

THE HOSPICE
OF EAST TEXAS
FOUNDATION

Fall 2016

Seasons



ON LOAN TO US ... *A Gift of Time Together*

Lucy* and her twin sister were born much too soon. They received wonderful care in a local neonatal ICU, and though her sister slowly began to thrive, Lucy had complication after complication which left her with severe brain damage. She could suck and swallow, and thus receive nourishment, but she was unable to see or hear or even regulate her tiny body's temperature. A special warming blanket, sensitive to the ebbs and flows of her temperature, kept Lucy comfortable and safe. It was not a long-term solution. Lucy would not live for very long.

After three months, Lucy's sister was ready to go home, and the family wanted to take Lucy home as well. There were four siblings to welcome her, and parents who loved all their children deeply and were committed to doing all they could to care for their tiny, fragile daughters. At the request of their pediatrician, Hospice of East Texas stepped in to provide care for Lucy and support for her family.



The highly complicated warming blanket Lucy needed was not normally sold to anyone but neonatal intensive care units, but Hospice staff talked the company into selling one to Hospice of East Texas so that Lucy could have it at home. While Lucy was being transported by ambulance the fifty miles to her home, Hospice staff arrived to help the family get ready. When the blanket was plugged in, it blew out all the fuses in the modest trailer home.

It was early evening and Lucy was on the way, so there was nothing to be done but improvise. Hospice staff bought a heating pad at Walmart, took it to the house and stayed with the mom, instructing her to take Lucy's temperature every thirty minutes through that first night until another warming blanket, with fewer electrical demands, could be purchased and delivered. The new blanket arrived the next day,

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and over time, the family gradually settled into a complex and demanding routine, meeting the needs of two newborns and four other children.

One day, Lucy's mom said the most extraordinary thing. "I know she's mine," she said, "but she's only mine for a little while. She's on loan to us, and then she will go back to God."

Make no mistake about it. That Lucy is able to spend her final days on earth at home with her family would not have been possible without the Hospice of East Texas and the support of friends like you. And make no mistake about this: only the Hospice of East Texas would go to such extraordinary lengths to give Lucy and her family the gift of time together as a family in their own home. Caring for Lucy requires constant visits from nurses, frequent phone calls, special feedings and expensive equipment that Hospice of East Texas may never use again. Your gifts make it possible for Hospice of East Texas to provide this extraordinary care and fulfill our commitment to serve each patient who needs us, no matter what it takes. Lucy's family, who does not have health insurance, will never receive a bill for the care they receive.

As her mom expressed so poignantly, Lucy is on loan to her family for just a short while, but in that time, her family has enjoyed the gift of her presence, all of them together in their home.

As this newsletter goes to press, Lucy and her twin sister just celebrated their five month birthdays, a milestone no one expected Lucy to reach. "It's love – and God – that are keeping us together," said Lucy's mom. "It's been a blessing." Indeed.

**not her real name*

PET PEACE OF MIND

Pet Peace of Mind™ helps care for the entire family

Blackie* was everything to Mr. Prince.* You couldn't call him a "service dog" because he lacked the official title and the official training, but over the course of the years, keeping Mr. Prince company, Blackie had had plenty of "on the job" training. Because Mr. Prince was blind and mostly homebound, he had come to depend on Blackie for the joy of his constant company, and to recognize visitors and be alert for changes around the home the two of them shared.

When Mr. Prince's health began to fail, he and Blackie got along okay at first, but gradually it became apparent that Mr. Prince couldn't continue to live alone and care for himself and Blackie. When the Hospice nurse and social worker talked to Mr. Prince about moving to a nursing home, at first the answer was a resounding "NO!" Mr. Prince wasn't going anywhere without Blackie. The Hospice staff struck a bargain: If they found a good home for Blackie, would Mr. Prince consider a move? Maybe, he said.

Hospice of East Texas social worker, Anna Donihoo, got on the phone and on email to the Hospice staff. Was anyone looking for a great dog? Hospice physician, Dr. Craig Gunter, thought of his father, who said

"yes!" and drove from Arkansas to pick up Blackie. In the meantime, Hospice of East Texas paid a local vet to get Blackie up to date on all his shots and heartworm medicine. Mr. Prince was all smiles, knowing his trusted companion was going to a good home, and he was able to move to the nursing home in peace.

