



HOUSTON HOSPICE

Life Matters

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The 2014 Laura Lee Blanton Community Spirit Award October 28, 2014

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Houston Hospice, we are very pleased to announce that Dr. Linda Gregg Fields and Dr. Jerry D. Fields are the recipients of the 16th Annual Laura Lee Blanton Community Spirit Award. Linda and Jerry will be recognized at the Spirit Award Dinner on Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at River Oaks Country Club, 1600 River Oaks Blvd., Houston, Texas. The evening will begin at 6 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres, drinks and a raffle, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Award-winning journalist Melanie Lawson, from KTRK channel 13, will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies.

The annual Spirit Award Dinner supports the compassionate physical, social and spiritual support Houston Hospice provides to individuals and their families, while recognizing a virtuous, Houston area couple for leadership qualities, continuous commitment to a wide range of charitable causes, and both financial and hands-on support for philanthropic organizations essential in our society.

Monies raised through the event support hospice services, including indigent care. Houston Hospice is very proud to be a nonprofit hospice provider, dedicated to the highest quality of end-of-life care to patients in our community regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs or ability to pay.

Linda and Jerry are active philanthropists supporting causes such as Texas State University, Ronald McDonald House, The American Cancer Society, Houston Center for Hearing and Speech, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Notre Dame School Dallas, Malayake House in Uganda, and Chi Omega and Sigma Nu to name a few. They have endowed two Chairs (Economics, and Ethics), and two Excellence in Professorships (Stephen R. Gregg and Burton Dee Roberts) at Texas State University.



Linda and Jerry Fields

After graduation from Texas State University, Linda taught elementary school for eight years and was one of the original teachers in the Head Start program initiated by President Lyndon Johnson. When her first child was born, Linda retired from teaching to devote her time to raising her two children.

