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## LOCAL

### News

Community Features

Home on my Range

Obituaries

Events Calendar

## OPINION

Editorial

## SPORTS

Stories

From the Bleachers

OSAA

Oregon Live

OSU Athletics

UO Athletics

## OUTDOOR

ODFW Fish Counts

Out & About

by Scott Staats

## CITY/STATE

City of Prineville

Prineville Chamber

Crook County

Essential Contacts

## EDUCATION

Crook County High

School

School District

Oregon State

University

University of Oregon

COCC

CC Christian School

[Return to Search Results](#)

## Friends with Flowers

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Little things really count when a person is in hospice care, but can something as simple as a bouquet of flowers improve someone's life?

Friends with Flowers believes it can. So much so that they are built entirely around that belief.

"One of our goals during hospice care is to help patients live the rest of their lives with quality," states Brenda Wilson, Hospice, Bereavement and Volunteer Coordinator of Pioneer Memorial Hospital.

Local volunteers, Pioneer Memorial Hospital, florists, grocery stores, and Friends with Flowers are partnering to bring a little cheer to Prineville hospice patients.

It all works like a well-oiled machine. Heidi Berkman, an event organizer and founder of Friends with Flowers in Bend, receives a call from a local vendor or event, such as a wedding, to say they have flowers they no longer need.

Berkman then contacts volunteers to pick up the flowers who strip away wilted petals, snipping here and there to re-arrange them into smaller, bouquets for bedside tables.

Before each hospice care provider leaves the hospital to visit a patient, they check to see if there are any flowers to take with them.

Randy Pultz, a hospice volunteer in Prineville, puts it this way, "Bringing flowers to a patient brightens everybody's day. One patient, who has a time with Alzheimer's never forgets that I was the one who brought her flowers. It makes my day and hers too!"

The gift of flowers is a caring touch that brings joy to the patient, their family, and all the people who take part in the giving.

"The other day we had flowers lining the hospital hallways," states Wilson. "It wasn't just a feel good for the patients, it was a feel good for the entire staff, too."

Extra flowers and floral arrangements come from florists, grocery stores, weddings, and stores like Trader Joe's, who recently donated more than 40 bunches of flowers. Berkman is working on getting other contributors such as Costco.

"Our goal at Friends with Flowers is to provide an unconditional gift to hospice patients and their families, bringing a bit of joy and beauty to their lives," Berkman, of Bend, states. "Some of a person's last remaining senses are smell and the ability to see color."

Berkman first learned about the organization founded by Randy McManus, an event coordinator in Greensboro, North Carolina, who noticed that a lot of good flowers were going to waste after weddings and other events.

Berkman decided to follow suit and now operates her own autonomous branch of Friends with Flowers in Central Oregon. Word spreads quickly in this territory and it

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wasn't long before Michelle McMichael of The Posie Shoppe in Prineville caught wind of the organization and made a call to Berkman.

Berkman and McMichael met with Wilson of Pioneer Memorial Hospital, to see what could be done for Prineville hospice patients.

The hospital agreed to allow the group to use a conference room for volunteers to perform the floral redesign. When the flowers are ready, hospice care workers will take the arrangements to their patients. The organizers and volunteers have no personal contact with the patients in regard to the flowers.

Karen Monson, a Prineville volunteer, states, "It must feel really wonderful to be the one to deliver the flowers."

McMichael of The Posie Shoppe has been teaching the volunteers Karen Monson, Marlee Dutli, and Susan Valentine about rearranging recycled flowers into smaller bouquets for bedside tables.

They are picking up many tips and pointers as they make light of the work, enjoying the feeling of doing something invaluable for hospice patients in Prineville.

Marlee Dutli, of Prineville explained, "It [volunteering for Friends with Flowers] has everything I love, recycling, flowers, and blessing hospice patients."

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