Stories like this are not uncommon at Hospice of East Texas. For many patients, the care of their animal companions is top-of-mind as they face their last days. What has long been an informal part of our mission, now has a name and a structure: Pet Peace of Mind.™

The Pet Peace of Mind™ program at Hospice of East Texas will use a network of cooperating veterinarians, groomers, boarding facilities, shelters, rescue programs and trained volunteers to provide care for pets and reassurance to their owners. Initially funded with a grant from the national Pet Peace of Mind™ network, the program will provide routine pet care (food, grooming, vaccinations, etc.) for patients who cannot afford those items, temporary boarding and placement of pet family members after the patient's death.

**not their real names*

We welcome your support of the Pet Peace of Mind™ Program. For more information on what you can do to contribute financially or to volunteer for the program, contact Vicki Harvey at 903-266-3405.



For many people, their pets are more than pets –

they are members of the family. So, what happens when someone requiring hospice care can no longer care for their pet and has no family member or friend who is able or willing to lend support?

The Pet Peace of Mind™ Program, sponsored by the Banfield Charitable Trust, was launched nationally in 2009 as an additional way to help nonprofit hospices provide their unique brand of patient and family-centered care.

Hospice of East Texas is the only hospice in our region to participate in the Pet Peace of Mind™ program. We share the program's philosophy that pets provide a significant source of unconditional love and acceptance for their owners and that making sure their pets are taken care of is very important to patients and their families.

ABOUT PEANUT BUTTER ... *Our Purrfect Friend*

He's a small white and tan cat, and he belongs to Hospice of East Texas.

He chose us, appearing in the back garden behind HomePlace one day, hanging around like he wanted to make friends. A little shy at first, he roamed the edge of the woods, timidly crossing the lawn on occasion to sit in the sun by the gazebo. Staff and patient families spoke to him as he sauntered by, and slowly he let us know that he had found his home. One day, LaStasha named him: Peanut Butter.



The nurses started putting out little bowls of food and water on the patio. Courtney bought him a cat house and a bed. Lisa bought cat toys. Courtney bought him a second cat house and a climbing tree. Brittnee Cagle from "Spay Neuter NOW" heard about Peanut Butter and arranged for him to get his vaccinations, had him neutered and fitted with a microchip, free of charge. A family member of a patient painted his portrait. When the weather was cold, he cuddled in his house by the glass door and watched the traffic inside. People in the hallways. People on the phones at the nurses' station. When the weather turned warm again, Peanut Butter sunned on the lawn furniture, chased the birds at the feeders, acted the way some cats act, like he owned the place.

Over these months, Peanut Butter has not only found a home, he has found a mission. In the gardens around HomePlace, families watch and wait, seeking solace in nature's beauty, and as an outside cat, Peanut Butter seems to know who needs attention. He slides up next to a lady sitting on a garden bench, rests by her leg, lets her know he's there. He walks back and forth in front of a gentleman who's pacing the grounds, keeping him company. He charms little children, filling the air with their squeals and giggles, but he's too quick for them to catch. When patients can go outside,

sometimes in wheelchairs, sometimes in their hospital beds, Peanut Butter is especially watchful. He seems to know that those days, with the last touch of the sun on their faces, are precious and sacred.

There are many things that make the experience at HomePlace special. Extraordinary care and medical attention. Complimentary meals provided by a caring community. A play room for the children. The gentle touch and listening ear of volunteers. To that list of special things about HomePlace, we can now add one more: Peanut Butter. For many families, his is that "extra touch" of comfort, offered with no words, just a caring presence, wrapped in white and tan fur.



Hospice Shoppe and patient volunteers in Henderson



A restaurant full of volunteers in Nacogdoches!



Volunteers from the Athens area gather to celebrate

VOLUNTEERS

THE HEART AND SOUL OF HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS

Since the inception of Hospice of East Texas almost 35 years ago, volunteers have been its heart and soul. Today the work of hundreds of caring volunteers throughout East Texas strengthens and extends our mission in countless ways.

Consider these statistics from the last year alone:

Number of volunteers: 271

Volunteer hours donated: 20,480

Dollars saved by utilizing volunteers: \$505,053

From doing paperwork to serving patients, whether using the phone, the van or their caring hearts, volunteers serve in 27 different capacities, contributing their heart and soul to Hospice of East Texas.

