

# Hundreds walk for I.C. Hospice

Gusting winds and intermittent rain were not enough to dissuade the hundreds of eastern Iowans who gathered alongside family and friends Sunday in Willow Creek Park.

The crowd had assembled for the Iowa City Hospice's 14th Walk for Dignity, a 1- or 3-mile walk and fundraiser. Many donned matching T-shirts and formed "teams" to walk in memory of a loved one who received hospice care before dying — Including Deb Devore, whose husband Mike Devore died of esophageal cancer November 2007.

"They helped the whole family deal with his illness being final," she said of the Iowa City Hospice workers who cared for Mike Devore that year from August to November. "It was hard to talk about, but they made it easier."

Deb Devore said Mike was initially uneasy with the concept of hospice care, as the process reminded him of his terminal diagnosis. Yet the nurses managed to win over his support, she said, due to their caring and supportive attitudes as they delivered his medicine and offered counseling to his family.

Iowa City hospice officials have developed a new directive over the last several years to change the perception of hospice care in such a manner, said Sarah Neary, Iowa City Hospice Volunteer Program Coordinator.

"People aren't accessing hospice services as much as they could; they see it as giving up," said Neary, who has a master's in social work from the University of Iowa. "Hospice care doesn't mean giving up, it just means you're looking for a place to live out the rest of your days comfortably."

Volunteers ran all of the Iowa City Hospice's functions from its founding in 1984 until the early '90s, when they added paid administration and consulting positions to accommodate the institution's growing clientele. Neary said volunteers have remained an important part of the hospice process ever since, prompting Iowa City Hospice officials to choose volunteers as the "honorary family" at this year's walk.

Iowa City resident Harriette Pierce walked in memory of her friend Vicki Burketta, a former UI College of Education professor who died February 2012 of primary peritoneal cancer — a cancer of the abdominal cavity. Burketta spent two weeks receiving hospice care at her home from Iowa City Hospice volunteers.

"It was a kind of care not just on a medical level but a spiritual level as well," Pierce said. "Vicki passed with so much dignity and grace."