



HOUSTON HOSPICE

Life Matters

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Veterans Day: Honoring America's Veterans Includes Meeting Their Unique Needs

Houston Hospice delivering Veteran-centric care to those who served our country

Many Americans do not realize that 1 in 4 of all deaths in the U.S. are Veterans. As the nation honors these American heroes for their military service on Veterans Day, November 11, it's important to remember that they also deserve recognition and compassionate care when dealing with a serious illness.

As a [**We Honor Veterans**](#) participant, Houston Hospice is providing specialized care to Veterans who are facing a life-limiting illness. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs created We Honor Veterans to empower hospice and other healthcare providers across America to meet the unique needs of seriously ill Veterans and their families.

"Through We Honor Veterans we are taking a giant step forward in helping healthcare professionals and volunteers understand and serve Veterans at the end of life," said J. Donald Schumacher, NHPCO president and CEO. "It is time that we step up and acquire the necessary skills and fulfill our mission to serve these men and women with the dignity they deserve." Houston Hospice CEO, Jim Faucett, noted the benefits of the program to patients and families and the organization, "As we've trained to meet the unique needs veterans face at the end of life, our staff has become more aware of all veterans. We've been enriched by seeking out our veteran volunteers and learning their stories, and we're less hesitant to introduce ourselves to other veterans and thank them for their service."

Within the We Honor Veterans program, there are four levels of distinction that hospices can earn based on their involvement with Veteran education and their interaction with the Veterans and their family members that they are caring for. The goal of these levels is to ensure the very best care is being provided to those who have served our country. Houston Hospice is working toward the highest level of participation. It is meeting the specific needs of Veterans by being knowledgeable about the wars in which they served and the associated traumas; such as radiation exposure from atmospheric nuclear weapons tests after World War II, and pulmonary maladies resulting from the oil rig fires of the Gulf War. Houston Hospice is also strengthening its relationship with the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center and offering community outreach educational programs for Veterans' groups about advance care planning, available resources, and care options.

Houston Hospice volunteer, Mike McCardle, began visiting veteran patients 15 years ago. Because he's a veteran, he said patients open up to him about their lives and the emotional burdens they've carried since battle. "I walk in, give my military pedigree, then they give me theirs and we're off and running. They know they don't have to explain. They know I understand." Mike served in Vietnam from 1964-69. He went to war as a young private and left Southeast Asia just five years later as a battle-seasoned Captain in the United States Army. Often, the wives of the veterans he visits have not even heard the stories their husband's share with him. "The biggest surprise is how much I get out of it. I form a bond with these guys. I've met some real characters. I've heard about the Battle of the Bulge, and lots of stories about the South Pacific. I was just mastering my own PTSD and these guys really helped me to know that what I was going through is normal."

As we celebrate our nation's heroes this Veterans Day – and every day of the year – we must not forget that it is never too late to give them a hero's welcome home. Learn more at www.WeHonorVeterans.org.

Houston Hospice was founded in 1980 and is the only community-supported, independent, nonprofit hospice serving Houston and ten surrounding counties. Care teams of doctors, nurses, hospice aides, social workers, chaplains, counselors and trained volunteers provide medical, emotional and spiritual support to patients and their families. To learn more about Houston Hospice, visit www.houstonhospice.org or call 713-467-7423 (713-HOSPICE).

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