

## Five Myths of Hospice Volunteering

### You *can* get involved even if you *think* you can't

**I'm not qualified. I don't have the right experience. I can't make any difference. I don't have time. Other people will do it.**

These are sentiments about volunteering as old as volunteering itself. But the truth is none of these sentiments are applicable in every case for every person. Volunteering, especially for an organization like hospice, can mean looking at your heart and seeing past the myths. We talked with our volunteer coordinators and current volunteers to help dispel these myths.

#### MYTH #1 – I am not qualified for hospice volunteering.

"Not true," said Jan Martz, Fresno area volunteer coordinator. "You don't need any special skills to be a hospice volunteer, just a kind heart and the ability to listen." Part of what perpetuates this myth is that many people just don't know what volunteering for hospice entails. They don't think they could ever sit and comfort a dying person, but according to Jan, there is a wide spectrum of volunteering opportunities — and many don't deal with patients directly.

Numerous volunteers start by doing more administrative work like stuffing

envelopes, putting family information packets together, making bereavement calls and filling out condolence cards.

Jan continued, "When someone comes to us, we find out where their heart is and what they like to do. Some volunteers have never lost a family member, so we help them to feel comfortable being in that environment. Then they can really focus on the patient and the family. They come to the realization that while they are with the family, the normal caregiver can have some free time."

Many volunteers do come from situations where they have had a

#### Opportunities in Fresno and Madera Counties

(559) 320-4000

- ✓ Volunteers for smaller communities such as Oakhurst, Firebaugh, Sanger, Reedley
- ✓ Direct patient support in homes and facilities
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers
- ✓ Specialty program volunteers such as Pet Therapy

loss and hospice made a dramatic difference. Often a hospice volunteer who helped them is the connection to the realization that they too can help.

Not requiring special skills is not to say that Optimal volunteers are thrown in unprepared. In addition to a general introduction to hospice, every volunteer comes through an application process with a background check, a TB test and reference checks, just like employees who go into homes.

Volunteers will have a minimum of 12 hours of basic training, including classroom time, reviews, walkthroughs and mentoring if desired. "We then match the volunteer to their skill set and personality, and each volunteer gets reviewed each year," said Jan.

#### Opportunities in Orange County

(562) 494-7687

- ✓ Volunteers to make bereavement calls
- ✓ Pet Therapy
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers

#### Opportunities in San Joaquin County

(209) 670-8000

- ✓ Bilingual volunteers
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers
- ✓ Pet Therapy
- ✓ Direct patient support in homes and facilities

# Volunteering,

continued from page 1

"Of course, they are not professionally trained, so no personal or medical care is done by our volunteers.

"If a volunteer is hesitant about the requirements, we explain that if it were their family, wouldn't they want the assurance that the volunteer has all this background and training? Then they understand the importance."

## Opportunities in Stanislaus County

(209) 338-3000

- ✓ Direct patient support in homes and facilities
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers
- ✓ Office volunteers
- ✓ Volunteers to make bereavement calls and mailings

## MYTH #2 – They don't need someone with my experience.

Bakersfield area Volunteer Coordinator Rhonda Frankhouser said, "You would be surprised at the needs you could fill. We have needs for specialized volunteers, beyond sitting with a patient or relieving a care giver." Rhonda said they need volunteers for a karaoke singing program, a sewing program and a bereavement care program, which fits the profile of many retired professionals. Additionally they have need for hairstylists, bilingual volunteers and veterans for our Vet to Vet Program. Volunteers with a year of service can qualify for our 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Program for actively dying patients. "In all, we have needs for about 15 different programs," added Rhonda.

A volunteer's desire and willingness to give is more important than a skill set. Both coordinators said they would love to have more male volunteers.

## MYTH #3 – I wouldn't make a difference in anyone's life.

"Anyone can make a difference to a hospice patient," said Vince Cummings, Navy veteran and Fresno area hospice volunteer. "Sometimes your visit could be the only visit they get in the end."

Retired from the Navy since 2009, Vince decided to obtain his bachelor's degree. His course of study found him in a position that required him to obtain an internship with volunteer hours.

"Honestly, I was trying to find anything but hospice for volunteering. I just had a misconception of what hospice was about. I sat down with Jan (Martz, Fresno area volunteer coordinator) and she explained it to me, and I realized I had a misconception," said Vince.

"As Jan told me, we are not helping people die; we support them as they die. The one thing that hooked me is that there is a lot of information on birth but not much about the end of life."

In their conversations, Jan also recognized that Vince had a background that would fill an important need, helping veterans through the Vet to Vet Program.

Vince said that most of the veteran patients he visits are older than he is. Many are at the end of life. "But," said Vince, "they still have something to live for. I see pictures of their families and grandchildren, and I am able to talk to them about things that they love and care about."

