

CITATION OF HONOR

COVENANT HOSPICE

Pensacola, Florida

When Hurricane Ivan barreled through Florida's panhandle in September 2004, it tore up the landscape and wiped out entire subdivisions, tossing boats around and heavily damaging a major bridge. Among the most devastated areas was Pensacola, where Covenant Hospice's headquarters were dismantled by strong winds and rain.

And yet, within a few hours of the storm's passing — without offices, telephones or computers — hospice staff members were gathered in the parking lot of the ruined building discussing their patients and processing new referrals for the organization's end-of-life programs.

And just a couple of weeks later, the hobbled organization was carrying out its mission of healing for a whole community, hosting a *Rays of Hope and Healing* ceremony that drew more than 200 people to a junior college track infield. Those gathered shared a message of hope and were given advice on how to cope with the disaster's losses by hospice bereavement specialists.

Covenant President and CEO Dale Knee attributes the organization's ability to quickly rebound from the disaster to a business philosophy that infuses leadership into every hospice employee from the day they start working there. "We feel that leadership needs to be developed, at all levels of the organization no matter what the job is," says Knee. "When we got hit by Ivan...people understood they needed to display leadership in their particular areas. It really kept the organization together almost without any lapse of service."

Covenant started out in 1983 as the product of five local hospitals that recognized the need for end-of-life care. It has since grown to cover an unusually large geographic area of northern Florida



and southern Alabama, with a daily census of over 1,000 patients.

The organization maintains 14 satellite offices and takes pains to ensure that they are staffed by local people, even if that means leaving a position open for some time. "We refer to each (satellite) as the hometown hospice," explains Knee. "We allow them to develop as individual hospices so they have the culture within the community that they serve."

Covenant also provides the same services in each satellite no matter how small or spread-out a population it serves.

The hospice provides care in its own freestanding facility in a hospital-based hospice/palliative care unit, in patients' homes, and in more than 300 local nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Covenant boasts an extensive educational outreach program that trains its own staff and also goes into the community to educate health care professionals and the public. "We'll speak anywhere, anytime about whatever they want to hear," says Julie Patton, curriculum development manager for Covenant's education department and a longtime employee. Her department has provided more than 13,000 educational

hours to staff and a similar amount to the public and had 280 medical and nursing students spend time with hospice staff. Public education efforts include outreach on advance directives and distribution of an award-winning, comprehensive family handbook and other home-grown materials.

Covenant also offers a school-based children's bereavement program, bereavement camps, and counseling from specialists. And, most recently, it has affiliated with the local Alzheimer's Family Services organization, which provides volunteer services to hundreds of patients and caregivers. Additionally, through a leadership development alliance with the Studer Group, it offers leadership development opportunities for end-of-life providers nationwide.

The organization's commitment to its community became clear after Hurricane Ivan, which disabled Covenant's plans to hold its annual fundraising garage sale. Despite heavy losses from the storm made worse by losing a chance to raise money, hospice leaders decided to give the collected 600 bags of clothing for the garage sale to needy hurricane victims. Explains Knee: "The most important thing we feel is that we truly live the mission."



INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

RELIANCE OF LEADING-EDGE BUSINESS PRINCIPLES BLENDED WITH HOSPICE PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT ALL LEVELS

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH VA, MILITARY HOSPITALS, AND STATE VETERANS HOMES