Compassionate Care

NOVA—Healer of Hearts

Sweet, sassy and soulful. That’s Nova, Healer of Hearts. Nova, licensed and insured through Therapy Dogs International and titled through the American Kennel Club, is one of Solvay Hospice House’s therapy dogs.

Nova was introduced to Solvay by College of St. Scholastica graduate student Jack Lee. During an internship at the Franciscan Health Center on Park Point, Jack discovered a passion for hospice and a deep sense of responsibility to be with people at one of their most vulnerable times. And so the two of them—Jack and Nova—began volunteering at Solvay.

Because of her size—Nova is a fluffy 120 pounds—assisting residents at the bedside can be difficult, but she’s found another important niche to fill. Eighty percent of her time is spent with families; the other ten percent is divided among residents and staff, “just kind of hanging out and waiting for a resident who wants a visit or a family member who is lounging in one of the living rooms. Solvay nursing staff is best at determining where we go,” says Jack. Nova engages people with her eyes. Family members and staff plop down with her on the floor where she easily finds all the attention she’s looking for, reciprocating with a sense of gentle genuineness. “Nova is huge,” says Deb, Solvay’s Administrative Assistant, “but she’s a big teddy bear and as soft as a feather.”

“For me,” says Jack, “Nova’s success lies in taking individuals’ minds off their ailments, whatever they may be, for a period of time while at the same time decreasing their anxiety or depression. My hope for Nova is that she will continue to provide love and support to all those individuals she encounters as well as being a support for me in my own self-care as a social worker.”

Jack will graduate this fall with a degree in clinical social work. He plans to specialize in animal-assisted therapy. Nova, who’s just 21 months old, will graduate with a THDA, Therapy Dog Advanced in the next month or so.

For more information, contact Solvay Hospice House at (218) 529-3400.
Hospice—The Value of Early Enrollment

Hospice misinformation, coupled with a general discomfort of talking about end-of-life care, can prevent families from taking advantage of available hospice services. Two studies point to the importance of selecting hospice care as soon as possible:

“Family Perspectives on Aggressive Cancer Care Near the End of Life” (Wright, 2016) reveals that family members of older Medicare-covered patients who died of lung or colorectal cancer felt that earlier enrollment in hospice was associated with better end-of-life care. This research also supports the benefits of advance care planning consistent with the preferences of patients.

“Place of Death: Correlations With Quality of Life of Patients With Cancer and Predictors of Bereaved Caregivers’ Mental Health” (Wright, 2010) suggests that interventions aimed at decreasing end-of-life hospitalizations or increasing hospice utilization may enhance not just the patient’s quality-of-life, but also the caregiver’s. Caregivers show a reduced likelihood of mental health problems when their loved ones die in hospice care.

While both studies suggest a need for further hospice-related research, we know that a dedicated interdisciplinary team of health and social service professionals, like those at Solvay Hospice House, are specifically trained to provide social and emotional support, pain management, physical therapy, grief counseling and time for families to join together to focus on one another. These services are offered to anyone enrolled in hospice care at Solvay Hospice House regardless of their circumstances or medical provider.

They dropped everything for a good cause

The Duluth Playhouse – The Underground’s production of Calendar Girls was a smashing success, selling out immediately and performing for a packed house for each show.

A special shout out to the cast and crew, as they dropped everything for a good cause when they created and sold their own calendar, with 100 percent of proceeds being donated to Solvay Hospice House.

A Chance to Watch What I Wanna Watch

No one at the end of life deserves fuzzy reception. That’s why we’re seeking your help. Now that Solvay Hospice House has been open 10 years, televisions and CD/Clock/Radios in each of Solvay’s 12 patient rooms must be replaced. New TVs will allow residents to stream 12 straight hours of Gunsmoke, relive the Bogart/Bergman love affair in Casablanca or watch non-stop Carol Burnett.

Spaces were specifically designed for these components so size requirements and hook-ups are pretty exact. Rather than purchasing specific components, you can donate dollars to purchase a television or Bluetooth/CD/Clock/Radio.

$268.88 will buy one smart TV for a total of 12 TV’s at $3,226.56

$100 will buy one Bluetooth/CD/Clock/Radio for a total of 12 at $1,200.00

To donate to the Watch What I Wanna Watch Fund, use the enclosed envelope or to make your gift or go online at mdfoundation.org and check Watch What I Wanna Watch.

What does the Solvay Hospice House staff like best about Solvay?

“I truly enjoy everything about Solvay Hospice House. One hears of the great reputation that Solvay has in providing end-of-life care; working here as part of this team has allowed me to see why. Our staff, volunteers, providers and the Foundation are truly advocates in meeting the wants and needs of our patients and families.”

—Kevin Rodland
Solvay Nurse Manager

mdfoundation.org