

Member Spotlight: Montgomery Hospice

BY BETH HESS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Support the work of Montgomery Hospice at the “Derby Duck Race Festival” in October.

“Our work is about the living.”

Not a comment you’d expect in thinking about hospice care, but that was very much the case in April. Following the tragic death of three Montgomery County children in Baltimore City, *The Washington Post* ran a piece in its Sunday “Close to Home” section by Elaine Tiller, director of bereavement care at Montgomery Hospice. In the piece Elaine talked about what each of us as individuals and a community can do for those who are grieving, and who we can turn to for support.

Elaine submitted her piece following a workshop at the Center for Nonprofit Advancement with “Close to Home” editor Gina Acosta. Her letter was both timely and personal—important qualities for a “Close to Home” editorial. These same qualities could be used to describe the everyday work of Center member Montgomery Hospice.

Last year, the group worked with more than 1,400 hospice patients in Montgomery County and touched more than 5,500 through bereavement services. This dedicated team of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, spiritual counselors, social workers, certified nursing assistants, bereavement counselors and volunteers provides care in patient homes, extended care facilities and Casey House, an acute care facility operated by Montgomery Hospice.

“We reach people where they are,” said Susan Burket, Montgomery Hospice communications manager. “We find out their needs and what’s important to them.”

As part of the healthcare continuum, medical and personal comfort for people in the last months, weeks or days of life is covered by Medicare, Medicaid and often private insurance. Treatment for those whose care could not be managed at home is provided at Casey House, the only all-hospice, acute care inpatient medical facility in Montgomery County.

Montgomery Hospice also provides grief support free of charge for patient families for more than a year following a patient’s death through support groups, workshops, visits, phone calls and regular mailings of self-help materials. Montgomery Hospice also serves as an educational place for the community, providing bereavement programs open to all who live and work in Montgomery County.

As part of their effort to do more multicultural work, bereavement groups for Spanish speaking individuals will be starting this fall. Spanish language articles on grieving are also being added the group’s Web site.

Supporting the work of Montgomery Hospice are 175 volunteers who “fill in the holes.” You might find them reading, sitting with patients or allowing caregivers to take a break.

“They’re the most caring people,” said Burket. “I’m in awe of them and their work. They look pain in the face and don’t flinch.”

In addition to volunteers, Montgomery Hospice relies on financial support from the community to make its work possible. While the group receives no public funding, Montgomery Hospice does serve all residents of Montgomery County regardless of their ability to pay.

The group’s special fundraising events include the popular “Derby Duck Race Festival.” The fifth annual event will take place Oct. 5 at Seneca Creek State Park and includes crafts, family entertainment and a water race with 10,000 rubber ducks. Friends of hospice can adopt individual ducks, a six “quack” or a whole flock to help support their work.

To find out more about Montgomery Hospice visit www.montgomeryhospice.org ☺