Four years ago, as John Sterrett neared the end of his life, a doctor advised his wife to place him in a nursing home.

But Joan Sterrett didn’t want to move him. At 91, John suffered from dementia and Joan wanted to keep him home in his final days. To help manage his care, she turned to Legacy Hospice Services.

At first, hospice workers came a few times a week. As John’s needs grew, they came nearly every day, offering a variety of palliative services: special bed sheets to make him more comfortable; morphine sponges to ease his pain; tools to help administer medication.

“They were extremely courteous and caring,” Joan says. “They were very cooperative in suggesting things to give comfort to him.”

Legacy Hospice serves adults, children and their families with home-based care in the Portland metropolitan area and communities throughout the Willamette Valley.

“It’s a very comforting feeling to know that your loved one is having special care.”

– Joan Sterrett, hospice donor

Legacy Hospice also provides care in residential or assisted living settings, adult foster homes and nursing care facilities. Hospice workers treat the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients and support family members and other caregivers.

John and Joan were married for two decades and their marriage sounds like a romantic travelogue. In 1994, they moved to France for a year on a whim. They travelled to Italy and England and celebrated birthdays in London. John loved the landscape of Italy. His final trip was a Christmas cruise down the Danube River.

John’s last days were difficult. As his dementia progressed, neurological problems contributed to painful falls. Hospice workers who took care of John gave Joan peace of mind. After his death, Joan made a generous gift to support Legacy Hospice Services.

“It’s a very comforting feeling to know that your loved one is having special care,” Joan says. “Knowing they were there any time I wanted them, knowing they would be there for me. And for him.”

donor profile: hospice care for a dying husband inspires generous gift

More than 50 people attended the Hopewell House Blessing Ceremony on October 6. The ceremony included a blessing by Chaplain Timothy Buthe and the lighting of luminaries along the path outside Hopewell House, which closed on September 30. Legacy Hospice continues to offer services at patients’ homes, assisted living settings, adult foster homes and nursing care facilities.

For more information about supporting Legacy Hospice Services, please contact Rachel Gilmer at 503-413-6774 or rgilmer@lhs.org.

hopewell house blessing ceremony

A legacy campaign

Donor profile: Hospice care for a dying husband inspires generous gift

Compassion and care

A newsletter for donors to Legacy Hospice Services | Fall 2019

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Some days, volunteers sit vigil alone with Legacy Hospice patients. Sometimes they join loved ones overwhelmed by grief. They might play music or sing or encourage family and friends to share stories and photos.

It's a deeply spiritual experience and some Legacy Hospice volunteers sit vigil to prepare themselves for their own deaths.

"The volunteers are drawn to hospice," says Lori Cannon, volunteer coordinator for Legacy Hospice. "They feel like there's a need to be with people when they're dying."

Legacy Hospice gets five or six requests for vigil volunteers each year. In three-hour shifts, they sit with patients who are within hours of death and use their training to comfort family and friends. They also set a mood for the room, with subdued lighting, the right music, even stuffed animals if the patient is agitated.

Patients are usually in a hospital or other health care facility and they are generally unresponsive. Volunteers might use lavender lotion to calm the patient, hold their hand, talk to them or read aloud.

"It's not for everybody," Cannon says. "Most of the people I have for volunteers are spiritual people. They feel very privileged to be with that person while they're dying."

Grief doesn't have an expiration date. It doesn't follow a timeline. That's why Legacy Hospice Services offers grief support groups for mourners who need help processing the death of a loved one.

In September, Legacy Hospice created a new grief support group at Legacy Mount Hood in Gresham. It meets on the first and third Monday of each month from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

"We're basically responding to the needs of the community," says Petya Pohlschneider, bereavement coordinator at Legacy Hospice. "We've received feedback from families asking for services closer to that area."

Grief support groups also meet twice a month at Legacy Meridian Park Medical Center and Legacy Good Samaritan Medical Center. The discussions are moderated by a licensed clinical social worker.

When a patient is served by hospice, Medicare requires that grief support services are offered to family and friends for up to 13 months after that patient dies. However, Legacy Hospice offers support beyond 13 months, and works with other hospice programs to provide grief services.

"So often, grief is such a lonely journey and there's not a lot of support," says Kris Anderson, a bereavement clinician with Legacy Hospice Services. "People really experience the depth of their grief months after their loss."

If you are interested in receiving grief support after the death of a loved one, feel free to contact Legacy Hospice Services at 503-220-1000.

Legacy Hospice Services invites you to remember loved ones during the holidays at this special celebration. Please extend this invitation to additional family or friends who may wish to attend. You are encouraged to bring photographs and other mementos of loved ones for display during the event. Contributions support care for hospice patients and families.

Light up a Life - McMinnville
Saturday, November 9, 2019
11 a.m.
Light refreshments to follow
McMinnville Senior Center
2250 NE McDaniel Lane
McMinnville, Oregon

Light up a Life - Portland
Sunday, November 17, 2019
2 p.m.
Light refreshments to follow
Legacy Emanuel Medical Center - Lorenzen Conference Center
2801 N. Ganntiben Avenue
Portland, Oregon