



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

*"To be with them in their final days of their life is an incredible experience. I always feel like I get back more than I give."*

—Ben Estes

It is, longtime volunteer Estes says, "an incredible show of respect."

Barham, a volunteer for 11 1/2 years, describes it as a chance to "put closure to, and complete the circle of, the relationship developed with that person."

Bryant calls it "a chance to give back the dignity that this disease robs from people and at the same time make us all a bit more human."

Siebert says it is a sometimes overwhelming emotional experience. She shares a story about a young volunteer who had just started giving of her time. She was on duty the day a man who many at Our House had grown close to—and who was fortunate to be surrounded by his extended family—passed away.

Siebert made sure the new volunteer realized she did not have to take part in the ceremony, but she chose to be involved. As the body was taken out, a larger than normal "circle" formed. In the midst were the man's young nephews, who were outwardly very emotional. Everyone, obviously, was in tears.

Immediately after the procession was over, Siebert turned to check on how the new vol-



PHOTO COURTESY OUR HOUSE OF PORTLAND

Joanne Barham (left, with development director Joe Jefferson) says Our House staff treat volunteers like family

unteer was doing. The young woman said simply, "It's OK."

"It really was a beautiful experience," Siebert says.

As much as the volunteers thrive at Our House because of the contact they make

with the residents, they also believe their interaction with the staff and other volunteers makes a huge difference in their lives. "I've met lots of people and made a lot of friends," St. Martin says.

"Our House is a very loving, caring and safe environment where quality of life is important," Barham says. "Our House is a home, and we're family. The staff and volunteers support and care for each other. They are the best."

Benson adds: "It's such a fun, warm, loving, kind place to be. The people are friendly, and there is a strong sense of community."

Estes says: "I have never met anyone there I didn't like. The people are wonderful."

Sellers admits that as a board member she had no idea how long some volunteers had given of their time at Our House until she became executive director.

"I was amazed," she says. "I asked them, 'Why do you come back?' They said that they loved the place, that it made them feel good about themselves and that they made good friends. I think that says a lot."

And while the friendships with others at Our House make a huge difference, the volunteers also insist there is something incredibly profound about being with people in

Continued on Page 26

*"I...do my best at trying to fatten people up. I have always loved to cook, and the residents seem to love what I do for them in that area."*

—Deanna Bryant

and at other times she might sit and read the Bible with them.

St. Martin also brings Communion and spends a great deal of time supporting the residents' families. "I am there to be with them," she says.

Death is a fundamental part of the human experience, and though more and more residents are actually seeing their health improve to a point where they can return home, volunteers are aware that many of the people they come to know and cherish may soon pass away. To help in that stage, Our House conducts a ritual of sorts when someone dies. This plays an incredibly vital role in helping volunteers cope with the loss and, just as importantly, in keeping alive the spirit of all residents.

When representatives from the resident's chosen funeral home arrive to take the body, there is no secretive exit. The person is placed in the traditional body bag, but the face is left uncovered. Over the body bag is draped a beautiful handmade quilt. As the gurney is wheeled out, other residents, staff members and volunteers line the hallway and the walkway. All are holding flickering candles.



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

**DIGNIFIED PET SERVICES**

Cremation & Memorials For Your Companion

- Unique Cremation Urns
- Memorial Jewelry
- Personalized Caskets
- Granite Monuments
- Books & Literature

8976 SW Tualatin Sherwood Road  
Tualatin OR 97062  
Phone (503) 885-2211

www.DignifiedPetServices.com  
(A Division of Cascade Funeral Directors, Inc)

**BUCKMAN TERRACE**



- Studio & one bedroom apartment homes
- Expanded living rooms with office alcoves
- Generous closets in each apartment
- Sheltered between a tree-lined street and a city park
- Spectacular city and mountain views
- Indoor fitness center
- Sun terraces and community room for entertaining
- Enclosed parking garage
- Walk to MAX/bus

303 NE 16th Ave  
Sandy & NE 16th

cats & dogs welcome www.buckmanterrace.com

Pinnacle Realty Management Company 503.230.9000

More Than Candy...

**Bertucci's**  
Chocolates & Gifts

- Greeting Cards
- Gourmet Foods
- Beeswax & Soy Candles

1560 Columbia Blvd.  
St. Helens  
(503) 366-9602

UNIQUE HOME & GARDEN ART, GIFTS & MORE



Living By The Garden  
1829 NE Alberta  
Portland (503) 287-4144