



FOR: Hospice & Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois
www.hospiceanswers.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOSPICE PATIENT PROFILE: *SAM FINDS RECONCILIATION AND PEACE* *By: Mary Klest*

Sam's life is now a memory for his oldest sister, Christine. A good memory. "At first, you think of hospice last, that it is the end; but for us it was a beginning, a healing. I thank God for that."

In 2005, at the age of 41, Sam was very ill. He was given the Last Rites in accordance with his family's religious tradition. "He was very afraid," says Christine. Hospital staff referred the family to Hospice and Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois to help Sam with his pain and emotional issues. "Hospice helped my brother understand his self, but also helped our family through the whole process."

As a child, Sam maintained a good relationship with his family. They enjoyed fishing trips and cheering for the Chicago Cubs and the Bears. He was outdoorsy, yet worked in factories. He married and worked the third shift to be with his son, Sam Jr.

Then, says Christine, came "the beginning of the end": He and his wife divorced and Sam began using drugs. The drug abuse changed him, according to Christine. He basically dropped out of contact with the family. There was anger on both sides, but when he became ill, "we had to let it go — a difficult process — to reestablish a relationship."

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PATIENT PROFILES — SAM/Add One

In hindsight, she says none of it really mattered: "You have today, maybe tomorrow. Everything you say comes straight from the heart." She says it took a lot of strength for him to let them back in. He was able to make amends and forgive himself. "We needed that time as a family," she says.

None of them were familiar with hospice care. Christine remembers wondering at the time: "Do we want to take that last step?" Hospice and Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois managed his pain and "gave him back his dignity." Hospice staff helped Sam rekindle his relationship with his son, who is an Army soldier serving in Iraq.

When the family had questions they called Sam's Hospice social worker, who visited several times a week. "She brought comfort and peace to him when he was afraid. He called her his 'spiritual counselor' because she allowed him to forgive himself. That brought him peace."

Christine remembers another kind of peace Hospice offered: The mounds of paperwork and language used in applying for social security benefits, questions to ask, and finding answers when advocating for his rights as a patient. "People need help with a process like this!" Sam's condition improved. He was eating, exercising, and decided to try for a liver transplant. He got on the donor list and went off hospice care. He and his family stayed in touch with the Hospice social worker, who continued visiting with them. When Sam's illness advanced, making him ineligible for the transplant, he returned to hospice care.

One of Sam's last wishes was to fly. He'd never been in an airplane but was captivated by the Arizona landscapes. Christine recalls, "We knew it would probably be his last trip. Hospice helped again -- they knew who to contact to make his dream come true. He and my mom went together."

The trip was one of the items on his “list” of things to accomplish: Make amends with his family; let his son know how much he loved him and that he was sorry; speak to kids in high school about drug abuse; and write a memoir to be kept by his family.

Remembering her little brother, Christine says proudly: “He got most of his wishes.”

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PATIENT PROFILES — SAM/Add Two

Throughout the year, Hospice Foundation of Northeastern Illinois raises money to provide the necessary financial support for several unfunded Hospice programs that are offered to patients and family members.

About Hospice & Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois

Hospice & Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois is a not-for-profit organization serving families throughout McHenry, Lake, Northwest Cook, Kane, Boone and DuPage counties. Founded in 1982, the agency provides comprehensive end-of-life care to over 1,400 patient families each year. The organization’s palliative care program offers services for those who struggle with serious illnesses as well as pain and symptom management. Hospice & Palliative Care of Northeastern Illinois is Medicare certified and accredited by the Joint Commission. For further information, please visit www.HospiceAnswers.org and www.PepperFamilyHospiceHome.org.

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