

Sharing
**Hope &
Home**



SPRING 2025



OUR MISSION

Hospice of East Texas seeks to enhance the quality of life for individuals and families dealing with life-limiting illnesses and to assist bereaved family members by providing compassionate, comprehensive, coordinated care and support.

Their love story began in 1946...

At the age of seventeen, Jesse Stanton, known as J.T. by his family, was attending high school, when he spotted a beautiful young basketball player. Her name was Patsy. She was fifteen years old at the time.

J.T. and Patsy dated only a few short months before knowing they wanted to marry. On September 3, 1946, they eloped.

The newlyweds rented a one-room house in Tyler. Eventually, J.T. and Patsy built a home and settled on Patsy's family land in Whitehouse. J.T. worked at Tyler Pipe for 36 years and did a little barbering on the side. Patsy was a homemaker. Together, they built a beautiful life and raised two sons and one daughter.

J.T. and Patsy remained in that home on family land until February 2024. In that month, they were involved in an automobile accident. J.T. made a good recovery, but Patsy was not able to live independently and was moved to a long-term care facility. After 78 years of togetherness, living apart from one another took its toll... Patsy's health continued to decline, as did J.T.'s.

Patsy came to HomePlace at The Hospice of East Texas in November, and J.T. was admitted two days later. The staff at HomePlace moved a bed for him to her room – reunited. Patsy celebrated her 94th birthday in the room they shared. J.T. had recently turned 96. When asked to what he attributed the success of their 78-year marriage and if he would do it all over again, J.T. did not hesitate. "Yes! Marriage is all about give and take."

To come full circle, Patsy and J.T.'s great-granddaughter is a cherished RN at The Hospice of East Texas HomePlace. Serving as a charge nurse, Courtney Wynn has been a precious part of their journey, especially during the tender days and nights at HomePlace. Courtney reflects, "I can remember spending every holiday with my great-grandparents and attending church with them on Sundays during my childhood. They were the rock of our family. They were the constant in all our lives and extremely supportive. I can still picture my Nana sitting in the rocking chair in my living room, holding my son for the first time. That is one of the sweetest memories that I will always cherish."

"My great-grandparents had the most beautiful love story and a marriage that stood the test of time. The idea of them being separated during their illnesses seemed almost cruel to our family. **We are extremely thankful for my Hospice of East Texas family that allowed my great-grandparents to share the same room and be together during my grandmother's last days on this earth.** I've always known that HomePlace is an incredible place with the most amazing staff; but this experience has put everything into a different perspective for me. It was really special to witness how everyone here loved on and cared for my grandparents and my family at this time. I am forever grateful."

Patsy Stanton passed away November 19, 2024 at HomePlace. Her husband, J.T., passed away at HomePlace March 26, 2025. Reunited again.



Marji Ream
President/CEO

A Message from Marji

Dorothy, in *The Wizard of Oz*, may have said it best – “There’s no place like home.” Here at The Hospice of East Texas, though, we believe home can be more than a place. It’s a feeling of being cared for and protected, a notion of safety and refuge, a sense of calm and peace.

In February, we gathered for our Annual Meeting to look back at the accomplishments, the challenges, and the significance of 2024 in the life of our mission. Together, with our friends, donors, board directors, staff, and volunteers, we recognized – anew – that this sacred work belongs to all of us. The Hospice of East Texas is a family. It is home.

At the event, our Medical Director, Dr. Laura Ferguson, spoke so eloquently. **“Hospice is not a place. Hospice is us.** It’s the doctors, nurses, home health aides, social workers, chaplains, and others who help place hospice care in the homes of thousands of patients and families each year. **Hospice is you,** who support this organization which served 2,092 patients in 2024.”

We celebrated 40 years as an organization in 2022, and this year marks the 25th Anniversary of HomePlace – the only in-patient hospice facility providing extraordinary specialty care around the clock. Twenty-five years ago, this vision became a reality with the help of an abundance of generous donations and a common goal to ensure that loved ones would have the feeling of home while being cared for by our dedicated team.

As we look ahead to the next 25 years, we are excited about the opportunities to improve our facilities, offer new and state-of-the-art clinical care, train the best physicians in palliative care, and continue to deliver extraordinary and compassionate care with all the comforts of HOME.

Your continued love and support mean everything to us. We couldn’t do it without you, and we wouldn’t want to. We are honored to share the journey home with each of you.

With gratitude.

Annual Meeting • February 18, 2025



Keith Morrison, Jennifer Turlington RN,
Lana Chapman RN, Matt Burkland NP, Dr. Jason Holman



Joe & Dayna Woelkers, Sherry & Ken Dunn



Kim Beckham, Barbara Bass, Holley & Eddie Howard



David Nelson, Jacie & Trey Lawson



Nikki Baker, Dr. Laura Ferguson, Hank Baker



Peggy Smith, Julie & Tom Brown, Dr. Steven Cohen

Vernell Marshall

20 Years of Unwavering Commitment, Compassion, and Excellence



Vernell Marshall at the Annual Meeting, where she was honored for 20 years of service.