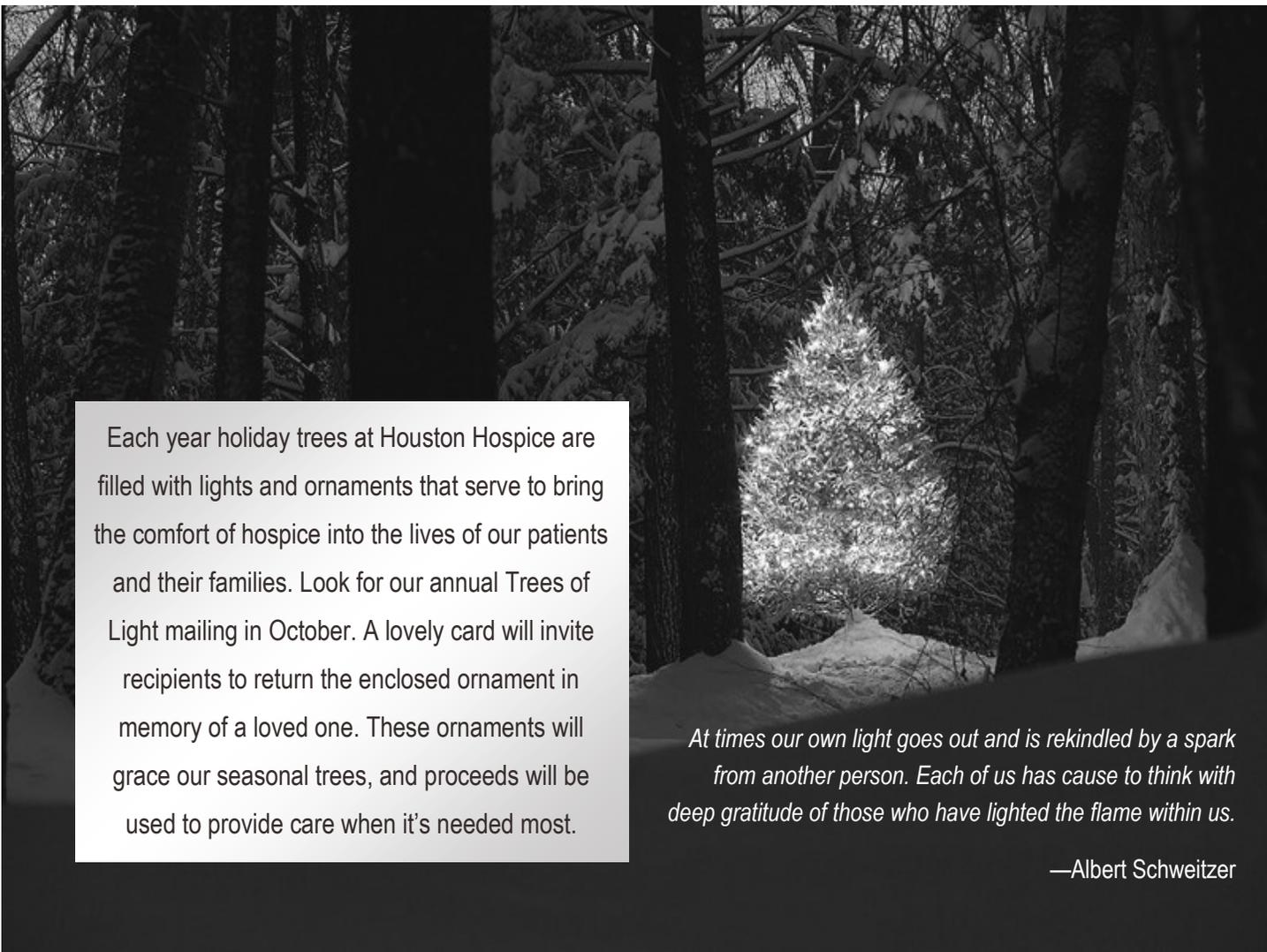
Jerry is Chairman and CEO of J.D. Fields & Company. Linda and Jerry have been married for 46 years and have two children and two granddaughters. When they are not fulfilling their passion for exploring the world, they enjoy splitting their time between Houston and Wimberley, Texas and Ajijic, Mexico.

We hope you will join us for this special evening and support the mission and work of Houston Hospice.

Visit www.houstonhospice.org for tickets and table sponsorship opportunities.

Newsletter

Trees of Light



Each year holiday trees at Houston Hospice are filled with lights and ornaments that serve to bring the comfort of hospice into the lives of our patients and their families. Look for our annual Trees of Light mailing in October. A lovely card will invite recipients to return the enclosed ornament in memory of a loved one. These ornaments will grace our seasonal trees, and proceeds will be used to provide care when it's needed most.

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

—Albert Schweitzer

Hope for the Holidays

Fall, with its lengthening nights and omnipresent holiday displays, can be bitter sweet. For those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, grief is never more acutely felt than when planning family gatherings — knowing there will be an empty place at the table. As the holidays draw near Houston Hospice is planning additional bereavement support.

An Empty Place at the Table

Our bereavement counselors understand how particularly difficult grief can be during the holidays. In response to this increased grief, they have scheduled special seminars entitled “An Empty Place at the Table” where participants will learn coping skills for this stressful season. These two-hour seminars will offer suggestions on handling family traditions, allow participants to share their feelings

and fears, and give them an opportunity to connect with others who are experiencing the holidays as they are.

Houston sessions: Tuesday, November 11, 2014 from 1-3 p.m., and Monday, November 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Margaret Cullen Marshall Patient Care Center first floor family room. (1905 Holcombe Blvd., Houston). Please call 713-677-7127 to register.

El Campo session: Thursday, November 13, 6-8 p.m. at the El Campo Houston Hospice office (1102 North Mechanic St., El Campo). Please call 979-578-0314 to register.

Bay City session: Please call 979-578-0314 for location and time.

Year-round bereavement groups are available. Visit www.houstonhospice.org or call 713-677-7127 for group schedules.

