



STEIN HOSPICE HONORS VETERANS WITH ESCORT CEREMONY

Stein Hospice's escort ceremony to honor deceased Veterans has received praise from families and inquires from hospices across the country interested in duplicating it.

The ceremony, held for patients who die at Stein's Care Center in Sandusky, is simple yet meaningful. The patient's body is covered with a U.S. flag and escorted to the elevator by trained staff and volunteers. Family members are invited to join the procession. As the flag is folded, Veterans in the procession salute while others place their hand over their heart.

Since March, the ceremony has been conducted for about 20 Veterans and their families.

"It was awesome and very respectful," said Marilyn Beckman, whose husband Don died at the Care Center in March. Don was a U.S. Army Veteran who served in the Korean War and was very proud of his military service, Marilyn said.

A couple weeks later hospice patient John Myers watched the military escort of another deceased Veteran. "That's a great honor," the U.S. Air Force Veteran told his wife Donna. An escort ceremony for John was held two days later.

"It really was the highest military honor you can give a military person," Donna said, her eyes filling with tears.

Stein's commitment to serve Veteran patients is longstanding and varied. Since the mid-1990s, Stein has been caring for patients at the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky. Any Veteran who dies at the Veterans Home receives an escort and Stein's on-site staff participates in those ceremonies. In January, Stein opened a hospice unit in Ohio's other Veterans Home, located in Georgetown.

Under the heading "PeaceWorks, hope and healing for Veterans," Stein offers a number of services to Veteran patients, including a pinning ceremony and a mental health therapy especially beneficial for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Stein is also a partner in "We Honor Veterans," a national initiative launched last year by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The program helps hospice professionals meet the special needs of dying Veterans and their families through education, training and activities. Its web site, www.wehonorveterans.org, also promotes best practices, such as Stein's escort ceremony.

Serving those who served