

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Michele Hutchins
(603) 238-6468



SMH Introduces New Spiritual Care Program

PLYMOUTH, N.H.--- Speare Memorial Hospital has introduced a brand new spiritual care program. The program has 10 active and retired clergy from the community who have signed on as volunteer chaplains to meet the spiritual needs of patients, family members, friends, and staff at Speare Memorial Hospital.

Director of Social Services, Kathy Wieliczko says, “It has been a long process putting this program together and I am very grateful for the extraordinary efforts of Reverend Judith Gooch and Reverend John Davies, who were responsible for bringing the idea to the table and coordinating area clergy.”



The Reverend Teresa Gocha visits with patient Doris Lavallee as part of Speare Memorial Hospital’s new Spiritual Care Program

Through the program, a different minister is available each day, seven days a week for three hours a day. Chaplains are available to all patients regardless of beliefs and religious affiliation. When patients are first admitted to the hospital, they are asked what their spiritual needs are, and what services, if any, they would like to receive. The chaplains have Chaplain Pastoral Education (CPE), which trains the ministers within a hospital setting, and emphasizes working with patients and addressing their needs.

Wieliczko says, “The program has been developed to support the goal of more patient centered care at the hospital. We realized the spiritual needs of our patients were not being met, and this program is a step toward making the patients feel more comfortable by having the chaplains as a caring presence, offering spiritual and emotional support, and listening with openness and understanding.”

Some of Wieliczko’s short-term goals for the program are to make sure the chaplains feel comfortable and make it easy for them to provide their services to the patients, as well as offering the chaplains a sense of personal satisfaction. Long-term she will assess the success of the program in meeting the needs of the patients. “I am interested in seeing where the program goes, and if we are meeting the spiritual needs of our patients,” Wieliczko says.

Minister of the Starr King Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Sarah Stewart says, “Plymouth is a thriving community, and I think this volunteer chaplain initiative is not only good for the hospital, but also strengthens and brings the community together.”

Wieliczko hopes patients become more used to the idea of a spiritual care program and begin to feel comfortable reaching out to these services. To have a visit from a chaplain, while a hospital patient, contact Social Services at extension 216 or ask your nurse to notify the chaplain on duty.

Speare Memorial Hospital is a 24-hour, acute care, non-profit community hospital and health care provider serving Plymouth and the communities of central New Hampshire for more than a century.

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