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MEDIA RELEASE

**FCHS & VON partner to offer Volunteer Palliative Care Support**

(Newbury, ON) – In April 2015, several hospital and community dignitaries attended the opening of the new Palliative Care suite at Four Counties Health Services (FCHS). The suite offers palliative care patients and their families’ privacy and dignity in a calm, peaceful space.

The need for palliative care continues to grow.  Since the opening of the suite, 12 patients used the FCHS suite in end of life situations, each averaging a length of stay of 9 days.  This means the room was occupied over 60% of the days since its inception, which clearly demonstrates its need in the community.

To augment the care provided, FCHS has partnered with VON to integrate a pool of volunteers who would be trained to provide respite care for tired family members and companionship to the person who is ill, particularly if there are no close family or friends in the immediate area.

“Volunteers are a huge part of a successful palliative program, most especially at end of life. As health care professionals, we practice within our unique scope, but volunteers are able to provide a wide range of experiences and skills that health care professionals may not.  Volunteer services can provide great comfort and improved quality of life to patients”, says Chiamaka Odunukwe, Nurse Practitioner at FCHS and co-chair of the FCHS Palliative Care committee.

 “The VON is very pleased to partner with Four Counties Health Services to help ensure that palliative care patients and their families have access to well-trained and supportive volunteers” says Lynn Hinds, district executive director, Community Support Services, VON Canada. “As members of the community and as health system partners, we know the importance of end-of-life care, caregiver respite, and grief and bereavement support and we welcome this opportunity.”

To participate in volunteering for this program, individuals must initially be referred into the program by contacting Meg Sattin (FCHS Volunteer Services) at (519) 693-7111 x 5595.

“The Palliative Care Program is a wonderful program which continues to contribute to the vitality and vision of Four Counties Health Services.  We welcome the partnership with VON in providing the best possible care for the clients we serve,” says Steph Ouellet, Vice-President, Strategic Partnerships at Middlesex Hospital Alliance and FCHS site director.

About MHA:

The Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) is comprised of two fully-accredited partner sites: Four Counties Health Services and Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital.

A progressive, team-oriented and technologically adept organization of excellence, the MHA is creating a more integrated and seamless approach to treatment by embracing and seeking out partnerships, through collaboration and investing in people. This coordinated approach helps to ensure that a high level of service is provided while reducing costs and continually enhancing quality.

Providing core acute primary and secondary hospital care, the MHA has also been recognized for establishing two notable Centres of Achievement (Orthopaedics and Diabetes Education Centre) that generate local and regional referrals.