

Hospice Care

Providing Comfort and Care to Patients and Families

By Catherine Dean

For terminally ill patients and their families facing the final stage of life can be overwhelming and difficult to endure. Hospice care addresses the needs of the patients while supporting the families through holistic approaches including pain management, bereavement support, spiritual counseling, and nutrition.

Hospice Care Options (HCO), a family owned agency, serves patients in forty-nine counties including Milledgeville/Baldwin County. The agency serves patients in their homes, hospitals, and nursing homes.

Company founder and pharmacist, Freddie Dwozan, takes pride in his agency's mission. "Each of our team members holds our founding theme of service to others above self as the most fundamental principal in their daily activities. Our focus is to help our patients and families during this difficult time with the talents and skills we possess," stated Dwozan.

Founded by HCO, Hospice Care Options Foundation (HCOF), a Public 501(c)(3) foundation, was created from donations received from patient families wishing to memorialize their deceased loved ones. According to Tina Clark, HCO project leader, the Foundation's funds are used to provide quality of end of life care for patients and family members, as well as enriching the lives of those in the communities in which they serve.

One of the services provided by the HCOF is Camp Good Grief, which is an annual three-day grief camp for children that is fully funded by the Foundation. Camp Good Grief is provided free of charge to all campers and partners with other community groups such as the Oconee Regional Chapter of Project Linus to help make the experience as positive as possible for the campers.

Harmony Hospice (HH), locally owned by nurses Keith Keuhn and Orian Motley, is located in Eatonton but serves patients in their homes in the surrounding area including Baldwin County. They provide care for terminally ill individuals of all ages including children.

Volunteers are at the heart of Harmony's commitment to care. "We have a thriving volunteer program and are always looking for new volunteers," said Lizzy Horton, HH administrator. "We are also committed to serving the community at large by offering free bereavement support groups, a day each April to complete Advance Directives for free, and ongoing classes for the medical community."

PruittHealth Hospice (PHH)-the hospice division of the family-owned PruittHealth Company- provides care for patients in their homes, nursing homes, hospitals, and in their hospice care facility located in Macon, Ga. Their philosophy includes enabling patients to continue to live an alert, pain-free life and to manage symptoms so that their last days may be spent with dignity and quality, surrounded by loved ones.

PHH nurse, Charlotte Facciani, has worked in long-term care for over twenty years and sees her career as an opportunity to help patients and families through the dying process. "In nursing school we are taught to keep patients alive at all cost, but, a person loses quality of life when they have a terminal disease," says Facciani. "Hospice helps the patient and family manage the difficult aspects of dying and provides comfort measures that improve the quality of life which is as important as quantity."

The PruittCares Foundation, an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3), sponsors an overnight bereavement camp for children each summer who have suffered a loss of a loved one. Camp Cocoon, held at the Athens Y Camp outside of Tallulah Falls in Northeast Georgia, draws children from all over the state and from surrounding states.

The camp is fully staffed by experienced volunteer professionals consisting of doctors, chaplains, nurses, administrators and hospice providers and trained caregivers. Campers enjoy arts and crafts, water activities, team sports and a ceremonial butterfly release.

"Camp Cocoon allows us to reach out to children who have experienced loss, pain, and perhaps even trauma in the grief experiences that life has thrown at them. We teach them how to take their most horrific experience and use it as a springboard for growth and healing," said Lisa Chapman, PHH administrator and camp volunteer. "It is so beautiful to see their transformation throughout the weekend and to know that they will go back home with the tools they need to deal with their emotions in a productive manner."

Because of hospice care, terminally ill residents of Milledgeville/Baldwin County, along with their families, do not have to navigate the end of life experience alone. Hospice professionals are present for each step, providing comfort and support before and after the death of a loved one.

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