

# FAMILY *to Family*

## *Cooking* AND GRIEF

**INSIDE:**

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Dear Friends,



This year marks the fortieth anniversary since the establishment of the Medicare hospice benefit which propelled end-of-life care in the United States from a grassroots movement into the mainstream of clinical care. Far though we may have come from those early days, many still view hospice with trepidation, as an ending. And yet, as you will see across these pages, beginnings abound.

Our interdisciplinary team at the inpatient unit in Lawrenceville has initiated "Nightingale Honors," designed to demonstrate reverence for nurses under our care. This has struck a chord which resonates throughout our organization and our community. Learn more below.

April marks the launch of "Lillian's Daffodil Legacy," a donor-funded program which extends a special welcome to guests of the Daffodil room at the inpatient unit. Our page-one story describes how a patient's daughter was moved to "pay it forward" to others in this manner by way of honoring her mother.

## NIGHTINGALE HONORS

Staff at the Family Hospice inpatient hospice unit in Lawrenceville have initiated "Nightingale Honors" for patients who were nurses in their professional life. During a bedside ceremony which includes a poetry reading, staff bestow a caduceus lapel pin, a white rose, a candle, and a certificate of appreciation. A white ribbon is placed on the patient's door frame to distinguish the guest of that room as a nurse.

Beth Venanzio, RN, introduced the idea based upon something she discovered on social media, and it was quickly embraced by her entire interdisciplinary team who worked quickly to pull together the various components. "I have always felt a sense of honor when caring for a nurse, as they have cared for so many in their time," said Beth.

Additionally, Beth and several of her Family Hospice nurse colleagues are joining the "Angels of Allegheny" honor guard. This group provides personalized tributes at memorial services of nurses in the Pittsburgh community.

Says Erin Bernhardt, RN, clinical manager, "This is the beating heart of hospice — interdisciplinary collaboration with the patient and their family at the center of everything we do."

Family Hospice wishes to thank **D'Alessandro Funeral Home and Crematory, Ltd.** for their sponsorship of the "Nightingale Honors" initiative.



The "Cooking for One" class featured on our cover guides bereaved caregivers who are embarking on the next part of their lives. For many, this means one less person at the dining table. Learn how our bereavement staff is helping people make this adjustment on page two.

And for the 36th year, we are delighted to mark the onset of spring at our Annual Golf Outing on May 16 at South Hills Country Club. This year's Hollywood theme is sure to dazzle. Register at [UPMC.com/FamilyHospiceDonate](http://UPMC.com/FamilyHospiceDonate).

Each of these important beginnings is made possible by the generosity of our donors and volunteers. We are fortunate to count you among those who inspire efforts to provide compassionate, expert end-of-life care to patients and families here in western Pennsylvania.

*Gratefully,*  
**Jennifer Vennare**  
*Vice President of Operations*

# Lillian's DAFFODIL LEGACY



A grateful daughter brings her mother's legacy to life by extending a special welcome to future patients and families

April Cunningham and her two brothers, Jeffrey and Hakeem, and two sisters, Victoria and Denise, were raised in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh under the care of one Sarah "Lillian" Everett-Taylor, a single mom at the time who stood 4' 11" on a good day. Though short in stature, Lillian was a large presence in a proud community.

Her home and the adjacent yard provided a safety zone where many of the local kids congregated, including a group known fondly as the "third floor boys," derived from where they gathered in the house. She later found love, married a gentleman named Zack Taylor, and started a new career. She worked for many years as a nursing assistant in long-term care settings throughout the city until her declining health made that impossible.

When April traveled home from Florida to Pittsburgh last spring, her intention was to help her mother get situated in a long-term care facility. Upon arrival, however, it became quickly evident that time was short and relocating her mother to a nursing facility was not feasible. Instead, Lillian was admitted to Family Hospice's Canterbury inpatient unit in Lawrenceville where she received expert, round-the-clock end-of-life care.

