

THE CENTER FOR HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

*Buffalo, New York*

People in Buffalo are learning more about quality end-of-life care and are redefining their expectations — and much of the credit goes to The Center for Hospice & Palliative Care. The Center is not one agency, but seven. Together, they help patients and families facing chronic and life-threatening conditions, terminal illnesses, grief, and loss. The result is an impressively seamless continuum, offering appropriate services as patients' needs evolve, without interrupting their care or changing their caregivers.

One of The Center's main goals is to reach patients closer to the point of diagnosis of a life-limiting condition and to allow them to experience quality of life throughout the illness. "By eliminating artificial demarcation points and by creating bridges between services, we're emphasizing the natural coexistence of curative and palliative care," says William Finn, president and CEO of The Center. "The results are encouraging. We're seeing a fundamental change in the way people view life-threatening illnesses. People are beginning to call us to say, 'I've just been diagnosed, and I'm ready to come in for help now.'"

Today, The Center provides care for more than 5,100 patients each year. Eighty-five percent of services are provided in patients' homes. The Center also provides an array of services in 12 affiliated hospital hospice/palliative care units and at the spacious Hospice Mitchell Campus in a soothing, wooded setting. Ease of access is a hallmark. Patients connect with its continuum through a variety of entry points, including home care, hospice in-patient and home care, and hospice nursing home care.

Most importantly, all of The Center's services revolve around patients' and families' needs. "We encourage patients



and families to be active in the care plan, to openly discuss their feelings, concerns, and fears," says Finn. "We've learned that the best way to accomplish our mission is by removing barriers of care, creating access, and encouraging patient choice and self-determination."

The Center's spectrum of services reaches out to children, too, through Essential Care, a pediatric hospice program. Using an interdisciplinary approach, Essential Care helps life-threatened children and their families complete their life experience together in what may be a limited time. The program offers support to the family as a unit, from diagnosis through treatment, helping them manage care at home. The program maintains a patient census of 50 children. More than 60 percent of Essential Care patients die at home — far more than the statewide average revealed in a recent study.

"Our philosophy is that the end of life is not all gloom and doom and depression," says Sue Huff, director of Essential Care. "It's an opportunity to seize the day and the moment. It's very satisfying to be able to help families find joy and love at a time when they

hadn't expected it. We believe that, with sensitivity, understanding and support, families can emerge intact from a painful experience, with a deep sense of meaning and completion."

The Center for Hospice & Palliative Care has a positive message for its community, and it's committed to sharing new information and lessons learned. Its Center for Excellence in End-of-Life Education, Research and Practice conducts research and works toward positively influencing current and future practitioners, by providing them with constructive and meaningful experiences in delivering quality end-of-life care.

In addition, The Center is reaching out in new ways to reach more people and a more diverse population. Recently, The Center developed a partnership with an inner-city Baptist church and will establish an eight-bed hospice facility in the church's neighborhood in 2004.

"Our hope is that palliative care becomes as commonplace as other types of health care," says Finn. "We hope to spread the notion that living with a terminal illness is different from dying. And we hope to offer a level of care that makes that clear."



INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

FOCUS ON SHAPING CARE FOR EACH PATIENT

COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF SERVICES