



For Immediate Release

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Hospice of Michigan Seeks Volunteers in West Branch

West Branch, Michigan, November 5, 2015 – Hospice of Michigan, the largest nonprofit hospice and palliative care organization in Michigan, is seeking volunteers to help support patient care.

While opportunities for an HOM volunteer are virtually limitless, some of the organization's more specific and immediate needs include:

- Bedside companions able to talk, watch TV or play games with patients
- Sitting vigil, a special program that ensures no patient dies alone
- Caregiver relief, allowing family members who provide day-to-day care to take a much-needed break for themselves
- Specialized volunteers, including licensed massage therapists, hairstylists and manicurists, art and music therapists, musicians, veterans and volunteers with pets

Houghton Lake resident David Kowalski had always planned to volunteer for Hospice of Michigan with his wife, Kimberly. When she was diagnosed with stage 4 stomach cancer, they called in HOM to help guide them through the final journey.

“Volunteering is my way of giving back to what they gave to her,” Kowalski explained. “Those people who took care of my wife are angels on Earth. It didn't matter what time of day or night you called, someone showed up and took care of what needed to be taken care of.”

“You have no idea of what you get back from the time you give a hospice patient. From the time I am with them and we're talking or playing cards or whatever we're doing, for that brief moment, they may forget about what they're going through. It makes me feel good that I had a part in that.”

Kowalski has been volunteering with HOM for the past two years, providing caregiver relief and companionship. One of his first visits was with a 101-year-old patient who had Alzheimer's, which he understands firsthand since he is caring for his mother during her struggle with dementia. A former Marine, he has also done a private pinning ceremony to honor the sacrifices of a veteran who fought in the Korean War.

“Volunteers are an integral part of a hospice team, helping to provide comfort and companionship at the end of life,” said Jodie Diehl, volunteer program coordinator at HOM. “We have immediate needs for volunteers like Dave, who have time to spend engaging with our patients or giving their caregivers the chance to have a few hours to focus on themselves. These may seem like small things, but they are so appreciated by both patients and their families.”

Prospective volunteers will be asked to go through a training course where they learn more about HOM, the principles of hospice, the grieving process and how to help patients, families and staff.

“Community members who have a passion for helping others and are committed to our mission are the best volunteers,” Diehl said. “In addition to sharing their skills, they have the time and the willingness to make a difference in the lives of patients and their families.”

If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities with Hospice of Michigan or to sign up as a volunteer, visit <https://www.hom.org/get-involved/> or contact Diehl at 989.790.4178 or adiehl@hom.org.

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 nonprofit cares for more than 1,700 patients each day, 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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