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New hospice site in Georgetown

Office here is county agency's first branch outside Austin

By MARY BETH PINNELL

Patients and volunteers of Hospice Austin have a new branch in Georgetown to call home.

Since Hospice Austin-Williamson County opened in April, the office has served as a central place for the nursing staff, case-workers and volunteers to connect with the organization in Georgetown. The Georgetown office is their first branch office outside of Austin, although they have served patients in Williamson county cities for more than 20 years.

Marjorie Mulanax, Hospice Austin executive director, said she hopes the new office will increase visibility for their services and therefore increase the number of patients and families they can help in the area.

"We're really excited and thrilled about the opportunity to be there because it's a great community," Ms. Mulanax said.

Residents are invited to join the Hospice Austin-Williamson County's staff at their open house Thursday, June 14 at 1101 Williams Drive, suite 102. The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 5:15 p.m. Light refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Hospice provides in-home end-of-life medical, mental health and spiritual care to terminally ill

patients and their families across Travis, Williamson, Bastrop, Hays and Caldwell counties. They are the only nonprofit hospice program serving the area.

Faye Wright, the new office's branch manager and nursing staff supervisor, said she thinks the local office will be a benefit to the community.

"I think that to have people live in and work in the area where they are providing care is a great advantage for the staff and the patients," Ms. Wright said.

Each of the registered nurses, social workers and chaplains seeing patients in the area is a resident of Williamson County, she said, giving it a sort of welcoming feel.

"We really tried to make it like a home and make it warm for employees who come in here," she said.

She plans to use the office as a regular meeting place for local and hospice staff members, a place for volunteer programming, teambuilding and eventually bereavement counseling.

Hospice volunteers such as Georgetown resident Emily Northrop, who have worked in the area for Hospice Austin before the new office, are looking forward to the local office helping them stay connected with the greater organization.

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HOSPICE

Agency always needs volunteers

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"I'm going to feel more connected with Hospice Austin now that they will have a home in Georgetown," Dr. Northrop, a environmental studies professor at Southwestern University, said.

She has volunteered with the organization for six years after trying to find a volunteer opportunity that she felt useful and comfortable doing.

It's "an opportunity to get outside myself and my little concerns, because the patients and families are dealing with something much bigger and much more profound,"

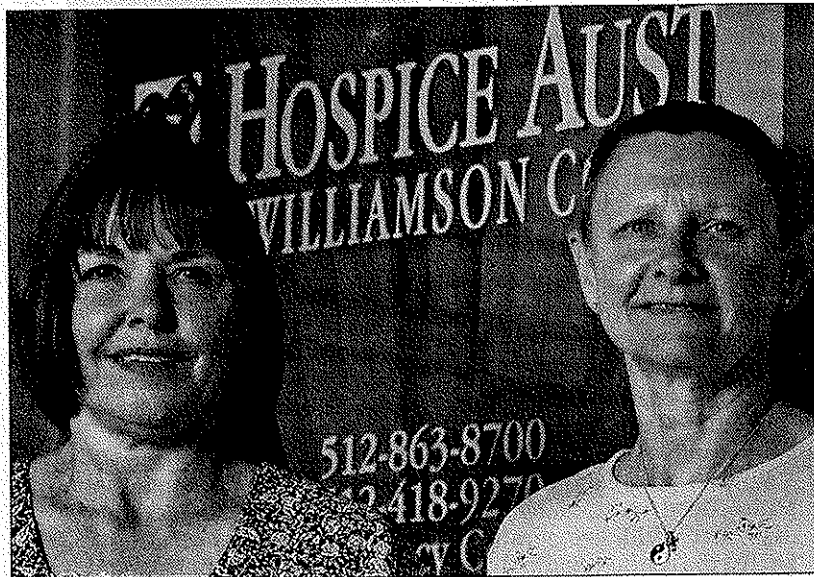
she wrote of her experience.

With the new office, Dr. Northrop also looks forward to having a stronger network of Hospice volunteers locally.

There are currently more than 35 volunteers living in Williamson County, but the organization is always looking for more people interested in visiting patients, helping in the office and during special events.

Ms. Mulanax said they are especially looking for people living in more rural areas, and volunteer coordinator Gayle Smith from the Austin office said they plan to offer volunteer training sessions at least once a year in the Georgetown office to be more convenient.

For more information about the open house or Hospice Austin-Williamson County services, call the Georgetown office at 863-8700 or visit www.hospiceaustin.org.



Karl Anderson

Faye Wright, left, is branch manager and Emily Northrop is a volunteer at Hospice Austin-Williamson County, which plans an open house June 14.