

## New & Notable

### New Initiative to Improve End-of-Life Care for African-American Community

Recognizing the needs of an underserved population, Family Hospice and Palliative Care is partnering with Bidwell United Presbyterian Church and the Northside Christian Health Center to launch a new program designed to increase understanding of and access to hospice care among African Americans living in Pittsburgh's Greater North Side community.

The program, called Transitions, focuses on dispelling myths about hospice and palliative care and helping families enroll seriously ill loved ones onto services that will alleviate suffering and provide caregivers at home with support.

Transitions is made possible due to the generous support of local foundations, including: The Buhl Foundation, Highmark Foundation and the McKinney Charitable Trust.

The Rev. B. De Neice Welch, pastor of Bidwell United Presbyterian Church, has been named Transitions Coordinator. Since last July she has worked on an interim basis to familiarize Greater North Side congregations, organizations and businesses about the program. Rev. Welch is resigning from Family Hospice's Board of Directors, where she has served since July of 2007.

Transitions will be housed at Family Hospice's Anderson Manor site (1423 Liverpool St., North Side) and Bidwell United Presbyterian Church (1020 Liverpool St., North Side).

"Bidwell Presbyterian Church is very excited about our affiliation with Family Hospice and Palliative Care. This is an innovative initiative that addresses the need for quality transitional care, and care for those living with debilitating illnesses, in the African-American community," said Rev. Welch. "I am so very proud to be part of an organization that cares and a leader of a church that is seeking to extend its love, spiritually, emotionally, and physically to those who need it most."

Transitions is being launched in February, in honor of Black History Month. Considering the fact that historically, African-Americans receive inadequate end-of-life care, this program is designed to provide patients with the comfort and care they deserve. In time, it is hoped that Transitions could change the course of local history by significantly improving care received by the African-American community.

Research indicates that hospice and palliative care services are underutilized by the African-American community. According to the African-American Outreach Guide and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, African-Americans represent less than 10% of those served by hospice, despite representing over 12% of the U.S. population. Family Hospice's own database research shows that less than 5% of patients served annually are African-American.

Additionally, a local multi-disciplinary group of representatives from the Greater North Side and Family Hospice management met to address concerns about the African-American response to hospice and palliative care services in the community. The group determined that local African-American perceptions of hospice mirror that of the overall population: most do not fully understand the scope of hospice and palliative care, including how the hospice Medicare/Medicaid/insurance benefit works. This data speaks to the need for greater outreach and accountability to minority patients who can benefit from hospice.

"Family Hospice is very respectful of the African-American community's perception of death and dying," said Rafael Sciullo, President and CEO of Family Hospice and Palliative Care. "It is our goal to offer compassionate care to patients with life-limiting illnesses in the North Side area, while providing them with all the necessary support to make a peaceful transition from this life. Our Family Hospice North Side location, Anderson Manor, was the first step in this process. Now, we invite the African-American community to take full advantage of our support and services, thanks to the collaboration of Rev. Welch and her team."

Audrey Murrell, Ph.D., Chair of the North Side Christian Health Center Board of Directors, added, "I am excited about the partnership between the Northside Christian Health Center and Family Hospice in the launch of the Transitions program. This effort represents the collaboration of two organizations whose passionate missions are well aligned toward providing compassionate and culturally sensitive care. I look forward to our work together and the opportunity to build a model that will not only provide hospice and palliative care for individuals and families in need, but also design a blueprint for others across the region and the country to emulate."

To inquire about Transitions and take advantage of the services offered, call 412-651-2583. †