



**Marji Ream**  
President and CEO

## We are Grateful

Our print newsletter has always been an important communication vehicle for Hospice of East Texas. As I write these words, I'm aware that you, our friends and supporters, won't receive this edition for about three weeks. So much has happened and so much has changed in the *last* three weeks, that exactly what life "will be" past May is difficult to predict and depends on so many variables. But one thing I know for sure: Hospice of East Texas will still be here, caring for the most vulnerable patients and supporting their families who are suffering pain and loss.

With all the extraordinary things happening in our world, all the first-time things, the never-before-things, the ordinary things continue. Life, in all its stages, goes on. In this unprecedented time, lives still begin... and lives still end, from COVID 19, yes, but also from cancer, heart disease and lung disease, from old age, sometimes from bad luck or bad choices. Lives end at 90 and at 45 and at six months. And where life is ending, Hospice of East Texas is here, still here, as we have been for almost 40 years, to support patients, families and caregivers through this facet of life's journey.

"Extraordinary care, compassion and commitment" is a tagline Hospice of East Texas has used for years. It has even more meaning now that so many things have changed. Our team has shown remarkable resilience and drawn on their deep wells of professionalism and commitment to our mission in order to continue to care for the seriously ill.

There are challenges, for sure. Obtaining the personal protective equipment to keep our people safe is a significant challenge and an expense we did not budget for. We have sent our cherished volunteers home and with them the many gifts they bring to those we serve. We have closed our resale shops, losing income that has been an important source of operating revenue. As essential workers, our staff are stretched and stressed. We are covering them with praise and prayer and modifying our personnel policies to make sure they have as solid a safety net as we have the resources to create.

Some years ago, a patient described Hospice of East Texas as a "mercy ship." What a fit description that is, especially now! We are navigating choppy waters, that's for sure, but our mission is a lodestar, our Board of Directors is keeping watch on the long view, and our skilled and steadfast staff are pulling hard at the oars to deliver the precious cargo of care and compassion that our friends and neighbors have come to depend on.

You, our friends and supporters, keep our mercy ship afloat today as you always have, and we know we can count on you to navigate this journey with us.

We are very grateful.

*"To Every nurse, doctor, medical aide, volunteer and chaplain... I thank you for the love, concern and support you gave to our precious Mary Pickens. The journey would have been impossible without each of you."*

Patti Pickens Pena



## A Time for Sharing Gifts

Not long ago, a customer in the Hospice Thrift Shop in Nacogdoches kept circling around and around a piano that was for sale. It was a small instrument, well-used, nothing very special. The man wandered around the store, looking at various other items, always returning to look at the piano. Finally, he sat down and began to play.

Beautiful notes filled the store, a surprisingly exquisite sound from such a humble instrument. The man had obviously spent many hours at other pianos, and he treated the other customers, staff and volunteers with the gift of his music. As the sounds filled the store, people stopped, lifted their heads and began to smile.

After a while another customer approached the check-out counter. "Is he going to buy that piano?" she asked the volunteer. Assuming that after hearing the beautiful sound the little piano could make, the customer was interested in buying the piano herself, the volunteer asked the pianist if he was interested in purchasing it.

"Oh, I'd love to buy this piano," the man said. "I've had my eye on it, and I've been coming to the shop for several days just to look at it and think about it. But I just don't have the money right now."

The customer at the check out counter heard the conversation between the volunteer and the pianist. When the volunteer returned to the counter, the lady

pulled a \$100 bill from her wallet and put it on the counter. Without a word, she left the store.

The shopper's anonymous gift was enough of a down payment that the man was able to buy the piano, and he picked it up the next day.

There are many benefits from the Hospice of East Texas thrift stores. Obviously, they are an important source of operating revenue for our mission. They give volunteers a way to connect and do their part in supporting the care of their friends and neighbors. And sometimes, unexpectedly, they are a source of something more. The shopper's anonymous gift gave a talented musician a way to use his own gift, gave him an instrument that he could use to express and share his music.

Sometimes the Hospice thrift stores are more than a simple place of commerce. They become a place where a random act of kindness touches lives and touches hearts, reminding us that we all have gifts to share.

**As this newsletter went to press, the Hospice of East Texas thrift stores in Jacksonville, Henderson and Nacogdoches are closed because of the threat of COVID 19. The staff and volunteers look forward to returning and sharing their gifts.**

## A Monster Truck Rally of a Birthday

Meet Eric, a patient of Hospice of East Texas.

