Hospice House Celebrates First Anniversary

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This November marks National Hospice Month and the first anniversary of when the Hospice House of St. Mary’s began accepting patients.

The Hospice House has provided end-of-life services with dignity and respect to more than 50 patients and their families since the house opened a year ago. Kathy Franzen, director of Hospice of St. Mary’s, estimated the Hospice House would be at 30 percent capacity during its first year, but she said it has seen between 80 percent and 90 percent capacity since opening and, at times, has a waiting list.

“The amazing thing about this house is how much it is needed,” said Franzen. “We would never have thought we would care for this many patients this soon. The staff is truly wonderful and all the letters from families attest to that.”

The Hospice House primarily serves patients during the last two to four weeks of life who may no longer be able to receive care in their own homes due to complicated treatment or family constraints. The house features six patient rooms and is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week to meet patients’ needs. Each bedroom has a different identity, much like a home, and the house includes a large family-style kitchen.

Hospice of St. Mary’s provides care regardless of a patient’s ability to pay. In fact, about half of the patients who seek care at the Hospice House are on a sliding fee scale and pay little or no room and board charges.

The $2.2 million Hospice House was built without any bank loans. More than 40 major donors contributed to the house’s creation and more than 60 percent of the contributions came in smaller amounts through donations, memorials, state grants and fundraising events. Although there is no mortgage on the house, more than $350,000 is required each year to keep the program running and donations are always appreciated.

For more information about the Hospice House and Hospice services, call (301) 994-3023.

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