



SPRING 2021

THIS IS YOUR HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS

STEPS OF COURAGE...



Walking alongside families is a privilege for us at the Hospice of East Texas. We are here to hold a hand and listen to a broken heart. Saying goodbye is hard and moving forward is harder still. The steps are steep, solemn, sacred. At any age, at any stage – expected or unexpected – the grief journey is arduous.

For Stefani Martin and her family, the grief journey was not only unexpected, it was unnatural, unimaginable...

At twenty weeks pregnant, the Martins were looking forward to a first sonogram. “We saw hands, feet, kidneys, a perfect heart. We saw a baby girl!” says Stefani. “Four days later my midwife called to tell me the radiologist’s report showed severe brain abnormalities. The floor fell out from underneath me. Life changed forever.”

Stefani and her husband met with Dr. Mojirayo Sarumi, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist, who gently explained their baby’s diagnosis of Holoprosencephaly – an abnormality of brain development. The condition was terminal, with a very short life expectancy if their daughter were to make it earthside at all.

“We made a purposeful decision to enjoy every single moment we had with our girl... We decided to name her Isabella Joy.”

“We chose to carry our daughter,” says Stefani. “We waited a few more weeks and told our three older children. We made a purposeful decision to enjoy every single moment we had with our girl; to feel her moving in my belly. To sing to her. To read to her. To take photos and draw pictures and be present without grieving her loss before we lost her. We decided to name her Isabella Joy.”

Stefani was transferred to the care of an OBGYN, Dr. Paul Fanning. He joined with Dr. Sarumi to bring together a team to support Stefani, her family, and her baby. This special group included Julie Rivers, a pediatric nurse with the Hospice of East Texas who heads the Hospice of East Texas perinatal hospice team.

Many people do not know that the Hospice of East Texas is one of the rare hospices that offers pediatric services, including perinatal hospice care, care for newborns who are not expected to live long and care for the families who are waiting for them. Pediatric hospice care is family centric, allowing parents to take the lead in determining a plan of care that is right for them, a plan that holds a hand and listens to a broken heart.

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Julie Rivers (pictured above) gave Stefani and her family a tour of HomePlace, Hospice of East Texas' inpatient unit. "If Isabella were to live, Hospice HomePlace was our desire for our sick baby girl. It was comforting to know we had this option, that we wouldn't have to go home if we didn't feel comfortable. Julie answered all my questions and was there for me always. Our three older children – ages 10, 7, and 4 – met with the Hospice Child Bereavement Specialist, Chantel Longino, and I know this was an integral part of their understanding and healing."

Isabella Joy was born April 21, 2020. She was 7 lbs., 19" long. She had her daddy's lips and her mom's long fingers and toes. She never opened her eyes or uttered a cry. She never suffered. She lived for three short hours. She never left the hospital, and, because of COVID, her siblings never got to meet her or hold her.

Stefani's children continued their therapy with Chantel Longino, and now, months later, Julie Rivers continues to stay close to Stefani. "Hospice has provided so many wonderful tools, resources," says Stefani. "They stood beside us during that time when life was at its worst."

Stefani's beautiful bravery and strength are teachers and touchpoints along her journey... and her journey is ours, too, because we walk together.

PASSION & PURPOSE

As a part-time Hospice of East Texas physician, Dr. Royal Becker is making rounds and on call – 24/7 – one week out of every month at HomePlace. This is a place like no other in East Texas, a place where extraordinary care is given to patients and to the families who love them. And extraordinary care is exactly what Dr. Becker gives.



He puts it this way: "Passion is loving what you do and letting it show. I get to be passionate about my work and share it with patients, families, and the staff at Hospice of East Texas. I have a heart for hospice care and believe the three most important characteristics that set our work apart are: purpose, worthiness, and dignity. What we do here is incredibly worthwhile and truly makes a difference."

It is abundantly clear – observing Dr. Becker interact with patients and families - his heart is in his work. Though his presence is commanding, his demeanor is gentle. He meets families where they are – struggling for answers, desperate for hope, emotionally exhausted. Often getting on a knee or sitting on the edge of a patient's bed, he makes eye-to-eye contact and offers reassurance with his voice and with his touch. Mostly, he exudes trust.

Dr. Becker gives credit to the entire Hospice of East Texas staff for creating a culture of collaboration and strong loyalty. He adds, "Our Certified Nursing Assistants are especially outstanding. They are the difference-makers every day, the hidden heroes who do so much – treating patients with love and dignity, treating them like family."

Anyone who walks through the doors at HomePlace can feel this sense of family, this feeling of peace and comfort. We are family here. This is us. We are your Hospice of East Texas.

