



Compassion Quarterly

Connecting Community Through Care

MORE DAYS WITH MEANING: WHY EARLIER HOSPICE MATTERS

Sooner is Stronger

Hospice. It's a scary word for many, and a topic most people want to avoid. Some fear that if they say the word out loud, it somehow makes the reality come faster. But hospice is not a death sentence. It's not only for the last three days of life, and it's not something anyone should be afraid of.

Hospice is simply one thing: support. Extra support for the patient, their family, and the medical staff already involved in their care.

Choosing hospice doesn't mean giving up hope, it means redefining it. Maybe a patient's goal is to make it to their granddaughter's graduation, to sit on the porch one more summer evening, or simply to feel comfortable enough to enjoy time with the people they love. While we cannot control the progression of a disease, we can help manage the symptoms that come with it. The earlier we are able to help, the easier it is to manage those symptoms instead of constantly trying to catch up with them.

When symptoms like pain or shortness of breath are controlled, people tend to do more living. They are able to spend better quality time with their loved ones, with fewer trips to the hospital, fewer admissions, and less time spent in the emergency room.

With guidance from your physician and our interdisciplinary group, we work to help patients remain at home, wherever home may be for them. Our goal is to provide the medical support needed so patients and families can focus on what truly matters: moments together, meaningful time, and making the days ahead count.

At Hospice of Dickinson County, we do everything we can to ensure both the patient and their family feel supported throughout the hospice journey. Our team includes a compassionate social worker who can help connect families with resources, home health aides who assist with personal care and hygiene needs, and dedicated volunteers who offer companionship and a comforting presence.

Many families who have walked this path before share a similar reflection: they wish they had started hospice sooner. When hospice care begins, caregivers often feel a sense of relief. They no longer feel like they are navigating everything alone. Instead, they have a team beside them, and access to a nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if something comes up.



**THE SOONER HOSPICE BEGINS, THE STRONGER THE SUPPORT.
SOONER IS STRONGER.**

Donate Day

DICKINSON COUNTY COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Donate Day 2026 was a wonderful success in our second year participating!

Thanks to this incredible annual event hosted by the Community Foundation of Dickinson County and our generous donors, we raised \$2,821.40! This is a huge increase from last year, which was also our first year, totaling around \$850.00.

Even more exciting, Dickinson County showed up in a big way, raising a record-breaking \$230,549.65 for 42 nonprofits.

Don't forget, donations are matched \$0.50 on the dollar up to \$5,000, making every gift go even further! Thank you to everyone who donated, shared, and encouraged others to give. Your support makes a meaningful difference in our community.

"Putting myself in their shoes and imagining what it took to ask me for what they needed. Or what would I think, feel or behave if I found myself in a similar situation. It helps me show up with attention and care even when I feel tired, or I feel selfish or I have other things on my mind"
-Michele Griffith, MSW

"Compassionate care means not only taking care of the patient's diagnosis but taking care of the whole human being. Even if that entails going out of our way to make sure they have the things they need to succeed!"
-Kristen Hajek, RN

"Compassionate care means caregivers that take their time, look you in the eye, write down things that are a concern for the patient, then address each one back to them stating something like " I heard you say..." so that they feel validated and understood. Follow through with things mentioned on previous visits and looking forward to the next visit for what they will need for the next visit. Listening ears are so important, being heard is so important!"- Nancy Brandt, RN

Recognizing the whole person, their experiences, values, and identity, and using that understanding to guide how I support them." -Dani Gantner, Director/RN

Question of the Quarter

What does compassionate care mean to you?

