



# Florida State University

## ARF News Special Feature

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## Some Thoughts on Volunteering and a Consideration of Big Bend Hospice

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First of all, for the newly retired, it is important to give yourself about a year from the date of your retirement before making any commitments. Often people assume retirement means having all the time in the world, but soon start asking themselves, “how did I do all of this and work full time?” This may be a result of taking up new hobbies, traveling to places on your bucket list, or helping families and friends with their to-do lists, errands, and even babysitting (grandchildren.) It usually takes a year of going through all the seasons and holidays before you get into a routine. Then you can determine how much time you do have to volunteer.

Next, ask yourself how you want to offer that time? Can you commit to doing something a few hours each week or once a month? Would you rather keep your options open and be “on call”, helping when needed? Maybe you like structure and want a specific assignment at a specific day and time each week, or you’re results-driven and would prefer to work on a project that has a specific deadline

Finally, know your passion. Offering one’s time can be more important than making a financial contribution. Make sure you understand and believe in the organization’s mission. The best way to determine if volunteering for a specific nonprofit is right for you is to ask

yourself whether you advocate for them in your community. You want to dedicate your time to something you not only feel, but knows makes a difference.

## **So, you've decided that you're ready to volunteer.**

### **Now what?**

Big Bend Hospice (BBH) is a great place to start. No matter how you answered the above questions, there is a volunteer opportunity for everyone. There are numerous, simple, yet powerful ways to serve as a BBH Volunteer and every experience is as unique as the person donating their time.

When most people think about the role of a hospice volunteer, they think of sitting at the bedside of someone during the last hours of life. This role is not for everyone and most are not comfortable doing this type of service. But these "Vigil Volunteers" make up only 15% of the entire BBH volunteer corps.

A majority of BBH volunteers provide companionship to active and alert patients. Direct Patient Volunteers serve wherever the patient calls home. They provide emotional, spiritual, and physical support to patients and families; reading, watching a favorite television show, and taking walks. Volunteers help patients write a life review; play games; help with shopping; meal preparation; or give assistance with light housekeeping. Direct Patient Care Volunteers can also provide transportation, and run errands.

Another vital service BBH volunteers provide is respite for caregivers, allowing them to get out of the home. Studies have shown that one out of four primary caregivers develops an illness or dies while taking care of a loved one. BBH volunteer will sit with patients while the caregiver runs errands, visits friends, or goes to their own doctor's appointment.

Direct Patient Volunteers also go in to Assisted Living Facilities and area Nursing Homes. It's easy to select a facility near you and visit hospice patients once a week. Having a second set of eyes is always appreciated by the family and BBH staff.

For those with a clerical background, Administrative Volunteers are needed to help in every department. This doesn't just include filing, copying, and data entry. But volunteers are needed to help in the Admissions Office and Medical Records Department. Comfort Call Volunteers make calls to patients and families to ensure they are getting the services they need. Special Event Volunteers help with local fundraisers and serve as advocates in their communities.

Volunteer. However, Veteran volunteers are used to help with Vet to Vet visits because sometimes a veteran will only open up to a fellow veteran. These visits provide an outlet for discussing military events or situations that happened and can help provide closure to patients.

Bereavement Volunteers are generally Direct Patient Care Volunteers who want to continue a relationship with a family after their patient has passed away. Bereavement Volunteers make home visits or phone calls to those grieving the loss of a loved one; assist the Bereavement Coordinator with Grief and Loss Support Groups as well as help with clerical duties and record keeping. The Caring Tree is a Bereavement Program specifically designed for children and teens. Volunteers are needed each year to help at the annual grief and loss retreats - Camp Woe Be Gone and Teen Woe Be Gone.

There are also ways for those with specific talents to volunteer at BBH. Handcrafters make lap quilts or red, white, and blue afghans that are given to the patients. Tea Time volunteers bake delicious goods and serve them to families and guests at the Margaret Z. Dozier Hospice House. Photographers, writers, and those who like to scrapbook help patients create legacy documents to share with their loved ones. There are many ways to help those facing a terminal illness. Looking to making a difference through volunteering in your community? Become a BBH Volunteer!

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