

Introduction

Research Objective

Lisaard & Innisfree Hospice set out to develop, implement and evaluate an organizational legacy program for their residents and families.

Background

Research has shown decreased rates of depression and anxiety in patients at end-of-life who were involved in a legacy program (Allen et al, 2008; Steinhauer et al, 2009). There is little data available regarding the impact of legacy programs on residents and caregivers in residential hospice. Our organization recognized an opportunity to develop a legacy program that would provide our residents with a unique opportunity to reflect on their life, while providing something tangible for their loved ones. We hoped our program would enhance communication and increase social interaction at the end-of-life. Making moments matter is a deeply valued statement within our organization. The heart of the project is providing a keepsake and individualized memories that will last forever. Using donations, volunteer hours and residential staff support, this project has proven to be successful with a promising future.

Methods

Methods and Materials

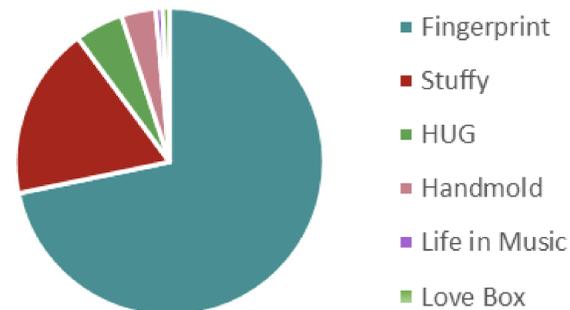
The process of developing the legacy program from concept to initiation took six months. A committee was organized and consisted of both staff members and volunteers. Key concepts were gathered from the article *Legacy Activities as Interventions Approaching the End-of-Life*. The authors indicated that "the combined treatment components of life review and engagement in pleasant events, targeting meaning-based coping, may improve patients' and caregivers' communication and emotional aspects of quality of life" (Allen et al, 2008, p. 1036). The concept of legacy was reviewed and highlighted throughout committee discussion of project ideas.

Projects were determined by our committee and start up supplies were obtained through donations. The legacy program was advertised through the use of posters and flyers which were provided to each resident upon admission. Staff and volunteers were educated about the program, emphasizing the role of legacy as life review, opening communication and achieving a sense of meaning. A binder was created that provided a detailed explanation of each project. These projects were organized using a bin system which are stored at each site. On initiation of legacy work with a resident, they are presented with a project bin and assisted with the project either by family, staff or a volunteer. Participants, their experience and supply inventory are reviewed and recorded by a legacy committee volunteer on a regular basis.

Results

We see it as our vision to work in partnership with residents and families to co-create as many special memories as possible. For our team, seeing families spend time together as families, rather than as caregivers, is what end-of-life care is all about. Our hospices have helped to facilitate Moments that Matter through this legacy program. To date, our legacy program has demonstrated meaningful communication with our residents and their families, professional fulfillment for staff and volunteers, and engagement of community donors.

Figure 1



Data represents total number of projects from Sept 2019-Sept 2020

Staff and volunteers report significant satisfaction when partnering in a project and/or observing the reaction of the resident and family engage in the legacy program. Families report increased discussion around life review, as well as death and dying. They also note that time together is spent with increased meaning and expressed the satisfaction of receiving a special memento. Decrease in anxiety has been observed in families participating in a project.

Figure 2

Stuffed Animal Project



This project requires a resident to record a special message on a small recorder, which is inserted into the stuffed animal. It is also fashioned with a hand-stitched back pack where hand written notes or mementos can be placed. These are loved by people of all ages!

A beautiful poem about love being in the empty box adorns this memento. This was created by a brother for his sister. They were not ones to verbally express their love to each other, hence he made this to communicate his love to her. Although the box is empty, she expressed "this box is full".

Figure 3

Love Box Project



Figure 4

Fingerprint Tree Project



Figure 5

Hand Mold Project



The fingerprint tree is our most popular project as it takes little effort to create a beautiful memento. Residents and families are encouraged to reflect on their life, as well as their time together now.

The plaster mold was initially trialed due to the cost. Residents and families have reported finding significant meaning in this project and due to its popularity, it is now fully funded by donations.

Conclusion

Discussion/Conclusion

Life contemplation and life closure are central features of hospice and palliative care. This, combined with our hospice philosophy of Making Moments Matter, has been the central focus of our Residential Legacy Program. Enhanced communication and intimate moments amongst residents and families have been a key result of the program. Families also report significant satisfaction with having a timeless and meaningful memento.

The Legacy Program has inadvertently supported residents and families during Covid in creating connections and facilitated meaningful interactions. The fingerprint tree has been used with residents adding their fingerprint while family members observe virtually. The family then completes their portion virtually while the resident looks on. These moments have created story telling opportunities while creating a family keepsake.

Although we have participant statistics we lack measurable outcomes on our residents anxiety and depression. Yet we have received feedback from families, staff and volunteers on the impact that this work has had on communication, decreased anxiety, and meaning making at the end-of-life.

Future Direction

Although we have anecdotal evidence, our committee is now considering how to evaluate the impact which the legacy program is having. We are contemplating measuring how the program may affect a loved ones grief, as well as the impact on residents' anxiety and depression. We continue to enhance the types of projects being offered. In Fall 2020, we are adding a resident's heart beat recording to music which will be composed by our Music Therapist.

References and Affiliations

References

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Steinhauer, K., Alexander, S., Byock, I., George, L., & Tulsy, J. (2009). Seriously ill patients' discussions of preparation and life completion: An intervention to assist with transition at the end of life. *Palliative And Supportive Care*, 7(04), 393. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s147895150999040x>

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