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Passion for the elderly and quality care

leads to the creation of Tranquility

Hospice of Tulsa

by Jim Butcher
Staff Writer

Hospice affirms life and regards dying as a normal process.

Nikia Denny is taking the process another step.

When you are fighting death in those final fleeting days of life with excruciating, agonizing pain someone has made you a promise — quality care.

Denny promises an alternative to routine home care and repeated hospitalization.

Using her profound respect and passion for the elderly as the cornerstone, Denny founded Tranquility Hospice of Tulsa in October 2006. Tranquility is a locally woman-owned hospice care provider whose mission comes from the owner's personal experience in the hospice field to provide the best quality care for each patient.

In her veins flow the blood of a Creek Indian who is committed to helping the elderly and working with them, often, in a hands on position to make those final days as good as possible.



Photo by Jim Butcher

Nikia Denny, LPN owner and founder, Tranquility Hospice of Tulsa

She doesn't believe in sitting in a leather executive chair making decisions affecting people's lives.

Instead, her staff may find her giving a patient a massage or a dozen other personal touches to add that something special to a patient's final days.

"When I

Mercy Makes Epic Change in Family Experience

In Edmond last fall to visit family, the Andersons from Arkansas soon learned firsthand why an EHR, or electronic health record, makes all the difference and even more so why it's critical to electronically track records across state lines.

Mercy's 11 clinics in the metro and a handful of clinics in southern Oklahoma, along with other Mercy facilities in a four-state area, have been electronically connected for more than a year. As of June 27, both Mercy Health Center

in Oklahoma City and Mercy Memorial Health Center in Ardmore will go live with an EHR — making Mercy one of only two percent of hospitals in the nation with an integrated electronic health record.

"Mercy can instantly access a patient's medical records across a four-state area," Di Smalley, president of Mercy West Communities (Oklahoma), said of Mercy's 30 hospitals and numerous other medical

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OMRF begins testing turbines for rooftop wind farm

When the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation last year announced plans to install 24 DNA-shaped turbines on the roof of its new research tower, the news sent ripples throughout the small wind power industry.



Once complete, the installation will make OMRF the first medical research facility to harness the wind to help power its labs. And with two dozen turbines, the project is believed to be the largest rooftop installation of wind turbines anywhere.

Now that the final beam has been placed on the shell of the structure, OMRF has begun the first phase of turbine testing and installation. This month, construction workers assembled a pair of the 19-foot-tall vertical-axis turbines on the roof in a shroud specially designed to house them.

"One of the reasons we chose these particular turbines is because they are designed to generate less noise and vibration than windmill-type turbines," said Sheryl Rood, an engineer with the Benham Companies who is acting as a consultant on the project. "But before we went ahead with the entire installation, we wanted to test for ourselves."

The OMRF turbines, manufactured by San Diego's Helix Wind, are based on the Savonius rotor invented in the 1920s.

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was very young, quite often my parents would start looking for me, and they would find me with an elderly couple. I can't explain it," she said, "but I was attracted to the elderly and now I want to help them as much as possible."

When Denny, a LPN who attended Tulsa Community College and Indian Capital Technology Center in Muskogee, decided to open Tranquility Hospice, she set out to raise the standards of medical care for all. "My ultimate goal is to increase the standard of care that is accepted. I don't want to settle for poor care. I really strive to make my standard — excellence."

Tranquility Hospice and its staff of 30, offers comprehensive care focused on easing the physical, emotional and spiritual pain that often accompanies terminal illness.

"Offering outstanding care, our hospice team members are dedicated professionals and trained volunteers who specialize in meeting the individualized needs of terminally ill

patients and families."

She believes people should have options.

Aromatherapy is one of several forms of alternative medicine. "Improving a person's mood is most important," she said. "Aromatherapy uses volatile plant materials, known as essential oils, and similar aromatic compounds from plants, for the purpose of improving a person's mood, cognitive function or health."

