



Quality of Life, Dignity & Support.

Monday, April 26, 2010

MULTICULTURAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As Thunder Bay celebrates diversity this coming weekend at the annual Folklore Festival, Hospice Northwest wants to promote the value of multiculturalism in hospice care. Many people who seek hospice care come from a variety of ethnic communities.

"We welcome and seek volunteers from different backgrounds and who know languages like Italian, Finnish, Polish, Ukrainian, French, Portuguese, Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibwe, Chinese, Vietnamese," says Terri Kannegiesser, volunteer coordinator for Hospice Northwest.

Kannegiesser says the advantage of pairing a client with a volunteer of the same background and language is obvious. It creates an opportunity for deeper communication and understanding, which can be very meaningful near the end of one's life.

Bob Fenton fully understands this. He's Aboriginal, and has been volunteering at Hospice Northwest for the past two years. He says not only are there differences between cultures, but within as well. "First Nation cultures are very diversified," he explains. "For instance, some are Catholic, some are Protestant, some are traditional. As more Aboriginal people become aware of Hospice Northwest's services, the need will increase."

Volunteer Libby Halvorsen knows her ability to speak Italian is an asset. "Imagine not being able to communicate when you are facing a terminal illness. That's like a double whammy."

Hospice Northwest is launching a recruitment drive this weekend for volunteers who speak a second language and/or come from a multicultural background. The drive coincides with the Thunder Bay Folklore Festival, which runs May 1 to 2, and with the Bayshore Home Health Butterfly Boogie, a Hospice Northwest fundraiser which takes place this year on May 1 to kick off National Hospice Palliative Care Week.

The not-for-profit agency hopes the celebration of different cultures and the national spotlight on palliative care will encourage people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to consider volunteering with Hospice Northwest.

For more information, please call:

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