

Postal stamp delivers hospice message of hope

BY TIM SMITH
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United States Postal Service's new hospice stamp perfectly gets across its intended message of peaceful hope and life-to-death "transformation," said one of the customers who came out during Tuesday's unveiling to purchase one of the first-day collector's items.

"Hope... it's hope," said Sharon Wysocki, a Farmington Hills psychotherapist, looking down at the stamp. "It's clear-cut. What else could you have but a butterfly making the transformation from a caterpillar. It's a caterpillar in this life and a butterfly in the next."

On the stamp, now available nationwide through the year 2000, the orange and gold butterfly floats above a tranquil, white house and a nearby green tree.

"It signifies the passage of life," said Farmington Postmaster Marlene Bowers, who was at the Hills branch Tuesday when Wysocki bought her unique stamp, and the hand-cancelled, specially-designed "Power of Comfort Care" cachet that came with it.

By hand-cancelling the cachet (with the date and point of purchase), it cannot be mailed and becomes an instant collectible, explained Elaine Grohman, volunteer manager employee for Southfield-headquartered Hospice of Michigan.

The stamp (available for 33 cents or \$6.60 for a

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Marilyn Bowers
—Postmaster

sheet of 20), is on sale for area residents in the downtown Farmington, Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield branches of the U.S. Postal Service. Hospice volunteers, such as Hills resident Bunny Kaminski, will work information booths in the Farmington-area branches from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. through tomorrow.

But Bowers said the tables will stay up until Hospice of Michigan literature is gone, and that promotional window posters also will indefinitely trumpet the stamp's availability.

"Stamps like this are issued to promote awareness of public issues," Bowers said. "What will help this stamp sell is that the hospice is out there... It's a great cause. The stamp is beautiful and the poster is beautiful. And it's the kind of thing that's for a cause that won't go away."

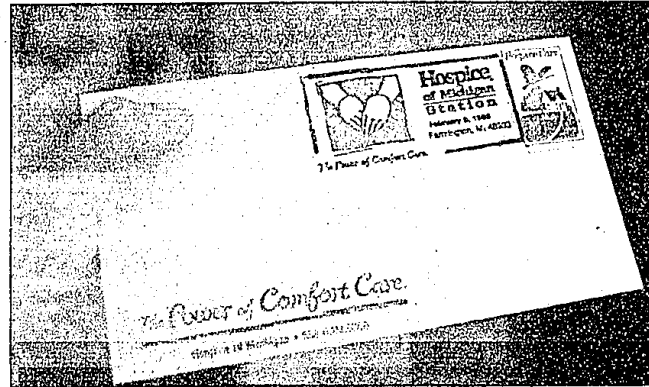
According to Kaminski, a Eucharistic minister who gives communion to hospice patients, the stamp "shows passion, hope and dignity. It's won-

Please see HOSPIECE, A10



STAFF PHOTO BY DILL BRADLEY

Buying: Julie Pulgini-Fagan purchased stamps to place on hospice envelopes. Elaine Grohman, Hospice employee, and volunteer Bunny Kaminski manned the Hospice booth in the lobby of the Farmington Hills post office branch.



Cancelled: This is what a hand-cancelled cachet looks like featuring the newly unveiled hospice stamp. The stamps are now available at the Farmington and Farmington Hills branches.

Carriers keep giving to cause

BY TIM SMITH
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Tuesday's nationwide unveiling of the first-ever hospice stamp by the U.S. Postal Service continues a caring relationship that is firmly taking root in the Farmington-Farmington Hills area.

POST OFFICE

Last year, letter carriers Geri Homezyn, Sue Krueger and Debra Read from the Farmington Hills post office branch on 12 Milo Road spearheaded fundraising efforts there to help install a garden at Hospice Home — and actually went to work to help plant it.

Hospice Home, located at 25911 Middlebelt in Farmington Hills, is one of the nursing home facilities affiliated with Hospice of Michigan, which is headquartered in Southfield.

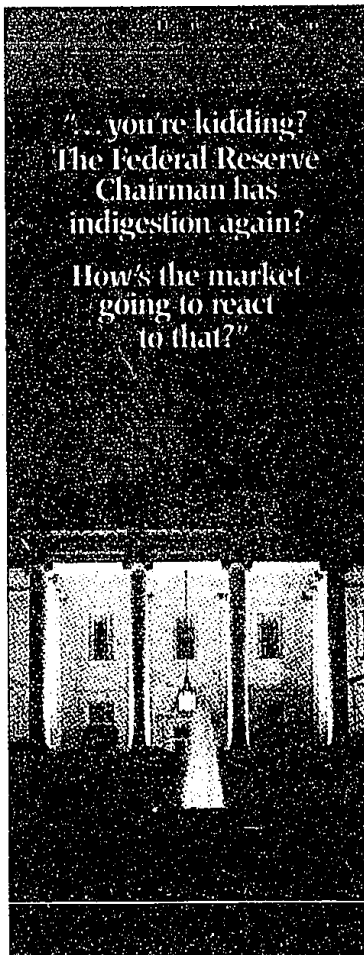
And then, a memorial garden remembering the late Mark Shada was created and dedicated last July, said Marlene Bowers, postmaster for the Farmington and Farmington Hills branches.

"They asked if we could do something here," said Bowers, pointing at the garden put in for Shada, a 30-year Hills post office custodian who died of cancer on Dec. 24, 1997.

He was not a hospice patient, but Elaine Grohman, Hospice of Michigan volunteer manager, sandblasted the lettering on a limestone and marble plaque for Shada. The plaque, along with planters, a bench and sundial, are key components of the tribute spot.

"This group of postal employees is very giving" to community endeavors, including supporting the hospice, Bowers said. "... They come out and keep this up."

Hospice of Michigan offers comprehensive, compassionate care for terminally ill patients, either in nursing facilities or their own homes.



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