

HELEN



Highmark Caring Place Volunteer

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Helen knows a lot about caring. She spent more than 50 years as a nurse caring for patients and their families. She was also a caregiver for her mother and her husband in their final years. When her husband passed away in 2000, Helen felt that loss on many levels. “After his death, I felt I was no longer needed,” she said. “Of course, I was going through my own grief.” It was during this personal transition that a speaker at Helen’s church inspired her to become a volunteer. He talked about the need for special caregivers at the Highmark Caring Place. “After hearing about the Caring Place,” Helen recalled, “I thought, ‘I can do that!’” She’s now been volunteering with grieving families for nearly a decade.

During her nursing career, Helen often cared for dying patients and their families. “I understand those who have experienced the long struggle of illness,” she said. “The best part of my volunteer experience is being able to



continued



listen and help individuals after the loss of a loved one." Although Helen enjoys all age groups, she believes her experience serves grieving adults the best.

Helen understands the benefits of donating her time and talents. "I have seen how the adults benefit from the first session to the 10th," she says. "I can see how the Caring Place helps families." A notable challenge for Helen was volunteering with the child loss group. She was apprehensive at first, because although she's nurtured many adults in her lifetime, she never raised children of her own. One group member in particular touched Helen's heart. "This woman would curl up in her chair and cry," Helen remembers. "She didn't talk for the first three sessions. I kept trying to think of how I could help her in her grief. It started slowly, but during the sessions she began to join in the discussions. The group helped her through a terrible loss." Group members frequently greet Helen with a hug when they see her.

Helen plans to volunteer at the Caring Place until her "second retirement" in the distant future. She's recommended volunteering to her friends, and some of them now work with her. Helen has found the rewards of friendship in reverse, too. "I have met so many volunteers who have become my close friends," she says. "The volunteers at the Caring Place are very special to me."

For more information about the Highmark Caring Place, visit us online at www.highmarkcaringplace.com.