Though every day is “Volunteer Appreciation Day” at Hospice of East Texas, we traditionally honor these important members of our team with recognition events in the spring, as pictured above. We would love to have you join our volunteer team. Call us and we will find a way for you to serve!



Leta Glass volunteers to serve families at HomePlace with snacks from the snack cart.



Vince Pietet shares his gift of music with patients and families at HomePlace.



Kathy McCabe volunteers each week to make mid-week “check in” calls to patients in their homes.



Pat Stewart drives to Nacogdoches and Longview each week to deliver medical supplies.



Bobby Crone and Ellen Wallace volunteer to lead a monthly support group for people who have lost a spouse as part of Hospice of East Texas’ Bereavement Program.



Sheila Oldaker, here with Ethel Mrazek, and other patient volunteers enjoy their time “just being there” with patients and their families.

Thank You!

You find so many ways to support the mission of Hospice of East Texas!

Every gift is important to this work and allows our staff and volunteers to extend our brand of extraordinary care to more than 2000 families each year.

In the last newsletter, we asked for donations of coffee to serve families at HomePlace. What a response! Churches, Scout troops, families, and even a drive at Sam's Club brought in enough coffee to fill the storeroom and ensure that the HomePlace waiting rooms always have the comfort of hot coffee.



The Nacogdoches County Retired Teachers Association presented a style show with members modeling clothes from the Hospice of East Texas Resale Shop in Nacogdoches. What style! What bargains!



Winter Curry had a coffee drive for her 4H project and donated 80 pounds of coffee and creamer



Maggi Mae Vasquez, her family and friends, held a coffee drive for Hospice of East Texas at Sam's Club in Tyler. They collected more than 100 pounds of coffee and \$1300 in cash donations.



Many thanks to the RGK Foundation for a generous grant in support of Hospice of East Texas' children's bereavement program. A portion of the grant was used to spruce up the children's playroom in HomePlace. That cheerful space gets a lot of use, and a lot of wear and tear, from children whose families are caring for a loved one in HomePlace.



Grace Chapel Assembly of God

The kind touch of a meal, afternoon dessert or snacks, when families are reluctant to leave their loved one's bedside, is a thoughtful gift. Many thanks to the churches, civic groups and families who experienced that gift in the past who provide this comforting touch. A few are pictured here.



Pine Springs Baptist Church



First Presbyterian Church "Pie Ladies"



Tyler CME Churches



Marvin United Methodist Church "sweets for the soul"

LIFE is not measured
by the number
of **BREATHS** we take,
but by the
MOMENTS
that take our breath away.



OUT TO DINNER... *ONE MORE TIME*

At Hospice of East Texas, we have begun using the above phrase in our fundraising and advertising. It's a lovely idea, to be sure, but in this work, the truth of those words is often made very real by the startling, breathtaking moments that our staff and volunteers have the privilege to witness. A romantic dinner at HomePlace was one such moment that took our breath away.

Mr. Herbert Washington was a patient at HomePlace, and he had one request: he wanted to take his beloved wife out to dinner one more time.

The HomePlace staff whirled into action. Zeta worked her decorating magic, transforming a family waiting room into a lovely dining room, complete with lace tablecloth, china plates and flowers. Izzy ran home

and got wine glasses. Dr. Ferguson gave Bert her credit card to buy a take-out catfish dinner, Mr. Washington's request. Travis Floyd, Dr. Ferguson's husband, happened to call in the middle of all the activity, and was asked to bring one of his suits for Mr. Washington to wear. Johnny thought of the music: Luther Vandross, of course.

When Mrs. Washington arrived that evening, her eyes flew open with surprise. Everything was in place for a romantic dinner for two, at the center of which was her dear husband, so handsome, beaming with pride and love.

Yes, it's true. Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.



Light Up A Life...

