

# Hospice Means Caring, Hospice Means Sharing

Sally Ann Dickey

Pick up a newspaper and you are besieged with dreary, lackluster headlines—AIDS epidemic, foreclosures skyrocketing, stock market crash, hurricanes, tornadoes, homeless, jobless, inflation increasing, gasoline prices, no COLA increase for Social Security recipients, tragedy in Haiti, and Elvis isn't feeling real good, either.

So how do you feel about all of this? Will America ever return to being the world power it used to be, or will it someday lag behind China?

Let me ask you—what gives you hope? What gives you joy amidst our crazy, changing world? For you, you might receive hope from your spouse, your significant other, your grandchild, your faith, or maybe Wayne Dyer.

I think Hospice of Marion County excels in being a bright star of hope for patients. Hospice has been the light in the darkness for families struggling with the deaths of loved ones.

I see strength in our Hospice of Marion County volunteers. I experience an unselfish spirit when I call a volunteer and ask for his help, and he is willing to leave his warm, cozy bed and be here at 6:30 am to register participants for a bike run. I experience deep commitment when I call a volunteer and ask if he can take on a new patient visitation assignment, and they say "YES".

Recently I interviewed a prospective volunteer. This applicant proceeded to tell me how her sister was placed in Estelle's House for her final days. This woman was under the impression that if you are on Hospice and you are awake, you are going to die the next day. When she saw the caring, competence and commitment of the Hospice staff; when she saw her sister's room so beautifully done—the room looked like home, not a hospital, she had an acute awakening. She felt contented that her sister was receiving such wonderful care.

Guess what? This lady, who is age 85, recently joined our Hospice volunteer family. She is a greeter at Legacy House. Isn't this a heart-warming story?

Every day I speak to people who wish to donate their used items to us. Many times when they call, they mention how Hospice of Marion County helped them through dark, difficult days. These opportunities to donate furniture, clothing and art work give the people we have served a chance to give back to us. Isn't that tremendous?

Hospice can be the light in the darkness for a patient and his family. We communicate to patients and family members we will be there for them in those tough days. We will hold your hand. We will help you in any way we can. Our call is to be a light for Hospice, to help light the path for someone in need.

When I arrive at work and encounter my co-workers, they are there with a cheery "Good morning", and if I'm carrying packages or bags, they are there to readily open a door for me. Hospice employees share. They put goodies to eat in the break room, they reach out to invite you to participate in company events, they look at you and ask "How are you doing?", and they help you when you are in a pinch. This is what I value most about working at Hospice. My co-workers are there for me like a lighthouse in a storm. This is what Hospice means to me.