



For Immediate Release

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Hospice of Michigan Memory Bear Program Helps Grieving Families, Seeks Volunteers with Sewing Skills

Detroit, May 29, 2014 – Sifting through the belongings of a loved one who has recently died can be overwhelming for a grieving family member, but the Hospice of Michigan Memory Bear program can help ease the pain.

In an effort to help the bereaved cope, HOM's Memory Bear program provides patient's families with a bear made from the clothing of their loved one. The bears, which are eight inches tall and made in a patch-quilt style, are created by volunteers using cotton, wool, fleece or flannel clothing that help the bereaved recall happy memories with their loved ones.

HOM is currently seeking skilled volunteers in Southeast Michigan to support the Memory Bear program and help family members of HOM patients' capture – and preserve – a keepsake they can cherish as they move through the grieving process.

Troy resident Martha Mouch began volunteering with the program more than a year ago.

"I was looking for a volunteer opportunity that was meaningful and would allow me to make a difference in someone's life," said Mouch. "When I learned of Hospice of Michigan's Memory Bear program, I felt it was exactly what I was looking for."

"Volunteering in the Memory Bear program gives me the opportunity to help the bereaved hold onto a piece of a garment of someone they loved and lost."

When the bereaved bring in articles of clothing to HOM, a grief support services manager will meet with person to learn more about the life of the deceased. HOM also asks that when possible, a photo of the deceased is provided.

"Before beginning a bear, I work with HOM to learn more about the deceased," Mouch explained. "I'll study photos they provide and do my best to create a bear that emulates the person."

Mouch recalls that one family brought a scarf their father always wore, so when she made the bear she not only incorporated fabric from the scarf, she also made a small scarf for the bear.

"I'm overcome with a very positive feeling every time I finish a bear," Mouch added. "Volunteering in the Memory Bear program has made me really aware of the grieving process people go through after they lost a loved one. I also really appreciate that I can play a part in helping them through that process."

HOM began its memory program in select communities a number of years ago. After seeing the positive impact the bears have had on those grieving, HOM has sought volunteers to help expand the program to other areas including Macomb, Oakland and Wayne County.

“Memorializing loved ones who have passed can be a healthy way to cope with grief,” said Karen Monts, director of grief support services at HOM. “It allows the bereaved to remember happy times and keep the essence of their loved one alive in their daily life.”

Prospective Memory Bear volunteers are invited to contact Monts at 313.578.6326 for additional information about becoming involved with the program. Volunteers must have the ability to travel to their local Hospice of Michigan office for appointments and to pick up and drop off materials.

“The most committed volunteers have a passion for helping others,” Monts explained. “If you have a few hours to spare every week or month, you can help someone work through their grief. This is a very special, hands-on way seamstresses and crafters can make a difference. Everyone who volunteers gets something out of the experience.”

If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities for Hospice of Michigan or sign up as a volunteer, visit https://www.hom.org/?page_id=1239.

For those who have experienced a loss, HOM encourages a waiting period of one year before becoming a volunteer in order to allow for the processing of grief.

About Hospice of Michigan

A nationally recognized leader in end-of-life care, Hospice of Michigan is the original – and largest – hospice in the state. The non-profit cares for more than 1,400 patients each day in 56 counties across Michigan, raising more than \$4 million each year to cover the cost of care for the uninsured and underinsured. HOM offers a broad range of services to enhance the quality of life at the end of life, including At Home Support™, our advanced illness management program, community-based palliative care and pediatric care programs. HOM provides grief support and counseling, caregiver education and support, and education programs for physicians and healthcare professionals through its research, training and education arm, the Hospice of Michigan Institute. For more information, call 888.247.5701 or visit www.hom.org.

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