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THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2008

New Life Hospice Reaches Out To Latinos

New Life Hospice reaching out to Latinos

By Ingrid Rivera, Special to La Prensa

When María Jurado's mother, Cruz Esperanza, 92, had a stroke, Jurado turned to New Life Hospice for help. The hospice has provided Jurado with a nurse and health aid that visit and take care of her mother several days of the week in the home. Jurado, of Lorain, said the program has benefited her family greatly.

"This (program) is the best thing that has happened to me," Jurado said. "They give their patients a lot of love. They are available 24-7."

Jurado is one of the few Latinos turning to the hospice to care for their terminally-ill family members.

The New Life Hospice staff is trying to reach out to the Latino community – a community that despite its growing numbers in Lorain County, is seeking the hospice's services in much lower numbers than other ethnicities.

The New Life Hospice staffs are trying to bridge the racial gap of patients by educating members of the Latino community of its services at various local churches, by providing mandatory training to all employees on how to better understand the Latino community, and by training Latino volunteers to attend the home with other non-Spanish speaking employees.

The hospice also provides all documents in Spanish. The next annual mandatory "Communicating with the Latino Community," training will be November of 2008.

New Life Hospice is a program member of the Community Health Partners that provides care and support to families and individuals dealing with a terminal illness. The hospice program provides each patient with a nurse, home health aid, social worker, chaplain and volunteers that treat the patient in the private home, nursing home or assisted living facility.

About 13 units for housing patients are also available within the Hospice Center of St. Joseph, located at 3700 Kolbe Road, Lorain, Ohio.

Ocasio and Navarro serve the Latino community
Two Latino employees, Joe Ocasio, registered nurse, and Sylvia

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Navarro, home health aide, of New Life Hospice, put together the mandatory trainings and travel to churches for other outreach presentations to the Latino community.

Ocasio, of Lorain and Puerto Rican decent, said Latinos are not turning to the hospice to care for their loved ones because they prefer to take care of their own family members in the home, and because of misconceptions about these types of programs within the Latino community. One misconception is 'believing that the family will be separated from the terminally-ill patient.'

"The Spanish community, we don't do very well with the dying process. We Latinos want to take care of our own," Ocasio said "But (this outreach program) it's to get them to understand that dying is not a bad thing and there is help available. We can help them in their own home."

Ocasio said he also visits six patients daily in various locations. During visits, Ocasio checks patients' vital signals and checks and manages any problematic symptoms that are causing the patient distress.

Ocasio said these services are needed and beneficial. "Families don't realize how draining it is to take care of a patient at home. You're going to see the decline over time; it's physically and emotionally draining," Ocasio said.

"We are a spiritually-based, a Catholic-based program. We believe life goes on. The goal now is that our loved ones can die with dignity," Ocasio said.

These two Latino employees travel to various churches in Lorain County to educate the Latino community about its services. Both Navarro and Ocasio, for example, presented the next "Ministry of Hospice" on August 7th at the Sacred Heart Chapel, located on Pearl Avenue in Lorain.

Navarro, of Lorain and Puerto Rican descent, said she visits about six patients every day at nursing homes or in their private homes. Navarro, Esperanza's home health aid, said she is taking care of two Latino patients.

"It's sad that we have dreadful diseases out there, but it's comforting to know that you are not alone," Navarro said. "I don't like seeing my people die, but it's like an inner peace inside of me that I feel when I can help them. It's something that Jesus taught us to do, to take care of others," Navarro said.

Despite the high population of Latinos in the Lorain County region, only 4 percent of Latino patients used the hospice's services in 2007 - a figure much lower than for other ethnicities, said Joan Hanson, director of the New Life Hospice in Elyria.

The program provides patients with hospital beds, oxygen tanks, wheelchairs, walkers, and shower chairs. Hospice drivers pick up medicines for patients at the nearest pharmacies. A bereavement counseling and support program is available for a family up to 15 months after the death of the patient. The program is covered in full through Medicare and Medicaid or other health insurance plans. Hanson said the hospice will help cover the patient and funeral costs for those without health insurance.

"I learned the Latino culture has a commitment for caring for their own. We have to be cautious of going into their homes and not understanding the relationship with their loved ones," Hanson said.

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“We will give them some guidance and teach them what they need to do for their loved ones. We don’t want to change their ways; we want to meet them half way,” Hanson concluded.

For more information contact New Life Hospice (located on North Abbe Road in Elyria, Ohio) at 440-934-1458 or 440-960-4900 or log onto their Web site at:

<http://216.68.156.42/regions/Lorain/content/hospice.asp>

Posted by Adrian Perez, Publisher at [8:29 AM](#)

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