



MISSION
HOSPICE

The Caring Line

IT'S ABOUT LIFE

November 2009

Mission Hospice reaches out to the Hispanic community

In San Mateo County, where almost a quarter of the population is Latino, it's not unusual to see traditional Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) trappings alongside Halloween masks.

Celebrated on Nov. 2, the holiday combines Roman Catholic symbolism with some of the traditions of the native peoples who first inhabited Central and South America. Traditionally, Dia de los Muertos is when families gather in cemeteries to share a meal with each other and the dead, to clean or decorate graves and to remember family members who have died. In some areas, sugar skulls and skeletons, costumes and parades, are part of the festivities.

Like Halloween, Dia de los Muertos in no way trivializes death and dying, according to Gloria Gutierrez, MSW, Mission Hospice medical social worker (see profile on Page 3). Growing up in her grandparents' South San Francisco home, Gutierrez remembers that visiting the graves of loved ones was something her family did regularly.



Dia de los Muertos Altar

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Mission Hospice launches new Advanced Care Program

Patients who have serious illness but aren't yet ready or eligible for hospice care have a new benefit at Mission Hospice – an Advanced Care Program to provide in-home medical, skilled nursing and rehabilitation services.

“This will allow us to assist in the continuity of care when people are entering their last year of life,” explained Mission Hospice CEO Dwight Wilson. The program is being developed under the leadership of Veronica Fuata, R.N., nurse-case manager, who was hired in September specifically for her skills in this area.

Wilson noted that the new program complements the existing “pre-hospice” Transitions program, which provides social work case management and volunteer support services.

“The Advanced Care Program allows us to treat patients for the duration of their chronic illness, which often eventually includes hospice care,” Wilson added. “Many patients feel torn between treatment and hospice care options, but with these complementary programs, patients don't have to choose – they can get both from Mission Hospice.”

The new program, which will require national accreditation, will cost approximately \$100,000 to activate. To qualify, Mission Hospice will have to provide “free” services for approximately six months. Then, it will undergo a survey by the Joint Commission, an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies more than 16,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. Wilson said he expects to achieve certification next spring.

With the Advanced Care Program, Mission Hospice will be the only hospice in the Bay Area to provide both home care and transitions services.

“For 30 years, families have chosen Mission Hospice for the compassionate care and comfort we provide patients as they near death,” said Wilson. “Now, we can extend that same compassionate care to patients who aren't ready for hospice. This is good news not only for our organization, but more importantly, for the families we serve.”

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Calendar of Events

- **Bereavement Support Group**
 Every Wednesday 6 to 7:30 p.m., Mission Hospice offices 1900 O'Farrell St., Suite 200, San Mateo. Open to all members of the community. For more information, please call (650) 554-1000.
- **Caring for the Dying Seminars**
 Part 1: "What Every Caregiver Should Know," Saturday, Nov. 7, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Part 2: Compassionate Practices, Saturday, Dec. 5, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. \$10 per person per session. For reservations and locations, please contact the Rev. Linda Siddall, Mission Hospice chaplain and program facilitator, at (650) 554-1000 or LSiddall@missionhospice.org.
- **Light Up a Life Remembrance Service**
 Program and reception, Sunday, Dec. 6, 2 to 4 p.m., San Mateo Senior Center, 2645 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo.
- **31st Anniversary**
 Celebrate 31 years of service to the community and honor Lotus Award winner Bob Sawyer. Sunday, Jan. 31, 4 to 7 p.m., Peninsula Golf and Country Club.

New Online

For the latest information about Mission Hospice, look online. The website (www.missionhospice.org) is updated regularly with news, events, photos and more. Check out the "About Us" section for the recent Annual Report and Mission Hospice video. The online photo gallery features pictures from Oktoberfest and Voices of Hospice under "News and Events."

Mission Hospice is now on Facebook. Become a fan of Mission Hospice and gain access to photos from recent events, or post photos of your own for others to see. Search "Mission Hospice" or visit the page directly at <http://www.facebook.com/missionhospice>.

From the CEO's Desk

I'm excited to announce the new **Advanced Care Program**, which will complement our Transitions Program and enable us to offer skilled home care to patients who are not yet ready or eligible for hospice. You can learn more about this important program in the newsletter and online.

We need approximately \$100,000 to launch the Advanced Care Program, and I'd like to thank those who have joined our 2009 Benefactors Circle with a gift of \$1000 or more. Your donations have enabled us to provide hospice care to those who cannot afford it, to deliver Transitions and Home Health Aide programs free-of-charge, and now to support the Advanced Care Program.

I'd especially like to thank the Peninsula League for their luncheon on Oct. 9 benefiting our Home Health Aide program.

It's been a banner month for Mission Hospice with the recent Oktoberfest dinner and Voices of Hospice concert. I'd like to recognize the Mission Hospice Auxiliary, as well as Mike Russo, the Mission Hospice staff and the St. James AME Zion Church, for their hard work and dedication to making these events a success. More photos can be seen online at www.missionhospice.org or www.facebook.com/missionhospice.



Dwight Wilson
Chief Executive Officer



The Meridian Band played a selection of Middle Eastern music at the 2009 Voices of Hospice concert.



