

however. “We still have some of the grass-roots volunteers involved in hospice yet today,” Kay said. “These are the people who first stepped up in 1986, and they are still involved.”

Today, there is a room specially designated for hospice care in Sanford Vermillion Hospital.

“There is also a program through Medicare or insurance that is called ‘acute hospice.’ That program is designed to manage acute symptoms,” Kay said. “For example, if somebody has severe pain that is not controllable in the home, we can put them in the hospital under acute hospice and those cares can be given under that program in the hospital until their symptoms are managed, and then they’ll typically go back to either their home or the nursing home, whatever is their primary home.”

The hospice room at Sanford Vermillion is also used for people at the end of life who choose to pay privately for the room for a short period of time. This typically occurs at times when a patient can’t be stabilized to be taken home. In those situations, families often opt to pay for the room as a private cost while hospice services are provided.

At times, patients who hadn’t previously used hospice services are moved to the hospice room in the hospital because of the comfort it provides to those at the end of life. This room is newly decorated, with new equipment and new furniture added, including a fold-out couch to allow individuals to spend the night with a patient.

A room across the hall, equipped with a large table, books and games, is designed as a place where family and friends can congregate while a loved one is in the hospice room.

“The whole intent is to make both the family and the patient as comfortable at the end of their life, and that room is available in the hospital in order to do that,” Kay said.

It is a service that may not differ much from what is offered in other communities, except for one thing – its rich legacy in Vermillion, filled with the joy of life, the sorrow of death, and the undying determination of Mary and Ray.

“We loved what we were doing,” Mary said.

■ Story and Photos by David Lias



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