"Compassionate care to me means you're there for the patient regardless of financial status, home conditions, personal history etc. you're there to pour all of you into someone who needs you because that's who you are not only as a nurse but as a person too" -Kylie Engle LPN

"Compassionate care is taking the time to be present with our patients. Not just always a medical visit to check a bunch of boxes on an assessment form. Getting to know the person, building those relationships and gaining trust. Finding a way to support our patients and families, so they feel at ease with the dying process or with their current health situation."
-Shannon Walters, RN

"Do good for others. It will come back in unexpected ways."
-Elise Clore, HHA

Compassion care is caring for others without expecting anything in return. Do your best."
-Blanca Alaniz HHA

"Compassionate care is treating someone mind, spirit, and body, all while putting their wishes and comfort at the forefront, and doing everything we ethically can to ease suffering" -Cece Murphy, LPN

\$54,100 RECEIVED FROM COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF DICKINSON COUNTY

On February 5th, 2026, a check was presented to Home Health and Hospice of Dickinson County in the amount of \$54,100.00.

This was made possible through an endowment fund that began as a legacy gift and was invested with the Community Foundation of Dickinson County. This fund provides ongoing support, ensuring compassionate care for individuals and families across Dickinson County today and for generations to come.

This picture features a group of home health and hospice staff, hospice volunteers, and Elizabeth Weese from the Community Foundation of Dickinson County. *Pictured left holding the check.*



Caregivers Corner

Why Saying Yes to Help is a Superpower

Sustains Long-Term Care

Caregiving is often a long journey. **Saying yes to help isn't "slacking off"** or handing over your responsibilities to someone else. It's acknowledging that **you may need a break**, and no matter how amazing you are, none of us have superpowers. We all need sleep, rest, and time to care for ourselves both physically and emotionally.

Improves Quality of Care

If you never take a break, exhaustion eventually sets in. **Fatigue can lower the quality of care** faster than anything else in the home. **Accepting help isn't losing control of the care** your loved one receives. It's making sure you can continue meeting the high standards you've set for them.

Shows Emotional Maturity and Wisdom

Recognizing that you cannot do everything alone requires maturity and humility. It shows that you **value the well-being of your loved** one more than the idea that you have to do everything yourself.

Fosters Connection and Community

Caregiving can be isolating and lonely. Sharing the experience creates opportunities for friends and family to step in, feel helpful, and stay connected. Allowing others to **help strengthens your support system and reminds you that you're not alone in this journey.**

Protects Your Health

When you're focused entirely on someone else's well-being, your own needs can easily be pushed aside. Over time, this can **increase the risk of physical exhaustion, burnout, and mental health struggles.** Accepting **help isn't optional**, it's necessary to protect your health.

Accepting help **doesn't mean you are failing.**

It **doesn't mean you are giving up** control.

And it **isn't a burden to others.**

Sometimes the strongest thing a caregiver can do is simply say **yes** to support.



HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE OF DICKINSON COUNTY
PRESENTS

Caregiver Connections

"A circle of understanding, strength, and renewal."

Join us for a welcoming space where caregivers can connect, share experiences, and find support. Each session offers encouragement, practical tips, and resources to help you navigate the challenges of caregiving.

Join our Caregiver Support Group
sessions on the first and third
Tuesday of every month.

Time: 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Location: 1111 N Brady St., Abilene

Caring for you.

At the Office

NEW TO MHS: MICHELE GRIFFITH, MSW

BY TAYLOR KNAUSS, HOSPICE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

If you've seen a new face around the office or on our social media, it's probably Michele Griffith, MSW. Michele joined the team in January and has already dove in headfirst with patients, families, and bereavement care.

She was drawn to hospice out of curiosity about the wide range of services offered to patients and families. "I was intrigued to be a part of a meaningful end of life for someone and their family. When my family first faced terminal illness, I was 10 years old, and I had a lot of questions, but it felt intrusive to ask them. I now see the value of open communication and transparency so people can have peace of mind. I believe it is our birthright to be at peace during the death process."

Raised in Florence, Kansas, Michele is no stranger to rural life and understands the importance of community connections when working with patients. "Being human is the best quality we can express to each other. Being a listener allows a person to share. Being myself allows patients and families to be at ease with themselves, too."