Eric is "all boy." He loves superheroes and playing with army men and Legos, and especially enjoys Nerf gun wars with his brother when he's feeling well. Eric and his twin brother Ethan celebrated their fifteenth birthday on March 18th. The boys had never been to a Monster Truck Rally and really wanted to go to the show in Henderson for their birthday. It was quite early in the spread of COVID-19 in the US and no public restrictions had been issued, but Eric's health was of utmost concern and importance when entertaining the idea of attending a big event. With the help of Eric's HOET social worker, Melissa Yount, his whole family was able to attend the monster truck rally in their own private suite, safely away from the crowd. "Eric's social worker made the call to see if it would be possible for Eric to attend, because he would need to be isolated from the others. They set up

everything for Eric and Ethan to attend for their birthday," said Eric's mother.

Eric was thrilled to see the trucks and meet the drivers. He picked a favorite truck called "Outlaw" and had a photo taken with the driver, too! "He was super excited," his mother said. "He loved the loud motor sounds and even jumped up out of his chair when the truck rolled over." Eric and Ethan were treated to hot dogs, pickles, popcorn, and nachos – all the best monster truck rally food, of course. According to their mother, they loved every minute of it. "Thank you all so much for the amazing time Eric and Ethan had celebrating their birthday" she said. "It wouldn't have been possible without Hospice of East Texas."

Hospice of East Texas is about more than excellent medical care and family support; but about celebrating the good days to the fullest, as rare or few as they may be.



*"Dear Hospice, the children and I can never thank you enough for the loving, caring and beautiful service you gave us during this sad time in the loss of our dear George. We will be forever grateful for your lovely facility."*

# New Ways of Serving in a New World

The people of Hospice of East Texas are resilient, and they have brought their creativity to the task of searching for new ways to care for terminally ill patients and their families. Our friends in the community have also found new ways to support our mission.

Many patients of Hospice of East Texas reside in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. For obvious but painful reasons, these facilities have had to restrict access in order to protect their residents.

Following the individual mandates of each facility, Hospice nurses, social workers, home hospice aids and chaplains remain available personally or virtually to each hospice patient and their family and have found new ways to support our partners in these facilities who remain on the front line in the care of their residents.



Baskets bursting with art and sweet notes of well wishes were delivered to nursing homes residents thanks to a Hospice of East Texas initiative called Happy Mail. The Hospice of East Texas collected these notes and drawings, lovingly created by our community and delivered them in hopes of lifting the spirits of residents isolated from their friends and families.



Work Hub in Tyler held a snack drive for Hospice of East Texas, bringing coolers of drinks and tubs full of snacks to refuel our front-line staff.



Our communities have responded generously to the need for cloth masks to protect our staff. Among many, many mask donations, one that truly stands out is a donation of 96 masks from Heartisans Marketplace.



Volunteer Donna Barnett, pictured here in front of the Hospice Shop in Jacksonville, (We love the "Hospice blue" tomato!) shifted gears from her regular assignment and began making masks for Hospice staff.



Hospice of East Texas staff were glad to be a part of "drive-by parades" put on for residents of Dogwood Trails Assisted Living, and Windermere at Cartmell Assisted Living.



The Hospice of East Texas Bereavement Department offered its first virtual support group via video conferencing because gathering in person is no longer possible.

Stacy Sanders, Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator, had this to say. "It is our heart to provide grief support to all who are in need, and the need has never been more acute than now.

We are all grieving. Many who have lost loved ones have not even been able to say good-bye surrounded by the comfort of family and friends, which can compound their sorrow. We hope this new virtual support group will enhance our ability to serve those who are grieving, both now and in the future."

Watch the Hospice of East Texas website – [www.hospiceofeasttexas.org](http://www.hospiceofeasttexas.org) – for information on offerings by the bereavement department. As always our bereavement specialists are available for person-to-person support over the phone. Please call 903-266-3400 ext 127 to make an appointment.

*"Thank you all so very much for your tender loving care you provided to my Daddy during his illness. Your organization glorifies the Lord each and every day."* Dee Ann Pascoe

# Volunteers

are the Heart of our Mission

Volunteers make a huge difference in the lives of Hospice patients, families and staff. We treasure them as valuable members of our Hospice teams and could not care for our communities the way we do without their dedication, commitment and compassion.

Each year Hospice of East Texas celebrates our volunteers during National Volunteer Appreciation month, but this year the celebrations were “virtual” as COVID 19 forced the temporary suspension of all volunteer activities.

On these pages we highlight just a few of the more than 250 men and women who give so selflessly of their time to Hospice of East Texas. We look forward to the day when they are back greeting and visiting, working in the shops, offering companionship and support to patients and families.



## Jann McGaughey

Impossible as it sounds, Jann McGaughey has been a hospice volunteer in East Texas since before there was a hospice that served her hometown!

In 1989 Jann McGaughey and a group from First Christian Church in Jacksonville, had an informal network to help and support families who were struggling to care for their loved ones and to minister to them in their grief after their loved one died. She reached out to her friend, Fredia Melvin, and with others in Jacksonville, they formed Jacksonville Caregivers.

