

Hospice of Alexander County Provides Solutions for Local Family

When Myrtle Harmon became bedridden, her family faced a dilemma that many families in today's society are facing. Myrtle's family successfully worked together to take care of their stepmother as her health declined. But when Myrtle became immobilized, the level of care required increased substantially...even taking her to the doctor was a challenge. They wanted to provide the best care for Myrtle...and they wanted to keep her at home if at all possible.

Judy Walker, Myrtle's stepdaughter, contacted Alexander County Department of Social Services to see what help was available for their family. A social worker suggested they look into hospice care. "I was surprised that she suggested hospice...that option hadn't even entered my mind since Myrtle wasn't battling a life-threatening disease. Myrtle's was simply aging and her health was beginning to deteriorate at a more rapid rate." A representative from Hospice of Alexander County came to the home to evaluate her condition, and determined that Myrtle Harmon was, indeed, eligible for hospice care.

Admission guidelines for Hospice of Alexander County include: life expectancy of six months or less; resident of Alexander or surrounding county; someone available to serve as a caregiver; and patient's physician willing to work with our hospice team. The Hospice interdisciplinary team consists of Hospice medical director, nurses, social workers, hospice aides, chaplain, volunteer coordinator, and volunteers. Once admitted, the Hospice team worked together to develop a plan of care for Myrtle Harmon. Normally, a hospice nurse visits Myrtle once a week and is a phone call away

Left: Judy Walker, Myrtle Harmon, Helen Watson, and hospice nurse, Becky Deal-RN



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if they have any questions or concerns. However, if additional visits are required, they are always there. A hospice social worker visits every two weeks, and provides assistance for financial and/or social concerns. Trained hospice volunteers also come at least once a week to provide caregiver relief and emotional support, as well as keeping Myrtle company for a while!

According to Judy Walker and her sister Helen Watson, "Hospice of Alexander County has been great!" Hospice of Alexander County is providing the end of life care and resources necessary for Myrtle Harmon's family to take care of her at home. "In my opinion," continues Judy, "hospice care has been better than traditional doctor's care for our situation. We get a response quickly anytime we call hospice with a question or need. Because of the structure of a physician's office, you usually have to leave a message and wait for a response...sometimes several hours."

Since 2005, the Harmon family has lost their father and a brother. Both chose hospice care, but their conditions required inpatient care, which was provided in a neighboring county. Although they were both adequately cared for, the long drive to see them every day was very demanding. Family members obviously want to spend as much time as possible with their loved ones, but the responsibilities of home and work are ongoing. "We would have loved to have had an inpatient hospice facility in Alexander County then." says Helen Watson. "It would have been so much easier on our family. I'm very excited at the possibility of inpatient services from Hospice of Alexander County! We need those beds here...and I want those beds to be with Hospice of Alexander County, and not at Valley Nursing Center with Hospice of Catawba County."

Hospice of Alexander County is in the application process to obtain a Certificate of Need (CON) for three (3) inpatient hospice beds in our county. Hospice of Catawba County is also in the process of filing a CON application for these three beds in Alexander County. Please consider submitting a Letter of Support on behalf of Hospice of Alexander County to be included with their CON application to the state. A sample Letter of Support is available at the local hospice office or online at www.HospiceandHomeCareAlexander.org. Submit signed letters to Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc., 50 Lucy Echerd Lane, Taylorsville, NC 28681 by April 30, 2010.

Serving residents of Alexander and surrounding counties in North Carolina since 1985, Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. specializes in easing the physical, emotional and spiritual discomforts that each patient and their family face as the end of life nears. Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. is committed to helping both patients and their families live life to the fullest with optimal comfort and support. For more information about hospice, transitions care, and advance care planning in Alexander County, contact us at 828.632.5026 or visit www.HospiceandHomeCareAlexander.org.