

# When It Matters Most...Ask for Alexander

August 2012

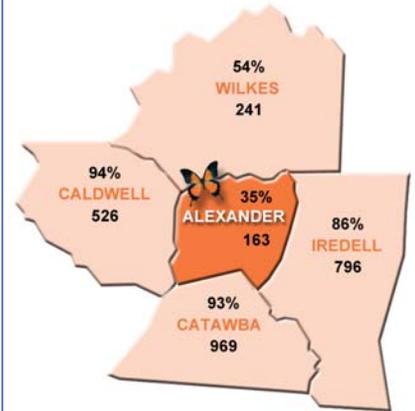
Since 1985, residents of Alexander County have welcomed Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. into their homes to provide end of life care and services. "To be welcomed into a home, and into such a very personal and significant time in a family's life is a great honor," says Tonya Roland-RN, CHPN, Executive Director of Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. "We are truly grateful for every opportunity to serve the residents of Alexander County. Providing the highest quality of care to each patient and family we are privileged to know is our top priority."

It can be very difficult knowing that your or your loved one's time may be limited. Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. understands this, and is committed to helping patients who have a life expectancy of six months or less and their families live the highest quality of life possible for whatever quantity of life is remaining. Hospice & Home Care provides the highest caliber of end of life care and services from a foundation of compassionate and educated medical professionals and volunteers dedicated to quality hospice care to the residents of Alexander County. The Hospice team works together with each patient and family to develop and implement a personalized plan of care.

Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. comes to you. The Hospice staff schedules visits when it is convenient for you, and comes to wherever you call home... a private residence, nursing home, assisted living facility...or even in a hospital. In addition to regularly scheduled visits by the hospice staff, an on-call registered nurse is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Hospice medical staff specializes in pain and symptom management with the goal of helping provide the best quality of life possible.

Given the choice, most people facing a life limiting illness prefer to receive end of life care in the their own home...in surroundings that are comfortable to them. Due to that fact, the majority of hospice care is provided in the home. According to 2011 data compiled by the Carolinas Center for Hospice & End of Life Care, only 1% of total days of care provided by Hospice of Alexander County were inpatient care days. The percentage of inpatient care days provided by hospice organizations in neighboring counties is comparably low—Catawba (4%), Caldwell (7%), and Iredell (10%)—in spite of the presence of inpatient facilities in these counties. While the Hospice team does everything possible to allow patients to remain in their homes, there are times when a patient needs more than can be managed at home, or symptoms require more intense management than family caregivers can provide. For these instances, Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. provides several options for inpatient care through contracted relationships with other facilities. If the inpatient options available through Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County are occupied, or are not the best option for the patient, patients may be transferred to a facility with the resources needed at that time. Transferring a patient is a simple process, and the continuity of care will not be compromised.

## 2011 • Patients Admitted to Hospice Care by County



### Alexander County • 163

- Hospice of Alexander County.....57
- Hospice of Buncombe County .... 11
- Hospice of Catawba County.....44
- Hospice of Iredell County.....51

Of 163 Alexander County residents admitted to hospice care in 2011, Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. had the privilege to serve only 35% of them.



**HOSPICE AND HOME CARE**  
*of* **ALEXANDER COUNTY, INC.**

50 LUCY ECHERD LANE  
TAYLORSVILLE, NC 28681

828.632.5026

www.  
HospiceandHomeCareAlexander.org

Although Hospice of Alexander County provides viable options for inpatient care, they would like to provide their own inpatient facility to meet those needs right here at home—in Alexander County. Some misinterpret the absence of an inpatient hospice unit in Alexander County as an indicator of lower quality care. This is not the case at all. The North Carolina Medical Care Commission (NCMCC) determines the number of inpatient hospice beds for which a county is eligible based on geographic, demographic, and economic considerations. When Hospice of Alexander County was established in 1985, Alexander County was eligible for only one bed. Since it was not financially feasible to operate a facility for one bed, Alexander County contracted that bed to Caldwell County with a provision for use when needed. Hospice of Alexander County also established contractual relationships with other facilities to provide inpatient care when needed.

In 2010, the State Health Coordinating Council approved a petition for an adjusted need determination in Alexander County. This approval provided the opportunity to submit a Certificate of Need (CON) application during 2010 to develop a 3-bed inpatient hospice facility in Alexander County. Both Palliative CareCenter & Hospice of Catawba Valley (PCHCV) and Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. began the CON application process in early 2010 to obtain these beds. PCHCV began the CON process with intentions of utilizing these 3 beds, if awarded, at Valley Nursing Center in Taylorsville, NC. Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County began the CON process with the intention of establishing a freestanding 3-bed inpatient facility if awarded the CON. Although they initiated the process, PCHCV did not file a CON application by the May 17, 2010 deadline. “Construction issues” with Valley Nursing Center were cited as the reason behind PCHCV’s suspension of their application.

Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. filed their CON application with overwhelming community support, including almost 3,000 Letters of Support from individuals, families, churches, businesses, civic organizations, government agencies and officials. In addition to Letters of Support, evidence was presented showing financial viability. The NC Division of Health Services (NCDHS) denied approval of the CON application, which would have allowed expansion of local hospice services in Alexander County. The predominant rationale cited in the State’s decision for denial was the large percentage of county residents utilizing hospice services in Catawba and Iredell counties. The NCDHS considered utilization statistics from the Carolinas Center for Hospice & End of Life Care for 2004 to 2009, which showed a sharp decline in use of local hospice services during that time period.

The alarming decline in use of local hospice services has become a concern for the county. Many patients assume that they are automatically referred to the hospice in their home county...or that all hospice organizations are “connected”. Often, when making a referral for hospice care, physicians refer patients to the hospice of the county in which they practice. Since the closing of Alexander County’s only hospital, residents must go to neighboring counties for inpatient medical care. All of these issues, along with increasingly aggressive recruitment of patients by neighboring hospice organizations, combine to lead to a loss of many of Alexander County’s potential hospice patients. Statistics show that of Alexander County residents admitted to hospice care in 2006 through 2009, the percentage served by Hospice of Alexander County fell from 58% in 2006 to 27% in 2009. Many residents say they choose neighboring hospice organizations due to the absence of an inpatient facility in Alexander, but would prefer to stay in Alexander County.

However, current data shows promise as more residents seem to be turning to their local hospice provider. Local utilization statistics for 2010 and 2011 have risen to 35%. “The increase of local utilization is very encouraging,” says Tonya Roland-RN, CHPN, Executive Director of Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. “We believe that residents of Alexander County receive a higher quantity, as well as quality, of end of life care when they utilize their local hospice. Nurses and social workers are closer—allowing more time with patients—and a faster response time.”

We all want the best possible care for those we love—especially when facing a life limiting illness. And we want to make the most of each moment when we have together. Hospice & Home Care of Alexander County, Inc. wants to help make that possible in the comfort of your own home—in Alexander County. When it matters most...ASK for Alexander!