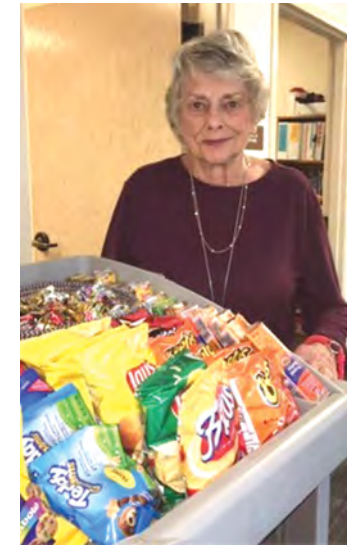
Realizing that they needed training to help them serve in the very best way, they contacted The Hospice of East Texas. At that time, Jacksonville was beyond the service area of HOET, but agreed to help with some training for this group of committed volunteers. When HOET expanded its service area in 1990, both Jann and Fredia became official Hospice of East Texas volunteers.

In the thirty years since, Jann estimates that she has served 125 patients, some for just a few days, some for two years, others who improved and were released from hospice care. Her youngest patient was two days old, and her oldest was 106.

Jann describes her work as a Hospice volunteer with this poignant phrase: “It has been my life’s work.”

Jann continues to serve as a patient volunteer (where her heart has always been) and she has found a new outlet, volunteering in the new Hospice resale shop in Jacksonville, which she describes as “so much fun.”

What commitment that takes! How blessed so many families have been that Jann McGaughey found her life’s work as a Hospice of East Texas volunteer.



## Bea Schroeder

Bea Schroeder and her husband Glenn began volunteering at Hospice of East Texas in April of 1998. They had recently retired from jobs in the corporate world and moved from Dallas to the Tyler area. Looking for a way to get involved in their new community, they found Hospice of East Texas and plunged right in!

In the more than twenty years since, Bea has done some of just about everything there is to do at HOET. She worked in the medical records office when HomePlace first opened and claims that she loved all that paperwork... but says it was fun, mostly because she so enjoyed the staff and other volunteers she worked with.

Bea has also staffed the front desk, greeting visitors to HomePlace – and volunteered in the check-in program that “checks in” with Home Care patients each week by phone to see if there is anything they need. She has done general office work in several departments, and now she’s found a new assignment in the snack cart that delivers snacks and drinks to families in HomePlace who are keeping vigil with their loved ones.

For 22 years, Bea Schroeder has been part of the Hospice of East Texas family. She is always cheerful, always willing, and always available to serve in any way she is needed. What a blessing she has been to Hospice of East Texas, to our staff, to our volunteers and to the patients and families we serve.

## Penny Stephens

Do you know someone who is such “fixture” in your life that you can’t imagine life without them? That’s how we at Hospice of East Texas feel about Penny Stephens.

Technically, Penny is a front desk volunteer at HomePlace. Twice a week, every Thursday and Friday, she works a four-hour shift... and has for 12 years. If you do the math, that’s 7,600 hours.

But Penny’s service is not just about her time at the front desk and how that time has added up through the years. To all of us at Hospice of East Texas, she is “Miss Penny.” She knows everybody and everybody knows her. She greets everyone she meets by name – physicians, housekeepers, nurses, staff, other volunteers - and she knows something about them. She often brings treats to cheer up and encourage those she knows are doing a hard job.

But most importantly, and the real reason Penny volunteers at HomePlace is that she serves as the first smiling, welcoming, kind face anyone sees as they walk in our doors on her afternoons at the front desk.

“I just love visiting with people as they come in and helping them in any way I can,” Penny says.

“If they are there to admit their loved one, they are sometimes anxious, and I can comfort them. If they are there to visit a patient, they often don’t know what to expect and I can reassure them. Walking into a hospice facility can be a little frightening. But it doesn’t take long for people to realize HomePlace is no ordinary place.”

Kim Reel, the HomePlace Volunteer Coordinator, calls Penny her “go-to” person. “She is always dependable,” she says, “and if I’m not there, I know Penny will be **in charge**.”

Penny says she loves being a part of Hospice of East Texas and the wonderful care that is given in HomePlace. That wonderful care starts at the front desk. And on Thursday and Friday afternoons it starts with Penny Stephens!



*“To the kindest people on earth. I would like to thank each and everyone of you at Hospice-Homeplace. For taking such good care of my brother, Michael Windle room 202, and our family. I have never known such kindness. For such a sad time, ya’ll were so respectful and caring. I can not thank you enough for all ya’ll did. I am forever grateful. I cannot begin to thank ya’ll enough for all you did in our time of need. Everyone was so great. Thank you. God bless each and everyone who works for your company. Your all Angels!”* The Windle Family



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*"I am amazed at the loving care you provided to my wife, June, during her final days. After three weeks of terrible pain, she was able to rest comfortably. I thank God you were there for us. God bless each one of you."* Bob Valliere