I first heard of Hospice Partners during my senior year at Proviso West High School. I was involved in the National Honors Society, and as a member, I was required to do at least 15 hours of community service. For a while, I didn’t even know where to begin, so I was kinda stuck. One day, however, before my last class of the day began, I was talking to a few of my friends and fellow members about my problem. Another friend of mine, Maria, overheard me and told me about Hospice Partners. She had been working there for a while. I later found out that she had volunteered far over the number of hours that were needed for NHS.

So, I took Maria’s advice and decided to go with her and our other friend, Shannon. Maria led us to a building that was in fact, quite close to our high school. It was less than a 2 minute drive! She led us up to the fourth floor, and through the door around the corner with the Hospice Partners logo on it, to a small set of offices. We were greeted by a friendly little receptionist who immediately recognized Maria and flashed us all a brilliant smile.

Maria spoke up and said that we all were there to volunteer for a few hours. The receptionist nodded, got up, and said that she’d find a man named George Watson. She told us to have a seat and disappeared for a minute. When she returned, she introduced
Shannon and me to George. He immediately made us feel welcome and was very friendly.

He showed us around the facilities and introduced us to everyone that worked there. Finally he brought us to their conference room and had us wait there. I was relieved. My cheeks hurt from smiling at all these new people! A few minutes later, George returned with a stack of papers for Shannon and me to fill out. The papers basically called for our general information, but there were also sheets that had to do with confidentiality policies. George explained to us that confidentiality is needed since Hospice Partners does deal with medical conditions, but because we wouldn’t be working directly with the patients or their information, it wasn’t really a concern for us at the time.

George stepped out again, and then returned with two boxes of envelopes. He set Maria to work on them down at the other end of the table while we were filling out the required information. George told me and Shannon that as soon as we were done, we could join Maria. He was putting us to work already! When we finished the papers, we did just as George said. Maria was putting address labels on the envelopes, so Shannon and I just followed suit. Soon, we were finished, and George returned to collect our work.

Ever since that first day, I’ve really enjoyed my volunteer work. It is completely stress free and George always gives me and whoever is working with me jobs that no one else there has time to do. These jobs are never very hard. They usually consist of folding brochures, putting labels on envelopes, or making phone calls. The jobs are quite simple, but they are time consuming. I’m very grateful whenever one of my friends can come with me to Hospice Partners because I do not want to have to do all of that work by
myself. If I did, I would never leave! On a normal day, when working with another person or a few people, we can get our jobs done in a little over an hour. But George always has something for us to do, so he’s quite thankful if we stay for 4 or more hours.

It’s not just the hours either; I really enjoy spending time with my friends. It is so much fun because while we’re working, we will share stories and jokes and just have some quality time together. This volunteer work is very therapeutic. I remember when Shannon and I were up there one specific time, and I would not stop talking about my new boyfriend. I would tell her stories about some cute little thing he did or said. We received strange, yet amused looks from the other workers there as they heard our uncontrollable giggling! It was so much fun.

George is quite a character as well. He is very professional and serious when it comes to getting his work done, but he’ll always take a break to joke around with someone. For instance, when I brought my friend Shania up there to get her signed up with the volunteer work, George greeted her with the same polite courtesy as he did when he and I first met. But not ten minutes after he handed her the papers to fill out, he threw a couple silly jokes her way. Shania looked up, slightly confused, but George just smiled back. He told her that at Hospice Partners, they like to break the new workers in right away. George made our work there so much more fun and really made us feel welcome there. I suppose anyone who works for a place like Hospice Partners needs to have a cheery attitude. It’s a very sad part of life that they deal with constantly, and anyone who did not have that type of personality would not be able to handle the kind of work they do.
To be put on hospice means that a person has only so much time to live and the doctors can do nothing else for him, so they let him go and live wherever he feels he is most comfortable until the end of his days. It is a very sad and painful experience to face death like this.

So what exactly is Hospice Partners and what do they do? For a start, it’s a not-for-profit organization. It is a wonderful way of caring for people and their families who are facing death. The office space in which I volunteer holds workers who organize care for these types of people. They get a hold of nurses, social workers, chaplains, and medical directors to get these people through the tough times. They follow families through at least twelve months in bereavement programs, such as bereavement seminars and grief group support, and provide outreach and education on end-of-life care issues and decision making.

Judging from the preceding information, it’s pretty easy to see that the people who work for Hospice Partners care a great deal and have a strong passion for what they do. It’s amazing to know that there are people who really do care about others. I have not complained once about volunteering there because I love having that feeling of being a part of something really good and worth my time. Even if I’m just folding papers or labeling envelopes, I feel like I’m helping someone take care of something bigger and better by relieving them of the stress of having to take care of that tedious task alone. I like to think that that person is able to spend his valuable time arranging for nurses to care for someone or aiding in the grieving process.

Another great thing is that I’ve been offered a new opportunity. The last time I was at Hospice Partners, George asked me if I was interested in doing something called
patient care. I was a little “iffy” at first because I thought that meant doing a lot of dirty work, like the hospice nurses do. But instead, I was told that patient care means traveling to a nearby nursing home whenever I am able, and spending some time with the older generation. I jumped all over this offer. I would absolutely love to visit a few of these people weekly and spend a few hours with them, getting to know them. Perhaps their families have abandoned them (as many do), and they need some company to look forward to. I’m very excited to begin my training. I keep thinking about the things I might do, such as reading some older gentleman his favorite novel, talking about current events with a sweet little old woman, or just becoming a good friend of anyone of the residents. I am quite a people person and I would be honored to bring some comfort and happiness to the lives of those who may not have much life left. I really feel called to do this.

I’m very thankful that Hospice Partners was introduced into my life. I really feel that I’m going to be there for a long time, and not necessarily for a certain number of service hours. I know that this is one of the many things that I want to do with my life, and for this, I rather enjoy not getting paid. This proves that it is coming straight from my heart. Perhaps someday, I could take after George and become a volunteer coordinator with some organization similar to this one. That would be lovely!