

## NHPCO Bereavement Chat, 10-3-12

### Ways of Remembering – Memorials and Holidays

#### MEMORIALS

Several callers reported declining attendance though one reported an increase and one reported steady attendance. Discussed ideas people have implemented to increase attendance.

Some participants said they invite only hospice families and some said they opened their memorial observances up to the community. Callers identified a variety of days and times services are held including various week day evenings, end of work day, and weekend days (Saturday and Sunday options). Some callers stated their agencies offered their memorials annually. Others indicated they held them more than twice, quarterly and even up to six times per year. One caller combined their holiday workshop with their annual Memorial Observance.

Callers identified a variety of locations too, depending on the number of people expected to attend, the cost to rent the space, and the needs of the particular community being served (culture and geography). Religious locations such as churches and temples usually did not charge. Several hospices rotated religious locations within their community. Public locations included agency office (with decorations), parks, hospitals, nursing facilities, college auditoriums, country clubs, and even hotels. One caller reported that this year they will hold theirs at four different locations to try and meet the needs of the bereaved.

Callers shared a variety of activities including:

- Butterfly release in June – partnered with nature center. In case of rain participants could release them in a glass enclosure; nature center staff would release later them outside.
- Candle lighting
- Slide show with photos of deceased interspersed with nature scenes. Set to music.

- Special themed services such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, grandparents, veterans etc. instead on one annual service. Utilized appropriate activities.
- Participants come forward, say the name of their loved one, light a candle and place in box with sand.

Promotion of Memorial services included newsletters, newspapers, invitations, and press releases

## IDT SUPPORT

Ideas included:

- Wreath in team room
- Read off names of patients who died during daily report. Using a sharpie, team member writes initials of the patient on a bell and hangs it on a wreath. Wreath is displayed at their annual memorial observance on Saturday in the fall.
- Sacred Waters – locked box in facility chapel with dissolving rice paper next to it. Patients, families, staff write prayer request and insert in box. Box is unlocked during monthly staff meeting and placed in bowl of water where they are dissolved. Water is taken outside to water plants around labyrinth and facility building.
- 2X/year Day of remembrance where names of deceased patients are place on altar/shrine area. Staff is invited to spend time in room to reflect/meditate.
- Rededication ceremony (why do we do this work?). Involves hand washing ritual
- Hand blessing using oil – staff blesses one another.

## HOLIDAY SUPPORT

Noted again it depends on your specific community in which people may or may not celebrate traditional Christmas. Ideas shared include:

- Place a tree in office area and invite families/community to bring in an ornament to hang on the tree in memory of loved one. Open House.
- Place basket in lobby – people made tags and hung them on tree in waiting area
- Shell ritual – select one and place it in a fountain or bowl
- Glue different size and color tissue paper pieces on battery-operated votive (resembles stained glass when completed).
- Paint clear glass ornament in memory of loved one. Write a message to deceased on paper, roll it up, place in ornament, and add top.