

# HEARTBEAT

Volunteers are the Heart of Hospice

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Hospice & Palliative Care

## WE FALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

EVERCARE HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS GO HIGH-TECH AND REMAIN HIGH TOUCH

To continue to grow, streamline and standardize our volunteer program as well as respond to our volunteer needs from the Spring, 2009 survey feedback, it was determined that the best next step for the volunteer program was to move our monthly volunteer education online. We kicked-off the training series on September 8th, 2009. Keeping in step with our IDG model and increasing collaboration between staff and volunteers, we invited team members from the sites to attend and help present many of these training sessions.

We are hoping the WebEx, teleconference and the recording feature to view at a later time will be user-friendly and help accommodate the lives of busy volunteers within various time zones around the country. We ask that all question and answer time and WebEx Chat discussions be held at the conclusion of each WebEx. This is to keep the highest level of quality assurance maintained for each recording. We are also adding an online evaluation which we strongly urge

every participant to complete. If you are meeting live with your Volunteer Coordinator, hard copies will be available. We value your feedback tremendously and want to offer you the best and most applicable educational programs to make you most successful as a hospice volunteer.

Tip to remember: Volunteers are responsible for attending twelve hours of annual education within each year of service to Evercare™ Hospice and Palliative Care. Thank you for your enthusiasm during the preliminary training session in August. We look forward to getting to know our volunteers better and building more camaraderie within the Evercare Hospice Volunteer community.

Jen Jackson  
National Team Lead, Volunteer Services



Meet Peanut,  
A Horse of  
a different  
color.  
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For more information or to learn more about Evercare™ Hospice and Palliative Care, please visit us online at:

[www.EvercareHospice.com](http://www.EvercareHospice.com)

**Marvella Ivery**, an Evercare Hospice Volunteer in Macon, Georgia, “rapped” this poem at a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon this year. We want to celebrate the diversity of our volunteers!



## EVERCARE FOREVER THERE! A GARDEN OF THANKS!!

Poem by Marvella Ivery, Volunteer, Macon, GA

Evercare, Evercare you are forever there  
Especially when life gets too hard to bear  
    *Volunteers*, the heart of Evercare  
    The hearts of Evercare  
Take time to invest in the lives of others  
An expression of love like from heaven above  
    An expression of love for humankind  
    To take the time  
Having another’s welfare on your mind  
    To awaken with your commitment  
    Is a God sent  
    That’s what *volunteers* do  
Bring light when you’re feeling blue  
Hard to deal with a challenge that is new  
Celebrate with you when healing is on the way  
    Evercare is forever there  
    You are not alone  
Even when it looks like everyone else is gone  
Be not dismayed—you’re not by yourself  
The heart of Evercare come through the door  
Just in time to give you peace of mind  
    Relax, Renew, Refresh  
Now is the time to de-stress, de-stress  
    Evercare is now on the scene  
Forever on us you can lean  
Forever on us you can trust  
Get some sleep, now you must

Excellent  
Volunteers  
Eager to  
Relieve  
Caregivers  
As they  
Relax with  
Ease

Now let us help you please  
A GARDEN OF THANKS  
    To our volunteers  
Helping our patients dry their tears  
Helping our families dry their eyes  
    Overwhelming life can be  
Hope is just around the corner  
    Can’t you see?  
    Sometimes not  
If you are the only caregiver doing everything  
    You breathe a sigh of relief when  
    Evercare walks through the door  
    You thought you had it all done  
And now help you need some more  
    Evercare always there  
    When you need to vent  
Seems like the people are heaven sent  
    Trustworthy, Integrity is so very key  
I can let my guard down and just be me  
    I use every resource  
    Evercare had to give  
Volunteers help my family to see  
    The purpose to fight to live  
Even when my breath seems like it’s my last  
I get a phone call, an encouraging word  
Only friendly voice all day that I’ve heard  
    Just buried one family member  
    Now I’m taking care of three  
    Going through my grief  
God and Evercare help me to see  
    My source of relief, relief  
Blinded by my pain, but now I can see, see  
Taking care of three is now easier with Evercare  
    Showing me how to care for me  
I thank you with all the flowers God created  
Here’s a GARDEN OF THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO  
    While my family is going through  
    This season of life that is very new  
    Spending more time praying from the pew

