

Bright Lights Around the Bay Donna Stone



DONNA STONE

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A jack-of-all-trades, a chief cook and bottle washer, or as she calls herself, the house mother, Donna Stone's official title is the manager of the Guest Wing at Talbot Hospice House. Located on Cynwood Drive in Easton, the Talbot Hospice House, with assistance from the community, offers hope, support and services to patients and their families facing end-of-life issues. Hospice House services are provided for free in the patient's home, nursing home, retirement facility or in the home-like setting of the Guest Wing on the Hospice House campus. In July the organization celebrated the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Guest Wing.

On any given day Stone can be found in the Guest Wing visiting with patients and families, working on patient care plans, scheduling and supervising health care staff and volunteers, planning programs and trips for residents, ordering supplies, attending to facility maintenance and even cooking if one of the volunteer cooks can't. For Stone it is an honor to provide end-of-life support to residents in the Guest Wing and their families and she does whatever it takes to administer compassionate, quality services.

Originally from Millersville, the Goldsboro resident and mother of daughter Jacquelyn brings to Talbot Hospice House five years of experience as a hospice aid with Hospice of Chesapeake. With that organization she conducted home visits and provided personal care to hospice patients as well as family education and support. As a patient care technician at Anne Arundel Hospital she provided skilled care in the oncology department and she has taken nursing courses at Anne Arundel Community College.

But Stone is not all work and no play. Horses are her passion. She owns three and cares for them on her 15-acre farm. She rides several times a month for relaxation. Stone also rides with the Maryland Rough Riders in the St. Michaels Halloween and Christmas parades. She also participates in various horseback riding exercises with local drill teams in shows such as the Tuckahoe Outlaw Days held on Labor Day weekend in early September.

She likes ice cream too. When I interviewed Stone she was arranging a day trip for a Guest Wing family to visit Oxford to enjoy some ice cream by the water.

BLN: What is the mission of Hospice House and how has it grown over the last 10 years?

DS: The Talbot Hospice House Foundation offers hope, compassionate support and services to all members of our diverse community. Our services respond to the needs of persons diagnosed with life-limiting illness or facing end-of-life issues and their families and friends. We provide patient/family care, community education and advocacy. An interdisciplinary team of professionals, volunteers and staff provide knowledge, compassion and practical help so that patients and families feel cared-for, comforted and supported.

The need for our services has increased since the Hospice was founded in 1981 to assist families in the care of their loved ones at home. As demands for services grew, the board and staff saw the need for a facility. In 1998 the Talbot Hospice House opened on Cynwood Drive with a Guest Wing that supports six guest rooms, seating areas, gardens, meeting rooms and office space for staff and administration.

BLN: What is the purpose of the Guest Wing at Talbot Hospice House?

DS: The Guest Wing provides a comfortable home-like environment for Talbot County hospice patients who can no longer be cared for in their own homes as they approach end-of-life. Individualized care and attention are provided to guests by professionals and hospice volunteers, 24 hours a day, every day of the year, without charge. Our six individual rooms have private baths, TV/cable access, beautiful garden views, patios, a chapel, a dining area, a meeting room and a family room. Quite often one of our volunteers stops by to play the piano and there are usually beautiful, fresh flowers brightening every room. Transportation is also offered to residents as well as programs and trips, such as the one to get ice cream.

Most of our residents are terminally ill with life-limiting illnesses and have a prognosis of six months or less to live. We see patients with heart disease, lung disease, AIDS and other illnesses besides cancer. We have had a few guests who were admitted to Hospice House and were then discharged after receiving our wonderful care.

Since its opening the Guest Wing has served over 445 guests and their families. In the future we are looking at expanding to meet the ever-increasing needs of the community.

BLN: How is Hospice House staffed between professionals and volunteers and what are your volunteer opportunities and needs?

DS: Talbot Hospice House employs a staff of 12 and currently has a base of 310 volunteers. We have a dedicated board of directors and partner with Shore Home Care Hospice for medical services (hospice nurses and social workers). We also work with other social workers, nurses and home health aides as well as the Regional Cancer Center. Members of the community visit, make monetary and other donations and volunteer. The Friends of Hospice present the yearly Festival of Trees in November to raise money for our services.

Three of our staff members have been certified in Hospice and Palliative Care. Most others have worked in nursing facilities or hospitals. Continuing education in-services are held throughout the year as well as volunteer training 18-hour hospice training and an additional eight-hour hands-on training in the Guest Wing. Another training session is being planned for the fall.

Hospice volunteers help to provide personal and supportive care including companionship, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, grocery shopping, playing music, gardening, arranging appointments, staffing the reception desk and arranging fresh flowers. They are an indispensable part of our team. The delicious aroma in the air when you arrived is from the cooking of a dish of fresh tomatoes and summer squash, donated by and cooked by volunteers.

We always need all types of volunteers and just now I particularly need some strong

volunteers who are able to help with lifting and moving supplies and furniture. Please contact Talbot Hospice Foundation at 410-822-6681 or www.talbothospice.org to volunteer, make a donation or to learn more about our programs.

"Bright Lights Around the Bay" is a feature of the Chesapeake Business Ledger. The columnist, Bonna L. Nelson, is a Bay area writer. Nelson wants to know more about your business "bright lights." She can be contacted at the Ledger.