

St. Francis hospice offers low-tech, high-touch care for terminally ill



Shari Rudavsky, shari.rudavsky@indystar.com

1:30 p.m. EDT September 18, 2015

New Hospice House on Southside campus offers terminally ill patients a homelike environment for care.



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(Photo: Kelly Wilkinson / The Star)

When her mother-in-law was in the final months of her life, Cecilia Quade invited her into her home.

Alice Quade demurred, not wanting to burden her son and daughter-in-law. She died in an impersonal nursing home room in 2001, but her experience inspired Cecilia Quade to embark on a quest to provide others with a homelike environment in which they can spend their final days.

The effort that Quade started about a decade ago culminates this month with the opening of Franciscan St. Francis's Hospice House, located on the southeast corner of the main Indianapolis campus. The Hospice House offers everything for end-of-life care that Quade found lacking in typical hospital or nursing home

settings.

As director of end-of-life care for Franciscan St. Francis, Quade and her colleagues would strive to make a dying person's moments as calm as possible by trying to minimize the lights, beeping machines and hubbub of the hospital, but there was only so much they could do.

"We would try as hard as we could in the hospital to make it homey, but it was still the hospital," Quade said.

The Hospice House's 12 private rooms/suites have low lights, enough space for family members to spend the night, and no continually beeping monitors. If needed, there's space to add four more rooms. Two of the rooms will be available for bariatric patients.



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A \$10.3 million fundraising campaign over the past decade helped make the building a reality. An additional \$2 million is still needed to create an endowment for the future.

Hospice House stays will all be self-pay, with a nightly charge of about the rate of a nursing home, Quade said. The building will open to patients on November 2.

Some patients will come if their pain symptoms cannot be managed at home, but they prefer a less clinical setting than a hospital. Others may come for a few days for respite care if their regular caregiver needs a break. While some may have longer stays, the majority will be on the shorter side, Quade said.

"This is truly reserved for when they cannot be at home," she said.

Each room has a small private patio, two televisions so that patients and family members can watch different programs, and a small refrigerator. Linens are stored in wooden cabinets in the hallways to lend more of a residential, than institutional feel.

The rooms are defined just as much by what they don't have, however. There are no monitors, no medical equipment surrounding the bed.

"The hospice philosophy is more low-tech, high-touch," said Kristina Basicker, hospice director.

While each room has its own shower, there's also a spa room with a spacious tub where patients who wish can enjoy a bath or bask in aromatherapy. The facility features a large kitchen, where visitors can reheat food for their family members or friends who are patients or sit down and have a private meal.



The facility also has a library and a community room, where bereavement support groups can gather. Families can participate in bereavement services for up to 13 months after a person's death.

A small chapel features stained glass and statuary from Franciscan St. Francis Health's Beech Grove facility, which closed three years ago. The chapel has enough space in the rear that a patient can be wheeled in for services in his or her hospital bed, if needed.

Although the details are still being worked out, it's possible that the chapel could host funerals or even weddings if need be, Quade said.

Throughout the building, special touches exist. One of Quade's former colleagues created a quilt a few years ago as she went through treatment for cancer and gave it to Quade before her death in 2007. The quilt now hangs on the wall in the Hospice House.

And near the housekeeping room hangs a plaque with the name of Alice Quade, Cecilia Quade's mother-in-law, who was a housekeeper herself.

"She didn't want to come to our house, but she would have come here," Quade said.

Call Star reporter Shari Rudavsky at (317) 444-6354. Follow her on Twitter: @srudavsky.

Open house

The Franciscan St. Francis Hospice House, at 8414 Franciscan Lane on the southeast corner of the Indianapolis campus, will hold a public open house from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday.

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