It’s dignity... it’s humanity... it’s what we do.

It’s called Hospice Care.

As director of Knapp Medical Center’s Hospice Care Services, Ruby Torres thoughtfully selected one word to describe the role her department plays within the community — “Dignity.”

For more than a decade, Torres has been a part of the department that assists terminally ill patients and their families by providing a comfortable and supportive end-of-life environment. “We work to comfort patients and their families spiritually, emotionally and physically,” Torres said. “Many patients and families who are facing end-of-life situations just do not realize all of the services that are available to help them through what can be a very difficult and emotional time.”

Hospice services can be requested by a patient, their family members, or physicians. Such services range from helping patients ease pain and other distressful symptoms to running errands and relieving stress for family members.

Margaret Rauls, contacted Knapp’s Hospice Care Services after she determined that she needed help caring for her terminally ill husband, Donald. “I took care of Donald by myself for five months,” she said. “But I was just too run down and the doctor felt I needed some help and suggested hospice services. I’m glad I got Knapp’s assistance, because they helped me so much.”

Rauls said it was the dedication and caring of hospice staff that helped get her through the emotional pain of losing her husband. “They did everything. They were so friendly and understanding. It gave me a lot of comfort,” she said. “I can’t give them enough credit. They became like family to me, and I still think of them as family.”

Knapp Hospice Chaplain Oscar Quintana said that the relationship that forms between hospice staff and families who request services is often a powerful one that remains long after the patient is gone. “As a chaplain, I am a companion that walks together with them in their journey,” he said. “We form bonds with these families.”

Part of the bond includes support after the passing of a loved one. Hospice staff held a Community Memorial Service in November as part of National Hospice and Palliative Care Month to help members of the local community cope with the recent loss of loved ones.

“The event really provides closure for friends and family,” Quintana said. “It provides the opportunity to come together, and for families we have served, it gives us the opportunity to see them again and meet others who are grieving. It is often helpful to not feel alone.”

“It’s dignity... it’s humanity... it’s what we do.”
Valley Health Seminars

Seminars Resume on Thursday, January 20, 2011
Join us from 6 - 7 PM in the Knapp Conference Center every other Thursday beginning January 20 and running through March 31. Seminars are free and open to the public. For more information visit www.valleyhealthseminars.com

Miss Texas USA Visits Knapp Medical Center
Miss Texas USA 2011, Ana Rodriguez of Laredo, along with other local beauty pageant winners, visited Knapp in October to meet pediatric patients and staff. Also attending were Vanessa Garza, Miss Rio Grande Valley Teen USA 2010, Ashley Hughes, Miss South Texas, and Tyler Zimmerman of Weslaco, Miss South Texas Teen.

The Knapp Diabetes Center is committed to helping patients improve their overall health, lower their blood sugar levels and take better control of their diabetes.

The Knapp Diabetes Center works with each patient's doctor to identify their needs and develop a personalized plan of education that will help patients understand and manage their diabetes.

The Diabetes Center provides diabetes self-management training for children, adults and pregnant women. Patients will receive:

- 90 minutes with a registered dietitian
- 90 minutes with a registered nurse
- 60-minute foot class with foot screen
- 30-minute follow-up at three, six and twelve months

Knapp's diabetes educators also conduct bilingual classes for patients who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes and those who have been living with diabetes, and need to learn how to manage their disease. Education topics for adults and children may include nutrition, importance of exercise, stress management, medications, how diabetes affects other parts of the body, and prevention, recognition and treatment of diabetic emergencies.

Diabetes can affect anyone from young children to great-grandparents. Hispanic Americans are two times more likely to develop diabetes than non-Hispanic whites of the same age. Other risk factors include: advancing age, having a relative with diabetes, excess body weight (especially around the waist) and high blood pressure.

Some of the signs and symptoms of diabetes include fatigue, unquenchable thirst, frequent urination, excessive hunger, unexplained weight loss, blurred vision, numbness and tingling of feet, and wounds that won't heal. Annual blood sugar screening as part of a routine medical examination can identify diabetes early, before serious damage occurs.

Talk to your doctor about Knapp's diabetes services. Patients must be referred to the Knapp Diabetes Center by their doctor. For more information, contact the Knapp Diabetes Center at (956) 969-5568 or visit www.knappmed.org.

Harvest Night Gallery

Thank you to all of those who helped make this year’s Harvest Night Legacy of Giving a success. Photos and a video from this year’s event can be viewed online at www.harvestnight.com.