



WE HONOR VETERANS

Heart of Hospice, Hood River, Oregon: Level Four Partner Successes and Challenges as Shared by Pam Chandler

Successes:

- Setting up our Vet to Vet Volunteer program – We were able to combine with the current Volunteer program at the Oregon Veterans Home. We met with volunteers to find out if anyone was interested in becoming a volunteer for our Veteran Hospice patients. We had 5 volunteers sign up. The Veterans home ran the volunteers through their program, did the background checks, etc and then we were able to give them the hospice volunteer program. Currently all 5 have 2 patients each and it is working very well for us.



- Our celebration of honor for our Veterans program includes the hospice team assigned to that patient and a presentation with the patient's family present at their bedside. Each Veteran is given a service blanket representing their branch of service served, with an embroidered message from Hospice stating "Heart of Hospice thanks you for your service". The patients and family love the blankets as this is something they use every day. We have seen them hung at funerals, placed in the coffins with the patient and family members carrying them at the funeral. We also present the patient with a US flag in a stand to place on the bedside table.

- We did a presentation of a photograph by one of our Hospice youth volunteers to be hung in the entry way at the Veterans Home thanking all for their service.

- Currently 39% of our patients are Veterans; we have a monthly meeting with our local service officer and all organizations that have Veterans care so we can network and get referrals to necessary programs

when needed.

- Our hospice is very active in this program and we have quarterly education updates on Veteran programs. This month we will receive an in-service from Dignity Memorial who handles most of the burial ceremonies at Willamette Cemetery.
- Our Veteran's brochure turned out well and we are proud to hand this out in our community and to our facilities.

Challenges:

- Being one of the first hospices on the west coast to achieve this level, there was no one moving along through the process at the same time that we could bounce ideas off of. The Oregon/Southwest group, lead by Ryan Weller of the Portland VA Center, was working with hospices that still were on level one and had no idea of the needs to move forward with our organization. At this time, we have not been participating, as the group continues to focus on those who are still trying to achieve the different levels. This does not give us a forum to continue the level four care that we need. NHPCO hosted a call with the level four groups and this was very helpful.
- We were disappointed that the Veterans programs in the area were not informed of the **We Honor Veterans** process. When we met with the administrative staff at the Oregon Veterans Home, they had no idea and were not sure about participating in the program. We are still working with the process as they have not been given information from the VA hospital where they have their contacts.