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## Remembering those we've lost at the Holidays

Being in hospice, we know how difficult the holidays are for people who have experienced the death of a loved one. Last year, for this reason, we had a lovely memorial service during the holiday time. Our bereavement coordinator, Ellie Isaacson, M.A., C.T., did a wonderful job in making this a very special event for the family members we have served through our hospice in Phoenix, Arizona.

The memorial service was made even more special by the involvement of our volunteers. We had one volunteer who greeted everyone at the door and worked a resource table for family members to gather informational handouts. We had several volunteers who were available to sit with family members who had come by themselves and needed extra support. It was truly a gift to have the presence of our volunteers at the memorial service. Their loving presence created an atmosphere of compassion, grace and hope.

## A Story of Holiday Caroling

At Evercare Hospice, our volunteers and their contribution to our patients are highly valued. The simple gift of a volunteer's presence is immeasurable. However, we try to go above and beyond in thinking of special ways to create a dignified atmosphere for our patients and to bring them as much quality of life during this time. For example, one year the Phoenix, Arizona site provided Holiday Caroling for many of our patients.

The Holiday Caroling was such a wonderful event and the idea for this came from one of our volunteers, Phyllis Lewis. She wanted to do something extra special for our patients, so she helped our site plan and coordinate this event. Several of the volunteers and the volunteer coordinator went from nursing home to nursing home, caroling along the way.

Of all my years of working for hospice, this was one of the most special times I have ever had. The joy and smiles that our singing brought to not only the patients, but the nursing home staff as well, is beyond description. Once we started singing, people did not want us to stop! They kept thinking of different songs we could sing as well as any other excuse to keep us there longer. This really made us laugh because we were very much out of practice and probably way off

During the service, when the opportunity was given for individuals to speak, one of our volunteers spoke about the very special and meaningful relationship she had with one of her patients. Her courage and strong sentiments were carried out to the others in attendance. It was as if she opened the door for others to share their memories and honor their loved ones as well.

Many of our sites will be having similar memorial events this year. If you are interested in attending either as a participant or in order to provide a volunteer service, please let your volunteer coordinator know.

Lynn C. Hepperly, LCSW, LISAC  
Volunteer Coordinator, Phoenix, AZ

key. Before starting, we had been worried that people would be put-off by our singing! As luck would have it, several of the patients we sang to were either the choir director of their churches or they taught singing to children! Even so, they also seemed delighted in our caroling.

We had some extraordinary moments happen during this special night of caroling. The nursing staff had us singing in the hallways or common areas so as many of the residents as possible could hear us sing. One of the ladies, who heard us sing, was a dear friend of several of our volunteers. She looked up after we had sung for a while and she exclaimed, "You all did a very good job." The volunteers were in disbelief as they explained, "We have not heard her speak for several years!"

Another extraordinary moment as remembered by our volunteer, Pat Brown, was when we were singing at a unit where the Alzheimer's and dementia patients reside. As we sang to these patients, they stopped whatever they were doing and became quiet as they listened. They rolled their chairs closer and closer to us until they all surrounded us. The staff members bestowed us with much gratitude. They said, "We have many carolers come to our nursing home, but you are the first group to come to this unit."

Lynn C. Hepperly, LCSW, LISAC  
Volunteer Coordinator, Phoenix AZ

## “A Horse is a Horse...”

“A horse is a horse, of course, of course...” But it’s not quite that simple when talking about Peanut.

