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## **Hospice of The Gorge Launches *Consuelo y Ayuda* Program *Funded by United Way of The Columbia Gorge***

*October 1, 2007 - Hood River, Ore.* - Hospice of The Gorge has officially launched a program that describes the services that the nonprofit has already been providing to local Hispanics for years: *Consuelo y Ayuda*. Meaning “Comfort and Help” in English, the name represents the organization’s dedication to serving all of the Gorge’s residents, regardless of which language they speak.

“The challenge with reaching out to the Hispanic community is that you can’t just translate the words from an English-language brochure into Spanish words,” says community relations coordinator Kristy Athens, who managed the project. “The first thing is to ‘trans-culturate’ the existing language: that is, make it make sense in Spanish both linguistically and culturally. The second thing is to have the staff support available to provide culturally appropriate care.”

The initiative to step up efforts to reach the Hispanic community began in 2006, when the United Way of Hood River (now the United Way of the Columbia Gorge) funded a needs-assessment for awareness of hospice services. Two local outreach professionals, Evaristo Romero with La Clínica del Cariño and Gabriela Lizama with the Oregon Health Department, helped a committee of Spanish-speaking Hospice of The Gorge employees to create a questionnaire, which they then brought to various groups and individual families. The responses from these meetings are the basis of a report and the *Consuelo y Ayuda* program.

Romero will be joined as a *promotor de salud*, or “health promoter,” by Gerardo Lugo, also with La Clínica del Cariño. They will provide outreach via radio, religious and civic groups, and other means of spreading the word about the end-of-life care that is available to them, and continue to be available to Hospice of The Gorge as cultural consultants. The United Way of the Columbia Gorge continued its support of the program in 2007.

“The most basic message for us to bring is that *hospice* is not *hospicio*, explains Athens. In Mexico, the home country of the majority of the Gorge’s Hispanics, *hospicio* can mean anything from an orphanage to a mental institution. It is a place for people whose families have forsaken them: a major issue in Mexican culture, in which family is everything. “We have to convince people that the doctors, nurses, home health aides,

social workers, homemakers, volunteers and other staff of Hospice of The Gorge are available to *support* the patient and his/her family members, not displace them.”

Hospice of The Gorge has made a conscious effort to incorporate bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff for at least 15 of its 26 years. The medical director, Tina Castañares, M.D., Josie Castañeda, R.N., chaplain Lou DeSitter and social worker Patrick Rawson have all served Hispanic hospice patients in the past. The organization has dedicated its toll-free number to its Hood River office as a Spanish language-enabled line; office manager Angel Reyes, Jr., is available to field inquiries and translate documents.

“I’m extremely proud of the Hospice team that worked on launching this program,” says executive director Sharon Mulford. “They have taken what was once simply a good idea and made it a reality.”

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**Hospice of The Gorge** is a nonprofit, Medicare-certified public-benefit agency that since 1981 has provided comprehensive and compassionate care to those who face life-limiting illness and to their families. From offices in Hood River and The Dalles, Hospice of The Gorge serves eight counties: Skamania and Klickitat in Washington, and Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow and Wheeler in Oregon. Hospice of The Gorge receives support from the United Way. Please visit the website for more information: [www.hospiceofthegorge.org](http://www.hospiceofthegorge.org).