



## **Providing Compassionate End-Of-Life Care For All**

*By Maggie Elliott, Iowa City Hospice Executive Director*

Over the past 30 years that Iowa City Hospice has been serving our community, many of you have had first-hand experience with our compassionate care. You already know of the comfort and peace that walked through the door with the hospice team as they served you and your loved ones.

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month, an opportunity to reach out to those who have not had such an experience. We continue to educate our community about hospice, a life-affirming approach to end of life care that *adds life to each day*.

This November also marks a significant milestone for Iowa City Hospice as we begin celebrating these 30 years of service. We were founded by volunteers and, with our staff of professional care providers, are sustained by volunteers, who remain at the heart of our organization.

The founders were firm in one mandate: high quality, compassionate end of life care would be provided to all served by Iowa City Hospice without regard for ability to pay. To this day, our organization is true to this mandate and remains a community-based, not-for-profit hospice provider that, in 2011 alone, provided 1,271 days of community supported care.

In Iowa, hospice is covered by Medicare and Medicaid and by most insurance plans, but when it is not, or when there is no insurance, Iowa City Hospice provides a safety net so that no one is denied hospice care.

Specifically, the hospice team provides expert medical care to keep individuals in our care comfortable and able to enjoy time with families and friends. The hospice team answers questions, offers advice, provides guidance on what to expect, and helps caregivers with the duties and necessities of caregiving. Personal wishes are a priority.

While technology is available to aggressively manage symptoms, people forget that human touch and voice can also do that. While providing care and information, we remind patients and families of the value of love, memories, music and belief. To

that end, alternative therapies are also available that bring great comfort to the patient including massage, music therapy and spiritual guidance.

Our volunteers offer still more services including *Honoring Our Veterans*, meeting the special needs of the veteran at the end of life, and *Pet Peace of Mind*, that provides supplies and care for pets. Still other volunteers help prepare a Legacy piece that might include photos, writings, even recipes that patients wish to leave for their families. The Eleventh Hour volunteers sit with patients and/or families at the end of life.

The Iowa City Hospice team also provides emotional and spiritual support for the entire family. Grief support is an important part of our care and is available for anyone in the community dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Our care is available to people of all ages, with any illness, wherever they call home, including nursing homes, assisted living facilities and long term care centers.

We no longer have multi-generation households and, as a result, have lost our family memory of the process of dying. As a team, Iowa City Hospice brings a 30-year institutional memory and knowledge base to those we serve.

We hope you will join us this next year in celebrating these 30 years of guiding families, honoring wishes, and securing this amazing culture of compassionate end of life care for all.