ANGELS AMONG US...



Merion and Carolyn Simpson

"If the angels receiving my mother are anything like the angels who were with us for her send-off, then I am truly grateful..."

Daughter of a Hospice patient

We often hear Hospice of East Texas caregivers described as "angels" and there may be no better word which illustrates their acts of tenderness and compassion. These doctors, nurses, aids, social workers, chaplains, volunteers... truly answer a call – to guide, to protect, to serve.

Carolyn Simpson witnessed first-hand the touches of these angels. Her sister, Merion, was Carolyn's only sibling, her best friend. When Merion was nearing the end of her life, after a brief but valiant battle with cancer, she began receiving Hospice care in her home. That's where the angels surrounded Merion – and Carolyn – easing pain, listening to heartache, saying prayers. They delivered supplies, and medicines, and hope.

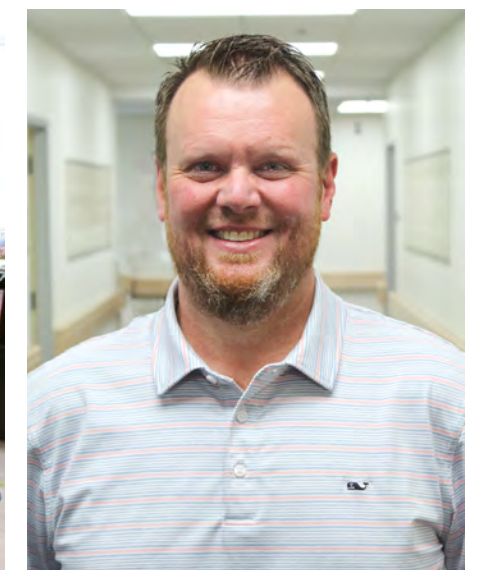
Calling each of them by name, Carolyn expressed her grateful heart. "Sydney, Tammy, Lenora, Ryan, Teresea, and Barbara gave me the strength to face each day. Katrena and Elwood brought such comfort. These angels showed patience and compassion every time they came through the door to care for Merion - and for me. They gently prepared both of us for each step of the way, and I know that is why I'm doing as well as I am now – even though I miss her so much."

HOET staff nurse Ryan May called Carolyn on Valentine's Day – the day after Merion's passing – to check on her, and Carolyn says she will never forget his kindness. Ryan humbly responds, "I do feel like God stepped in that day and gave me peace of mind and time to spend with her. I truly got as much from my time with her, as she may have received from us."

Not one of these angels serves for accolades or credit, nor does Carolyn Simpson support our mission for recognition. But none goes unnoticed, all of them make a difference...and we are thankful.



Merion's team of HOET "angels"



HOET staff nurse Ryan May



WEATHERING THE STORM



Christina Knepper,
Inpatient Facility Cook



In mid-February East Texas experienced the coldest temperatures and worst winter storm it has seen in decades. As the temperatures dropped and the snow fell, East Texas residents experienced burst pipes, power outages, and loss of water access. Hospice of East Texas was also faced with some of these challenges.

With winter weather in the forecast, our team began preparing for the possibility of a serious storm. Home Care staff made extra visits and special arrangements for home-bound patients, to best ensure that patients would have plenty of medicine and supplies to last several days in case travel was not an option. Our inpatient facility staff ensured our generators were ready in case of power outages, while kitchen staff took inventory of food and prepared a supply of drinking water.

Once it was obvious that the weather would soon take a turn for the worst, many HomePlace staff members chose to come in early – some even two days early – for their shifts, knowing that if they didn't get there early, they may not be able to get there at all. With suitcases in hand, staff members arrived at HomePlace ready to work and to serve, likely not realizing that they would not leave again for six or seven days. Kurt Lorenz for example, our Director of Pharmacy, stayed at HomePlace the entire week, making sure each patient had the medication they needed.

Carmen Gable, a HomePlace RN, said, "Any of them could have called in and said they couldn't make it, but these team members knew that there were still patients here who needed us, and we weren't going to let them down." Though they were down to a "skeleton crew" our staff never missed a beat. Thanks to the many team members who took on roles that were not their own, the quality of care our patients and their families received was never subpar.

The adaptability and willingness of staff to take on new roles and truly rise to the challenge was incredibly moving to their fellow coworkers and our

leadership team. When front desk staff weren't able to make it in, some of our Certified Nurse's Aids happily filled the shifts. With CNA's filling other positions, some of the Registered Nurses filled in as CNAs. Since much of our Housekeeping staff were unable to get to work, laundry began to pile up. Our Director of Inpatient Care, Merv Sanders, stepped in and took care of the laundry – all of it! The entire team helped clean rooms throughout the week to ensure they were all sterile and comfortable for those using them.

