

Healing through touch

There can be great power in simple, human touch.

Jan Graham has felt it. Jan, whose husband, Tom, died in February after several years of health problems and a week in Fairview's hospice program, experienced physical pain that couldn't be diagnosed, had trouble sleeping and could not eat. She contacted **Steve Sims**, bereavement director, who counseled her and pointed her toward **Judy Tills**, a hospice volunteer and Level 2 Healing Touch student.

"The first time I was with Judy, it was amazing," Jan says. "I was lying there, not knowing what to expect, but I could feel it, like a motion or a peacefulness settling within you. The relief was incredible."

Soon after, Jan felt her anxiety and pain fading.

"I have sadness still, but I'm able to eat. Now, in the morning, I wake up and feel brighter about the world," she says. "It seemed to help me move forward."

Fairview Home Care and Hospice's bereavement program recently began offering "healing touch" therapy to loved ones of hospice patients through Judy, and it's been popular: Judy has already seen eight clients.

Finding a balance

Healing touch is a relaxation therapy that works with your personal energy field to support your natural ability to heal physically, mentally, emotionally



Judy Tills

and spiritually. Clients recline on a massage table while the practitioner studies his or her energy field (including the chakras, or energy centers in the body) and works to clear, balance, energize and support that field. It uses gentle, light or near-body touch, but clients can opt to not be touched at all.

Benefits include reduced stress, decreased physical pain, a sense of calm, relief from neck or back problems and a strengthened immune system.

"Once your energy is balanced, you can deal with life better," Judy says. "We all have things that affect our energy—like daily stress—so it's my belief that everyone could use this at some time or another."

Reaching a diverse audience

Steve says he was inspired to offer the therapy through bereavement services after he witnessed a hospice nurse using healing touch on a patient. "My first exposure to healing touch was a number of years ago in a nursing home, and it was so mysterious," he recalls. "The practitioner was working with a patient who was semi-comatose but very agitated, and she worked without touching the patient's body. It was amazing to see how this restless

patient calmed down without even being physically touched."

Steve believes healing touch is one more innovative way to connect with a spiritually diverse group of patients.

"We like to be creative and think outside the box when it comes to providing bereavement care," he says.

"We work with a dream therapist, we've had labyrinth walks, we work with journal writing and music therapy. We try to find ways to fit individuals' needs as they heal."