"For me, it's a mutual exchange. The last guy I visited, I would bring him the news of the world, and he would give life advice. I walked him around the campus in his wheelchair, something the nurses didn't have time to do. For me, it's the veteran status. No vet dies alone. Your time really means something to them."

The bottom line, said Jan, "You can make a difference in someone's life."

## MYTH #4 – I just don't have the time that they need.

"I love that my volunteering time with Optimal is flexible," said Doris Dunham, retired teacher and six-year Bakersfield area volunteer. "It allows me to do other things that I have interest in. Even though I love my volunteer 'work,' I just tell the staff when it doesn't work for me. No problem."

Jan added, "There is no number of hours that someone must commit to as a volunteer." She noted that even at the most advanced stages of care, "the average length of any one visit is less than four hours, but the family that asks for the volunteer can request an amount of time. Sometimes it is just long enough for a caregiver to run some errands."

As for Doris, she generally splits her time between bereavement follow-up and administrative work for the Foundation, usually clocking in 12 to 14 hours per week. But she noted, "Even one to two hours per week is beneficial."

## Opportunities in Santa Clara, Alameda & San Mateo Counties

(408) 207-9222

- ✓ Bilingual speakers, specifically Spanish and Vietnamese
- ✓ South Bay (Gilroy/Morgan Hill) volunteers
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers

## Opportunities in Tulare and Kings Counties

(599) 741-7220

- ✓ Volunteers for Kings County
- ✓ Direct patient support in homes and facilities
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers
- ✓ Bilingual volunteers

### Opportunities in Kern County

(661) 716-4000

- ✓ Direct patient support in homes and facilities
- ✓ Vet to Vet Program volunteers
- ✓ Bilingual volunteers
- ✓ Volunteers for smaller communities such as Delano, Lamont, Wasco, Taft, Lake Isabella

### MYTH #5 – Other people will fill the need.

Regarding the Fresno area, Jan said, “We can always use more volunteers because even though we might have a good number of volunteers in our database, there are only so many active at any one time. And our volunteers’ availability changes so we are always looking for new volunteers.”

Rhonda concurred for the Bakersfield area. She said, “We can never have too many, since only a percentage that volunteer do it longer-term, so we need to have new folks all the time.”

To help fill the need, Optimal advertises, uses social media and sends staff to health fairs and job fairs. Optimal also hosts volunteer orientations in a class setting four times a year.

According to Rhonda, “We can use college and university students who want to be counselors or who are focused on human services, as they can come to us to get more experience. They can learn how to work on their own.”

Each of our service areas has its own priority of needs (see the boxes throughout this article), and the needs are pretty constant.

Many volunteers have said that volunteering has made them grow, and going forward, they are not going to be afraid to help or talk to someone who is dying. You don’t have to solve their problem; you just need to listen. This experience has helped them to be a better mom, wife, son... It shows that we are part of a team, and what you learn you take home with you and apply it there.

To sum it up Jan said, “Volunteers have the heart to do what we want to do, but can’t because our other tasks take us away.”

And couldn’t that be you? Contact us today to find out where you fit in. We need you.

**OPTIMAL**  
HOSPICE FOUNDATION



# Light Up A Life

## Save the date for our Community Celebrations

Please join in one of our uplifting community celebrations to honor and remember loved ones and friends who have been a special part of our lives.

Light Up A Life information will be mailed the first week of November and also can be found on our website: [OptimalHospiceFoundation.com](http://OptimalHospiceFoundation.com)

### BAKERSFIELD

Wednesday, December 2  
6:30 p.m.  
Bakersfield/Crest RV Resort\*  
5025 Wible Road

### BAY AREA

Saturday, November 21  
2:30 p.m.  
Centers for Spiritual Living  
1195 Clark Street, San Jose

### FRESNO

Thursday, December 3  
6:00 p.m.  
Fig Garden Village\*  
Palm & Shaw Avenue

### KERN RIVER VALLEY

Saturday, December 5  
6:00 p.m.  
Kernville Circle Park

### LONG BEACH

Thursday, December 10  
6:00 p.m.  
TBD\*

### MODESTO

Tuesday, December 8  
6:00 p.m.  
Bethel Retirement\*  
2345 Scenic Drive

### PORTERVILLE

Wednesday, December 2  
6:00 p.m.  
Roger S. Good Cancer Center\*  
456 West Putnam Avenue

### STOCKTON

Wednesday, December 9  
6:00 p.m.  
Atria Bayside Landing  
3318 Brookside Road

### TAFT

Thursday, December 10  
6:00 p.m.  
The Historic Fort\*  
915 North 10th Street

### TEHACHAPI

Sunday, December 6  
3:30 p.m.  
Kelcy's  
110 West Tehachapi Blvd

### VISALIA AND TULARE

Tuesday, December 1  
6:00 p.m.  
Café 210 \*  
210 Center Avenue, Visalia

\*Outdoor/partially outdoor event

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The following individuals and organizations generously contributed to Optimal Hospice Foundation from January through June 2015. On behalf of the patients and families we serve, thank you for your support.

