

#66



COMPLETE

Collector: New Link (Web Link)

Started: Thursday, September 26, 2013 6:39:51 AM

Last Modified: Thursday, September 26, 2013 6:44:27 AM

Time Spent: 00:04:35

IP Address: 99.100.186.78

PAGE 2

Q1: Staff person submitting this nomination.

Name:	Barbra Bortner
Title:	Vice President, Marketing & Public Relations
Hospital/System:	Mercy Health System
Address:	1000 Mineral Point Avenue
City:	Janesville
State:	WI
ZIP Code:	53548
Email Address:	bbortner@mhsjvl.org
Telephone Number:	6087432052

Q2: Name of Volunteer Program.

Mercy Hospice Pet Peace of Mind Program for Hospice Patients

Q3: Program Category: Select one of the four program categories.

Community Service – programs that assisted a health care organization in the design and delivery of services or programs of measurable impact to the wellbeing of individuals and/or the community.

Q4: Provide the date the program was implemented.

12/01/2011

PAGE 3

Q5: Provide a brief description of the program, including its goals and outcomes. (600 words max)

The Mercy Hospice Pet Care Program was developed to support patients with pets and concerns related to those pets. Called Pet Peace of Mind, it helps by stabilizing and supporting the patient's relationship with their pet in the midst of coping with a hospice diagnosis and allowing hospice staff to manage their care. It reduces the financial burden from residual medical, living and medication expenses that hospice doesn't cover.

The program's focus is to preserve the relationship between the patient and their pet. Clinical staff provide services that support the patient and ease concerns, including:

- Daily care chores (walking, cleaning cat box, etc.)
- Financial assistance with pet food or medication
- Routine veterinary care, including transportation to veterinarian
- Address obvious medical needs of pet
- Emergency treatment due to accident or life-threatening conditions
- Boarding or pet sitting if patient is hospitalized or transferred to facility; arranging visits
- Providing placement for pets after patient's death

Developed in partnership with the Banfield Charitable Trust, the program is a proven resource. By actively recognizing and supporting the relationship between our patients and their pets during their time on hospice, we offer relief and better serve our patients.

Today, 62% of households have at least one pet, and studies by the APPA show that people have a special bond with pets, often considering them a best friend or family member. By stepping in and assisting, the program acts as an extension of the care the patient would normally give the pet. Since the patient's focus has been on the illness, oftentimes the pet's care has not been primary and services are very much in need. It also allows a patient who may be struggling financially the opportunity to secure vital care and, with that, peace of mind.

Hospice's goal is to support a compassionate, respectful end-of-life process. Talking with a patient about their pet and their long-term goals for the pet sometimes opens the door to discuss other end-of-life decisions. Interacting with the patient's pet in a positive way brings a sense of safety and trust to the relationship between the patient and hospice organization and caregiver. By providing patients with the assurance that we understand the role of their animal companion in contributing to their emotional and spiritual well being, and sharing this with our community partners as we describe the program, we help increase understanding.

The program accepts dogs, cats, birds, fish—virtually any legal pet. The program currently has nine volunteers trained to work with the pets. Services and care offered varies based on need. One of the pets cared for this year included a "Make a Wish" request from a patient who wanted to give his wife a puppy so his spouse would not be alone after he passed. Another patient was bed-ridden and required support house-breaking a puppy. Another patient had three pets that required various levels of veterinarian care and flea treatments. All efforts help our organization achieve its goal to recognize and actively support the relationship between our patients and their pets during their time in hospice.

Pets offer unconditional love, acceptance and companionship during a time when terminally ill patients need it most. Our goal is to keep pets and their families together by providing volunteers to help hospice patients with their pet care needs.

Q6: Describe the role of volunteers in planning, developing, implementing and maintaining the program. (400 words max)

Volunteers with the Mercy Health System Association of Volunteers (MHSAV) conceived the idea for pet support of some kind after learning of the need. Volunteers investigated, selected a partner program and then implemented the program. Today, volunteers provide assessment and pet care services for all Mercy Hospice patients who are unable to care for their pets while in hospice.

Intake services include:

- Provide a brief pet assessment/inventory to address the importance of pets in the patient's family system
- Ongoing evaluation of companion animal needs in the home with referral to the program
- Education about the program to families and caregivers
- Interaction and acknowledgement of pets in the home as part of caregiving

Pet care services include:

- Assistance with food and pet litter
- Financial assistance for routine veterinary care and grooming
- Temporary pet sitting and boarding
- Foster care
- Adoption placement

All volunteers receive training and support. Partnerships with local veterinarians for reduced cost care and fundraising events help provide monetary support.

"In the four-county area we serve, we are continually presented with many of our patients possessing pets. Most are dogs and cats, and occasionally pet birds, but all are very loved by their owners. Our patients are challenged with life-limiting illnesses, and struggle physically and emotionally to care for themselves, let alone their pets. If our patients need to be re-hospitalized or their condition becomes grave, oftentimes there is no one in the family who is able, or desires, to step forward to care for the remaining pet. Worrying about their beloved pets and what will happen to them causes our patients untold stress, concern and heartache," says Nancy Bracken, RN, BS, MS, CHPCA, director of Mercy Hospice Care.

