

Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home marks a decade of patient care

For 10 years, the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home in Russellville has provided the best in end-of-life care.

Located at 220 John Babish Lane, the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home is a state-of-the-art, eight-bed inpatient center that provides care in a warm, home-like setting for patients with life-limiting illnesses who need around-the-clock care. Featuring a private chapel, a gazebo, and a covered patio, the beautiful facility is Arkansas Hospice's first free-standing inpatient center; the organization also has inpatient centers in Little Rock and in Hot Springs, both located at CHI St. Vincent.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home, a virtual celebration titled "A Decade of Patient Care" premieres at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 4, at ArkansasHospice.org/RiverValleyHome. The community is invited to this special online presentation, which will remain online for viewing thereafter.

WHAT IS HOSPICE CARE?

Most Arkansans have heard the term "hospice," but many misconceptions still exist. One common myth is that hospice is a place. It's not. While facilities such as the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home do provide care, hospice is actually a type of medical care for patients who have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. Comfort care and symptom management become the primary focus, rather than ongoing efforts to find a cure. Arkansas Hospice cares for patients of all ages wherever they may be, whether in their own or a family member's home, a nursing home, a hospital, an assisted living facility or at one of Arkansas Hospice's inpatient or contracted facilities across the organization's 43-county service area. While several agencies provide hospice care in the state, Arkansas Hospice is the state's largest non-profit provider of hospice services.

Even though most of Arkansas Hospice's patients receive care in their own homes or other places of residence, there may be times when patients have symptoms that are too difficult to control in their home settings. When these times occur, the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home provides around-the-clock care for residents of the River Valley, plus patients from Northwest Arkansas and other areas of the state experiencing symptoms that cannot be

managed at home. Patients benefit from a full range of services to ensure their physical, emotional and spiritual needs are met. These special guests and their families receive support and guidance from an interdisciplinary team including physicians, nurses, hospice aides, social workers, chaplains, bereavement specialists and volunteers.

The care provided by the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home and Arkansas Hospice's Russellville, Berryville and Rogers area offices was recently recognized with the Hospice Honors award, which identifies agencies continuously providing the highest level of quality care. Presented by HEALTHCARE*first*, a software and data-gathering company that partners with thousands of hospice and home health agencies across the country, the award was based on results from surveys given to the caregivers of Arkansas Hospice patients in the River Valley and Northwest Arkansas.

A PIONEERING LEGACY

As a pioneer of hospice care, Arkansas Hospice opened the state's first hospice inpatient center in February 2000 in a leased wing of the Eugene Towbin Healthcare Center at Fort Roots in North Little Rock. Arkansas Hospice Founder Michael Aureli's dream was to continue this ground-breaking legacy by building the state's first free-standing inpatient hospice facility. Originally, he envisioned building that facility in Little Rock. Those plans changed in 2004 after Michael discovered a greater need for a hospice inpatient facility between Little Rock and Fort Smith. In 2005, it was decided that Russellville would be a prime location for this dream to come true.

In the months to follow, Russellville businessman Jim Bob Humphrey was chosen to chair the Capital Campaign Committee formed to raise the \$2.8 million needed to build the center, set to be named the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home.

Strong community support along with special events boosted both morale and money-making efforts. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 10, 2009. Two years later, construction was complete.

On Sept. 28, 2011, the more than 7,000 square-foot facility's doors were opened to the community, so they could see the center they had helped build. As Arkansas Hospice President and CEO Judy Wooten addressed the ceremony's audience, she acknowledged the work of two people crucial to the home's success who did not live long enough to see its fruition – Michael

Aureli, the founder of Arkansas Hospice, and Dorothy Babish, an Arkansas Hospice supporter and Foundation board member, as well as a key member of the Capital Campaign Committee.

“Ms. Babish was a beautiful lady who had a true hospice heart,” Wooten said at the September 2011 ceremony. “She saw a need and never gave up.” Babish, whose late husband, John, is the namesake for the street where the River Valley Home is located, died on Sept. 13, 2011, missing the dedication by two weeks and one day.

“Founder Michael Aureli had the vision,” Wooten continued. “He inspired others to appreciate that vision, and he also never gave up.” Aureli died on June 28, 2011, missing the celebration by three months to the day.

Michael Aureli’s dream of a free-standing inpatient hospice facility finally came true on Nov. 4, 2011, when the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home accepted its first patient.

Since then, , the facility has cared for more than 1,940 patients with care provided by Allan Kirkland, MD, and W. Robert Thurlby, MD, FACP. a full nursing and administrative staff, chaplains, and social workers. In addition, volunteers provide various services including meals for the patients, their families, and the staff, as well as direct service supporting the patients and their families.

CONTINUED SUPPORT

Even though, the River Valley Home has been open for a decade, continued community support is essential, as Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance does not fully cover the operating costs of inpatient centers.

Currently, two local groups continue to provide their time and financial support to further the mission of Arkansas Hospice.

One group is the Benefactor Club whose members receive elevated recognition for their annual giving at the \$1,000 level, which provides direct support to the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home.

Another group supporting the facility is the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home Ambassador Council. The council meets regularly and works closely with the administrative staff by providing

input and feedback regarding the direction for special events, organization of various programs, and general fund-raising support.

To make a gift to support the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home or to learn more about the facility's 10th anniversary, please visit ArkansasHospice.org/RiverValleyHome.

For more information on Arkansas Hospice's quality, compassionate care, please visit ArkansasHospice.org. To learn more about ways you can support the mission of the Arkansas Hospice River Valley Home, please contact Shannon Boshears at sboshears@arkansashospice.org or 501-748-3302.

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