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# Golf in The Sun and Under The Stars 2015

The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament presented by Synergy Pharmacy Solutions was held Friday, Sept. 11, 2015, at Stockdale Country Club



and it was a huge success. This fun event began with nine holes of golf in the late afternoon, followed by dinner and then culminated with the final nine holes played in

the dark with glow-in-the-dark golf balls. The Foundation would like to thank all of our sponsors, players, donors and volunteers whose generosity helped us raise over \$22,000 to further our mission.

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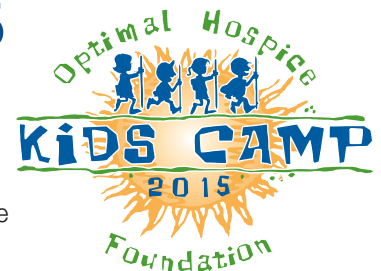
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## Thank you Kids Camp 2015 sponsors and donors



Kids Camp is for children ages 8 to 16 who have lost a loved one in the recent past. Our goal is to provide an opportunity to find healing and peace through games, activities and meeting others who are "just like them."

The 2015 camps were held in July and August at Gergen Ski Ranch, Camp Oakhurst and our new NORCAL Camp at the Taylor Family Foundation at Camp Arroyo. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, this year a record 150 children were able to attend one of the four sessions. The Foundation would like to extend a special thank you to Project Linus and the Kern County Fire Department.

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## FOUNDATION LOCATIONS

### Foundation Office

1315 Boughton Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93308  
(661) 716-8000

### Community Offices

#### Bakersfield

1675 Chester Avenue, #401  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
(661) 716-8000

#### Kern River Valley

6504 Lake Isabella Blvd, #E  
Lake Isabella, CA 93240  
(760) 379-5038

#### Bay Area

3375 Scott Blvd, #410  
Santa Clara, CA 95054  
(408) 207-9220

#### Fresno

6780 North West Avenue, #101  
Fresno, CA 93711  
(559) 320-8000

#### Long Beach

3200 East 19th Street  
Long Beach, CA 90755  
(562) 494-7687

#### Modesto

1101 Sylvan Avenue, #B-10  
Modesto, CA 95350  
(209) 338-9000

#### Stockton

3461 Brookside Road, #A2  
Stockton, CA 95219  
(209) 338-9000

#### Visalia

2439 West Whitendale Avenue, #B  
Visalia, CA 93277  
(559) 334-5120



1315 Boughton Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93308  
(661) 716-8000

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## Support groups available through Optimal Hospice Care

These groups are open to the public and offered free of charge.

### Bakersfield

Tuesdays  
10–11:30 a.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
4600 Stockdale Hwy., Room 4

Thursdays  
6–7:30 p.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
4600 Stockdale Hwy., Room 4

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (661) 371-2102 for info.

### Fresno

Mondays  
6–7:30 p.m.  
Sunrise of Fresno  
7444 N. Cedar Ave.

**Families Affected by Alzheimer's**  
Saturdays  
Somerford Place, 6075 N. Marks Ave.  
Call (559) 320-4000 for info.

### Lake Isabella

Wednesdays  
1–2:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care Office  
6504 Lake Isabella Blvd., Ste. E

### Madera

Wednesdays  
Cedar Creek Senior Living  
Center  
500 N. Westbury Blvd.  
Call (559) 320-4000 for info.

### Modesto

Last Thursday  
4–5:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care  
1101 Sylvan Ave., Ste. B-10

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (209) 338-3000 or Stockton  
(209) 670-8000 for info.

### Porterville

2nd & 4th Thursday  
10:30 a.m.–Noon  
Sierra Hills Retirement Center  
2500 West Henderson

### Santa Clara

Optimal Hospice Care  
3372 Scott Blvd., Ste. 410  
Call for info: (408) 207-9222

### Stockton

Last Friday  
4–5:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care  
3461 Brookside Road, Ste. A2

### Taft

Thursdays  
1–2:30 p.m.  
Chevron Valley Credit Union  
1092 W. Kern St.  
Community Room, outside  
entrance

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (661) 371-2102 for info.

### Tehachapi

Tuesdays  
1:30–3 p.m.  
Tehachapi Senior Citizens Center  
500 East F St.

### Visalia

2nd & 4th Tuesday  
3–4:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care  
2439 W. Whitendale Ave., Ste. B