

Health Care

Hospice houses

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ily name) explained the need for hospice houses. "With most people, the first thing is they don't want to be alone when they die, and they don't want to be in pain. Hospice fills both those needs."

Noting the "hoopla that goes into when a grandchild is coming," she said, "there should be the same kind of family support and togetherness when you leave this world."

Quinlan said, "So many people have been killed in violent deaths in our society and there is no time for thank-yous and goodbyes." Hospice houses welcome family and friends, and provide guests with rooms or sleeping areas.

Advent House was so named because Advent is a season of waiting, of anticipation, of hope, said its director, Glenda Hastings, RN.

"Hospice is hope," Hastings explained. "To people who come here we can provide, first of all, nice surroundings, the hope that they will have a pain-free death, the hope of ongoing support for their families even after the death, and the hope that the individual's needs will be met."

Often such hope seems to be enough for people. Quinlan tells of sick people, whose families are drained in many ways, with whom the house had talked and accepted, but who never made it.

"We began to wonder if there wasn't a reason for this," Quinlan said. "Just the fact they could come to us, had discussed the place, and knew they had a place that was safe and secure to come to, if that allowed them a sense of peace and they were able to let go. It's happened just too many times."

Typical of hospice care is bereavement support. Workers may attend services, hold anniversary services, send cards throughout the year after a death, call, hold support meetings, and simply be there with the coffee on. "I never knew how to make coffee," said Hastings. "Now I can make it in my sleep."

Benincasa and Advent House face an extra hurdle. Several hospice houses were donated — Isaiah House, a Corpus Christi Church outreach, was donated by an individual, and House of John was



Brenda Kloster of Visiting Nurse Services checks Joseph Alesi's blood pressure during one of her weekly visits to Alesi's home.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

donated by St. Felix Catholic Church. Sunset House is leased for \$1 a year from Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, and Teresa House pays the Village of Genesee \$1 a year for its house.

Benincasa, however, has no such land or building arrangement. Advent House, which has rented a house in Perinton since 1990, is temporarily closed while money is being raised to continue building a house nearby. An architect donating services has designed the new 2,860-foot Advent House with wider doorways and spacious bathrooms, meeting and office space, parking, and decks outside its two bedrooms.

Southern Tier Hospice, one of the state's oldest hospices, started InnCare to fill the gap for people without primary care givers. The Tier hospice serves 300 patients a year and anticipates serving another 17-20 in InnCare houses. So far, there is one house, in Elmira. It is staffed with home health aids.

"It didn't work when we asked the churches to run the house, but we are going to the churches to get volunteers," noted Pat Wheeler, marketing/development manager. "We have a small group trained now and that will help our bottom line."

Hospice programs and the houses for the dying find the need continues for education. Providers present talks throughout the area. Hospice houses depend upon donations, and are funded also by memorials, grants, and fundraisers — not fees.

"Death touches everyone. None of us will escape it. That's why these little houses have an impact on the community and people respond to our needs," said Quinlan. "We have been showered with blessings. Everything from the house on down to the furniture and the picture on the wall has a story."

Providers are amazed at the retention

rate of the hundreds of hospice volunteers, needed for everything from gardening, cleaning, cooking and shopping to patient care.

In *The Hospice Movement*, the modern movement's founder Cicely Saunders tells author Sandol Stoddard that hospice work "should not be embarked on at all unless one is the sort of person who really cannot help it. ... It must be done from within, by means of prayer above all, but celebration as well."

Mulcahy, who has seen hundreds of people die through his work, said, "People have odd ideas about the difficulty or nobility (of) what we are doing. We do something we believe in and that's enough for us. We've seen it make a difference in people's lives."

"People tend to look to us to know what to do," he said. "Our role is to kind of guide people through the death process and afterward."

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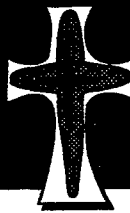
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