

## A Program for the Living – Right Up Until the End

What if we told you there was a program for living? To help people live their best life – up until their last breathe? Wouldn't you want to know more?

One does exist, and it's called hospice. But most of us don't have a real idea of what services or benefits it provides before it's needed. Nicole Sharpe thinks that needs to change.

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that entering hospice care means you are giving up hope," said Sharpe, community outreach director at Emmanuel Hospice. "In truth, it's about living each day you're given – right up until the end."

A person with a life-limiting diagnosis of less than six months to live can be admitted into hospice care. However, many times hospice is only involved for a few days or weeks – and often that's too short to make a true difference in the quality of care.

"In the end, many people wish they would have called hospice earlier," Sharpe said. "The stigma surrounding the word hospice prevents that. Many people associate hospice care with death, but it's so much more than that.

"It's about bringing on a team to help patients live their remaining days to the fullest extent possible. We want people to recognize that hospice provides many benefits at the end of life."

These benefits aren't only for the patient but their families as well. These include aggressively treating pain and other symptom management, spiritual support, caregiver support and grief counseling.

"Emmanuel Hospice takes a holistic approach to end-of-life care," Sharpe said. "While we have doctors and nurses on staff to care for the body, we also have counselors, therapists and chaplains who help the mind and spirit."

Recent studies have shown people who seek and receive hospice care live longer and more importantly, fuller lives. Patients in hospice receive personalized care to help manage their symptoms, which can stabilize their condition.

Sharpe encourages you to have the conversation about how you want to live at the end of your life so when the times comes, there are no questions. Having an open and honest conversation with loved ones who will take the lead on your care is crucial to fulfilling last wishes.

“When it’s determined a family needs hospice, it can feel overwhelming,” said Sharpe. “When these conversations have already taken place, it helps ease some the burden.”

Starting a plan includes:

- Gathering information about programs and facilities for end-of-life care.
- Deciding what type of treatments you want in case of diagnosis of disease.
- Sharing your goals and values with your loved ones.
- Writing your plans down should you not be able to speak for yourself.

After you begin gathering information, you should search for an organization that aligns with your goals. With a written plan in hand, asking questions of potential providers can save you and your loved ones difficulty in an already difficult time.

“We value the patient’s life and their wishes. We are here to walk along side our patients and their family in this journey. Emmanuel Hospice is here to be on this journey, however you see it. That’s why we ask, ‘How do you want to live?’”

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