



FACTS ABOUT FRIENDS OF HOSPICE

PROBLEM

Most people find out about hospice too late to benefit fully from this important end-of-life program.

While hospice programs are plentiful, only about a third of those who could benefit from hospice care actually receive it. Often, those who do enroll benefit for only a few days; half of California's hospice patients are in a program for 17 days or less according to median length-of-stay statistics. At just 18 days, local hospice programs serving Butte, Tehama and Glenn counties report similarly short median lengths of stay for 2005.

Communications programs have failed to achieve adequate awareness and understanding of hospice as an end-of-life option.

THE CAMPAIGN

The "Friends of Hospice" campaign intends to increase awareness of hospice, as well as to encourage people to talk to their families about their wishes should they be faced with a life-threatening illness.

The California Hospice Foundation (CHF), along with three area hospice programs and five community groups dedicated to the community's health and well being, has created a pilot program to increase awareness of hospice, as well as encourage people to talk to their families about their wishes, should they be faced with a life-threatening illness. The "Friends of Hospice" coalition includes Enloe Medical Center Hospice, Butte Home Health and Hospice, and Paradise Hospice, a department of Feather River Hospital, along with: Butte-Glenn Medical Society; the California State University, Chico, School of Nursing; the American Cancer Society; the Chico Area Interfaith Council; and Passages Adult Resource Center.

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HOW IT WORKS

No communications program to date has attempted to mobilize a valuable potential resource—those who believe in the value of hospice because they have been touched by its special care. Volunteers, donors and those who have benefited from hospice will be invited to become “Friends of Hospice” and help spread the word to their networks of family and friends.

The heart of the campaign is a direct mail letter that invites these people who have been touched by hospice to send postcards or e-mails to their friends and families. In their messages, supporters will identify themselves as someone affected by hospice, and offer their willingness to talk about their experience. They also will encourage their contacts to begin discussions with family members about end-of-life wishes.

Anyone who feels they can help spread the word about hospice can get involved by sending an email or postcard to their network of friends and by becoming better informed. On May 17, resources for the program will be available through three mechanisms: new web pages and an order form added to the California Hospice Foundation website (www.hospicefoundation.info); a dedicated toll-free telephone number (1-877-248-1122); and postage-paid reply postcards that will be sent to selected households in Butte, Glenn and Tehama counties. Until May 17, questions can be directed to the California Hospice Foundation at (916) 925-3770 or by email to Margaret Clausen, President and CEO of the California Hospice Foundation: mclausen@calhospice.org.

WHEN

The pilot program is scheduled to begin prior to Memorial Day and is expected to run for six to eight weeks.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The campaign expects to increase awareness and understanding of hospice, as well to spur conversations about advance care planning. If successful, the pilot campaign will be expanded.

CHF

CHF is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation. Its mission is to improve access to quality hospice and palliative care services through education and public awareness.

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