

# EXCELLENCE



Awarded 5 Stars by Medicare's Family Caregiver Survey

FOR

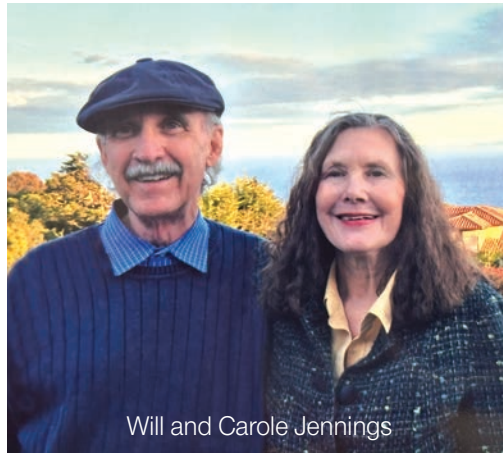
*Everyone*

The  
**HOSPICE**  
of East Texas

Fall 2024



## Higher Love



Will and Carole Jennings



These days, at their home in Tyler, Carole and Will Jennings feel calm and peaceful. It may all be so very different from days gone by – days filled with music and celebrity, travel and excitement – but they've reached a place of quiet acceptance. They are thankful for the past, and they are content with today.

Can you hear the melody and maybe even sing along to *Up Where We Belong*, *Tears in Heaven*, *My Heart Will Go On*, or *Higher Love*? These are just a few of the more than 500 songs written by Will and performed around the world by some of the most talented artists of our time - Joe Cocker, Eric Clapton, Celine Dion, Steve Winwood, Whitney Houston, Dionne Warwick, and the list goes on. Will's songwriting gift has earned him national and international acclaim, including Grammy and Academy Awards, installation into three songwriter Halls of Fame, as well as deep respect and admiration. For most of us, that kind of life experience would be hard to imagine – one of such success and renown. But Will remains humble, and now he and his wife are happy to be in East Texas where it all began – for them both.

Will attended Tyler Junior College, Stephen F. Austin State University, and was a teacher at the University of Wisconsin, before his dream of becoming a full-time songwriter led him

to Nashville, Los Angeles, and London. He and Carole built a beautiful life together. Years passed and, ultimately, it was chronic and debilitating illnesses which brought them back to where they could be near family – a family that takes care of its own. Will's two older sisters, Gloria Townsend and Joyce Hudnall, both live in Tyler and are grateful for that privilege.

As their health issues progressed, Carole and Will were referred by physicians to hospice care. Gloria and Joyce knew that, for them, there was only one choice: The Hospice of East Texas. The moment the expert, compassionate team arrived, Joyce says she knew they had an ally...

Having navigated Will's and Carole's health journeys the best they could, the family was becoming more overwhelmed, as needs intensified. They were comforted when The Hospice of East Texas began coming to their home – a place of familiar surroundings – where a new kind of healing could begin. Joyce says, "The Hospice team of physicians, nurses, and aides have made order out of our chaos and moved us out of crisis mode. They have taken away panic and anxiety, replacing it with emotional and physical relief – for all of us."

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*Continued from front page*

The Hospice of East Texas understands that every family is different, and Joyce understands that, too. She's seeing care that is unique to Will's and Carole's specific needs. Joyce goes on to say, "There's no retreat! The Hospice of East Texas caregivers have a depth of concern that lets us know we are never abandoned and always loved. There is nothing mechanical about the way they go about their care – it's given from the heart. They are not only there to meet Will's and Carole's physical needs, but also to heal their souls. It's hard to describe – but we can all rest well at night, because The Hospice of East Texas helps us feel safe."

Not only does the family feel safe but also very protected. Joyce observes, "We trust The Hospice of East Texas. They listen to us. They are intentional and honorable with every action. We have learned so much, as the Hospice team teaches – not only our family and Carole and Will, but also the caregivers from Home Instead who have been exemplary for our needs from the beginning. Before, the uncertainty of the next step was frightening. Now, with their guidance and comprehensive approach to care, we are better equipped, because they prepare us for what to expect. Will is a true gentleman and cherishes family above all. Is it any wonder he is so easy to love and care for? That sacred task has been elevated and made more effective with the tender assistance of Hospice."

