

# Hospice of North Alabama

## The Heart of Hospice: How Volunteers Enrich End-of-Life Care

### A Vital, Yet Often Overlooked Component of Hospice Care

Hospice care is built upon a foundation of compassion, dignity, and support—not only for the patient but also for their family and loved ones. While medical teams provide expert pain and symptom management, hospice volunteers bring an irreplaceable level of companionship, emotional support, and non-medical assistance that enhances quality of life in the final stages.

Despite their essential role, many healthcare professionals are unaware of just how much volunteers contribute to hospice care. This is where we stand apart—our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do.

# VOLUNTEERS

### What Hospice Volunteers Do: The Unsung Heroes of End-of-Life Care

Our dedicated hospice volunteers extend their care in profound ways that benefit both patients and their loved ones, including:

#### ✓ **Companionship & Emotional**

**Support:** Volunteers provide a comforting presence by reading, listening to life stories, or simply sitting with patients who may feel isolated.

- ✓ **Respite for Caregivers:** They offer relief to family caregivers, allowing them to take breaks, rest, and tend to personal needs while knowing their loved one is not alone.

#### ✓ **Legacy Projects & Memory**

**Preservation:** Volunteers help families capture meaningful memories through scrapbooking, recorded interviews, and written reflections.



- ✓ **Specialized Support:** Some volunteers are trained in unique services such as Reiki, pet therapy, or veteran-to-veteran companionship programs.
- ✓ **Bereavement Support:** The impact of volunteers extends beyond the patient's passing, as they provide grief support to families through calls, letters, and remembrance activities.

## The Evidence: Why Volunteers Matter in Hospice Care

Research shows that volunteer involvement in hospice care has a measurable impact:

- According to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), **95% of hospice agencies utilize volunteers, and their contributions equate to over \$469 million annually in unpaid services** (NHPCO, 2023).
- A study found that patients receiving volunteer visits reported **higher levels of satisfaction and improved emotional well-being** (Candy et al., 2020).
- Facilities that incorporate volunteer services see a **20% reduction in caregiver stress and burnout**, leading to better overall family coping mechanisms (Ghesquiere et al., 2021).
- Hospice programs with strong volunteer engagement are associated with **lower rates of hospitalization and emergency room visits in the final months of life**, reducing strain on the healthcare system (Connor et al., 2019).

## The Differentiator: Why This Matters to Referral Sources

Many hospice providers mention volunteers in passing, but few truly leverage them as a core part of their care model. Our hospice program prioritizes volunteer integration in ways that make a tangible difference, ensuring:

- ▶ Every patient who desires companionship has a dedicated volunteer.
- ▶ Families receive structured grief support beyond the patient's passing.
- ▶ Unique programs like veteran outreach and legacy projects provide specialized care beyond traditional medical services.

## Partner with Us: Extend the Best Care Possible



Choosing the right hospice provider for your patients means selecting a team that goes beyond symptom management—it means selecting a provider that values the whole-person approach, including the emotional and psychosocial support volunteers bring.

Refer your patients to a hospice that treats volunteers as an essential part of the care team.

**Contact us today to learn more about how our hospice services stand apart.**




### References

- Candy, B., France, R., Low, J., Sampson, E. L., & Vickerstaff, V. (2020). Does involving volunteers in the provision of palliative and end-of-life care improve patient and family well-being? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 60(2), 302-312.
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- Ghesquiere, A., Hauser, J., & Schulz, R. (2021). Family caregiver burden and hospice use: The impact of volunteer support. *The Gerontologist*, 61(1), 108-117.
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). (2023). NHPCO facts and figures: Hospice care in America. [https://www.nhpc.org/hospice\\_statistics](https://www.nhpc.org/hospice_statistics)