Though the Home Care team had prepared their patients' families as much as possible for the storm, there were still instances in which patients needed more medication, oxygen, or other supplies. A group of staff members, and even some staff's family members, took to the icy roads in their 4-wheel drive vehicles to deliver these much-needed supplies. The group was also able to help their fellow employees by picking them up from their homes and bringing them to HomePlace so they could work, and then even returning them to their homes when it was time for them to go.

A humble hero that stood out to many of our staff during the "snow-pocalypse" was Christina Knepper, our Inpatient Facility Cook. Christina is known for her positive attitude and dedication to any task she takes on, but her pleasant demeanor and overall preparedness during the storm impressed her teammates. "If I had to pick a hero of that week, it would be Christina," Merv Sanders said. When asked about her experience during the storm, Christina is quick to praise her fellow staff members, and believes she was simply doing her job. She humbly mentioned that she requested to come in to work a day early to be sure she would be there to cook for everyone through the storm. Thanks to Christina's preparedness, she was able to single-handedly feed HomePlace staff, patients, and the families who were also snowed in, for six days with ease. Once water access was lost, she carefully chose what to cook each day to conserve drinking water. She and fellow staff

members were continuously melting snow just to flush toilets. If you lost water at your home, you could imagine the challenges our team experienced at HomePlace, while also caring for patients and their families.

With no hot water, nurses and CNA's improvised by microwaving hand towels, dampened with clean water, to provide warm baths for our patients. When laundering linens was no longer an option, packages of brand-new linens were opened to provide clean bedding for patients. Our staff made pallets in family rooms, offices, and anywhere else they could to be close to their patients but rest when they got the chance. "Despite everything we were up against, none of our staff ever interacted with a patient or family member in a way that revealed how tired we were or what we were dealing with outside that patient's room," Carmen said.

We share this story with you to recognize and honor those steadfast staff members who chose to make patient care their top priority at a time when every East Texan had a plethora of worries to consider, whether it was their family, their home, or otherwise.

Merv Sanders said it best, "The whole experience has bonded our staff so tightly because we learned to truly count on each other. We don't get a second chance caring for a patient and their family just because there was a snowstorm. Our team took it very seriously, and though they had plenty of concerns at home, they left everything and came here to fulfill the mission."

But maybe that's what it's all about – that something special about those who are drawn to work in hospice care. The care and compassion of these nurses, aids, housekeepers, cooks, chaplains... this is who we are! This is us. This is your Hospice of East Texas.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS FOUNDATION

The future of Hospice of East Texas is important to those who will need our care tomorrow.

Long term investments and endowments are a significant part of a stable economic future for any nonprofit organization. For Hospice of East Texas, they are important factors ensuring that our organization will always be able to care for all who need us, regardless of uncertain economic environments, the constant shifts and changes in the healthcare system and even the crisis of a worldwide pandemic.

The Hospice of East Texas Foundation is an independent non-profit entity whose sole mission is to support Hospice of East Texas. It is also the vehicle through which Hospice of East Texas raises much-needed community contributions and manages long-term investments, endowments and designated funds in support of our extraordinary care.

Through the years, friends and donors have created endowments and designated funds within the Hospice of East Texas Foundation. Each fund honors the life of a person loved and remembered and creates a lasting legacy in that person's name.

We are very grateful to those who have created named funds within the Hospice of East Texas Foundation, and grateful to be entrusted with helping to carry forth the memory and legacy of those honored.

If you would like more information on establishing an endowment or designated fund, visit our website: www.hospiceofeasttexas.org. Give: The Hospice of East Texas Foundation: Creating a named endowment. You may also call the Community Relations office at 903-266-3402.

NAMED ENDOWMENTS AND DESIGNATED FUNDS AT THE HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS FOUNDATION



Keith Frazier, M.D. Endowment for Pediatric Hospice Care

The Keith Frazier Endowment honors the memory of Keith Frazier, M.D., beloved friend, mentor and colleague, who was a Hospice of East Texas physician at the time of his death in 2009. Proceeds from the fund support Hospice of East Texas' pediatric hospice program, providing comfort and support to families facing the death of a child.



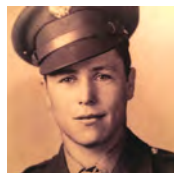
The Donna Lassiter Endowment

Engineering, Procurement and Construction, Inc. (now Jasper Ventures) honored the retirement of Charles Lassiter, a partner in the firm, with a gift to Hospice of East Texas in memory of his wife, Donna, who was a patient of Hospice of East Texas. Proceeds from the endowment are designated for general purposes.