"The Hospice of East Texas is the standard-bearer. Their care comes with commitment and is offered with no strings attached – only love," says Joyce. "When a community has a heart, it matters. That's what I see in this amazing organization."

None of us knows what tomorrow may hold; but like Carole and Will, we can be content for today. That's what the good work of The Hospice of East Texas is all about, and we are humbled to serve every patient and family who seeks our extraordinary care. Maybe Will's own words, his magical lyrics, say it best...

*Think about it, there must be higher love  
Down in the heart or hidden in the stars above  
Without it, life is wasted time  
Look inside your heart,  
I'll look inside mine*



Will with his sisters Joyce Hudnall (left) and Gloria Townsend (right)

Will Jennings passed away September 6, 2024 at his home in Tyler, with his family by his side – saying prayers of thanks for the gift of his life and all the lovely expressions of joy he wrote for them and for the world.

## Your Kindness is just the Beginning of Your Legacy



Often families express their desire to “give back” to The Hospice of East Texas in a meaningful way. A simple bequest to The Hospice of East Texas in your will is a wonderful way to do that and could be the most important charitable gift you ever make.

Leaving a gift in your will is often called a planned gift – which means just what it says – a gift that requires some planning. You may designate a specific dollar amount, a particular asset such as securities or real estate, a fixed percentage of your estate, or leave your residuary estate after you have provided for loved ones.

If you are committed to ensuring that The Hospice of East Texas thrives for years to come, please consider a planned gift. We encourage you to consult with your attorney, accountant, or estate planning advisor to be certain your legacy gift meets the needs of your family and individual goals, while helping to support a cause you care about – the mission of The Hospice of East Texas.

### **Will. Power.**

*“The things you do for yourself are gone  
when you are gone,  
but the things you do for others  
remain as your legacy.”*

~ Kalu Ndukwe Kalu

We invite you to visit with us about legacy giving. Please contact Betsy Brush 903-266-3402 or [bbrush@hospiceofeasttexas.org](mailto:bbrush@hospiceofeasttexas.org).

# Light Life<sup>Up A</sup>

*“I think as you grow older, your wish list gets smaller and the things you really want for the holidays can’t be bought.”*

## Light Up A Life

is a meaningful end-of-year tradition at **The Hospice of East Texas**, offering the opportunity to shine light into the lives of others through the purchase of holiday cards – which we personally hand address and mail for you – to remember those held dear.

## Give a Gift

in someone’s honor this year...

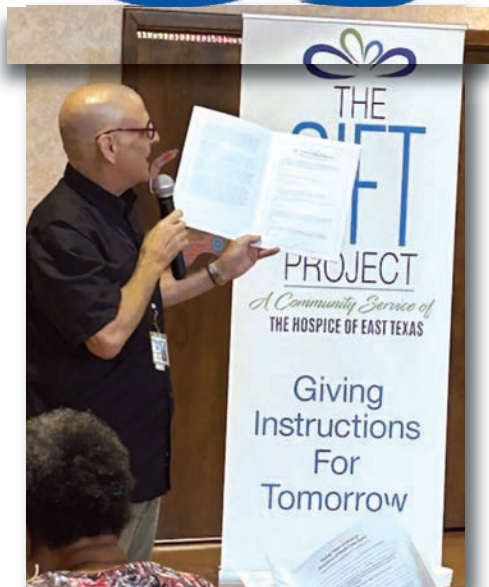
You’ll fill their hearts with **LOVE**. And you’ll be helping to provide the compassionate, comprehensive, coordinated care and support that only

**The Hospice of East Texas** can offer.

Please be watching your mailbox for Light Up a Life materials to arrive in late October or visit our website at [www.hospiceofeasttexas.org](http://www.hospiceofeasttexas.org) for more information.

Thank YOU  
for being a GIFT to others!

# What is the single most important step in health care planning?



**Stacy Sanders**  
Director of Chaplain & Bereavement Services

## Communication.

Making your wishes known is one of the most generous gifts you can give a loved one.

