

Feature Release

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Editor's Note: Print-quality photo attached.

Haven Hospice celebrates "Mr. Harry's" 80th birthday **For Harry Coleman, Haven is home and family**

(CHIEFLAND)— The staff of Haven Hospice's Tri-Counties care center in Chiefland honored their most dedicated volunteer, Harry L. Coleman, with a surprise 80th birthday party Mar. 5. It was a fitting tribute to this Trenton resident who has made helping Haven his mission. For "Mr. Harry," as he's known, the Haven staff is his family and the care center is his home. He adopted them and they in turn adopted him.



Haven Hospice has cared for seven members of Mr. Harry's family. The first was his brother Norris in 1994. When Norris died, Mr. Harry decided to buy two memorial bricks for the garden path at the E.T. York Hospice Care Center in Gainesville. One reads Norris Coleman; the other is engraved with his nickname, "Big Daddy."

Those bricks marked the beginning of a long commitment to Haven Hospice, and the first of many gifts Mr. Harry has made in gratitude for the care Haven Hospice provided his family. In addition to funding several areas of care center, Mr. Harry is always thinking of ways he can help patients and their families. "I can see people in need who are in worse shape than me," he says, though he suffers from lifelong inherited skin cancer. "This is something I like to do and a way I can help other people," adds Mr. Harry, who retired after 20 years as a farmer, 20 years in the Navy, a job at the Trenton courthouse and a stint as a prison security guard.

"We make sure he's invited to our dinners," says Iris Davis, secretary at the care center. He won't show up unless we do. He would never want to impose."

He does about a million little things for patients, buying personal care items they may have forgotten to bring and supplying daily newspapers for their families to read.

Mr. Harry also donated the care center's bird feeders and keeps them clean and stocked. Once a week (or more often as needed), he brings a half dozen roses, which play a ceremonial role in helping families say goodbye to their loved ones. When a patient dies, the staff lays a beautiful quilt and a rose over the patient and gives the rose to the family as a memory.

He also has the distinction of selling the largest number of tickets each year to Badcock Home Furniture & More of Chiefland's annual benefit for Haven Hospice—a holiday drawing for a large-screen high-definition TV.

When the staff honors Mr. Harry, there are tears in his eyes as he reads the card all of them have signed. "He reads the card over and over again," Davis says. "He pretends to be gruff but he's a big marshmallow," she adds. "An angel in disguise. He is just the sweetest man."

For information about making a difference by volunteering at Haven Hospice, call Vondla Sullivan, Haven volunteer coordinator, at (352) 493-2333.

About Haven Hospice

Haven Hospice is North Florida's expert in end-of-life and palliative care and is one of three 2008 Circle of Life Award® winners nationwide to be recognized as leaders in improving the care of patients near the end of life or with life-threatening conditions. Haven Hospice has also been recognized as a Florida Pacesetter for its leadership in promoting living wills. Haven Hospice has served nearly 50,000 patients and families since 1979 and has been licensed in Florida as a not-for-profit hospice since 1980. For more information, visit www.havenhospice.org or call 800-727-1889.

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