Social workers hold a special role on the hospice team, providing emotional support for the entire family. "The hospice journey is a personalized journey. Our team works closely with each family to provide what they need. I hear it during our bereavement calls. You would think visiting with someone who lost their loved one six months ago would be heavy work, but often they share how the personalized care our staff provided helped them through their grief. Sometimes they share funny memories about their loved one and we laugh. It reminds me what can happen when we are really there for each other."

She also values the way hospice connects families with the support they need. "Some families need more contact, so volunteers are referred to them. Some patients have spiritual questions, so pastoral care is involved. Hospice becomes a point of contact so that no matter what arises, patients and caregivers have a resource available 24/7. That helps manage many of the unknowns and stress caregivers face."

Outside of work, Michele enjoys painting abstracts and writing. The outdoors is her calming place, and she enjoys walking, biking, and hiking. She is very family-centered, spending time with her mother, who recently moved into a retirement home, and her two brothers. She also appreciates a smooth cup of fair-trade organic coffee or green tea with a classic book, especially Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Michele is also a longtime fan of the Star Wars franchise. It was the first movie she saw in theaters, and she admits she "fell head over heels for Han Solo." What young girl didn't?

To wrap up our interview, I asked Michele what she is most excited about in serving Dickinson County. Her answer was right up my alley. "I am excited about making hospice a safe conversation. Hospice means quality of life. It means our loved ones suffer less and connect more with the people around them. Sometimes people do so well with hospice they even come off services. The stereotype that keeps people from having the beautiful care hospice provides needs to be broken down."

At Home Health and Hospice of Dickinson County, we are always working to reshape the conversation around hospice. It isn't the loss of hope, it's reframing it. We're excited to have Michele on our team and look forward to introducing her to more of our community.



Building a Path of Remembrance

Our goal for 2026 is to create a peaceful space where families can come to reflect, remember, and honor the loved ones they have lost. A Memorial Garden is currently in the works at Home Health and Hospice.

In conjunction with this project, we are launching our “Bricks R Us” fundraiser. This ongoing opportunity allows community members to purchase an engraved brick in remembrance of someone special. Bricks may honor anyone, regardless of their connection to our hospice agency, and will become part of the memorial garden pathway.

Each brick will help create a lasting tribute while supporting the care and compassion our team provides to patients and families.

Interested in purchasing a brick?

Please contact the Home Health and Hospice office for more information.



What's Coming Up?

- GriefShare continues to meet every Wednesday until May 6th. Sessions take place at the Home Health and Hospice Abilene location at 2 pm!
- Herington has a new grief group, Life After Loss, meeting every Thursday from 4-5 pm.
- In April, we celebrate a week of Volunteer Appreciation! We will celebrate our amazing hospice volunteers and the incredible contributions they make to our agency!
- The Longest Day, a day to bring awareness to Alzheimer's and raise money for Alzheimer's research! Last year, Home Health and Hospice of Dickinson County raised a little over \$250.00. We hope to surpass that this year!



MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM
Home Health & Hospice of Dickinson County
HERINGTON | [Sibley Regional Health Center](#)



Life After Loss

A Community Grief Support Group

A supportive space to share, listen and heal with other community members.

No Cost

Starting March 5th, 2026
Thursdays from 4-5pm

Home Health and Hospice Office
11 N. Broadway
Herington, KS 67449
Facilitated by Michele Griffith, MSW

Contact us
785-258-3611
hospice@mhsks.org

Small acts, BIG IMPACT

Hospice volunteers may not be able to change the whole world, but they can change someone's day. They don't have superpowers. They simply show up, listen, and care. Sometimes it's a short visit. Sometimes it's a kind conversation. Sometimes it's giving a caregiver a moment to breathe.

These small acts create a powerful impact for patients and families during some of life's most meaningful moments. You can be that difference.

Become a hospice volunteer. Your time could mean the world to someone.

Contact Taylor Knauss, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, 785-263-6630



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MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM
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ABILENE  Salina Regional Health Center