Dear Friends:

As your hospice team, we would like to express our sympathy in the recent death of your loved one. We also want to make sure that you, as a hospice client, know about the bereavement services that we offer during the year following your loss. It is your prerogative to accept or decline any of these services so that you have exactly the kind of support that you wish from us without our overwhelming or intruding on you. We also encourage you to call us if we can be helpful in ways that are not part of our regular bereavement program.

Our regular bereavement services include:

**Monthly Phone Calls.** These calls are usually made by hospice bereavement volunteers, who will check in to see how you are. This conversation can be brief or more extended, depending on your needs and desires. We can call you for the entire year, or you can opt out of phone calls at any time that you wish. Just let your bereavement caller know what you want, or if there are other family members who would like to be called.

**Quarterly Mailings.** These mailings contain material about the grieving process and keep you informed about our quarterly bereavement gatherings. They constitute your invitation to these events and ask you to RSVP if you wish to attend so that we know about how many people to provide materials and refreshments for. You are welcome to bring family members or friends with you, and if there are others who wish to be on the mailing list, please let us know.

**Quarterly Bereavement Gatherings.** Our bereavement gatherings have a lot of different themes and formats, but they always provide some kind of bereavement information or activity in a social setting with refreshments. They tend to be informal and allow you to come and go as you wish. These gatherings are supportive but are not formal bereavement support groups. We meet at the Council Bluffs Public Library or another appropriate venue. As many of our staff as possible attend these gatherings so that you can re-connect with those who worked with your family and loved one.

**Annual Memorial Service.** Our November bereavement gathering each year is a memorial service that honors the people who have died on our hospice during the past year. You, and any family members or friends you wish to bring, are invited and encouraged to attend this lovely event. It takes place in a different church each year and is the most formal of our bereavement gatherings. The service is non-denominational and is followed by a reception.
**Bereavement Support Groups.** Twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, we offer twelve-week bereavement support groups. They are open to any of our bereaved clients that we feel can benefit from a support group. These groups are closed, meaning that the people who sign up for them attend for the entire twelve weeks and usually no new people join during this time. The material we use is sequential and it affects the trust level and the process for group members to keep incorporating new members throughout the twelve-week period. We offer bereavement support groups to 6-10 people at a time, and need at least six people to run a group. These groups occasionally also include bereaved members of the community who have not been on our hospice service.

**Memory Pillows.** These lovely keepsake pillows are made from articles of clothing worn by your loved one. We offer the first pillow to your family free of charge. Additional pillows may be requested for $15.00 each, payable at the time that you order them.

**Home Visits or Referrals.** We are always willing to come to your home or another designated place for a one-on-one visit or to meet with a group of family or friends. Just call the main hospice number—712-352-1389—and ask for the bereavement coordinator. If you wish to drop by the office to see one of the staff, please call ahead to make sure that the person you want to see will be there. We can also make referrals to other professional assistance if you would find such services helpful.

**Bereavement Surveys.** When your bereavement services end thirteen months after your loved one dies, you will be sent a survey asking how well our bereavement program met your needs. We appreciate your completing and returning these surveys so that we have an opportunity to improve our services.

Enclosed, please find a checklist that you can fill out and drop in the mail in our postage-free envelope to indicate what bereavement services you would like at this time. Again, these services can be dropped or added at any time by your simply letting us know what you want. We look forward to interacting with you during the coming year.

Sincerely,

Linda Schlafer, BCC, Ph.D.

for your whole hospice team