

Hospice of the Gorge seeks volunteers

Hospice of The Gorge, a non-profit end-of-life service agency, invites any community member with an interest, to learn how to become a hospice volunteer.

This free training program is open to anyone in the Hospice of The Gorge service area, consisting of eight Mid-Columbia counties in Oregon and Washington: Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Wheeler, Skamania and Klickitat.

Training takes place over two weekends at the Hospice of The Gorge administrative center in Hood River, from 6 to 8 pm on Friday, May 2, and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 3 and 10.

The training gives people who want to volunteer with hospice, the overall tools to understand hospice philosophy, and how to provide direct service to patients and families. The training also provides the basis with which to serve in administrative and other types of volunteer roles.

Christine Jones, volunteer coordinator for Hospice of The Gorge, explains that hospice volunteers who work with patients help in a variety of ways, but mostly on a

social level.

"Often they help out in the home while the caregiver takes a break; or they may spend time talking with or reading to a patient. Sometimes what really matters is just having someone to talk to outside the family — to share a laugh, to watch old movies with, or to look at photo albums together."

Occasionally, hospice volunteers offer a special skill or service. Jacquie Hashizume of The Dalles, for instance, helps patients relax through a form of energy massage known as Reiki.

Jones offers some insight into why people volunteer for hospice, and what constitutes the typical volunteer.

"Generally our volunteers have some kind of personal connection with death. Often they've experienced the loss of a loved one themselves, and feel a very deep sense of commitment about wanting to help others through the process."

Still, Jones says, the ideal volunteer would not have just recently experienced the death of a loved one. "We want to be sure people have healed from their own losses before they become hospice



HOSPICE VOLUNTEER Jacquie Hashizume uses her special skills in the Eastern form of energy work known as Reiki to help patients relax and reduce stress. *Contributed photo*

volunteers. We would be cautious about asking people to volunteer too soon after a loss, because we need them to be fully present for other people."

Jones says that the time they spend with a patient or family varies depending on circumstances. "Our goal is

to make a good match between the needs of our patients and families, and what a volunteer can offer."

For more information about volunteering at hospice, call Christine Jones at Hospice of The Gorge, 541-387-6449, or at cjones@hospiceofthegorge.org.