

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HOSPICE FOUNDATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



It's Never Too Late to Make a Difference
Submitted By: Elise Hall, Hospice Nurse

My regular day of admitting patients to Hospice began at Anaheim Regional Hospital, where I met Doreen Nelson, a 60-year-old woman who had come to the end of her long battle with rectal cancer. Her hospital discharge would be delayed for several hours due to minor medical complications and we would have to wait for a doctor to remedy the problem before we could head home to her loving husband Robert.

While waiting for Doreen to be seen by the physician, I pulled up a chair to keep her company and answer any questions she might have regarding Hospice. I learned that Doreen is a quiet warrior, never wanting to complain, let alone ask for anything more than her family had already unselfishly provided. After an hour of getting to know Doreen, she turned to me with tear-filled eyes and said, "I will never see the ocean again, smell the sea breeze, or watch the sun dip into the night." I could barely hold my excitement, knowing I could submit a request to the Southern California Hospice Foundation (SCHF) to make Doreen's wish – visiting the sea one last time – come true.

Within hours, SCHF was apprised of Doreen's request as well as her physical limitations of being unable to stand or even sit due to pain. That's when Michelle Wulfestieg, Executive Director of SCHF, arranged for Angels on Wheels – a program created in the spirit of minimizing pain and maximizing mobility – to assist Doreen in meeting her transportation needs. Two of the gentlest men I have ever met, Mike and Luis, tenderly moved Doreen from her home to the van and then to the beach without a hitch. They truly cared and demonstrated what it meant to provide loving compassion.

We arrived at the Huntington Beach shoreline with a heap of burgundy blankets, pillows, throws, and candles - all for Doreen's sunset dream. We sat on the beach - Doreen, Robert, their 15-year-old granddaughter, Ashley, Mike, Luis and myself - telling stories, sharing memories, and hearing the tales of a marriage that lasted for 30 years. That's when Robert looked over at the nearby lifeguard tower, straining to see the numbers, and said to Doreen, "We are two lifeguard towers away from our first date." There was not a dry eye as we watched this couple sit on the beach, Doreen in her hospital bed with Robert kneeling beside her, watching the sunset in the same location where, serendipitously, they had shared their first kiss 30 years ago... It's never too late to make a difference.

About the Southern California Hospice Foundation:

The Southern California Hospice Foundation was established in 2002 with a grand vision: open a Hospice House in Southern California that serves as a live-in facility for end-of-life care. While working toward our vision, we fulfill our mission by delivering a breadth of resources to caregivers, families and patients who are confronting the final stages of life. We will accomplish this through a commitment to advocacy, education and a mutual respect for all faiths.