during the holidays. They have also purchased bricks to honor their late spouses and to symbolize their new beginning.

"You never forget," says Diane as she and Dave stand in front of their memorial, "but you can learn to move forward and find happiness again." 

For more information, visit Hospice Caring, Inc. at www.hospicecaring.org