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Hospice care in Vermillion initially was offered in both home settings, and in the local hospital.

"My intention to begin with was to work with the hospital. But I could see that the hospital setting may not begin to work for a long, long time, and I didn't have that much patience," she said, laughing.

Hospice became an active, volunteer-only service in Vermillion in 1986.

"We not only served here; we went to Alcester, Beresford, Viborg, and generally any place in about a 30-mile radius," Barb Kronaizl, one of the pioneering volunteers, said.

Soon, the volunteers were filling specific roles. Mary became the main contact person. After receiving a call from someone for hospice care, she then arranged for the volunteers to provide that help.

"The doctors were wonderful, the nurses were wonderful ... everybody – the volunteers were perfect," she said. "Some people wanted to work directly with the people; others didn't, they preferred to do other things, so we had every area covered."

Barb decided to step up immediately when it became apparent that Mary's initial efforts were going to depend on volunteers.

"I was raised in a family that always helped people who needed help," Barb said. "And sick people need help, and hungry people need to be fed."

Today, the professional services offered by Sanford Vermillion Hospice offers local people an opportunity to maintain a high-quality life as they experience the death process.

"I think Joanne Martin, one of our hospice nurses, put it very well – sometimes people aren't ready to say that this is the end of their life," said Kay Hansen, site manager at Sanford Vermillion Hospice, "but having hospice come in, it provides such a quality to the end of their life."

"That's what the purpose of it is; to provide quality and comfort at the end of someone's life," Kay said. "It helps them to prepare to accept that this is the end of their life. You are almost prepping them to be comfortable in that mode ... by going in and reinforcing that you are there to help them with what their goals are at the end of their life, and with what they need – it helps people come to the acceptance that this may be the end of their life, but they can still have quality at the end of their life."



Mary and Ray Hall hold a photo of their daughter, Marilyn, who died in July 1986 of breast cancer. Following their experience in caring for her, they became determined to see that hospice care was offered in Vermillion.

'Hospitality'

The term hospice seems to elicit a response of fear or dread from a lot of people even though "hospice" comes from the same linguistic root as "hospitality." The word and concept of hospice can be traced back to medieval times and referred to a place of shelter and rest for weary or ill travelers on a long journey. The name was first applied to specialized care of dying patients in 1967 by a physician Dame Cicely Saunders, who founded the first modern hospice – St. Christopher's Hospice – in a suburb of London.

In the mid 1960s, Yale University invited Dr. Saunders to become a visiting faculty member for their school of nursing, about the same time, exchange programs for Yale university faculty to come to the London hospice to learn about the program were established. Toward the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross published a book on death and dying identifying five

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