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Hospice worker a quiet presence

By **Laurel Firant**

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A visitor to Bortz Health Care in Ypsilanti might see Tisha Moore carrying a bag that contains lavender-scented lotion and lip balm and a book featuring choir songs as she goes up to the facility's top floor.

Moore stops to visit with some of the facility's patients. After knocking on the door and ensuring the occupant is awake and able to receive visitors, Moore enters, sometimes offering a hand massage or soothing singing. Or she will just sit by a bedside, offering a patient quiet company.

Moore is a volunteer of Arbor Hospice, which welcomes patients who expect they have six months or less to live.

Knowing this neither depresses Moore nor deters her from volunteering. While the death of a patient who has become a friend is a sad event, Moore finds volunteering inspiring.

"I think Tisha, in particular, is very good at putting everything else away and just really being there in the moment with the person," said Sherry Wagenknecht, volunteer coordinator of Arbor Hospice.



Alan Warren, The Ann Arbor News

Volunteer Tisha Moore at The Residence at Arbor Hospice in Ann Arbor.

At times, Moore has been called by Arbor Hospice to sit with a patient in the hospice's Vigil Care program, which ensures patients who are a few hours

away from death that they will not be alone even if family or friends are unavailable. Sometimes volunteers of the program sit with patients and their families because a relative is available but fears being alone after a loved one dies.

A friendship with someone who had terminal cancer and her work coordinating nationally funded geriatrics studies brought Moore in close contact with people facing loss and drew her to volunteering with hospice.

"You might very well be ... one of the last new friends that somebody makes," she said.

"I guess I found it very exciting to be a part of that and to be able to support people and let them know they have value."

Each week Moore visits patients at the facility, and if some on a first trip through are not awake, she comes back later in the week.

"To know this volunteer is going to be here means a lot to them," said JoAnn Davis, director of social service at the facility.

Moore also alerts social service staff if she thinks a patient has a question or a need that may not be met.

"She has commitment to them," Davis says.

Arbor Hospice states a commitment for people to have a peaceful transition through the dying process.

"It's volunteers like Tisha that make the difference for us," said Gloria Brooks, president and CEO of Arbor Hospice.

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