Peanut is much more than your average horse. A 12-year old female miniature horse, Peanut has made it a mission to bring her own brand of joy to hospice patients.

Her owner, Evercare Hospice Volunteer Ginny Mills, called Nancy Oxenhandler (Colorado Springs Volunteer Coordinator) in late summer 2008. Ginny asked about the idea of using her miniature horse to volunteer with hospice and was greeted with a resounding “Yes, let’s do it.”

Several visits were made to allow Peanut to become accustomed to the variety of equipment, flooring and elevators at various facilities. Then, after waiting several months to go through the process, Peanut (along with her “big sister,” quarter-horse Mariah) was certified as a Pet Therapy animal through the Delta Society. Ginny has recently acquired another miniature horse, which will become certified sometime in the near future.

Since celebrating her graduation at an All-Staff meeting in May, Peanut has made visits to more than 16 facilities and spent time with hundreds of residents. When Peanut walks into an activity room, or strolls into a patient’s private room, she is greeted with gasps of surprise from those who simply can’t believe that they’re seeing a horse right in front of them (and a miniature one no less).

On some visits, Ginny gets help from teen volunteer Jenna Oxenhandler. While Ginny gets her new miniature horse, Willow, acclimated to the surroundings of a facility, Jenna will take Peanut into individual rooms for one-on-one visits with the patients. Jenna accompanied Ginny and her

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horses on several visits during the summer.

Peanut seems to sense what the patients need when she visits with them. She has been known to stand still for long periods of time, while her mane is being stroked endlessly and her neck is being hugged. She has nuzzled up against a bedridden patient, acting almost as if she’d like to crawl right into bed with him. She is patient and mellow and willing to be caressed, stroked and embraced for hours.

Some responses to Peanut have been simply remarkable. Peanut has provided the opportunity for folks to bring back memories of their earlier days when they rode horses, or lived on a farm. Peanut has also been the catalyst for patients to utter words, when they have not spoken or responded for months or even years.

Peanut has become somewhat famous in Colorado Springs, having been the subject of a photojournalism spread in the local newspaper, as well as being highlighted on the evening news. Since then, the calls have been coming in for our own hospice celebrity, Peanut, to make visits to facilities where we have patients.

So, even if “a horse is a horse,” Peanut is truly a horse of a different color...of course.

Nancy Oxenhandler, Volunteer Coordinator  
Colorado Springs, CO



September 2009

## Volunteers Embrace Service

Volunteers Embrace Serve America Act in honor of the FIRST September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance

I attend Stone Bridge High School and am a member of the Varsity Cheerleading squad. This year I helped organize my team to participate in a community service project to remember September 11th. Because I am a volunteer for Evercare Hospice, my volunteer coordinator, Jen Jackson offered me the idea of having my team decorate flower pots to give to nursing home residents at Sunrise Senior Living Center in Leesburg, Virginia. I talked to my team and my coach about the idea; everyone thought it was great. My mother, who is also a volunteer with Evercare, helped me organize the decorating party to have at our house

after practice. We all met, painted flower pots and had snacks and pizza that Jen Jackson brought for us. We all came up with very unique pots and had a great time bonding as a team while we decorated.

The following day, we delivered the pots to Sunrise. Jen Jackson brought potting soil and mums for us to use to plant the pots. We all paired up with each resident who wanted a pot and helped them plant it. They were so excited and appreciative. They coveted their pots like they were prize possessions, making sure they held them or knew exactly where they had been placed so they wouldn’t lose them. While we were waiting for some additional potting soil, we treated the residents to some cheers. They clapped and held up “OK” signs to show us how much they enjoyed our spirit. It made me feel like our team had done something special. It’s easy to get focused on everything going on in high school and on our squad as we prepare for our competitions this year. It’s nice to remember we are part of a bigger community that can benefit from our energy and enthusiasm as much as our school does.

Maddie Hall, Senior, Stone Bridge High School  
Ashburn, Virginia