

HOSPICE

One Day at a Time

Celebrating patients' lives, no matter how much time they have left, is the mission of Crater Community Hospice.



Talking about end-of-life care can be difficult for most families. Zach Holt, CEO of Crater Community Hospice (CCH) in Petersburg, Virginia, knows this from professional and personal experiences. Yet, he encourages people to have these conversations sooner rather than later. The more attention given to advance care directives, he says, the more time there is to celebrate each day of a patient's life.



Zach Holt, CEO

"Too often we meet families faced with end-of-life decisions but not prepared for them," he says. "This can lead to a delay in hospice care. That's why I always say you can never have the conversation too early—but you can have it too late."

Patient-designed Care Plans

Small and community based, CCH is the only locally owned nonprofit hospice in the area. They run their own thrift shop and care for every patient equally, regardless of their ability to pay. "We're not interested in growing the biggest agency

in Virginia; rather, we strive to be the best care provider in the small market we serve," says Holt.

At the heart of CCH's mission is a commitment to individualized care plans. Rather than tell patients what they should be doing, CCH nurses and doctors

take the opposite approach. "We ask our patients what's important to them," says Holt. "With their input, we develop realistic care plans that help them achieve their goals for the next six months—whether a goal is attending a loved one's wedding or showing up for Christmas with the family."

To honor patients' wishes, CCH provides services such as physical therapy, so they can stay mobile for longer, and in-home respite care to support the caregivers of patients who choose to remain at home. Sometimes it's the smallest actions that make the biggest impact. Holt recalls when a patient who'd eaten healthy his entire life expressed a desire to try a Big Mac for the first time. "So I got him a Big Mac," says Holt. Hardly typical medical advice, but for experienced hospice providers like the team at CCH, it was the right prescription.

CCH's We Honor Veterans program (pictured left), which hosts private and public pinning ceremonies several times a year for their veteran patients and the community, is another illustration of its compassionate, individualized approach to care. The service is especially poignant for the growing number of Vietnam War veterans now in hospice, many of whom were scorned rather than celebrated when they returned home after serving. "We're committed to training our team to better care for these veterans, regardless of where they are behaviorally and financially," says Holt. "So many of them have never been thanked for their service."

At Crater Community Hospice, programs and services like these help make each day count for every patient. "Our patients have life-limiting illnesses," Holt says. "Today is very important, but tomorrow is very important, too."



Celebrating Life Every Day

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