Vernell with her family

If you think about it, twenty years is a long time for anyone to stay in one job. But Vernell Marshall is not just anyone... she considers her work a calling. For the past 20 years, Vernell has been a shining light at The Hospice of East Texas, dedicating her heart, hands, and expertise to the care of our patients and their families. **Vernell is more than a certified home health aide; she is a soul of compassion, a source of comfort, a pillar of strength, a beacon of positivity for everyone she encounters.**

Her teammates describe her as someone who consistently goes above and beyond... bringing genuine kindness to every family she serves, ensuring that each patient receives not only the care they need, but the dignity they deserve.

Families who have experienced her tender care speak of her professionalism and deep knowledge, some stating they know without a doubt that choosing The Hospice of East Texas was the right decision – because of Vernell.

The Hospice of East Texas clinical team meets patients and families wherever they call home. Patients are priority and, when they need us, we are there – no matter the setting, no matter the circumstances. Our homecare staff are often on the road in rural areas. Once, when Vernell arrived

at a patient's home, her car was surrounded by goats! Not to be deterred, Vernell honked her horn, hoping to clear a path. But instead of scattering, the goats all collapsed in the yard. Vernell instantly feared she had unknowingly caused their demise and hurried to the house to alert and apologize to the family. They assured her that was not at all the case. Rather, this was a common occurrence with their myotonic goats, also known as fainting goats. Needless to say, that experience bonded that family to Vernell, and she to them. **Relationships matter.**

Vernell has a gift for making all patients feel comfortable and valued. Time and time again, families have expressed their gratitude, calling her a blessing and a refreshing presence. They describe her as having an infectious upbeat attitude, but also exuding calm and peace, even in the most difficult moments. One family member shared, **"If my grandmother were still here, I know she would have nothing but wonderful things to say about Vernell."**

She is an exceptional caregiver, a dedicated team player, and a hard worker who never complains. Most importantly, she treats every patient with respect and the kind of warmth that makes all the difference. Vernell embodies the very best of what hospice care should be. Her devotion and passion have an impact that lasts – well beyond 20 years...

THERE'S NO PLACE



THE HOSPICE OF EAST TEXAS
HomePlace
*Extraordinary Inpatient Care for
25 Years*

*HomePlace is home for patients
and families at a very tender time.*

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO... in the fall of 2000, The Hospice of East Texas opened the doors to the Robert M. Rogers Hospice Center for the very first time. Through many years of careful planning and fundraising, the visionary Board of Directors, volunteers, and staff focused their time and energy on the creation of a facility like no other in East Texas.

Named in memory of Robert M. Rogers, businessman and philanthropist, whose family gave the lead gift in the capital campaign, the Robert M. Rogers Hospice Center houses administrative offices, meeting rooms and a very special unique facility, called **HomePlace**, dedicated to the needs of patients at the end of life and to the caring support of their families and loved ones.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER... HomePlace remains the only dedicated in-patient facility for terminally ill patients in the region. Every detail, from its architecture and furniture to its artwork and gardens, is still patient and family focused. Its name is more than symbolic. HomePlace is **home** for patients and families at a very tender time.

People often ask, "Why don't other cities and communities have something like HomePlace?" The truth is that HomePlace was built, and continues to operate because of the love, service, and generosity of thoughtful people like YOU. You and others have been essential to nurturing and sustaining HomePlace since it opened its doors on November 6, 2000.

THANK YOU!



LIKE HOMEPLACE



“My dad passed away at HomePlace. As difficult as that time was, the staff there was wonderful, and the facility is beautiful and calming. It was a deeply meaningful experience for us, even in our time of grief... Everyone involved with The Hospice of East Texas should give themselves a pat on the back for the sacred work they do and for the environment they provide for patients and families.”

SAVE THE DATE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025

11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

CROSSWALK CONFERENCE CENTER
GREEN ACRES BAPTIST CHURCH

(Ticket and Sponsorship Information coming soon!)

Our response to the blessing of **25 years** of HomePlace is a commitment to ensure it continues to offer its extraordinary care to all who need it. And to commemorate this milestone, The Hospice of East Texas will hold hands with our community to share hope and home at a luncheon event. YOU are invited to join us! Event proceeds will be directed to support this cherished community resource.

When your family member or friend needs HomePlace, it is there. When patients and families choose hospice care in their own home – there is still the peace of knowing HomePlace is available.

Compassionate care is provided by our dedicated team **wherever you call home** – twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week...

“When we walked through the doors, we were immediately welcomed. The peace we felt as the nurses and staff ushered us in, tucked a quilt around Mom and assured us that everything would be okay... it was a blessing we will never forget.”



