



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**  
**April 26, 2010**

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### **Pleasanton Physician and Hospice Volunteer Receives Juanita Haugen Award**

Pushpa Dalal, MD, a volunteer for Hope Hospice in Dublin, has been chosen to receive the Juanita Haugen award from the Pleasanton Community of Character committee. The tenets of Pleasanton's Community of Character initiative are based on *Responsibility, Compassion, Self-Discipline, Honesty, Respect, and Integrity*. Dr. Dalal's work as coordinator of the Vigil Volunteer program at Hope Hospice reflects such qualities. "Caring for people is at the center of my heart," she says. Pushpa closed her private practice after 25 years and now works part time in a community clinic serving patients with limited or no income. In addition to volunteering at Hope Hospice, she also volunteers at Axis Community Health Center.

Pushpa's decision to support the efforts of Hope Hospice came from her own personal experience. She explains, "My entry into the world of hospice was like many other hospice volunteers. I suffered a great loss in the demise of my husband. My journey with hospice began with his illness. It continued in the Grief Support Center as I dealt with losing him."

Later, Pushpa decided she wanted to do something for Hope Hospice...to give back in some way. Recognizing the sadness and fear that many patients and their loved ones experience in the end-of-life journey, she worked with Wendy Celeste, Hope Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, to design a unique program called *Vigil Volunteers*. It offered a chance for other volunteers to learn the art of becoming a compassionate companion to those who are dying. The program includes training on the physical needs of those in the dying process: signs and symptoms of approaching death, gentle massage, and comfort touch. And since hospice care also addresses spiritual aspects, the training includes complimentary activities such as the use of quiet meditative music, creating a sacred space, or reciting prayers from the person's faith tradition.

At a moment's notice, and often during the night, Pushpa responds to requests for volunteers to 'sit vigil' with the dying. She brings a quiet presence to the bedside of those on their final journey: holding a hand, or praying, or playing soft music, and offering words of reassurance so that no one has to die alone. As a long time OB-GYN physician she now sees her new role as that of "helping people birth into the next phase of life's journey." Her gentle, compassionate presence gives people comfort and peace.

Without her dedication, many Hope Hospice patients would find themselves alone. And many families would wonder if they had done all that was needed.

For all these reasons, Hope Hospice takes great pride in congratulating Pushpa P. Dalal, MD, for receiving the Juanita Haugen *Volunteer of the Year* award.

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### **About Hope Hospice**

Hope Hospice, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization since 1980, provides compassionate care, insight, and guidance as families navigate through the end-of-life process. The hospice team, many with hospice and palliative care certification, provides emotional /spiritual support and state-of-the art methods of pain and symptom control to maximize quality of life. Hope Hospice serves families in Alamo, Blackhawk, Castro Valley, Diablo, Danville, Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, San Ramon, Sunol and the surrounding communities in the East Bay of San Francisco.