

Script – Print – 40 Years of Compassionate Care

OSF Hospice - Escanaba was one of the first in the US

It's a celebration of life, but also death - with dignity.

OSF Hospice - Escanaba was the first all-volunteer hospice in Michigan and one of the first overall in the United States.

For many of its years, Dr. Steve Dosh has been the medical director of OSF Hospice - Escanaba. He says it was one of his first roles in medicine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. And he graciously admits it's something that fits to the core of why he is a physician.

"Is to care for those who are in need and certainly in people with terminal illnesses the need is great," says Dr. Steve Dosh, Medical Director of OSF Hospice - Escanaba. "There's physical, emotional, spiritual and social pain associated with that experience."

While the focus of hospice care is to gently and compassionately support a person's end of life care, Dr. Dosh says for the family it not only provides relief, but guidance and direction in the midst of a most troublesome time.

At first hospice was for terminally ill cancer patients, but Dr. Dosh says acceptance of the program is growing, as well as a recognition of its effect.

"There's been gradually a transition to where we're doing more and more types of chronic illness," says Dr. Steve Dosh, Medical Director of OSF Hospice - Escanaba. "And with our aging population of course there are more people who experience the chronic illnesses, so that's been a big part of that."

From its start in 1978, volunteers have been an integral part of the OSF Hospice - Escanaba program's story.

Donna LaPorte has been there from the beginning. She says she liked what she read about hospice efforts in other countries and when there was talk of establishing one in her community she stepped up.

"They enrich my life so much," says Donna LaPorte, a 40-year hospice volunteer. "I got - I got much more than I feel I ever gave. The people, the family members, my people - cause I got really attached to them. And I miss not being able to do it now. But, so many beautiful memories. It's just the best program in the world."

LaPorte was recognized for her 40 years of volunteer service to the program during a recent hospice anniversary gathering.

She will soon experience the compassionate comfort that defined her dedication. She has terminal cancer and is expected to enter hospice.

To date, more than 140 patients have been served by OSF Hospice - Escanaba. To learn more, go to www.osfhealthcare.org.