



Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester Volunteer to Receive Award from The Volunteer Center of United Way

White Plains, NY – (March 15, 2010) – Hilary Ward, a volunteer for Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester (HPCW), will receive the Quality of Life Award from The Volunteer Center of United Way at its upcoming Volunteer Spirit Awards Celebration. The event will take place on April 23, 2010 at the Renaissance Westchester Hotel.

According to the Volunteer Center, the Volunteer Spirit Awards is the “premiere volunteer recognition event in Westchester and Putnam counties.” The organization recognizes distinguished volunteers whose extraordinary work has made an impact within the communities it serves.

Ward is being recognized for developing the idea of creating a communication tool to use with HPCW patients. The “communication boards” are used today by HPCW patients, nurses, social workers, spiritual counselors, volunteers, home health aides and family members. The idea was borne out of her work with an elderly ALS patient in HPCW’s care. Ward knew that as the disease progressed, effectively communicating with him would be difficult.

“Although I knew the patient needed to be heard and listened to, I also knew that he needed appropriate reactions and responses. Since I didn’t know much about ALS, I attended an ALS conference and was surrounded by people who had no way of communicating their needs unless they used computer-assisted devices,” Ward said. She added that learning a new technology would be too difficult for the patient.

The communication boards, which are presented to the patient in a booklet format, include such categories as feelings, food, requests, comfort levels, feeling of illness, pain levels and who they want to see. Each subject is accompanied by a photo or illustration.

Mary Jane Schaumann, Director of Volunteer Services for HPCW, said that Hilary’s contribution to the wellbeing of patients in hospice care is invaluable. “Nearly 150 patients have used the communications boards since they were developed,” Schaumann said.

“Our staff most often uses the ‘I want to talk about’ section to determine whether a patient is happy, sad or afraid or whether the patient wants to talk about dying. With the boards, patients are also able to communicate when they would prefer to be left alone,” Schaumann added.

Nurses use the boards as an assessment tool to evaluate and validate pain issues, a cornerstone of hospice care. The boards also enable patients to request more information about their disease and daily care.

“It is important to note that patients have a right to understand, choose and agree to the medical care they receive,” Schaumann said.

For more information on volunteering for Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester, call Mary Jane Schaumann at 914.682.1484 x116 or email her at MJSchaumann@hospiceofwestchester.com.

Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester is located at 311 North Street, Suite 204, White Plains, NY 10605, White Plains, NY. For additional information, visit www.hospiceofwestchester.com or call 914.682.1484.

About Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester: Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester is a private, not-for-profit agency that provides comprehensive end-of-life health care services to people with advanced illnesses who live in Westchester County. Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester offers programs and care that are intended to promote patient quality of life by addressing the medical, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients and their families.

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Hilary Ward arranges flowers for Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester patients for the organization's Flowers for Life program. Ward will receive the Quality of Life Award from the Volunteer Center of the United Way in April.