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Good Shepherd Hospice receives national recognition

LAKELAND, FLA. – Good Shepherd Hospice was named a Circle of Life Award® Honoree this week and was recognized for its innovative programs that improve the care of patients near the end of life or with life-limiting conditions.

The Circle of Life Award Program celebrates organizations that have expanded the frontiers of palliative and end-of-life care while improving access and quality in ways that can be adopted by other organizations. Good Shepherd Hospice is one of nine organizations honored nationwide this year by the Circle of Life Award Program. Nearly 50 programs applied.

“Good Shepherd Hospice is a true leader in program development and in the advancement of palliative care through its continual improvement and contributions to the field,” said Rich Umbdenstock, CEO and president of the American Hospital Association. “Its open access program brings care to those who do not yet fit the traditional definition of hospice care and it is for this reason that it was awarded a Circle of Life Citation of Honor.”

“Good Shepherd Hospice is truly grateful to be named a Circle of Life Award Honoree,” said Dr. Ronald Schonwetter, HPC Healthcare Inc. executive vice president and chief medical officer. “This recognition highlights the high-

quality, evidence-based hospice and palliative care we have been providing in Polk, Highlands and Hardee counties for nearly 30 years.” HPC Healthcare is the parent organization of Good Shepherd Hospice.

As one of the nation’s largest not-for-profit hospice organizations, Good Shepherd Hospice offers a broad spectrum of services that provides open access to those who do not yet fit the traditional definition of hospice care. Its approach to everything from patient care to employee standards is based on research and measurement results. Good Shepherd Hospice recently received accreditation by the National Institute for Jewish Hospice and re-accreditation by the Joint Commission, the nation’s preeminent health care accrediting agency.

“We really pride ourselves in maximizing access to care, being evidence-based and looking at things from that point of view,” said Kathy Fernandez, HPC president and CEO. “As a leader in the hospice industry we want to be sure we are leading with facts and by example.”

Leaders from medicine, nursing, social work and health administration made up the Circle of Life selection committee. They selected Good Shepherd Hospice for its innovative programs that respect patient goals and preferences, provide comprehensive care, acknowledge and address the family or caregivers’ concerns and needs and build systems and mechanisms of support to continue the program for future patients and caregivers. Good Shepherd Hospice demonstrates these qualities in a number of unique ways:

- Good Shepherd Hospice has offered an open access model of care for more than a decade, allowing patients to receive various therapies and treatments while under hospice care. The leaders of Good Shepherd Hospice believe that patients and their loved ones should be able to access a full complement of hospice services while still undergoing some aggressive treatments.
- Good Shepherd Hospice provides acute, inpatient care in two hospice houses for those who cannot be cared for in their homes. In addition, Good Shepherd Hospice operates pharmacy and durable medical

equipment companies to complement care provided and simplify patients' lives.

- Good Shepherd Hospice research contributes to the scientific literature on hospice and palliative care results, which channels policy and practice advances by leading-edge care organizations nationwide.
- Good Shepherd Hospice is partnering with area hospitals and a long term care facility to establish palliative care programs. Through its affiliated organization, Axis Palliative Healthcare, patients who are in need of such care who may not be hospice appropriate or desire hospice care may receive palliative care services addressing their unique needs.

“This is a great honor for Good Shepherd Hospice and our staff of dedicated professionals and volunteers,” said Brian Hinton, volunteer chairman of the non-profit HPC Healthcare board and president of Bartow Consulting Group, Inc. “Our mission is to provide high-quality hospice care to the patients we serve, and this recognition is a testament to the solid foundation put in place by Good Shepherd Hospice leadership.”

The awards are supported in part by the California Healthcare Foundation, based in Oakland, Calif. Major sponsors include the American Hospital Association, AARP, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the Catholic Health Association, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the National Hospice Foundation; the Center for Practical Bioethics is a Circle of Life cosponsor.

This is the ninth year for the Circle of Life Award. For more information on the Circle of Life Award, visit www.aha.org/circleoflife.

Good Shepherd Hospice embraces its mission to make the most of life by relieving the suffering of patients and their families affected by life-limiting illnesses or end-of-life issues. The organization is a community-based, not-for-profit hospice that has been a part of Polk, Hardee and Highlands counties since 1979. Good Shepherd Hospice is the only local agency offering hospice

programs accredited by the Joint Commission, which sets the national standards for healthcare accreditation. The United Way of Central Florida funds in part the community programs offered by Good Shepherd Hospice. For more information, please visit the website at www.goodshepherdhospice.org

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