



Southern California Hospice Foundation

Sowing Seeds of Dignity:

Rhonda Ducote's Commitment to Harvest Multigenerational Generosity for Hospice

Rhonda Ducote is one of our Foundation's most dedicated supporters. Her commitment to opening our first Heavenly Home and building its Endowment has been a true Godsend. With a heart of service and gratitude, her dedication to helping those who need it most is contagious. Rhonda, her business partner Harmon Kong, their entire team at their financial services firm, Apriem Advisors, as well as their generous clients have dedicated their time, treasures, and talents to elevating the quality of life for those at the end of life.

Rhonda was one of the first members of our Hospice Advisory Council, developed in 2017, to create and implement a development plan for our Heavenly Home Project. Rhonda was already well acquainted with hospice, having family, friends, and clients who had all benefited from the service. She shared, "It's so comforting that they come in and make the last few days, weeks, or months of life as pleasant and pain free as possible. It takes a special person. It's like they were sent down directly from God."



Rhonda and her business partner Harmon have helped numerous clients to live fully while facing a life-limiting illness. Not only have they assisted with estate planning, including putting in order their client's wills, finances, and health directives, but also, especially in cases where loved ones are far away or there are no children, Apriem Advisors has assisted with funeral arrangements and have spent much time providing emotional support and companionship to their clients through their final journey.

When she joined the Hospice Advisory Council shortly after meeting Executive Director Michelle Wulfestieg, Rhonda had been serving a long-time client who had recently entered hospice. She shared, "My client's husband had passed away seven years before. Both spouses had lived well into their nineties, and both had

been in hospice. We get to know our clients so well that they trust us. I was able to tell her about my initial meeting with Michelle, and she remembered how hospice had helped her husband.” This meaningful exchange inspired Rhonda’s client to become a supporter of SoCal Hospice Foundation.

Rhonda noted that many have never heard of hospice or don’t know it’s available. She observed, “The key to understanding hospice is to see hospice caregivers in action. They are changing the bedding, providing personal care, holding their hand, combing their hair, providing personal hygiene, and talking to patients. It’s a very natural, beautiful experience. Providing that care is a very special ability.”

This type of 24-hour caregiving is exactly what the Heavenly Home will provide, along with art therapy, massage therapy, love and support, and an open door for loved ones to visit. Rhonda noted, “It’s so important that people know they are not dying alone and to ease them through that transition. These last weeks are so sacred for the dying, and now there will be a loving place where hospice can be provided.”

Rhonda looks forward to the first Heavenly Home opening its doors, and she has a larger vision for the Project as well. “After funding the Endowment, I look forward to visiting The Heavenly Home’s first patient. The Endowment is my main priority, and \$5 million is my goal. This will allow the Heavenly Home, through dividends and interest, to provide 24/7 caregiving and fund upkeep of the property, taxes and insurance. In just six months, during Covid-19, we’ve already raised \$1.2 million. I don’t doubt it for a minute that this will happen.”

She added, “We have found the right home, and once it opens, we are committed to starting another property. My vision is that this will multiply tenfold. I see this as being a multi-generational nonprofit. When we have dozens of Heavenly Homes and an Endowment that keeps these operating in perpetuity, then everyone that needs a loving home for the last stage will have one.”



Rhonda’s role in bringing The Heavenly Home to fruition and building its Endowment has been paramount.

“My role has been to bring awareness and to find people that are philanthropic to get them as excited as possible. It’s only been a few years since I’ve been involved with SoCal Hospice, and I look forward to a lifetime of involvement. I’ll do everything I can to make sure it’s a success, not only in Orange County, but also across Southern California. I feel so fortunate to be a part of this, and I feel like the luckiest person to have met Michelle.”

As seen on: Southern California Hospice Foundation Newsletter, March 2021