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Hospice Celebrates Light-A-Life and Other Community Christmas Gifts

ALBION—Some Christmastime traditions are worth a bit of sacrifice, even withstanding frigid air for a half-hour or more. That’s just what more than 60 people did last Saturday (Dec. 7) as they witnessed the lighting of the Hospice of Orleans’ memorial tree on the front lawn of the Route 31 campus.

The annual Light-A-Life event provides a way for family and friends of people who have passed away—not just Hospice patients, and not only those who have died recently—to remember their loved ones, while also supporting Hospice of Orleans. The tree is available to any for whom a measure of comfort can be found in paying tribute to a loved one in this manner. Light-A-Life participants purchase an ornament (available at \$10, \$25, \$50 and \$100) in memory or honor of their chosen designee. The purchaser takes home an ornament for his/her own tree, and Hospice creates a paper laminated ornament for the outside tree, which was donated by Jerry and Carol Culhane of Gaines. Bill Downey of Albion donated his sign-making services to identify the tree’s meaning to passersby.

Brandi Hazel DiMatteo attended in memory of her grandparents, Merle and Eleanor Hazel. “The tree lighting at Hospice used to be me and Grandma’s annual event to find Grandpa’s name on the tree. Unfortunately, I was looking for both their names this year. My aunt Linda Wilkins and I were there to show our love. We’re missing them everyday more and more.”

Hospice Board Member Craig Lape sang a solo rendition of the Alabama song, “Angels Among Us,” prompting tears from many present, some of whom quietly sang along. Pastor Linda Haight, a Hospice spiritual care coordinator, offered a reflection about how grieving is still allowed, even at this merry time of year. Her meditation will be available on the Hospice website (www.hospiceoforleans.org – lower left, “Latest News”).

In addition to the Light-A-Life, Hospice is celebrating the first anniversary of the opening of the Martin-Linsin Residence this month. To help deck the halls, Albion Ace Hardware donated a 7.5-foot pre-lit Christmas tree for the main living area. Hospice friend Winnie Wawrzyniak donated a second tree, which is on display in the indoor courtyard. County House Christmas Trees contributed two fresh wreaths. And Walmart of Albion gave us a gift card toward other Christmas decorations.

The piano students of Bonnie Heck of Lyndonville will be giving a recital at the Residence on Dec. 14. Eccles Piano Studio of Albion is hosting a Hospice benefit recital at the Albion Free Methodist Church on Dec. 20. In addition, various carolers and other visitors are planning appearances at the Residence. Even Santa is rumored to be stopping by.

“Having so many people pitch in is so heartening,” said Hospice Development Director Marsha Rivers. “That’s what makes this ‘the most wonderful time of year’—not that everything is perfect, but that people open their hearts and their pocketbooks to help their neighbors. The reason we love Christmas is because Christmas is about love.”

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