THE HOSPICE VISIT

Some important things to remember when planning and/or making a Hospice visit…

◆ Confidentiality must be respected
◆ Be discreet
◆ Be Yourself
◆ Be punctual
◆ Be prepared
◆ Be clear about what you can and cannot do
◆ Be aware of the person’s environment
◆ Be considerate
◆ Be in the experience

Be assured that the thoughtfulness of your presence and any kindness that you may share will ease the tension in a person’s home. As a Hospice Volunteer it is always good, when meeting the patient/family for the first time, to get a sense of what is important to those people—what it is that keeps the house going. Are there animals, bird feeders, plants, gardens, artwork, crafts…you can learn a lot about a person without a word being spoken by simply observing what is around the environment.

Perhaps you may hear someone say that in all of the stress of their loved one’s illness that the plants just haven’t gotten any attention, the dog hasn’t been walked, the garden hasn’t been weeded, the laundry is piling up—think about what can be done to alleviate stress for families and then ask permission to do it! Here are a few suggestions:

◆ Listen
◆ Fill bird feeders
◆ Throw in a load of laundry
◆ Listen
◆ Weed the garden (as long as you can distinguish weeds from flowers!)
◆ Make some cookies, bake a casserole
◆ Listen
◆ Walk the dog
◆ Help write some cards and letters
◆ Sweep the porch
◆ Help arrange photos in albums
◆ Listen
◆ Do what comes naturally to you, as that is what will be best received
◆ Hold a hand
◆ Listen
◆ Listen
◆ Listen
When contacting a family for the first time, be sure to identify yourself as the Hospice Volunteer. Even though the volunteer program has been explained to the family, remember that they may still have some confusion as to the difference between a volunteer, a nurse, a home health aide... The better equipped you are with information, the better they will understand your involvement. When arranging a visit, some things to remember:

◆ Choose a mutually convenient, agreed upon time to visit

◆ When possible, make your first visit an introductory one, rather than a respite visit. Give the patient/family ample time to begin to feel comfortable with you (and vice versa!)

◆ Re-confirm your visit that day if there has been a time lapse since setting the time of visit

◆ Leave your own preconceived ideas outside and enter with open ears, heart, and hands

◆ Trust your intuition. If you are perceiving something as needing attention, call the primary nurse, or call the Volunteer Coordinator

◆ It is better to err on the side of speaking up, rather than to remain silent about a potential problem.

All cases must be assigned by the Volunteer Coordinator. Time sheets will only be accepted for active hospice patients/families, or bereavement clients. It may be possible that a volunteer may be reassigned or discharged from a case at any time, given a substantial reason, i.e. for patient and/or volunteer safety. Should you be discharged from a case and desire to have continued contact, you will be asked to sign a Release of Obligation, protecting your status and that of Hospice Volunteers of Hospice of Southern Maine.

Do not hesitate to call the office with any questions, concerns, or needs.