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After 35 years of Caring, Hospice By The Bay True to Volunteer Roots

Larkspur, CA – (May 2010) -- Hospice By The Bay, the second oldest hospice in the nation and the first in California, was founded 35 years ago through a grassroots effort by community volunteers in Marin County. These visionaries saw how terminally ill patients were treated and believed that there had to be a better way. They began to read about a new model of end-of-life treatment, hospice care, and passionately agreed with its core belief – that patients with life-limiting illnesses should be cared for compassionately, minimizing pain and suffering to improve their quality of life, during every precious moment of life.

These community volunteers adapted and developed this new hospice model for patient care, founding Hospice of Marin in 1975. They also joined the national grassroots effort to educate legislators and partner with members of Congress, asking them to support legislation to fund hospice through Medicare and minimizing the financial burden on families caring for their seriously ill loved ones. These successful efforts helped launch the national hospice movement – a movement that forever changed how dying patients and their families were cared for in America.

Founding volunteer nurse and former CEO Mary Taverna has said, "I feel a great sense of pride in our organization's leadership and participation in hospice history. When we started, we never imagined the number of Americans who would be touched by our efforts." As founding community volunteer and former board member, Kiki Judd of Larkspur, recently said, "It was an idea that just needed to happen."

True to that founding tradition, Hospice of Marin, now Hospice By The Bay, continues to play a leadership role in efforts to ensure that quality, compassionate end-of-life care is considered a

basic human right. Throughout the recent battle for health care reform, Hospice By The Bay, under the direction of **CEO Sandra Lew, LCSW**, continued to champion the right to hospice care access for all who choose it. With the option to choose hospice care, “all children and adults with serious illnesses can live out their lives in comfort, with dignity, in their home of choice, surrounded and supported by those they love,” says Lew.

Compassion and Leadership Make History

In the 1970s, the hospice model of care was brought to the U.S. from England. It was a new concept based on a medieval model of providing skilled medical, practical, spiritual and emotional care for terminally ill patients in specialized facilities or in a family home. Building on the hospice ideals of Britain’s Dame Cecily Saunders and the groundbreaking writings about death and dying by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Hospice of Marin began offering in-home care. Bedside visits were done primarily by professional nurses who volunteered their time and skills because they believed so profoundly in this new, holistic form of end-of-life care. These volunteer healthcare professionals created new treatment protocols that became the models for others around the country who wanted to start a hospice.

Says Janet Winegarner, *RN*, a founding nurse still working for Hospice By The Bay, “We established nursing care plans and developed charting methodologies, for example. There was no database of hospice care treatments.” She adds that working with dying patients could be emotionally challenging, but the rewards were great. She says that when friends asked her, “‘How can you do this work?’ I would say, ‘How can I not?’”

In 1975, Hospice of Marin became a non-profit, licensed and Medicare-certified home care provider, with its first paid, professional staff. Today, 35 years later, Hospice By The Bay has grown as the need for hospice care has grown. It now has a professional staff of more than 260, and offers hospice and palliative care and community grief support counseling in Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo and Sonoma counties. Hospice teams care for more than 320 patients a day in private residences, long-term care facilities or hospitals – wherever our patients call home. Hospice By The Bay remains at the vanguard of the hospice industry and a premier, regional provider of end-of-life care for all ages.

True to our Roots, Volunteers Continue to Play a Crucial Role

More than 550 volunteers gave their time and talents to Hospice By The Bay last year. In the tradition of its founders, our Direct Care volunteers continue to help patients and their caregivers, offering practical, day-to-day help and companionship that complements the work of the professional staff. Direct Care Volunteers gave nearly 7500 hours of support to patients and families last year, many saying that their volunteer work is “a calling,” while others call it “a way to give back” for the caring and support they received when their own loved one needed hospice.

A Direct Care Volunteer for 25 years, Ruth “Roo” Silverman of Larkspur, describes her experience providing in-home, patient and caregiver support, and later, Hospice By The Bay’s care for her husband: “I had many, many opportunities to experience just how precious Hospice’s compassionate care is to families coping with serious illness. Let me tell you about just one: I was sent to the home of a young family who had just brought their critically ill newborn home from the hospital to spend his final days. The mother was exhausted. As part of the Hospice Team, my job, each day, was to simply hold that baby so that Mom could get some rest. I held him, comforted him – this beautiful baby, with big blue eyes and blond hair. When he died, the family and the entire Hospice Team grieved together. That’s what happens when you touch a life – the connection is so deep.

“At that time, little did I dream that my own family would also one day be supported by this wonderful, caring organization,” Silverman continues. “When my husband became seriously ill, I knew and he knew that we wanted Hospice By The Bay to make the journey with us. Bill’s final days were spent in comfort. My children and I will be forever grateful.”

Hospice By The Bay is a 501(c)(3) organization that has been serving the Bay Area since 1975. Hospice By The Bay is a regional provider of hospice and palliative care for chronically and terminally ill adults and children. Through its community grief support program, Hospice By The Bay also serves anyone whose life has been affected by the loss of a loved one.

Hospice By The Bay programs are funded through health care reimbursement and charitable donations from community members and businesses. For more information about Hospice By The Bay, call (415) 927-2273, or visit www.hbtb.org.

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