Not All Hospices Are the Same: A Crisis of Care and the Exponential Growth of For-Profit Hospices

An article published by the Washington Post on May 3, 2014 entitled "Terminal neglect: How some hospices treat dying patients" reported that the quality of care provided by hospices varies widely. A Washington Post investigation analyzed Medicare billing records for more than 2,500 hospices, obtained an internal Medicare tally of nursing care in patients near death and reviewed complaint



records at hundreds of hospices. In many hospices, they discovered that very little care was provided for patients most in need. The investigation attributed this absence of care to skimping on nurses, and to the failure of these hospices to have either an inpatient unit, or a contract with a facility such as a hospital or nursing home where continuous crisis care could be provided. The investigation found that about 18 percent of U.S. hospices did not provide a single day of crisis care to any of their patients. Frequently, when urgent calls for help to these hospices went unanswered, panicked family members felt compelled to drop services and rush their loved ones by ambulance to the emergency room, an especially difficult place for the frail and dying.

The investigation did note that the absence of crisis care at those hospices stands in stark contrast to most others, where such care is a fairly common part of the patient experience. The trouble may be a matter of economic incentives posed by Medicare payment rates. Providing patients with "routine" levels of care, which typically includes semiweekly nursing visits, can be very profitable. But providing continuous bedside nursing care or inpatient care to needier patients can be a financial and logistical drain for small and mid-size agencies.

An area of great concern is the burgeoning growth of home health care businesses that offer hospice. "For-profit home care agencies are bleeding Medicare; they raise costs by \$3.3 billion each year and lower the quality of care for frail seniors," said Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, professor of public health at CUNY's Hunter College, lecturer at Harvard Medical School. "Letting for-profit companies into Medicare was a huge mistake that Congress needs to correct."

William Cabin, assistant professor of social work at Temple University and lead author of a nationwide study published in the August 2014 issue of the journal *Health Affairs* said, "While our study is the first to show that profit-making has trumped patient care in Medicare's home health program, that's no surprise. A large body of research on hospitals, nursing homes, dialysis facilities, and HMOs has shown that for-profits deliver inferior care at inflated prices." The study revealed that the quality of care was worst in the South, where for-profit firms provide the overwhelming majority of care.

Researchers believe that the majority of hospices are providing quality care and many nurses in the field consider palliative medicine as much a calling as a job. When the hospice movement took root in the United States, hospice practitioners were typically part of religious groups, or were community-supported like Houston Hospice. However, for-profit businesses have come to dominate the industry.



Ribbon Cutting

Thank You! The Margaret Cullen Marshall Patient Care Center is operating at full capacity. The vision of three floors and 33 patient care rooms has come to fruition thanks to your generosity! The completion of the newly constructed third floor and newly renovated first and second floors will be officially celebrated in a ribbon cutting ceremony.

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Houston Hospice is a member of the Texas Medical Center

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Welcome New Board Member

It is with gratitude for her gift of time and expertise that we welcome Sue Stiles White to the Houston Hospice Board of Directors. She is a University of Texas alumna and former early childhood and music teacher who brings a wealth of civic, school and church-affiliated volunteer experience.

Sue is the President of the Garden Club of Houston — the organization responsible for maintaining the beauty of the Houston Hospice gardens.

Mission Statement

Houston Hospice provides uncompromising, compassionate end-of-life care to patients and families in our community.

Through the efforts of specially trained and highly skilled interdisciplinary teams of health care professionals and volunteers, Houston Hospice patients and their families are guided through the process of illness by receiving clinical care, psychosocial support, spiritual guidance and volunteer assistance.

WE HONOR VETERANS



Houston Hospice is a proud participant in the national We Honor Veterans Program. Through compassionate listening and grateful acknowledgment we recognize the unique needs of America's veterans and their families as we accompany and guide them through their life stories toward a more peaceful ending.