



## **Aging Happens: Boutique's mission supports end-of-life services**

*By Ellen Waldman*

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During her life, Mary chose to give away many of her prized possessions. Her reason for this was that she got pleasure from seeing her friends and family enjoying her gifts to them. Still, after she was no longer here, there were many more wonderful items remaining.

What to do with them might have caused concerns for the family, but instead, they knew all about the Hospice Unique Boutique (<http://hospiceuniqueboutique.org>) at 1618 Ashland St., 541-488-7805. Mary was an avid shopper at this store, and would have been thrilled to know her beloved items supported their cause.

Many locals may be familiar with this store in town, but there is a bigger story than just some great items for sale. To learn more about how this local organization supports our community, I spoke to Susan Hearn, the executive director for Southern Oregon Friends of Hospice. In that role, she oversees the operations and staff at the Hospice Unique Boutique, providing leadership for the shop committee and management for the general manager and assistant manager.

**Q:** How did the Hospice Unique Boutique come about?

**A:** Back in 2008, Catherine Church, Sarah Seybold and Carolyn Johnson had the idea to open a high-end resale boutique, to support hospice services and compassionate end-of-life care, through financial gifts and community education. The vital purpose was to raise money to one day build and operate a hospice residence for Southern Oregonians.

**Q:** How does the Hospice Unique Boutique support Southern Oregon Friends of Hospice?

**A:** The Hospice Unique Boutique generates nearly \$700 a day in revenue. This supports the Southern Oregon Friends of Hospice mission, to educate about hospice services and financially support compassionate end-of-life care. Nearly \$90,000 in gifts have helped the following programs: Asante, Providence, Lovejoy and Asante Ashland Community Hospital Hospice programs; WinterSpring Center for Grief and Loss; and COHO (Choosing Options, Honoring Options). The proceeds from the boutique also fund the administration and fundraising efforts currently under way to build and operate a hospice residence. This will help patients and families who desire hospice care, but are unable to provide care at their own home for many different reasons.

**Q:** What is the purpose of a hospice residence?

**A:** The need for a residence that specializes in hospice care is widespread in Southern Oregon. Dying is a natural process and not purely a medical event. It is best supported with compassionate care for mind, body and spirit of patients and family members. Hospice is unique in this way. Most Americans say they wish to die in their own home. However, many live alone, or with family members who are unable to provide nursing care themselves and cannot afford to pay for private nurses.

The hospice residence is the next best thing to being at home at the end-of-life. It will offer a beautiful caring environment with hospice-trained caregivers and volunteers. A personalized and supported environment alleviates fear in the presence of death. It also helps maintain patient dignity and gives loved ones an opportunity to build positive memories of their last days together.

Q: In what ways can people support the Hospice Unique Boutique?

A: There are three ways to benefit Southern Oregon Friends of Hospice.

Financial donations can be made via mail to: P.O. Box 1182, Ashland, OR 97520; online at [www.sofriendsofhospice.org](http://www.sofriendsofhospice.org); or in person at the Hospice Unique Boutique in Ashland.

Donations of clothing, furniture, jewelry, art and housewares are welcome at the boutique during business hours, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

If you enjoy working in the retail environment, then consider volunteering at the Hospice Unique Boutique. The store is run by over 40 volunteers who work behind the scenes, processing donations and working as the cashiers. In addition, volunteers will pick up and deliver furniture and other larger donations. They help with online research and Internet sales of higher value items which require a larger audience. Volunteer applications are available at the store or on the website, <http://hospiceuniqueboutique.org>.

Q: Are there any upcoming special events?

A: The annual Candle Light event is coming up Dec. 3. The theme is "A Very Vintage Christmas." Each year we receive some of the best gift items, as well as all the holiday décor. It's a beautiful sale with festive drinks and appetizers while shopping by candlelight.

This small boutique in Ashland has undertaken to provide a vital missing service to our community. How great that through the Hospice Unique Boutique, many are supporting their wish to help others receive this special type of care at the end of life.