

Jory Graham speaks

Hospice is a place to find peace

By DONNA LOMAS

Jory Graham is aware of what dying people need. She knows only too well, because she is dying of cancer.

"What you need to do first is to tell the person you are trying to help," said the syndicated columnist.

"Touch is so wonderful but it is often denied to us," Miss Graham advised more than 100 health-care professionals attending a conference on the hospice movement at Mercy College in Detroit last week.

"Listen to someone who is dying," she urged her audience. "Learn to know how a patient feels. Then let them be themselves."

"By you being with us, you reinforce the sense that my life counts. That's terribly important."

THE SOFT-VOICED blonde is fighting metastatic (spreading) cancer. Since her original diagnosis in the

spring of 1975, she has had a radical mastectomy and almost died five times.

Her column, *A Time for Living*, is syndicated in U.S. and Canadian newspapers. The only column of its kind, it reaches more than five million readers, who write Miss Graham about their terminal illness and its effects on their lives, family and friends.

A hospice is a compromise between hospital and home, and terminally ill people can use a hospice to die in a dignified way, with family, friends and familiar objects around them.

Care can be given at home by hospice teams, which make it possible for a terminally ill person to die at home.

A hospice to Jory Graham means we're no longer afraid of dying. She cautioned her listeners to ensure their hospices avoid the stigma of a place "where you go to die. A hospice is a place where you go to find peace," she said.

Ski bus reservations are being taken now

Jan. 31, Feb. 7 and 14. Make-up days for cancelled trips are Feb. 21 and 28. Fee of \$49 includes bus transportation for three Saturdays, lessons and tow charges. There is an additional \$5 charge for equipment rental.

Adults who act as chaperones can receive a free day of skiing. Chaperones are still needed on a few of the bus trips. Inquiries will be taken by calling the center, 477-8404.

Although Europe has used hospices for years, it is a new concept to the U.S., where death is "two generations removed" from most urban dwellers, Miss Graham said.

"The real glory of a hospice," Miss Graham said, "is that you make dying at home possible."

She battles with her illness, not death, saying death is inevitable for everyone. A favorite place to her is the *Alamo* in Texas because "There wasn't a man there who didn't surely know he would die."

"It's hard to find ways to be individually courageous now," she said. "Yet I find equal courage in people today who can talk to their family about their cancer."

Terminally ill people have had to come to terms with saying goodbye, Miss Graham said. "Suddenly everything becomes dear," she said. "When you are confronted with your own mortality, nothing becomes as dear as your own existence. It's not so much the world without me, but that I won't be here to take it in."

She compared the horror of instant death to her situation: "We cancer patients have time to take care of what we need to take care of, to say goodbye."

She also cautioned the hospice audience about taking control of a patient's life.

"I'm greedy enough to want to die

my own way," she said. She is dismayed at the proliferation of craft classes for dying people, saying "there is a place for crafts, but not because we (health-care workers) think it belongs there."

"Not one of us wants to die without feeling that our life was worth it," Miss Graham said. "We all want to leave our mark."

"SHE'S RIGHT," said Peg McCusick, executive director of the Hospice of Southeastern Michigan. "She said so much that hospice people need to hear."

"How can we judge someone else's death? We're in the business to listen to their needs and meet those needs. A hospice should be the most permissive place that exists."

"America is a death-denial culture, but it is changing attitudes," said Dr. Josefina B. Magno, executive director of the National Hospice Organization.

"There is a basic desire to help (in a hospice) because all of us have seen someone die in pain and without dignity."

In 1976, Dr. Magno was part of a pilot project for the hospice movement in the U.S. and has been working on gaining a foothold for U.S. hospices since 1978.

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JORY GRAHAM

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