



HOUSTON HOSPICE
Life Matters

Media Contact: Karla Goolsby
Telephone: 713-677-7118
Email: <mailto:kgoolsby@houstonhospice.org>
Website: www.houstonhospice.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 29, 2016

Personal Experience Brought Volunteer of the Year, Sylvia Valverde, to Houston Hospice

During a recent volunteer shift, Sylvia Valverde was summoned to the dining room of the historic Holcombe mansion that houses the administrative offices of Houston Hospice. Her initial confusion at seeing a cake, flowers and balloons turned to stunned surprise upon learning that the party was in her honor because she had been named Houston Hospice Volunteer of the Year. When she retired from a 33-year career as an educator in 2011, Sylvia knew volunteering with hospice patients and families was what she wanted to do during the next phase of life. A very personal experience prompted her to seek opportunities to help others through Houston Hospice where her empathy and commitment to service have made her a perfect fit. As one of the only nonprofit hospices in Southeast Texas, Houston Hospice relies upon over 250 trained volunteers to help set the tone for the compassionate care patients and families receive.

Sylvia says her biggest surprise about volunteering at Houston Hospice is how much she loves it. “The patients have given me tremendous insight about living life to the fullest and that the dying process is not to be feared. I’ve especially been blessed to give babies and toddlers love and care in their final days when their parents haven’t been able to be present. That has been my most rewarding experience.”

Because she is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish, Sylvia often helps translate for patients and families. She enjoys her conversations and says seeing patients and their loved ones smile is priceless. “I enjoy visiting with the patients and family members and they like knowing that Houston Hospice is very special to me because my mother was a patient there. That experience connects us and lets them know that I have personally experienced hospice care. While every death is different, I can somehow relate and understand what they’re going through.”

Her mother’s experience is what inspired Sylvia to volunteer. She says the care her mother received in 2003 from the nurses, doctors and other staff members made a big impression on her. “I always said I wanted to give back when I had the opportunity. I retired from education in August 2011, and I immediately contacted Houston Hospice and began the training that September. God has blessed my life tremendously and He calls us to be servants—this is why I’m here—to serve.”

Volunteer Manager, Patsy Piner said it wouldn’t be Friday mornings at Houston Hospice without Sylvia Valverde’s lovely smile and sweet spirit. “Whether she is passing out pillowcases to patients, training new volunteers or sharing her delicious homemade goodies with the staff, she is a blessing to everyone she visits. We are so fortunate that she chose to volunteer with us.”

Volunteers are an integral part of nonprofit Houston Hospice’s team; serving patients and families with caring expertise in the Houston Hospice care center, in patients’ homes and in assisted living facilities. To learn more about volunteering at Houston Hospice, call 713-467-7423 or visit www.houstonhospice.org.

Founded in 1980, Houston Hospice has evolved from an alternative, grass roots concept to a leader in hospice care throughout Houston and ten surrounding counties. Houston Hospice, is a 501 (c) (3) organization that is community-based, community-supported and not for profit.

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