

TO MEDIA:

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PHOTO: Excela Health Hospice patient August Bucciarelli with Hospice volunteer Ed Washburn and cake baker Nancy Gombos. Washburn visited the patient many times before he died, forming a supportive friendship with him and with his family - the reward of being a hospice volunteer. Bucciarelli requested to meet Gombos to thank her for making his birthday memorable.

HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS MAKE FINAL BIRTHDAYS MEMORABLE

GREENSBURG, PA, July 17, 2012 ... While we rarely know the day or the hour when we will transition from life to death, Hospice patients, their families and caregivers are keenly aware time is fleeting and strive to make the final moments memorable. Excela Health Hospice celebrates end of life as its beginning by marking what most likely will be the patient's final birthday observance.

Hospice volunteer Ed Washburn, a member of Community United Methodist Church in Harrison City, approached fellow parishioner Nancy Gombos, widely regarded by the congregation for her baking skills. Over the past year, Gombos, a medical assistant with Excela Health Cardiology at Excela Square at Norwin, has baked more than 80 cakes for this project. Occasionally, Gombos accompanies Washburn on the deliveries. "I know we can't talk about faith during our visits, but it's a way to show the love of God through our presence," Gombos said.

Most cakes are flavored with gelatin, and iced with whipped topping. Seasonal or holiday decorations add a festive touch. "If the recipient has a preference, I'll bake to order," added Gombos, who knows a month in advance how many cakes she'll need to create.

Individuals who wish to support this community outreach activity may donate cake mixes, disposable 9x13-inch pans, vegetable oil and frosting. Supplies or monetary contributions should be sent to Excelsa Health Hospice, at Excelsa's Corporate Services Center, 134 Industrial Park Road, Greensburg, PA 15601. For more information, call 724-689-1800.