



BLACKJACK *with Class*

The Casino Party Professionals™

“Full House” – Linda Gets Unusual Wish from Faith Presbyterian Hospice

By Gloria Beard

Presbyterian Communities and Services

She's 56, single, and until the day Linda Drake quit the job she loved, she saw dozens of family members everyday. Her sister lives out of state, but when Linda went to work as a recreation leader at Frisco Senior Center, she found a huge family - the kind you get to pick for yourself. She immersed herself everyday in activities and adventures for “her seniors.” It was the job of a lifetime. It would be her last.

The words, “You have cancer,” brought everything to a stop. The vacuum quickly filled with tests and treatments, until there was nothing remaining to be done. Linda was referred to Faith Presbyterian Hospice, a non-profit organization known for both traditional and innovative therapies for pain management and quality of life. Linda's requests were small - acupuncture and massage therapy.

But when Carol Weaver, Volunteer and Life Enrichment Director at Faith, told her about the “Faithful Wish” program - a chance to receive a special wish - the fun-loving recreation director kicked back in. Her seniors loved parties and winning prizes, and Linda loved making them happy. She also loved a trip now and then to Las Vegas. Why not combine the two and bring Vegas to Frisco for a send-off to remember?

This October, 150 guests arrived at the Frisco Senior Center and walked through the doors of a Las Vegas casino. Margo Wright, owner of “Blackjack with Class” provided the atmosphere, complete with tables for blackjack, roulette, and dice, stacks of chips (no money was exchanged), and professional dealers looking top-notch in black and white. Margo also donated prizes and a large portion of the costs.

Carol Weaver was helped in making this wish come true by Faith Presbyterian Hospice donors and volunteers. Tables were spread with refreshments, and a beautifully decorated room large enough to hold a crowd of Linda's closest friends was provided through the efforts of Leslie Penland, Steve Walsh, and Frisco Senior Center volunteers. All was in place.

For her part, Linda conserved energy for a week, put on make-up that day, and draped a cheery red shawl around her shoulders. Applause and tears filled the room as everyone stood to welcome their friend's return.

“I felt very loved, like I never have in my life,” Linda said.

She beamed, and joked with them like old times. She said how much she missed them all and touched lightly on a request, explaining she'd just received news there were more tumors. She asked, “Not that you pray for my recovery, but for a quick goodbye, and an easy one.” Then she laughed about being “fully dressed, just for you, for the first time in months,” and declared, “Let the games begin!”

Linda made the circuit in her wheelchair, stopping to play at different tables and collect warm hugs. True to form, she won the most chips - which even by casino standards, made her the biggest winner of the night.

About Faith Presbyterian Hospice: *Each Moment Matters* Faith Presbyterian Hospice, was founded in 2004 to provide exceptional care for individuals of any faith that face a life-limiting illness. We are not-for-profit: our bottom line is the quality of service and depth of compassion we provide patients, their families, and their friends through this difficult transition.