Many of us have two fears when it comes to end-of-life: that we will not get the care we need, and that we will get the care we do not want. Letting those close to you know what you would choose will help make certain:

- Your family and doctors know clearly what you want.
- Emotional relief is there for your children, spouse and other loved ones from having to make difficult decisions alone or negotiate them with family at a trying time.
- Our loved ones will have more quality time and energy with us and each other, rather than grappling unprepared with unfamiliar situations.

## Giving Instructions For Tomorrow

*A Community Service of The Hospice of East Texas*

The GIFT Project is a workshop led by a Hospice of East Texas Chaplain and Nurse to guide, prepare and support families in having these important conversations with each other. The interactive sessions empower you to identify what matters most and take steps to be sure your wishes can be honored.

**82%**  
of people say  
it's important  
to put their  
wishes in writing.

Only **23%**  
have done so.





*“Informing ourselves, making decisions and letting your loved ones know how you want to be cared for is truly a GIFT we can give others as well as ourselves.”*

**Artis Newsome**

*Board Director, Hospice of East Texas*



**70%**  
of people will  
need someone  
to make  
healthcare  
decisions for  
them at the  
end-of-life.

**You are invited to call and plan a workshop for your own group or organization. Please reach out to Betsy Brush at 903-266-3400, ext. 402.**



## Called to Serve

On a recent Saturday morning, a charter bus pulled up to The Hospice of East Texas... out poured over 30 young women, clad in bright pink t-shirts – the newest members of the Junior League of Tyler – Provisional Class #74. We were the first stop on their history tour, as part of their Provisional Retreat, learning about community impact.

How fitting, of course, they found their way to our campus.

**The Junior League of Tyler founded The Hospice of East Texas in 1982**, and we are honored to share a history of togetherness.

The Hospice of East Texas began with one woman’s vision... Evelyn Lake visited a friend in Arizona, who was receiving hospice care. That was in the late 70s/early 80s, when very few had even heard the word “hospice.” Mrs. Lake returned home to East Texas with the certainty that our community needed that same kind of specialized care for those dealing with life limiting illnesses. Her spark caught fire with the Junior League of Tyler, especially since one of the primary tenets of hospice care was the involvement of volunteers. The League voted to make The Hospice of East Texas its signature project, committing \$30,000 and countless hours of volunteer time to start the organization in 1982.

**Volunteers** created The Hospice of East Texas and philanthropic support was critical to its early foundation and sustainability. In fact, the entire budget of the newly formed organization came from private dollars, long before Medicare or insurance covered hospice care.

Forty + years later, volunteerism and philanthropy remain as the bedrock of our culture by a *founding commitment* to serve every patient and family who seek our unique brand of care, regardless of their life situation, financial circumstances, or the complexity of their care.

On that September morning, we toured a beautiful group of women through HomePlace, The Hospice of East Texas’ in-patient facility – the only one of its kind in the region – and together we were reminded of the deep significance of this rare gem, a true gift given *by* our community *to* our community. It only takes a spark... and, with courage and love, it becomes a light to help others find their way.



**Marji Ream**  
*President/CEO*

## You've Got a Friend

On an unexpectedly rainy day, several people came into HomePlace, umbrellas in hand, looking for a friend who had arrived earlier that morning. I was standing near the reception desk and took the opportunity to greet and welcome them. "Thank God for you all, that Marilyn can come here. We didn't know what we were going to do. But your people came in and they did - they knew what to do. We are so relieved" one of them said with great emotion.

Friendship is significant in helping us weather the storms of life. Like you and me, these visitors wanted to ease the circumstance of their friend whose past months had been spent dealing with a life-limiting illness. The Hospice of East Texas is here to serve and be a friend to all who need our services.

If someone you care about is diagnosed with a serious illness, making repeated trips to the ER or has repeated hospitalizations, we may be the right friend for the season. When people are in the storm of dealing with a serious illness, sometimes it's difficult to see all the options. So often friends are the ones - just a step outside family and home dynamics - that we can lean on for needed support.

*"One always measures friendships by how they show up in bad weather."*  
Winston Churchill

We are honored to share life's journey with you, our friends.

