



Aging Happens: New hospice resource coming to area

By Ellen Waldman

October 10, 2017

When we receive the diagnosis from which we will not recover, we are in a completely different phase of life. Hospice services are hopefully the support that most people will reach for at this time of need.

How does this usually work? It's been said that hospice comes to you. That means whether if you are living at home, or in a community facility, hospice services will attend to you there. Many people think this means hospice will be with them around the clock, and that's not the case. While hospice will send the needed medical and social supports, they will not always be physically present. This is the role usually left to friends and family members. Still, everyone needs to sleep and take care of their own daily activities. Some people hire paid caregivers so their loved one is never by themselves. Now, for the first time in Southern Oregon, there is soon to be another option. Welcome to the Holmes Park House: A Residential Care Facility for Hospice Patients (<http://sofriendsofhospice.org/why-a-hospice-home/hospice-house-introduction/>).

Recently, I spoke with Susan Hearn, executive director of the Southern Oregon Friends of Hospice. Here is some important information she conveyed to me about this new residential facility for hospice patients.

Hospice is primarily a visiting service. As I said above, the hospice staff comes to your home or wherever the person is currently living. The nurse informs the family about medications, how to provide hands-on care, and what to expect as the process continues to the end of someone's life. In addition to keeping patients comfortable, they are focused on the activities of daily living (ADL's), such as bathing, dressing, using the bathroom, etc. This hospice benefit is paid for by Medicare, and most often, there is no cost to the person receiving this service.

At the Homes Park House (HPH), the staff specializes in providing this type of care. The fact that it's residential means that their ability to care for their patients happens around the clock. In addition to the physical care of their patient, they are also involved with the spiritual and emotional support to the family. They see the whole family as a unit and provide them with these much needed services. It's even possible for family to spend the night with their person (when needed, they have wider beds and sleeper chairs in some rooms), or eat meals together. They have a small kitchenette the family can use. Plus, the patient can actually have their own pets visit with them. In addition, the patient and their families have full access to the beautiful outdoor gardens.

This is an enormous help to many family caregivers who normally provide much of this care themselves. This is difficult, or impossible, when families live at a distance, the patient lives alone, or an elderly spouse has to fulfill this role. Here's where HPH takes the challenges of support and care needs and solves them.

It's important to know that Medicare does not pay for a stay at HPH. The cost will be \$280/day or \$6,500/month. (Compare this to hiring round-the-clock caregivers at home, which costs around

\$14,000/month!) It's designed and staffed to support short stays. They will have six beds in private pay rooms, and six beds in rooms that will be funded by nonprofits or Medicaid, for those who have a financial need. In addition to an administrator and a registered nurse, the staff ratio is one caregiver for four patients.

Here are some interesting statistics. In Jackson and Josephine County, there are 230-250 people on hospice at any time. The average length is 35-40 days, and about one-third are on services for only one week. Here's something else to consider. In the two counties, there are now only three hospice providers: Asante Hospice 541-789-5005, Providence Hospice 541-732-6500, and Signature Hospice 541-664-7400. The wait for a nurse to assess someone and receive their services is around one to seven days. So, clearly this is not something to postpone until the last moments have arrived.

Here's one more thing you could do: Take a tour of this amazing facility from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at Holmes Park House, 217 S. Modoc Avenue in Medford. Learn about the historic home and gardens, built in 1939 for Harry Holmes of Harry and David and designed by architect Paul R Williams. Please call to schedule this tour at 541-500-8911 or email sue.carroll@sfriendsofhospice.org. With support like HPH coming in 2018, another vital option for end-of-life care will soon be available in our community.