

# Free Help for Those with Chronic Illness

Living with a chronic illness is difficult. Equally challenging is watching someone we love struggle to enjoy life despite being ill with a disease that may not go away. It creates a strain for all who are affected whether we live next door or in another town.

An individual with congestive heart failure (CHF), cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Parkinson's, dementia or even frailty related to older age likely takes multiple medications throughout the day. He or she may have diet limitations. Doing chores may increase one's risk of injury. Living day to day in situations like this takes an emotional toll that may or may not be obvious. Depression can exacerbate physical symptoms and lead to a host of other problems.

Journeys, a new, free, non-hospice program from Wings of Hope Hospice can help.

Every individual with chronic illness who registers for Journeys receives a visit in his or her home from a registered nurse. After a mini-assessment and focused conversation, the nurse will help the Journeys client and his or her family members create a plan to maximize quality of life. This plan might include the following:

- Managing and living comfortably with symptoms of illness
- Creating a realistic schedule for taking medications
- Setting up a medication box
- Establishing an affordable and healthy diet
- Securing volunteer support to help with chores, provide emotional support to the individual or respite to family members
- Connecting with medical and community resources

The RN will contact the individual regularly to check on him or her and confirm the quality of life plan is working. If it isn't, the RN will help make adjustments until all who are affected are satisfied with the result. With permission, the RN will keep the individual's physician informed with regular updates about activities and outcomes.

*The searing pain in her back was relentless. It overshadowed all else and became the center of her universe. She lost the energy to take her medications, including her medication for depression. She was caught in a downward spiral of emotional and physical pain. Her husband was exhausted and had run out of ideas. The Journeys RN connected her with a resource to adequately manage her pain and contacted her regularly to be sure she was taking her medications and eating well. Her pain is now managed and she is thriving. The relief her husband feels is palpable.*

Journeys is a non-hospice quality of life program. It is free and has been specifically designed for anyone living with advanced chronic illness in the target service area. This area includes Allegan County, Van Buren County and surrounding communities. To sign up for Journeys, please call Wings of Hope Hospice at 269-686-8659.