Additionally, April and her family benefitted from the staff's guidance as to what to expect in their mother's final days and beyond. April described how the staff prepared them for the dying process and how they walked the family through what would happen after Lillian's death, even down to reverently escorting her mother's body out of the building as the funeral home stood ready to receive her. "I will be forever grateful for that," April expressed.

"The experience was amazing," she continued. "The rooms were comforting, and the colors were soothing." April took note that her mother was a guest of the Daffodil room; all the rooms at the Lawrenceville unit are named for flowers and trees to evoke a sense of nature and the cycle of life. This left an impression upon her that foreshadowed inspiration in the wake of Lillian's death.

Driving through the old neighborhood after her mom's passing, April was surprised to see daffodils in bloom. She pulled over, took a photo, and sent it to family. No one recalled daffodils ever sprouting forth from their native, childhood soil. April took it as a sign that she was going to be all right, and further, she knew what form she wanted her mother's legacy to take.

That day, the idea for "Lillian's Daffodil Legacy" at the Family Hospice Canterbury inpatient unit in Lawrenceville was born.

Set to launch in April 2023 to mark the anniversary of her mother's death, this legacy program provides a care package of things April herself found she needed as a guest. It includes practical and comforting items like a blanket, a tote bag, a water bottle, a notebook and pen set, and an inspirational card for future guests of the Daffodil room.

April hopes that others might follow suit with this adopt-a-room approach.

**"Whatever family comes to occupy that room, my hope is that they feel some sort of love, reassurance, and inspiration in that space," April said. "I want them to feel welcome, and to know that someone has gone before them, and that it's going to be okay."**

# Gifts at Work

Support for the Family Hospice Foundation impacts daily life for 2,100 friends and neighbors in western Pennsylvania annually who are navigating end of life with the benefit of the expertise and compassion of our multidisciplinary team.

We are pleased to share a summary of how that support is applied to enhance care.



Stacie Chandler

## Cooking for One

Food is life sustaining, but for many people, food has a deeper meaning when it comes to cooking, baking, and sharing a meal. Family Hospice understands that after the loss of a loved one, a person's relationship to food can shift. Elizabeth Schandelmeier, LCSW, discusses food and loss in a multi-session course, "Cooking for One," funded by the Family Hospice Foundation.

"Cooking for One" sessions focus on meal planning, meal preparations, and cooking as well as the emotional and mental challenges that come after a loss. Elizabeth says, "Grief is not just an emotional reaction; it is a full body experience. Many people find their appetite is affected and energy levels drop. Cooking is often impacted by loss of motivation to eat or cook."

After a loved one's death, there can be a lot of unknowns in the kitchen and in cooking. Elizabeth explains, "There is a ripple effect of secondary losses, feeling the losses that happen after the death of a loved one. They can feel the loss at the dinner table because of the empty seat or at the grocery store when the shopping list is now absent a loved one's favorite foods."

The most recent "Cooking for One" provided a way to meet others in a similar situation, enhance cooking skills, and participate in an enjoyable activity. The tables at the cooking sessions were equipped with fresh ingredients, and each table had a different recipe to accommodate the various skill levels of cooking. With guidance, the participants worked together to create a dish that was later shared with the whole group.

"These sessions bring grieving people together to explore these new challenges. Participants learn techniques, expand skills, and learn about themselves and their shifting identity in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Part of their 'homework' is to find a joy in life after a loss," says Elizabeth.

For information about bereavement programs and resources, call **412-572-8829** or visit **UPMC.com/FamilyHospiceBereavement**.

## General Donations

A total of \$77,715 will fund the following in 2023:

### Bereavement

- **Stationery** for comforting notes, community memorial services in spring and fall, grief support groups. Benefits 4,000 bereaved.
- **Cooking for One Classes.** Class capacity is 16.
- **Grief totes** for children with activities and items that promote health and self-care. Benefits 100 kids.

