

Hospice continues mission in face of pandemic

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are still approaching the end of their lives for unrelated reasons — and Hospice of Redmond is still at work serving them.

The organization, which serves Sisters Country as well as Redmond, is continuing its mission, adapting to ever-evolving conditions. Hospice announced last week that it is cancelling its annual grief support program, Camp Sunrise, held at Suttle Lake west of Sisters in June.

Maureen Krebs, communications director and veterans outreach coordinator for Hospice of Redmond, told *The Nugget* that the organization is following national Hospice guidelines to provide care for its clients.

There are several aspects to Hospice support. The physical aspect of Hospice care focuses on palliative measures to ensure comfort during the last days or months. Social workers and a bereavement coordinator provide emotional support for the entire family — and for an extended period of time after bereavement.

The physical care continues to be provided by nurses, who go into senior care facilities or the patient's home to provide services. The other aspects of care are more challenging due to the health and safety requirements of the effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The work is always vital, and becomes more so in a situation where many people are distanced from families.

"Taking care of these people at this time when they may not be able to see their families — it's critical that we continue caring for them, that we continue that relationship," Krebs said.

In some cases, social workers and a chaplain can connect with Hospice patients by phone and Facetime to maintain contact and connection.

Other outreach programs have been forced into abeyance.

The Transitions Program is a pre-hospice program.

"It's for anyone who has a life-limiting illness," Krebs told *The Nugget* last year. "It's a non-medical program, so it's really about resources."

Transitions Program participants, who are not charged for services, also receive emotional and spiritual support as desired, as staff helps connect them with resources that can make their life coping with their condition easier and more satisfying. The program can also connect families with respite care.

That work has been put on hold.

"Because it's a non-medical program, we can no longer see those people face-to-face," Krebs explained.

She is working on ways to stay in contact with Transitions clients, because isolation is a problem that they were already facing and the current situation threatens to exacerbate the condition, creating what Krebs characterized as "a spiral of isolation."

"It affects them," she said. "That's something I'm working with our team on. We're coming up with creative ways to serve if we can't see them face-to-face."

One of Krebs' most beloved duties is reaching out to the veteran community in Central Oregon.

"I typically see our veteran patients and veterans in the community," said Krebs, herself a Marine veteran. "That has completely stopped."

The disruption of the Hospice program is tough on patients who may not have family in the community and rely on the connection with Hospice staff and volunteers. It's also hard on the

volunteers. Krebs recalled talking with volunteer coordinator Jill Wolfe.

"She's seeing some of our volunteers struggle — because they love what they do," Krebs said.

If the community would like to support Hospice of Redmond, follow them on

Facebook (facebook.com/hospiceofredmond) or Instagram (@HospiceofRedmond) and comment on posts with positive messages for nurses and staff serving the community. Send cards for Hospice of Redmond nurses to 732 SW 23rd St., Redmond, OR 97756. And the staff continues to

adapt and work as effectively as possible to serve their vulnerable community.

As Krebs said, "We're doing everything in our power to support these individuals in any way that we can."

For more information visit www.hospiceofredmond.org or call 541-548-7483.

Camp Sunrise canceled for June 2020

In an effort to protect the safety of patients, volunteers and staff, and members of the community, Hospice of Redmond has made the difficult decision to cancel its children's grief support camp, Camp Sunrise, which is held annually the third weekend of each June.

For 20 years Camp Sunrise has been recognized and honored as a valuable and effective resource in helping children navigate their way through the strange and often frightening feelings of grief after the death of a loved one. The success of Camp Sunrise is due to the capable and extraordinary people who volunteer their time each year to help the children through this amazing experience.

"The past few weeks have presented daily challenges as we at Hospice of Redmond adapt to the current health environment and the determine the best precautions for our volunteers, our staff, our patients, and our community," said Diane Kellstrom, Bereavement Coordinator and Director of Camp Sunrise. "Unfortunately, we had to

make the difficult decision to cancel Camp Sunrise 2020. School closures have ended our access to referrals, staff trainings cannot be held as scheduled and we cannot go into homes to complete the in-home interviews with our campers/families. We appreciate the outpouring of community support for Camp Sunrise 2020 and any donations made this year will be honored during Camp Sunrise 2021."

Hospice of Redmond notes that the organization appreciates the support each year of Family Access Network, school counselors, therapists and the many community members who refer children to Camp Sunrise. Families of children in need of assistance following the death of a loved one should still reach out to Hospice of Redmond for virtual bereavement support.

Hospice of Redmond urges the public to call its 24/7 line at 541-548-7483 if they are in a crisis and need someone to talk to regarding bereavement support and end-of-life care.



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