"Many times, the pets are given away, put in a shelter for adoption, or are euthanized if not adopted. This also increases the stress level of our staff, since they care very much for their patients and are sincere animal lovers. Up to now, we have been helpless to try to avoid these unfortunate situations. With the Pet Peace of Mind program in place, there can now be a positive outcome for everyone."

Q7: Describe how this program is unique and/or innovative.(400 words max)

The only program of its kind in Wisconsin and Illinois, this program is innovative or unique in that it fulfills a need that is sometimes overlooked. As mentioned earlier, 62% of households have at least one pet, often considering them a best friend or family member. The program acts as an extension of the care the patient would normally give the pet. Since the patient's focus has been on the illness, oftentimes the pet's care has not been primary and services are very much in need.

The program is also unique in the way services are delivered. The nine trained program volunteers bring a variety of skills and special talents to the program, allowing us to serve patients in a way that best meets their needs. From securing medical care and providing daily pet care to helping families make a wish for a pet for a surviving spouse come true, services are truly tailored to the patient and focused on supporting their end-of-life process with dignity, respect and compassion. This patient story, as told by volunteer coordinator Laura Bergeron, embodies this in many ways:

"For John and Lenore Green our program took on a slightly different twist. The Greens knew about our program and told nurse Angie Marshall about their desire to adopt a dog. Angie saw how important it was to John to be able to do this for his wife, Lenore, who would have someone to love and care for after he was gone.

"John had a 'wish list' of what their little dog would look like. It had to be small, non-shedding, housebroken and friendly with adults and children. With that in mind, we set the wheels in motion. We emailed all volunteers asking for their help. The response was overwhelming. Emails, phone calls and pictures of available pets were received. A possible pet for the Greens was found through Friends Of Noah, a Janesville non-profit that provides financial support for low-income families struggling to care for pet.

"The Greens received Maggie May, a little Lhasa Apso, on Saturday, June 1. There were tears of joy for all involved in making a wish come true for John and Lenore. We will be forever grateful to Friends Of Noah who shared our vision of bringing happiness to our patient and making a wish come true. John passed away last month but knowing that his wish had come true."

Q8: Describe how the program benefits the service recipients, the health care organization and/or the community. (400 words max)

Mercy Hospice's Pet Peace of Mind program is the only program of its kind in Wisconsin and Illinois. Pet Peace of Mind:

- Reduces the financial burden on the family and pet
- Manages the loss of control that occurs with hospice
- Provides a non-threatening way to assist a patient or caregiver in a meaningful way
- Provides relationship-building opportunities for hospice staff and volunteers with patients and family members
- Helps resolve unfinished business by planning for placement of animals
- Eliminates unintentional neglect of pets due to caregiver stress

Information about the work the volunteers perform is freely shared with regional partners and community members to help increase knowledge around the issue. We communicate that supporting pets equals supporting patients. This program is a tool for creating connection with patients. Their pets may be the most important things in their lives. The program is widely embraced by the public, which leads to greater opportunities to share the mission of hospice and encourage those in need to seek out services.

An early success story: A woman diagnosed with terminal cancer shortly after adopting a puppy was unsure what to do. Puppy Tasha had serious oral medical surgical needs. The Mercy Pet Peace of Mind program stepped in, securing a vet to provide services at drastically reduced fees, conserving funding. But Tasha still needed a new home. Inspired by the vet's generosity and hopeful for the future of the program, the hospice coordinator shared the story at a prayer group. A member had just lost a pet. Following the meeting, she called the office and Tasha ultimately found a new home. The local paper picked up the story, bringing together the Tasha, the new family and the prior owner's daughter. Little Tasha got so excited when she saw her original owner's daughter that her little legs were shaking. Then suddenly she stopped and looked back at her new owner, as if to let her know she hadn't forgotten about her either. "All of the hospice program staff members were crying, it was so sweet," says Nancy Bracken, program director. "Today, Tasha's new owner takes her to see her original owner at the nursing home. Tasha no longer has doggie breath or drooling. But I do think she can smile now...just look at her pictures."

PAGE 5: Contacts

Q9: Chief Executive Officer of the nominated hospital/system.

Name	Javon R. Bea
Title	President/CEO
Email Address	jbea@mhsjvl.org
Telephone Number	6087566627

Q10: CEO Support.

Checked box confirms that your CEO supports the submission of the nominated program.

Q11: Administrative Assistant to the CEO.

Name	Judy Reynolds
Title	Executive Assistant to Javon R. Bea
Email Address	jreynolds@mhsjvl.org
Telephone Number	6087566896

PAGE 6

Q12: Name of the volunteer or auxilian who will be representing the program at the AHA Annual Meeting, May 5, 2014.

Name	Laura Bergeron (with Nancy Bracken)
Title	Volunteer Coordinator
Home Address	3835 Curry Lane
City	Janesville
State	WI
ZIP Code	53546
Email Address	kbergeron8631@charter.net
Telephone Number	6087283696

Q13: Volunteer Service Professional/Manager.

Name	Marie Bilek
Title	Director of Volunteer Services
Email	mbilek@mhsjvl.org
Telephone	6087566739