

TO YOUR HEALTH

Volume 28, Number 11



November 2023

National Hospice and Palliative Care Month

By Marcia Feldman, Palliative Care Coordinator

In 1978, then President Jimmy Carter signed the first proclamation announcing that November is National Hospice Month. Several of his successors continued this tradition, at some point adding palliative care to the title. Now, interestingly 45 years later, Carter is himself receiving hospice care, bringing this particular type of care into the national conversation once more.

Former President Carter's decision to publicly announce his entering into hospice care has defied the norms of famous people quietly making this



decision out of the limelight. In an OpEd in the NY Times, Daniela Lamas put it this way, "Mr. Carter's decision to enter hospice and to continue publicizing that choice is a fitting final gift of candor from a former president to an American public that has long been uncomfortable with our own mortality."

One common misconception about hospice is the assumption that a person will die immediately when shifting their goals of care to comfort and choosing hospice. It has now been 9 months since February when Carter, who turned 99 recently, signed onto hospice. His grandson Josh Carter reports that, "It's clear we're in the final chapter. He's still very much Jimmy Carter. He's still opinionated, he's still strong-willed, he's still him. And that's great to see. He's just tired."

What is hospice?

Hospice provides an array of comfort and support services – also called palliative care – to patients and their loved ones. This is usually when a serious illness is no longer responding to treatments focused on a cure. Hospice helps patients who are dying clarify their priorities

and establish their goals of care while providing relief from pain and other symptoms.*

Healthcare Dollars Saved

According to a study by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, Medicare spending on hospice patients was \$3.5 billion less than those who decided not to enter hospice care. Regardless of the length of time patients received hospice care, the study also found that patients and their families experienced "increased satisfaction and quality of life, improved pain control, reduced physical and emotional distress, and reduced prolonged grief and other emotional distress." (from TheHill.com)

What is Palliative Care?

The word *palliate* comes from the Latin word "*palliare*" which means "to cloak". The definition of *palliate* is: to reduce the violence of (a disease); also: to ease (symptoms) without curing the underlying disease. – (Merriam Webster's Dictionary.) Addressing the symptoms can improve the person's quality of life.

Palliative care is a team-based approach to treating serious illness that focuses on a person's physical, emotional and spiritual needs...The goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve the physical symptoms, anxiety and stress that often accompany a serious illness.*

* ("Know Your Choices: A Guide for Patients with Serious Advancing Illness," Massachusetts Department of Public Health.)

The Difference Between Palliative Care and Hospice Care

Both palliative care and hospice care provide comfort. Palliative care can begin at the time of diagnosis, concurrent with life-prolonging treatment. Hospice care begins after curative

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treatment is discontinued and when it is expected that the person is going to live 6 months or less.



Palliative Care at Carleton Willard

Nearly 15 years ago in 2009, the *Living Fully, Dying Well*® palliative care program was launched at CWV. It is a unique, innovative program that brings comfort care to Residents with life-limiting illness. It was developed with great care by an interdisciplinary team who had a special focus on providing services for those nearing the end of life.

Some of the services offered by the *Living Fully, Dying Well* program are:

- Massage Therapy
- Live music visits
- Pet Therapy
- Vigil Volunteers
- Spiritual support
- Partnership with hospice
- Resource library
- The Legacy Project for life review.

Carleton Willard partners with hospice and works closely with their team to provide additional resources, meeting regularly to discuss Residents needs. They provide another set of eyes and expertise to support Residents in maintaining their quality of life through the end of life.

Upon turning 99, former president Jimmy Carter received 19,800 birthday messages from over 100 countries, according to The Carter Center. As he faces his life coming to a close, the palliative care he's receiving in hospice may be helping him enjoy the rest of his days by retaining his quality of life.

And the Award Goes To...

On October 11th, LeadingAge Massachusetts awarded Carleton Willard's group of Vigil Volunteers the **2023 Volunteer of the Year Award**. Several Vigil Volunteers attended the LeadingAge Annual meeting and dinner, represented by Alice Morrish who graciously accepted the award on behalf of the group.



The Vigil Volunteers are an integral part of the Living Fully, Dying Well palliative care program at Carleton Willard. They sit vigil with those nearing the end of life and can give respite to family members and loved ones. Several of the volunteers have been sitting vigil since the program was launched in 2009 with a brief pause during the pandemic. We are grateful for this recognition of their service and congratulate them all for receiving this well-deserved honor.



SHINE Counselor

On **Friday, November 17th at 2:00pm**, there will be a SHINE counselor in Auditorium Right. They will offer a presentation on Medicare and Insurance. Please register in the clinic.

Vaccine Clinic

On **Thursday, November 16th** the clinic will be offering another Vaccine Clinic in partnership with Bouvier Pharmacy. Please watch for more information in an email and in upcoming issues of Bits and Pieces which will include a link to sign up.

