

March 1, 2023

To: Smith Family Funeral Homes

RE: Nomination Letter for Willow Award

I nominate Monte Gillespie, for this Willow Award for her tremendous end of life care for my mother, Rose Stramel. My Mother was in the process of moving to a nursing home when she fell, became very ill and was bed ridden. When The Manor Director and head nurse saw that she was not able to move, they let her spend her last few weeks at the facility where she could pass in the place she had come to call home.

This is not a hospice facility nor is it a nursing facility, so it was a little hard to navigate the end as this was not really the roll for The Manor staff; this is an assisted living facility. Monte, along with several other staff members stepped in and took care of her at the end and it wasn't always pretty. For two weeks, my mom was sick in bed and could not get up. They were all exceptional, but Monte's gentle kind heart and nursing skills went above and beyond the call of duty. I later found out that Monte had cared for her own sister when dying of cancer and I think she knew what our family needed from personal experience. My sister and I assumed Monte had been a nurse for a long time since her caring skills were so exceptional, but we were surprised to learn that she had returned to school to be a nurse just a few years before while filling the role of Wife and a mother to 5 children, one with special needs. We were in awe that she is going to bless a lot of families in time with the skills and resolve that she holds.

48 hours before my mother passed away, Monte stayed with her. At times, my sister and I would leave to get some fresh air and a cup of coffee and come back to a beautiful clean room, soft music playing, with my mother having been bathed and changed with clean sheets on the bed. Everything would be pristine just the way my mother lived her life. She had been very ill for 24 hours, and it just was so upsetting to come back and see her having my mother basically looking angelic, came with a flood of emotion. She did this over the course of 48 hours at least 3 times. I would think to myself "here is a young lady who is doing things I don't even know if I could do, and this is not even her relative". She also left her own home with a husband and 5 children to sit with my mom for the last two nights of her life, all night long. She honestly loved on and took care of my mother better than anyone I ever knew.

The most profound thing was when my mother was at the end, she told us exactly what was happening, when it was happening and how it was going to happen. She walked us through every step and instead of us being alone with our mother not knowing what to expect or do, we had Monte helping us and walking us through the process, one that I had never experienced. I had never in my life seen someone care so much. I said to my sister she took a situation that was unpleasant and hard and made it comfortable and accepting. In my opinion, its nothing but a gift from God when someone can do such things. She truly possesses a gift and for that reason is why we nominate her for this award.

One last thing was when I went back the next day after my mother passed to gather up a few of her things, I noticed the room was all cleaned up, spotless, everything in its place and just beautiful. Monte did not have to do 90% of what she did. I'm not just amazed, but I'm eternally grateful for her and how she made this easier for us, not to mention more importantly, I have no doubt my mother felt loved at the end of her life. Like someone truly cared.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you Monte!

Thank you,

The Family of Rose Stramel

1947-2023