In loving memory of a friend or relative

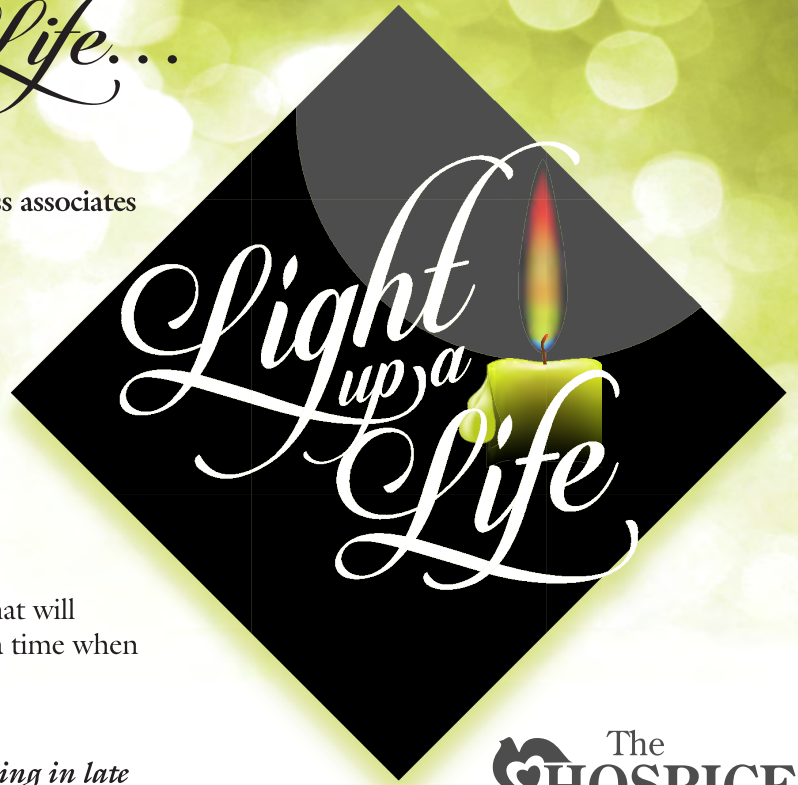
As a holiday gift in honor of family, friends or business associates

In honor of someone who lights up your life

Each year, proceeds from Light Up A Life, Hospice of East Texas' signature fundraiser, help to ensure that our staff and volunteers are able to serve each and every patient who needs the extraordinary care, compassion and commitment for which Hospice of East Texas has always been known.

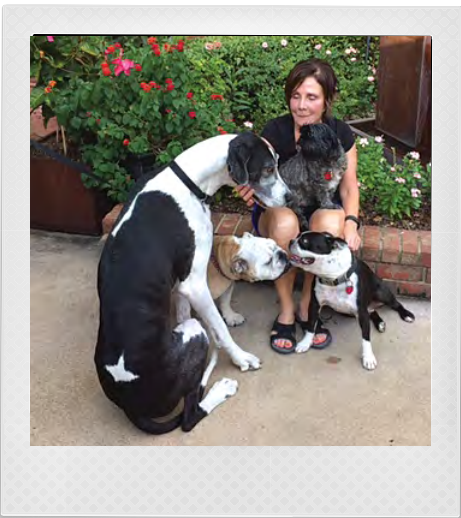
We hope you will consider a gift to Light Up A Life. What better way to give than to make a contribution that will directly touch the lives of patients and their families at a time when they need it most?

Watch your mail for Light Up A Life materials, arriving in late October or visit our website at www.hospiceofeasttexas.org.



THE HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS FOUNDATION

A NOTE FROM MARJI



Marji Ream, President and CEO of Hospice of East Texas, with Belle, Winston, Martin and Vito.

My family and I are dog lovers, through and through.

Over the years, our pets have been a great source of joy and

companionship to all of us, and we can't imagine our home without at least one dog.

For persons at the end of their lives and the families who care for them, pets can provide stability, routine and a sense of normalcy at a time when lives can seem far from normal. Just as they have been in our home, pets are a significant source of unconditional love and acceptance for their owners, a part of the family in so many ways.

In this newsletter, you'll find stories of the ways animal friends are contributing to the extraordinary patient and family-centered care that is the hallmark of Hospice of East Texas.

For years we have been blessed by regular visits from the pet volunteers of Hearts In Harmony. Now Peanut Butter, the resident outside cat at HomePlace, and our newest program, Pet Peace of Mind,TM are also offering patients and caregivers an additional level of comfort and compassion.

Every gift matters to us at Hospice of East Texas. Whether it's the gift of time given by volunteers, the coffee that comforts families, or your generous financial support which allows us to extend our extraordinary care to all who need us, your contributions uphold our mission every day. We are very grateful to each and every one of you.



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