

Foundation seeks funds for hospice

WellStar gains site but needs \$17M

By Ashley Hungerford
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MARIETTA — Marietta resident Gene Cork is familiar with WellStar Community Hospice.

The unit assisted his family before his father, Roy Cork, died in April 2001 and his sister, Angie Spence, died in November 2002. His father died after suffering several strokes, and his sister died of cancer.

"Hospice was the first really good health-care experience in a while," Cork said. "They brought comfort to them and to us ... at a hospice, the purpose is not to keep people alive just to be alive. The purpose is to provide some type of quality of life at the end of life."

Cork said the hospice provided logistical, medical and emotional help to his family.

"There is so much going through your mind and your heart when someone you love is dying," he said. "The hospice has the experience to provide a level of comfort and peace, and it gives patients a way to die in dignity. The people that work there are the most compassionate people you'll ever meet."

With the help of the WellStar Foundation, the WellStar Community Hospice is planning to build a hospice center in Marietta. The Foundation recently launched a campaign

To donate

Call M. Sharon Smith
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to raise the \$17 million needed to create the center and an endowment to pay for the hospice care when patients cannot.

"We'd like to build as soon as possible," said Tracey Atwater, president of the WellStar Foundation. "Especially now, when it is a great time to build. (But) we need to have a good portion of the money in hand or committed before we can build."

WellStar Community Hospice has been assisting dying patients and their families for more than 25 years. The average hospice stay is six days. The unit provided only in-home care until about 10 years ago, when the Tranquility facility opened near WellStar Cobb Hospital in Austell.

Tranquility has served more than 4,000 patients and constantly has a waiting list, said M. Sharon Smith, the foundation's director of hospice development.

Like Tranquility, the new hospice facility will have 18 private rooms.

The foundation has already purchased the four-acre tract on Kennesaw Avenue, adjacent to the national park and behind the

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Signature Health Care of Marietta nursing home, for the hospice center.

"There is lots of wildlife on the property, and our intent is to maintain that as much as possible," Atwater said. "We want to be able to offer these people the most appropriate settings."

The location, less than a mile from WellStar Kennestone Hospital, also addresses a need, she said.

"It would mean so much to the people in the Marietta area to have a hospice nearby where they can see loved ones," Atwater said.

Smith concurred.

"So many people have had an experience with a hospice," she said. "When we built Tranquility, we didn't know this many patients would receive care. It has just touched so many people."