

News > Top Stories

Family gets solace from Home Hospice

[Print Page](#)

by Ruth Campbell
Midland Reporter-Telegram

Published: Monday, November 9, 2009 1:31 AM CST

For the family of Refugio G. Nunez, Hospice House was a refuge during the end stages of his five-year battle with colon cancer.

Hospice House Foundation owns a historic house at 903 N. Sam Houston St. in Odessa, which serves the entire Permian Basin. The foundation purchased the vintage 1938 home in 2000 and it opened in November of that year. When first constructed, it was a teachers' boarding house, then a bed and breakfast in the 1990s, Home Hospice Director and foundation President Debra Bridges said.

His family took Nunez to Hospice House Sept. 15 and he passed away Sept. 25. When he died, his daughter Michelle Mendoza said one of the nurses came out and gave her the news. She said the nurse could have said anything, instead she said, "He's home."

"That made a big difference. That's what this place is -- a home away from home. It was all about my dad and all about us," Mendoza said.

"The whole time they took care of him, they took care of us as well. Their compassion made it a whole lot easier," said Mendoza, who was joined by her daughter, Bridgett and adopted sister Sonia Cortez for an interview to mark November as National Hospice Month. There are four sisters total and seven grandchildren.

Mendoza said she had known about hospice because of her work as a provider liaison with PB Healthcare Network. As someone who credentials physicians, Mendoza said she deals with doctors on a regular basis, but this time she got to see a different side.

Nurses and doctors at Hospice House and Home Hospice answered all the family's questions. Medical Director Dr. Don McLarey II pulled up a chair and "sat with us like he was a family member."

"He was wonderful," Mendoza said, "telling us they were there for my dad, and it was true until the very end. There is nothing bad you can say about this place. From the minute you walk in the door until you leave ... you feel at peace here."

She noted her dad was an "ornery" man, but her family knew he was comfortable. "Once we got here, we didn't see the pain," Cortez said.

"He was so relaxed," said Mendoza. "I truly think this place made every bit of difference."

Cortez and Mendoza offered to be Home Hospice volunteers after Nunez died, but Bridges said it's recommended they wait a year before doing that so they can go through the grieving process.

Hospice House has nine adult and one pediatric room and three family rooms where families of loved ones can stay free of charge. Bridges said Hospice House provides toiletries and feeds them.

Some \$200,000 in renovations are now being done and should be finished in the next month. These include installing new siding, a new roof, a new nurses' station, dining room, room renovation and redecoration. New TVs with remotes and wireless headphones will also be added.

"This is a community investment," Bridges said. "Every dollar that goes into the foundation is meant to maintain the building. It's going to be really pretty."

Ruth Campbell can be reached at ruth@mrt.com.

Copyright © 2009 -