

# Willow Tree Hospice uses a team approach to help patients and their families



Courtesy photo

The staff at the Willow Tree Hospice helps patients and their caregivers and families during difficult times.

By Margaret Daubert  
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When one thinks of the word "hospice", the term usually doesn't evoke happy, bubbly feelings. Rather, hospice is normally viewed as an option during the end of life, when there is no hope left. Willow Tree Hospice, located in West Grove, stresses that this is a false assumption.

Christine Coll, administrator of Willow Tree, emphasizes that hospice should not be considered a dark or scary alternative. "Hospice is a generous benefit, not solely for the last few weeks of life, but whenever a patient needs it. When they are slowing down, when they have an illness or disability from which they probably will not recover, or when they simply need the emotional and physical support that we are able to provide" she said.

For five years, Willow Tree Hospice has been successfully caring for and nursing patients who need their help. Willow Tree uses a "team approach" with nurses, physicians, social work-

ers, chaplains, volunteers, and a medical director all on board to make the patient as comfortable as possible. Willow Tree provides care directly at the patients' home, wherever they live, and there is no charge for their visits. Knowing that the cost may be a concern, Coll assures that there is none.

"The Medicare Hospice Benefit funds the cost of Hospice care. The medicine, the equipment, and the visits are all covered by this generous benefit."

Studies have shown that patients on hospice live longer due to the extra care and attention.

The main goal for Willow Tree this year is not necessarily to reach out to the patients, but also to family members. The Community Outreach Program is a lecture series that speaks to the needs of the caregiver. Willow Tree has been providing a free lecture series at various places throughout the community, such as libraries, retirement communities, and most recently to the West Chester University faculty. They also take part at health fairs at different venues and are planning to continue these lectures.

The outreach programs focus on multiple subjects that deal with the caregiver. The first idea that Willow Tree wants the caregiver to know is that it will not be easy. There are many emotional and physical demands that correspond with caring for a loved one. However, they are determined to guide the family through the grieving and loss period, teach how to navigate the health care system, and how to care for themselves. The majority of the caregivers nowadays have fallen into the "Sandwich Generation", which consists of modern day adults that have to take care of their parents as well as their children. Willow Tree's overall message to the caregivers is that they are not alone. Willow Tree strives to work with the families and be there for comfort and support during stressful and difficult times.

If there is a request about the lecture series, or if there are any inquiries about the hospice program, Willow Tree Hospice is available 24 hours, 7 days a week for assistance. The hospice can be contacted at (610)-869-2201 or [info@willowtreehospice.com](mailto:info@willowtreehospice.com).