

The Rich Legacy of Hospice in Vermillion

Driving force is Mary and Ray Hall, and their love for their daughter, Marilyn

A lot of hard work, organizing, phone calls, and soliciting of volunteers by Mary and Ray Hall is, in part, one reason Sanford Hospice is an important part of the health care system of the Vermillion community.

The driving force behind the rural Vermillion couple's relentless efforts is their love for their daughter, Marilyn.

Marilyn, who grew up on the family farm located approximately five miles east of town, married John Hippe in Minneapolis, MN on Feb. 28, 1981.

The Hippes moved to Madison, WI, so that John could continue his education there. On their six month wedding anniversary, Marilyn was diagnosed with breast cancer.

She battled the disease for five years, with Mary traveling to Wisconsin to stay with Marilyn as the cancer gained ground.

There finally came a time when Mary traveled to Wisconsin one last time.

"The last of the three weeks before she came here (to Vermillion), I went there (to Wisconsin) and stayed with her at her home," Mary said. "And then we were to decide when she wanted to come home to die. After I was there for three weeks, we decided it was time to bring her home."

Marilyn's boss graciously lent the Halls the use of his van so that their very weak and terminally ill 34-year-old daughter could make her final trip home lying down.

"She was here for three weeks, and the whole family cared for her," Mary said.

Marilyn passed away, surrounded by family in her parents' farmhouse in July 1986.

The Halls' oldest daughter was, at the time, a medical social worker in the Washington, DC area. "She had asked me if we had hospice in Vermillion," Mary said. "There was no hospice in Vermillion. I was informed later that hospice had been offered in Vermillion two times, and there was no interest in it. That didn't deter me, however. I was determined there was going to be hospice in Vermillion.

"We so wished we had hospice. The home health nurses came to our house, and that was fine, and we checked with her doctor in Madison, WI, and he informed us (on what to do), too," she said.

Dr. William Dendinger agreed to provide medical care to Marilyn during her final weeks of life. The Halls also received valuable help from Tammy Rohde, the daughter of the late Al and Marilyn Siecke of Vermillion, who at the time was on maternity leave from her job as a nurse.

"She said 'I will help you,' and both of us called all over speaking to various hospices and asking how they operated, and we got lots of information from that," Mary said.

One month following Marilyn's death, Mary and Ray began their efforts to see that other local families who were experiencing a situation similar to what they had gone through weeks before would get needed help.

"The hospital in Vermillion (then known as Dakota Hospital) was very, very receptive, and so good to help us," she said.

In 1986, Dale Garris, the hospital administrator, was enthused about seeing hospice serv-



Marilyn Hall Hippe



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