

Volunteering offers benefits for all involved

Home Health United hosting events

"I look upon this as an opportunity, a gift to me. I always receive more than I could ever give back."

This sentiment, expressed by a Home Health United - Hospice volunteer, conveys just how passionate and dedicated volunteers are.

Trained volunteers assist with patient care by spending time with patients, reading to them, providing companionship, and offering respite to family caregivers. There are also many opportunities to help that don't involve direct patient interaction, such as data entry, mailings, health fairs and fund-raising events.

Jan Ebert, St. Clare Hospice House manager and volunteer coordinator, has seen firsthand the impact volunteers make. "Home Health United - Hospice volunteers are an inspiration to the rest of us," Ebert said. "They are willing to give of themselves without asking, 'What's in it for me?'" Hospice is a very

special type of volunteering that is viewed as a privilege and honor to be invited into the lives of our patients and families at such an intimate period of time.

"A hospice volunteer is trained specifically for end-of-life care, and the majority of the volunteers have personally experienced the death of a loved one. This life experience of a volunteer enhances the mission of hospice, which is to provide comfort and support at the end of life."

HHU - Hospice staff realize how beneficial it is to have great volunteers, but many people don't realize the benefits volunteers receive back. Aside from the sense of community and achievement, volunteering can help you develop a new skill, expand career options, introduce you to new experiences, learn about people from all walks of life, and possibly give you a different perspective on life.

Want to learn more? Not quite sure if volunteering is for you? Join fellow hospice volunteers and HHU - Hospice staff on the square

in downtown Baraboo on Saturday morning, July 23, anytime between 9 and 11 a.m. Come by for a free cup of coffee, chat with some current volunteers, and get all your questions answered by HHU - Hospice staff members. Look for signs near the farmers market.

There also will be an opportunity to learn more this fall in conjunction with the St. Clare Hospice House open house. HHU is opening its doors to show off the newly renovated Hospice House on Monday, Sept. 26 from 5-7 p.m. for a Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce "Business After 5" networking event. All Chamber members and the public are welcome.

If you're ready to become a member of this special group of volunteers, the next training session for volunteers of all ages will be held on Sept. 19-20 in Baraboo.

If you would like more information about volunteering for Home Health United - Hospice or to sign up for training, contact Ebert at (877) 356-4514 or jebert@hhuvns.org.



CONTRIBUTED

Dot Roche and Bonnie Mihlbauer, both of Baraboo, visit with a recent Hospice House patient.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

Bonnie Mihlbauer said she can't express enough the fulfillment she gets from volunteering:

"Doing this brings the greatest satisfaction in the world. It's always a different situation, so we learn a lot of new lessons. It's nice to know you can help these families by holding a hand, or talking to them, or simply sitting there and being with them." Mihlbauer used to be a hairdresser, and now uses her skills to help patients who can't get to a salon.

One of Dot Roche's favorite memories of her time volunteering is a patient who used to be a veterinarian. Roche brought her a toy cat and dog that the patient fell in love with. "Her family talked to volunteers and others about her life and what she used to love doing. I believe the animals provided a continuous companionship for her, and she handled them so gently and lovingly."

Roche said. "She passed away recently but I hope we made her last few months more enjoyable for her."