

'Hoops for Hospice' set for Dec. 11 at Mayville State University

By James R. Johnson—December 5, 2015

MAYVILLE, ND - Free-will donations will be accepted Dec. 11 at the Mayville State men's basketball game during "Hoops for Hospice."

This is the second-year fundraiser for Hospice of the Red River Valley (HRRV), which since 1981 has been serving patients with end-of-life care for life-limiting illnesses.

Often, the diagnosis with HRRV patients is six months or less. These people have chosen to forego aggressive medical treatment in favor of comfort care.

It's team care.

- The patient's doctor and Hospice's medical director oversee the plan of care with the patient and family;
- A nurse is on call 24/7 for pain and symptom management. The nurse visits as often as necessary to assess medical needs;
- A social worker provides emotional support for patients and loved ones, and assist with financial, legal and insurance issues;
- Grief support specialists offer 13 months of bereavement services; and
- There are volunteers who provide companionship and respite support.

More than half of the patients served by HRRV live in a long-term care facility, but qualified care is "provided wherever an individual calls home, and that includes nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, apartments and homeless shelters," said Bonnie Oelschlager, marketing and communications manager for HRRV.

What's more is that nobody is turned away from HRRV care because of age or an inability to pay. With reduced time spent in the clinic or emergency room, out-of-pocket medical expenses actually decrease.

"It's a very affordable option of health care," Oelschlager said.

Medicare and Medicaid pay for HRRV services, including medical equipment, supplies and medication.

Should the terminal condition exist beyond six months, patients are recertified to be sure they still meet medical guidelines for HRRV care.

"It's a team diagnosis, but in those cases the patient is doing so much better that doctors believe they have longer to live," Oelschlager said. "There are people who graduate from Hospice care."

Personal testimony

Sue Strand, of Mayville, and her family can vouch for HRRV services. Her father was cared for by HRRV from the time he qualified in June 2014 until his death in October 2015. Strand says it's more than just end-of-life care.

"During all that time, the support was very comforting," Strand explained. "The nurse would come and see him every week, so we didn't have to be taking him places, which would have been very difficult."

"There was respite care," she continued. "We were able to take my Mom to my niece's wedding in Montana,

HOSPICE cont'd.

and he was given respite care in the hospital for five days.

“Volunteers came over and sat with my Dad when he and Mom were in their apartment in Sun Center, so my Mom could go out and do things with her friends and not be locked in.”

Strand concluded, “There were just a lot of nice services that they had that just made it easier for us as a family. They just made it better for us and for him.”

More than half of HRRV patients have a terminal diagnosis from illnesses other than cancer, such as ALS, Alzheimer’s, heart and liver diseases, and COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Patients who live alone can continue to live independently under HRRV care, though more assistance may be recommended as their illness progresses.

Facts about Hospice of the RRV

Hospice of the Red River Valley is a non-profit organization with a fundraising goal of \$1.4 million in 2015. It’s also supported through Heirlooms, a high-end resale store.

More than 400 volunteers plus 200 full- and part-time staff work for HRRV, which became the first hospice west of the Mississippi to be Medicare-certified in 1983.

HRRV established an office in Mayville in 1985. Since then, offices have been set up in Lisbon, Valley City, and Grand Forks, N.D., as well as Thief River Falls, Minn.

HRRV’s service area covers 14 Minnesota counties and 15 in North Dakota, including Traill and Steele.

Strand said HRRV may be able to help other families “who just don’t know about them.”

More information may be found online at www.hrrv.org or call 800- 237-4629.

Tip-off for “Hoops for Hospice” is 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11 in the Lewy Lee Fieldhouse.