Left to right:
Glenda Carney, Auxiliary Co-President and
June Field, Auxiliary 1st Vice President



Left to right: Bob Sawyer, Mission Hospice Board; Rev. Walter Johnson; Esther Johnson, Auxiliary Sustaining Member; Don Lehmkuhl; Mary Lehmkuhl, Auxiliary Co-President



Left to right: Judy DiPaolo, Mission Hospice Board; Andy DiPaolo; Ralph Garcia, Mission Hospice Board; Jean Garcia

Staff Profile

Gloria Gutierrez: medical social worker



Gloria Gutierrez - The Nutshell

Education and career:

- Bachelor's degree in home economics, San Francisco State University
- Masters degree in social work, San Jose State University

Personal

- Born in San Francisco; raised in South San Francisco; resides in Menlo Park
- Single, mother of an adult son who recently graduated from law school and two teenage daughters attending Canada College

Gloria Gutierrez, Mission Hospice's Spanish-speaking medical social worker, spent 20 years with San Mateo County Children's Protective Service before turning to work with the other end of the age spectrum.

"I was ready for a change," said Gutierrez, who was a family care worker and social worker in the Emergency Response, Family Reunification and Family Maintenance units. She explained she was initially drawn to youngsters after taking care of her grandparents until they died.

Six years ago, she retired from the county and became a volunteer with the county's ombudsman program, visiting nursing homes and acting as an advocate for patients.

"I saw the vulnerability of the older adults who didn't have families looking out for them," she said. Her interest in older adults also was piqued while interning in a hospice program during college. It was this experience that influenced her decision to pursue her masters degree in social work, with an emphasis on aging adults.

"I was impressed by how instrumental hospice workers can be at the end of the life," she said. "I especially remember a homeless woman I worked with. She didn't want to discuss death. She didn't want to talk about God. But at the end, I helped her sister – who had a serious drug abuse problem – be part of supporting this dying patient. I was present to see the forgiveness they were able to share."

Gutierrez joined Mission Hospice in the fall of 2008. Part of her job is reaching out to the Peninsula's large Hispanic community. As a bilingual, bicultural woman, she's an integral part of extending Mission Hospice's "pre-hospice" Transitions program (see front page article).

She admits that it's not always easy. She relies on her Catholic religion and regular exercise at the YMCA to strengthen her and help her cope with the difficulties. But ultimately, she finds the work extremely satisfying.

"I'm always on a two-way path," she said. "Hope is the last thing people are going to give up. At the same time, I'm teaching them that it's good to be prepared in case anything happens. Hospice can turn a tragic event into something that makes people more prepared and accepting."

Mission Hospice reaches out to the Hispanic community (continued from page 1)

"My grandmother lit a candle every night for all her saints," she recalled. "It was a daily thing."

As the outreach liaison for Mission Hospice to Spanish-speaking families, Gutierrez plays an integral role in implementing a \$25,000 community grant from the Sequoia Healthcare District aimed, in part, at increasing Hispanic representation in hospice services, especially in the Transitions "pre-hospice" program. The program provides case management and volunteer support for patients with life-limiting illness.

She collaborates with St. Anthony de Padua Church in Menlo Park and St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto to recruit Hispanic hospice volunteers and reach out to families. She's also worked on preparing more Spanish-language material for Mission Hospice, include a bilingual "photo novella" (graphic book) that tells the story of a Hispanic family and hospice, and a brochure outlining programs and services.

Gutierrez hopes that hospice will be woven into the rich fabric of Latino tradition around death and dying. "One tradition is parents blessing the children," she recalled. She remembered a mother who took

her dying husband's hand and blessed their children. Many Catholic Hispanics find comfort in having a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe on hand, and they participate in the sacrament of anointing the sick (formerly last rites).

Gutierrez also noted that traditions have evolved as Hispanic families have integrated into the U.S. For instance, she recently noticed that a family altar honoring the memory of a young man held a serving of McDonald's fries and catsup – one of the deceased's favorite foods. His grave was decorated with photos and flowers.

Another change is that cremation is now more accepted, as families often take a loved one's ashes back to his or her native country for burial with other family members.

"It's all part of the respect we have for the dead," Gutierrez said. "When I go to Mexico, I take flowers to my great-grandmother's grave, although I never met her."

As local Latino traditions around dying grow, Gutierrez and Mission Hospice's new bilingual volunteers are ready to serve this important community.



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Light Up a Life Service Dec. 6

Vocal coach and former pop music backup singer Margo LeDuc will perform as part of Mission Hospice's annual Light Up a Life remembrance service set for Sunday, Dec. 6, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the San Mateo Senior Center, 2645 Alameda de las Pulgas.

The event also will feature speaker Robert McLean, whose wife, Lorraine McLean, was a Mission Hospice patient in 2008. A reception will follow the program.

Light Up a Life is open to the public and free of charge. It is an opportunity during the holiday season to remember and honor those who have died. It is part of Mission Hospice's ongoing commitment to providing bereavement services, which also include weekly group support meetings and private grief therapy. Guests do not have to be related to Mission Hospice patients.



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Easy to be green via E-mail

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter and other Mission Hospice communications by e-mail? If so, please e-mail Irene Kanturek at ikanturek@missionhospice.org and indicate whether you'd prefer to receive electronic communications in addition to, or instead of, hard copy mail. Please help us keep Mission Hospice green by reducing our reliance on paper.