### Clinical and Complementary Care

- **Caregiver Toolkits** containing customized bedding, a pill crusher, handbook, and planner for patients at home. Benefits 650 families.
- **Treatments not covered under Medicare Benefit.** Dialysis, IV cardiac medications, radiation, and blood transfusions for patients transitioning to hospice. Benefits 30 patients.
- **Comfort Music** for patients to alleviate pain, reduce stress, and improve respiration and blood pressure. Benefits 12 patients.
- **Art Therapy** to improve mood, relieve stress, and conduct life review. Benefits 100 patients and 100 family members.
- **Overnight stays at the Hope Grows Iris Respite House** for caregivers. Benefits 24 caregivers.

### Canterbury Inpatient Unit

- **Enhanced CD Players** with Bluetooth and speakers in each room. Benefits more than 500 patients.
- **Keyboard and stand** for volunteers to play in the common area. Benefits more than 500 patients.

## Angels On Call Fund

Funding is for resources for patients with financial limitations and is provided as requests are submitted.

In 2022, the Angels On Call Fund fulfilled the following requests in the amount of \$1,700:

- Fidget pillow and pillowcase for patient with dementia and agitation for patient with Alzheimer's and Down Syndrome.
- Hotel stay for a son to visit his mother who he hadn't seen in 20 years.
- Grocery gift cards for patients at home.
- Air conditioner for a home patient with lung cancer and COPD. Home call bell system.
- Wheelchair for pancreatic cancer patient to give him access to the outdoors to visit with friends.
- New parts and tires for the scooter of low-income patient.

## Carol Sayers Vockel Fund

In 2022, the Carol Sayers Vockel Fund for Community and Volunteer Education supported the following events in the amount of \$6,050.

- "Dreams and Visions Workshop: Understanding End-of-Life Experiences and Bereavement." Staff and volunteers learned how to converse with patients and family members about their dreams and visions to normalize and validate their experiences.
- "Building a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion" symposium for staff and the community.
- **Education series at Mt. Lebanon Library** covering utilization of art therapy, Reiki, and death doulas, advanced directives, dispelling myths of hospice, and grief over the holidays.

## Imagine Harmony Fund

Funding is for final life experiences and is provided as requests are submitted.

In 2022, the Imagine Harmony Fund fulfilled the following requests in the amount of \$3,700:

- Thanksgiving meals for patients and their families. 21 patients were served complete turkey dinners to enjoy what may have been their last holiday together.
- Fishing trip to Erie for a patient to spend his birthday with his son and new grandchild.
- Robotic companion cat for two dementia patients.
- Wheelchair transportation to a Hindu temple for a patient and her son to prepare her for end of life.
- Casino trip and 102nd birthday party for a patient to share with her family and friends.
- Wheelchair transportation for a patient to visit the gravesite of his recently departed grandson.
- Tickets to Phipps' Holiday Flower Show along with wheelchair van transportation for a patient.



Joyce Campbell and caregiver Karen

# Gifts at Work



Essie Ritter

## Caring for Seniors

In 2022, with the help of a generous grant from the Pittsburgh Foundation, Family Hospice and the UPMC Living-At-Home program are collaborating to help older adults in Allegheny County live as independently as possible, safely and with dignity. The grant addresses two areas of care, Assistive Technology and Disability and Safety Aid and provides for items which improve quality of life and are not covered by Medicare or other insurances.

Resources include a “Reminder Rosie” talking alarm clock with personalized reminders in a familiar voice; companion pets (lifelike robotic pets that provide a sense of purpose and comfort); bathroom benches, rails, and shower tools; pill dispensers, organizers, and crushers; fitted sheets and mattress pads; walker baskets and cup holders; nightlights and baby monitors; and large-face and talking thermometers.

“The disability aids have assisted with fall prevention, unnecessary hospitalizations, comfort to many who are socially isolated, and have led to an increased quality of life,” emphasized Missy Sovak, director, Geriatric Coordination, UPMC Living-At-Home.

## Massage Therapy

Made possible by the Flora and Doris Denova Foundation, licensed massage therapists provided more than 160 patient sessions, totaling more than 138 hours of care in 2022. This included patients with ALS, Alzheimer’s, COPD, heart and renal failure, Parkinson’s, and various cancer diagnoses.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Donations of \$500 or more are recognized in print. List reflects donations made in 2022.

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Family Hospice  
700 Bower Hill Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15243

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