

The Journey Home with Hospice

Many of us grew up believing, "Do it on your own so you don't have to depend on anyone else." But confronting a terminal illness cannot and should not be done alone. As difficult as it may be for someone in this position, they often find themselves dependent on others for help throughout their illness.

The Hospice team is an indispensable resource for anyone in this situation. They are well staffed and trained to help both the terminally ill person and their families or ones closest to them. Their mission is to help the dying die with comfort, dignity, and love, and to help survivors cope both before and after the death.

Hospice care started in 1988 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital. Since that time, the name has changed to Avera@Home, but services remain the same with the goal of helping individuals who are terminally ill and their families. Hospice, the Avera@Home team, now serves approximately 20-25 patients at a time averaging 150 individuals and their families a year with roughly 200 families in bereavement. The Avera team reaches out to ten surrounding counties in Northeast Nebraska and Southeast South Dakota. The Avera@Home team expects this program to continue to grow and is excited to be able



Left to right Marlis Eben, RN; Dennis Webber, Chaplin; Tonia DeJong, RN; Megan Zweber, Social Worker; Holly Wells, Volunteer Coordinator

to witness this new way of experiencing end of life in the comfort of their own homes.

The Avera@Home team is made up of the primary physician, the hospice medical director, a primary nurse, social worker, Chaplain and the option for a physical or occupational therapist as well as the various individuals behind the scenes, volunteers and aides. Their mission is rooted in the Gospel to make a positive impact in the lives of people

and communities by providing quality services guided by Christian beliefs. When speaking with Megan Zweber, a social worker and part of the Avera@Home Hospice team, she follows this mission solidly with a goal of her own being the hands and feet of Jesus and asks herself during every visit if Jesus would approve of what He sees right now. This goal keeps her aware of her surroundings, aware of the conditions of the patient, and mental awareness of how patients and families are coping in order to provide the best quality of life.

With the holiday's right around the corner, the Avera@

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