

HSC's Mission
is to improve the quality of life for all persons with terminal illness; and to assist them, their families, their caregivers, and the community in addressing and experiencing end-of-life care issues in an environment that promotes dignity, comfort and caring.

“Before my experience with Hospice of Stanly County, I had the misconception that many have... that hospice care is for those who are dying. I can tell you, Hospice is about living, and living longer, and living better.”

Donald R. Hatley



Don Hatley Tells Us “Hospice is About LIVING” ...

Don Hatley was working at Cannon Mills in Kannapolis in the 70's, dreading another long boring day full of mundane tasks; just another in the day in and day out routine when he noticed the truck drivers zooming by and thought, “I'd sure like to do that.” That sparked the idea to change his career path and thus began his 40-year career as a truck driver. He'd hop up into the cab of his truck and view the world through the windshield, traveling to and fro, every day a new adventure and experience, chain smoking cigarettes every mile of the way. He saw the country's rolling hillsides and valleys. He traveled through wide-open spaces and crowded cities, his least favorite NY City and his favorite scenes right here in Stanly County near Tucker Town Dam.



Don worked for several trucking firms and eventually moved his wife and daughter to live in a modest mobile home in Sampson County as he continued to work behind the wheel of the rig each week. He traveled on week-long stints to provide for his family. As time went on, he noticed changes in his physical abilities. He'd have hard time breathing and think, “ok – it's time for me to put the cigarettes down.” But then the next day, he'd feel a little better, so he never did. Over time, it became harder and harder for Don to load and unload the rig. He began to work smarter to continue doing the job, positioning himself where he didn't have to walk too far or go up and down stairs. When he was faced with doing these things, he often had to stop and rest and he was afraid other drivers would notice.

One day he was assigned a furniture delivery in Pennsylvania and he began to prepare the rig for the haul. The simple act of sweeping out the trailer caused shortness of breath. He had to tailgate the truck so that the furniture items were ready to be lifted off the back of the rig at the delivery site and was forced to take several breaks to get all the items onto the trailer. Finally, the rig was loaded and he set out on his journey, resting comfortably as he drove wondering if he'd be able to unload the furniture in Carlisle, PA. When he arrived at his destination, he fibbed just a little and told the customers that he wasn't aware he was supposed to unload the merchandise. Then he asked for help. It was on this trip that he realized he could no longer continue working and he relented to go out of work on disability in 2005.

Don's struggles only increased as his life's partner was diagnosed with melanoma and his wife passed away in 2007. He was left a single-parent, unable to work due to COPD. He did the best that he could to continue providing for his daughter and himself. The bills kept coming in and his funds dwindled to the point that in 2009 Don and his daughter, Samantha, were forced to move back to Stanly County to live with his mother. Now he's back here in his home town, living life looking through the windows of his home. Funny it seems how during all those years spent looking through the windshield he dreamed of what life would be like when he had no work commitments. He could envision himself fishing, gardening, and playing ball with his grandkids; all of the joy that retirement should bring. His reality is that because of the choices he's made over the years, he's now a young man of 61 living in a body that's failing him. He gives his mother a loving glance and says, “It's not supposed to be this way....I'm supposed to be taking care of you.”

Hindsight is always 20/20 as they say...looking back on his life, he might have made different choices. If he knew then what he knows now, he'd have never picked up the first cigarette and quite possibly might have chosen a different career path too. The one choice that Don would not change is the choice for hospice care.

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It's About Living!

Don truly believes that Hospice rescued him when he was in the hospital in spring 2010. He had been there for two weeks and the medications didn't seem to be much good in helping him breathe. He didn't ask for hospice, but he says the care team saved him. He couldn't believe how quickly things started clicking once the referral for hospice care was made. Jan Goetz, HSC RN suggested using a full-face oxygen mask and increasing his oxygen liter flow to a more comfortable level. This quickly made breathing easier for him. Then Hospice arranged for oxygen equipment to be delivered to the Hatley home; Don didn't have to do anything, Hospice cared for it all – the hospital release, getting necessary medications, nothing was left undone.

Where Hospice is, peace of mind abounds. Don no longer has the stress of going to the doctor's office. He says going anywhere with COPD is a struggle and to be able to have a nurse visit him in the home and relay information to his physician has greatly reduced the physical burden he carries. Don realizes that HSC is as close as his phone, 24/7, nights and weekends. Having hospice care takes the tremendous burden of care off his family.

His family receives constant reassurance from staff along with an uplifting attitude. In Don's own words:

"No matter what condition I'm in, they leave me better than when they came. Hospice is more than I ever could have imagined. I have a personal nurse who visits me every week. I get a physical check-up and she asks about any new problems. She calls in my prescriptions and contacts my doctor "in real time" if I need anything. I have a social worker who is ready to help me with anything else I might need. I have a Hospice pastor who visits and calls often to see how I am. It is still hard to believe that I have access to so many resources. Hospice has become my extended family!

My nurse, Heather Crump, has become my lifeline. She's like a beam of sunshine when she comes through the door. She leaves no doubt that she really does care about me. Sharita Dunlap, my social worker is remarkable. She touches my heart; she's exuberant, joyful, and full of spirit. I look forward to her visits. She even tapped into community resources to bring toys for my granddaughter at Christmas. She has been a help to my entire family. My hospice pastor, Ron Honeycutt visits, calls and prays for us. He always leaves me feeling renewed.

Hospice has been a Godsend and a blessing in my life. They continue to add to the quality of my life and health, and I will never be able to thank them enough.

It was my perception when hospice was recommended that "it was over; it's the final steps". I didn't understand what a Godsend HSC would turn out to be....I was very surprised by how much hospice care can mean; everyone rises to the top. I'm in awe of the absolute caring attitude from everyone. There's single-mindedness from all the staff; their focus is on the patient's welfare. They've kept me out of the hospital on two or three occasions by checking on me and starting antibiotics here at home. It's peace of mind knowing that Hospice is just a phone call away. Someone who is not sick doesn't understand how much that means.

Dr. Mehta visited me and had prayer with the whole family- that just blew my mind!

I am still amazed that Hospice is all these things. Before my experience with Hospice of Stanly County, I had the misconception that many have...that hospice care is for those who are dying. I can tell you, Hospice is about living, and living longer, and living better. Thank you Hospice, for doing the work of angels!"

We share Don's story with you to encourage you to consider Hospice care for yourself or your loved ones who may be facing a life-limiting illness. One of the greatest gifts during life is the ability to make decisions for ourselves, to be in control of our lives. You have a choice when confronted with the diagnosis of a terminal illness. You can choose to take control of how our last days will be spent. You can choose to give the ultimate gift to your family. You can choose to make passing from life a time of great warmth and support – a time to share, to grow even closer to those who have been important to you, a time when pain is eased and the spirit is nurtured. You can choose hospice.

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