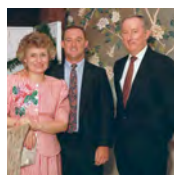
The Hospice of East Texas CARE Fund

The Hospice of East Texas CARE Fund is an endowment seeded with the estate gifts of two extraordinary women, Trudy Richardson and Estha Nowlin. Both ladies had a heart for service and deep compassion for the poor. Distributions help cover the cost of unfunded care.



The John W. Alexander Fund

The children of John W. Alexander created this endowment in his honor and memory and in appreciation for the care Mr. Alexander received when he was a patient of Hospice of East Texas. The fund is designated for general purposes.



The Bobbie and Mel Lovelady Fund

Created in 2015 by the inspirational gift of Pam and Thomas Smith, and matched with gifts from other friends and colleagues, the Bobbie and Mel Lovelady Fund is designated to support Hospice of East Texas programs which benefit patients with dementia at the end of their lives.



The D'Anna Poole Wick Endowment Fund

The D'Anna Poole Wick Endowment Fund was created by the family of D'Anna Poole Wick, the first Executive Director of Hospice of East Texas and a life-long supporter of its mission. In addition to gifts from the Wick family, the Smith County Medical Auxiliary made a significant contribution to the fund in recognition of Mrs. Wick's work with the Medical Auxiliary. The fund is to be used to support community education and outreach efforts of Hospice of East Texas.



The Carmen Richburg Endowment Fund

Rustin Richburg created the Carmen Richburg Endowment Fund in memory of his beloved mother and in appreciation for the care Mrs. Richburg received while a patient at Hospice of East Texas. Funded with gifts from Mrs. Richburg's family and friends, the Carmen Richburg Endowment Fund will be used to support general operations of Hospice of East Texas.

The Matt Clapp Fund

John Muse, friend and fellow Robert E. Lee High School classmate from the class of 1969, made the initial contribution to create this designated fund in memory of Matt Clapp, a beloved friend and role model to many. A multi-year challenge grant will be used to raise additional funds designated for unfunded care at HomePlace.



The Ann Minton Lake Endowment Fund

The Ann Minton Lake Endowment Fund was created by the family and friends of Ann Minton Lake, a beloved supporter, volunteer and board member who served the mission of Hospice of East Texas for decades. The fund is designated for general purposes.

Honey B and Big Daddy Fund

Renee and Dr. Royal Becker created this designated fund in honor of their dear friend Helen Bozeman and in memory of her beloved husband Ross Bozeman.

Endowments are permanent funds with a fixed percentage of the funds' assets available for distribution. Designated funds are designated as to purpose and can be distributed in their entirety.



Marji Ream
President/CEO

A MESSAGE FROM MARJI

Whether you're a longtime supporter and friend or someone who's learning about our mission for the very first time, it's an honor to know you, it's an honor to meet you. And we are grateful you're beside us. We are grateful you've entrusted us to uphold our commitment – our commitment for almost 40 years – to provide extraordinary care and compassion to tender patients and to the families who love them.

Not long ago, one of our team members, Hospice of East Texas Consultant Keith Morrison, wrote about an experience he had while working during the challenging days of COVID.

We sent a 90-year-old man to HomePlace today. His wife is 85, they've been married 67 years. She spent a good portion of today at the DMV trying to get her driver's license so she could go see her husband in the hospital. The DMV didn't like the hand-written birth certificate she had, because it didn't have an official Texas seal stamped on it. She explained they didn't have those types of seals 85 years ago... I helped her gown-up and go into her husband's room. She cried big crocodile tears as she did so but dried them up and went and sat with this man, held his hand, and patted it and listened to him mumbling – like she knew everything he was saying, like she's done for so many years. What a beautiful thing I witnessed. What a love story it is. What a privilege I had. THIS IS US.

Reading Keith's story, nudged me to share it with others, to share it with you. It serves as a beautiful reminder of who we are. We are the Hospice of East Texas. We walk the last days with those we serve. They travel before us on a journey we will all take. They teach us what it is to hope and what it is to care.

We all have a story, and each has meaning. YOU – our old friends and new friends – make the stories worth telling and make our mission matter most.



Save the Date

September 8, 2021
Tyler Rose Garden Center

Pop-Up Shops and Brunch
Benefiting HomePlace

For more information: 903.266.3400, ext. 140.



AT THE HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS



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