Animal-assisted therapy is a type of therapy that involves an animal with specific characteristics becoming a fundamental part of a person's treatment. "Pet therapy is designed to improve the physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning of the patient, as well as provide educational and motivational effectiveness."

"Music interventions helps us to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

To borrow an old phrase, Denny believes in going outside the box.

With the help of energetic volunteers, Denny and her staff provide patients and caregivers with extras such as manicures, relaxation time and much needed companionship.

"We offer 'glamour shots,'" Denny said. "We do patients' hair and makeup and take their pictures. It's so wonderful to see our patients light up."

Denny strongly believes in the care that Tranquility Hospice provides, noting that 98 percent of hospice patients' health improves because they are getting medical care on a weekly basis.

"Doctors told our first patient he had three weeks. He lived three and half years. And that is why I am doing this."

Denny can get her temper up when she talks about the level of health care people are getting today in this country.

"We've settled for crap," she said. "We need to raise the quality care for common people," adding that the American people need to stand up and make a commitment for quality care.

Since its opening, Tranquility Hospice has provided "unique, quality care" to more than 300 patients.

Her immediate short-term goal is to develop her own home healthcare service. It's another avenue she is using

to provide quality care to common people.

In the longterm, she wants to establish her own not-for-profit nursing home, but doesn't want to settle for "just" a nursing home.

"I want a nursing home like Montereau in Warren Woods in Tulsa," she said with a smile. "Let's say it would be quality care for the common people."

Montereau describes its style as where "residents can enjoy all the amenities of a cruise ship...without the waves; all the friendliness of a small village... without the remote setting; all the comforts of fine living... without the responsibilities of home maintenance."

And it takes quality employees to achieve and maintain a high quality of care for patients in a family atmosphere. "I strive to treat my employees well."

On her "To Do Short List" is a fitness center for the employees.

At the moment she is looking for a larger building where she can work toward achieving more visions of quality care for people.

EPIC

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facilities in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri. "So if you live in OKC but your child is going to school in Fayetteville and they visit a Mercy facility in Northwest Arkansas, the medical team knows everything in their medical record. They know if they are deathly allergic to a certain drug, if they just had certain medical tests performed or any number of possible twists and turns. An integrated electronic health record connects all the dots and ultimately means greater safety in patient care."

And safety and security is something patients and parents want 24/7. "There's something very reassuring when you know all of your doctors and nurses can see your entire medical history," said Arkansas' Jarrod Anderson, father of three. "I don't have to gather any records or try to translate anything. They see everything because it's all electronic. There are no results to fax or mail. It's all at their fingertips allowing physicians to make better judgments."

That was definitely the case with Anderson's red-headed toddler last fall. Just 2 at the time, Brody started to get sick. First it was a cough, then a fever developed. The Andersons tried some over-the-counter medications but nothing seemed to work. Not wanting

to cut short their visit with grandparents, they made an appointment with Kelly Stephens, a Mercy pediatrician in Edmond.

Because Brody had ongoing respiratory problems, his breathing became more labored. After a thorough exam, Dr. Stephens gave him a steroid shot and within no time, Brody was on the mend. Not too long after, when the family was back at home in Bentonville, Arkansas, they visited their family doctor. Not aware both were Mercy physicians, "We went in to our family doctor and he pulled up Brody's records and he immediately could see Brody had a steroid shot in Oklahoma. This was huge for us. Mercy is light years ahead with the ability to track electronic records across state lines."

While surprising to patients, Mercy's new EHR is also revolutionizing care for physicians and medical staff. "I noticed a shot had been administered but it wasn't me who administered it," said Jim Byrum, M.D., a Mercy internal medicine/pediatrician in Northwest Arkansas. "I did a double take because I could see notes from a physician in Edmond, Oklahoma, and I could see everything the other physician had done. Not only did I have the record but the Oklahoma physician could view my records when he saw Brody. This is a vast leap for medical information, something I've not seen in my 25-year career. This makes a very great case for people to see Mercy physicians when traveling, if at all possible."

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