Light Life^{Up A}

BLESSED by our 2024 LIGHT UP A LIFE BENEFACTORS

Sincere gratitude to these generous donors and to all the many supporters of Light Up A Life, The Hospice of East Texas' year-end tradition. Your loving gifts bring hope and peace to families needing tender care and expert guidance for life's final journey. As well, you are a tremendous encouragement to the physicians, nurses, and home health aides living out their calling to serve – inspiring the care they provide twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

PLATINUM BENEFACTORS

Anonymous Penny K. Stephens Bob Walton

GOLD BENEFACTORS

PJ and Tom Beets Kevin P. Eltife Charlotte and Tommy Hyde Dolly Wolf

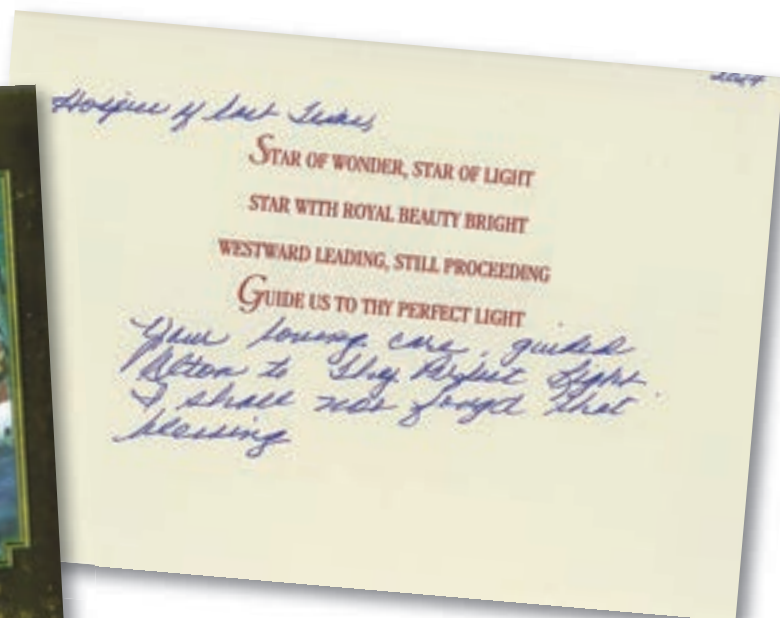
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A Heartfelt Thanks



LUNCH... More than a Meal



Around the table, L to R, Elizabeth Sharkey, Bill Vines, Marleen Elkins, Barbara Bass, Bill Martin



Elizabeth Sharkey with her father, Bill Vines

There's just something about sharing a meal with others... Time together, sitting around a table, provides a natural setting that gives way to conversation, laughter, and the sharing of experiences – building and strengthening special bonds. It can foster a sense of belonging and community, whether it be with family, friends, or even strangers.

That's exactly what happened when a group – all drawn together through The Hospice of East Texas – gathered for lunch at a local restaurant recently.

Bill Martin has volunteered with The Hospice of East Texas since 2022. Specifically, he is a Home Care Volunteer, providing companionship and even emotional support to patients and their families. His visits might include reading, playing cards, telling and listening to stories, or simply being there. His presence, wherever the patient calls home, is a welcome gift.

Bill Vines is a patient that Bill Martin checks on regularly. When they met for the first time, they immediately hit it off! Aside from sharing the same first name, the two Bills have similar backgrounds and life experiences. Like Bill Martin, Bill Vines was very involved in the community where he previously lived and called home for many years. In fact, Bill Vines served as Mayor of Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Inspired by this knowledge, Bill Martin reached out to

Marleen Elkins, Volunteer Coordinator at The Hospice of East Texas, with the idea of planning a lunch and inviting his friend, Barbara Bass, former Mayor of Tyler, to meet Bill Vines. He knew the two mayors would have much in common and would enjoy time together. Marleen thought it was a wonderful idea and helped coordinate schedules to set a date. Elizabeth Sharkey, Bill Vines' daughter, was also invited and thrilled to join the group!

And a magical time it was! Marleen thanked everyone for coming, saying, "What a joyful lunch and conversation!" Barbara commented afterward, "I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to visit with everyone and to meet your dad, Elizabeth! Thanks for making this happen, Bill, and for treating us to lunch." Bill Martin replied, "I thank each of you for coming. I so believe that we are blessed to have The Hospice of East Texas and people like Marleen, who help make our lives better."

Especially heartened by the experience, Elizabeth shared, **"All of you really blessed my father today. You gave him the opportunity to be the Bill Vines he thinks of himself, the one who can get dressed up and meet with civic leaders and hear about community events. You gave Daddy dignity and a lovely outing with such kind friends and a delicious meal. A real blessing."**

The Hospice of East Texas – the people who are served and the people who serve them – above and beyond extraordinary care – a real blessing indeed.



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