## Excellence for Everyone

### AWARDED 2023 SUPERIOR PERFORMER



FOR EACH CAHPS HOSPICE QUALITY MEASURE AS MEASURED FROM THE CAREGIVER'S POINT OF VIEW.

### RECEIVED 5-STAR RATING



FROM MEDICARE'S  
FAMILY CAREGIVER SURVEY

## The Hospice of East Texas Physicians & Nurse Practitioners

Laura Ferguson, MD, *Medical Director*  
Stacy Abernathy, MD  
Royal Becker, MD  
Michael Beets, MD  
Amby Cline, DO  
Craig Gunter, MD  
Jason Holman, MD

James Low, MD - Jacksonville  
Andrew O'Kelley, DO  
Amy Starr, MD  
Amy Swan, DO  
Randal Vinther, MD - Nacogdoches  
Stephanie West, MD  
Lloyd Whitley, MD - Nacogdoches

Cammie Bedell, NP  
Matt Burkland, NP  
Melissa Crosman, NP  
Amy Everett, NP

## “We always know, Someone Is Going To Benefit From This”



The Leming Family

It was a scorching Texas afternoon and we had escaped into the cool air of what is affectionately known as The Living Room on The Hospice of East Texas campus. Maureen and Dave Leming had just finished their volunteer work. Maureen spent her morning in the accounting department helping with filing and organizing. In addition to being a wife, mother and grandmother, Maureen was a valued secretary throughout her career.

Dave had spent his morning volunteering at Hospice as well. He and Greg Brown met just before 7:30 a.m. to get the moving truck and pick up a large estate sale donation. Together, they drove out to a home set on twenty or so acres. The family had lost their mother earlier in the year. All the siblings had agreed, they wanted to donate the contents of their mothers' home to The Hospice of East Texas new estate sale initiative. Dave, Greg and a few others loaded the truck and lovingly transported many of the donor's beautiful things to our Resale and Estate Shop.

***“Why do you do this? Volunteer so much of your time here at Hospice?”***

“We always know someone is going to benefit from whatever we are doing at The Hospice of East Texas. It's about the culture of this organization. All the people here seem to know the reason we all do it – to help ease the burden for patients and families” Dave replied.

“You never leave this place without being thanked at least twice. The staff and other volunteers are so grateful and that seems to flow from the gratitude the people who come to Hospice have for the care they receive.”

“There is sincere compassion here. We are so proud of our association with The Hospice of East Texas. The quality of people involved here – we just like being around and associated with people like that” Maureen emphasized.

“People love this place and are happy to make personal

sacrifices for the benefit of others” Dave continued. “Greg Brown, who I love working with, will work until 10 p.m. at night the day before – he'll get his work done early – so that we can meet here in the morning and go pick up a donation. His mom passed away on The Hospice of East Texas services a few years ago and this place means a lot to him.”

***“What are some of the highlights of your 10 years of volunteering?”***

“One was definitely when our granddaughter, who's 12, called us to come pick up three or four bags of clothes for the Resale Shops. She knew all about Dave's volunteering and well, like they say, more is caught than taught!” Maureen shared.

Dave remembered, “Another neat time was when our grandson Cade volunteered with me to get his service hours for confirmation. He was working towards a goal and we could do that together. It's a memory we will always share.” The Lemings still enjoy the picture Maureen took that day of Dave and Cade on the Hospice truck.

“Yes and we still have that garden decoration in our flowerbed that you got at the Resale Shop!” exclaimed Maureen smiling.

When they retired to Tyler about ten years ago they asked around for recommendations of where they should volunteer. That was the start of their volunteering for The Hospice of East Texas. Throughout their service they have visited patients at home and cooked meals for the staff – just to show appreciation for the work done. Serving holiday meals to families at HomePlace (Hospice of East Texas' inpatient facility) is another way they enjoy being involved.

It's visionary. The Hospice of East Texas was established by a visionary movement and that vision is still evident today in the people who are involved whether as volunteers or staff.

**Volunteer with us! Reach out to Denise Graber  
[dgrabr@hospiceofeasttexas.org](mailto:dgrabr@hospiceofeasttexas.org).**



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