



For Immediate Release

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Hospice of Michigan Seeks Volunteers in Gaylord

Gaylord, Michigan, January 21, 2016 – 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 care by:

- Professional and licensed massage therapists, hairstylists and manicurists
- Art and music therapists
- Bedside companions able to talk, watch TV or play games with patients
- Sitting vigil, a special program that ensures no patient dies alone
- Veterans willing to connect with others through the organization's We Honor Veterans program

When Gaylord resident Madonna Sussex started volunteering with Hospice of Michigan a year ago, she pictured herself doing office work – and that's where she started, doing research and handling spreadsheets. But when she saw the need for companionship visits, she quickly switched gears and began spending time with patients.

"One of the visits that stands out to me was when a wife wanted to attend the baptism of her grandniece and was so worried about leaving her husband," Sussex recalled. "She was just gone two hours, but had a lot of fun connecting with family – and she was so appreciative that someone was there with her husband.

"I got the impression that she had not been away from him in awhile. It made me feel like I made a difference – not only in the last week of the patient's life, but in her life. She needed a little break and knew that things were handled while she was gone."

Sussex uses an online story-telling technique called TimeSlips to help her talk with patients – especially those who struggle with memory loss or dementia. The technique allows patients to flex their creative muscles and tell a story, rather than struggle to have to remember. The story then can be shared with caregivers, family and community.

Sussex is sold on TimeSlips and has become certified in its use – one of the many things she does to engage patients during her visits.

"What I initially thought I would get out of volunteering isn't what it has turned out to be," she said. "Over time, you get way more than you expected. You get a sense of personal satisfaction, but there's a lot beyond that. Volunteering strengthens a community by providing important resources that support families and defray or reduce medical care costs.

“Volunteering doesn’t take a lot of time, even from the busiest peoples’ schedules. It’s very flexible – I can go when I want and set my own schedule. While it doesn’t take a lot of time, it makes a huge difference in someone’s life.”

Amanda Fleming, volunteer program coordinator at HOM, couldn’t agree more.

“Volunteers are an integral part of a hospice team, helping to provide comfort at the end of life,” she said. “We are particularly looking for volunteers who can provide important touches of grace to our patients, such as the beauty of music and art, the comfort of a new hairstyle or the companionship of a pet.”

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. 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 Fleming at 989.358.4293 or afleming@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 1,800 patients each day, raising more than \$5 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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