



# HOUSTON HOSPICE

*Life Matters*

VOLUME 23 | ISSUE 1

## Butterfly Program Family Shares Their Love and Resilience at the 22nd Butterfly Luncheon

The Hampton family shared their moving story of turning to the Houston Hospice Butterfly Team for support at the 22nd Butterfly Luncheon on March 24. Luncheon chairs Sally Rice, Robin Burke, Katherine Lucke and Catherine Randall were pivotal to the success of this year's fundraiser as they welcomed over 180 guests to join them in support of Houston Hospice.

The program featured a special conversation with Melanie Lawson, anchor for ABC13 (KTRK), and Wallis, Monica, Natalie and Nicole Hampton, whose son (and brother) was cared for in Houston Hospice's Butterfly Program, which serves pediatric patients with a life-limiting illness.

Jake's first year of life was fraught with concern after dozens of pediatrician visits resulted in a diagnosis of Hunter syndrome. As his health continued to worsen in his teenage years, the Hamptons turned to Houston Hospice to care for Jake – and his family.

Wallis describes the care they received from Houston Hospice as “the lifeline we needed to continue functioning as a family.”

Jake's sisters, Natalie and Nicole, wrote a book, *By Siblings, For Siblings*, to offer advice and tools on coping with common emotions and stressors for siblings who have a loved one with a disability.

Today, our Butterfly Team and bereavement counselors provide this book to families to assist with navigating the emotions of losing a sibling with a life-limiting illness.

Houston Hospice appreciates the support of everyone who made the luncheon a memorable event. Since its inception, the Butterfly Team has compassionately cared for hundreds of patients and families. Community support allows Houston Hospice to provide comprehensive, holistic care to patients and families.

*“Houston Hospice and the Butterfly Program took a horrible situation that I had been dreading since Jake was 13 months old and received his diagnosis and made it into treasured memories.”*

- Monica



Luncheon Chairs Robin Burke, Katherine Lucke, Sally Rice, and Catherine Randall



The Hampton Family and Melanie Lawson



Jake Hampton with his sisters, Natalie and Nicole



Houston Hospice is grateful to the Garden Club of Houston members for planting bulbs earlier this spring! These beautiful bulbs bloomed into gorgeous tulips throughout our historic gardens located on the grounds of our inpatient unit. Thank you to the Garden Club of Houston for their decades of support, which brings a space of peace and solace to our patients and families!



Houston Hospice was newly accredited by The National Institute for Jewish Hospice to provide enhanced end-of-life care to the unique needs of Jewish patients and their families in a caring, dignified manner, consistent with Jewish heritage and values.



Double the potential of your donation with a matching gift to Houston Hospice! Many employers recognize the value of contributing to causes their current and retired employees care about and offer programs to match your donation, so its impact goes farther. Check with your employer and request a matching gift today!

## Paying Forward Comfort and Compassion

by Suzy Martin, Houston Hospice Volunteer

My sister Ann got the news in 1990 that she had stage 4 breast cancer. She was 43 at that time, lived in Arizona and worked in the advertising field.

As the disease progressed, Ann flew to Houston to be with our family. At one point, her doctor recommended hospice care to us.

Hospice care began in the last five days of her life, in the home. We were overwhelmed with gratitude to be involved in such an amazing form of care.

We had been told that, should she need any medication adjustment at any time, she could be taken to Houston Hospice's in-patient facility, get the medication adjusted and then be allowed to go back home. When we arrived at the hospice facility, one of the nurses told us that Ann was in the active dying process and that she probably had only hours left with us.

As the day wore on, the nurses had a separate conversation with my sister, Lisa, and me – they explained that Ann's system had been shutting down and that she was

almost ready to go but something was holding her back.

Shortly thereafter, the nurse came in with a cart and indicated she needed to get some vital signs. We were surprised to hear this as Ann was so close to death, but we left the room for a short bit, so that the nurse could get her readings.

Within a few minutes, we were told that we could return, and we resumed our places, surrounding her. The nurse called my sister and me aside, to tell us that Ann had died.

When we had described her to the nurses, and told them about her independent life, one of the nurses had a hunch that she was waiting until we were out of the room to finally let go.

My mom, until the day of her death at the age of 91, was comforted by knowing that she had brought Ann into this world and was able to be with her when she left it.

I remember thinking to myself at the time that the reverence, dignity and compassion that all the hospice team

shared with us were, in so many ways, a touch of the divine.

A few years following Ann's death, I started training as a volunteer at Houston Hospice in 2000. As a volunteer, I take great comfort in knowing that Ann is with me, as I continue to work for this wonderful organization.





# Introducing...

The Houston Hospice board of directors and advisors is a diverse group of 22 seasoned business and community leaders who volunteer their expertise, guidance and passion to ensure the continued success of our organization. Please allow us to introduce the new board chair and our two newly elected directors.



**Al Gatmaitan, D.Sc., F.A.C.H.E.**  
*Chair, Board of Directors*

Al Gatmaitan recently was elected as chair of the Houston Hospice board of directors. As a healthcare executive, he has a unique

perspective on the role hospice plays in the lives of those seeking our care.

Al sees hospice as a holistic way of caring for not only the patient but the family and as anything but last-minute nursing care. He believes the end-of-life journey is one to treasure and is as meaningful as an individual's birth. The spiritual, psychosocial and bereavement opportunities Houston Hospice offers really enhance the medical care of a patient and our team makes the process as comfortable as possible.

As chair, Al plans to continue building on the foundation of his predecessors by working with the rest of the board and

senior leadership to strike the fine balance of providing the highest level of quality care while meeting the myriad regulatory and financial requirements and challenges.

Al credits the contributions of our donors and volunteers to helping ensure our teams are fully able to care for every aspect of a patient's needs while providing for the family's comfort.

"It is a phenomenal endorsement of an organization if you can rally both donors and volunteers," said Al. "I am so appreciative of the value they bring to Houston Hospice. It's a testament to the good work we're doing, and I am inspired to be of service."



**Staci LaToison**  
*Board of Directors*

Staci LaToison recently was elected as a director of the Houston Hospice board of directors. As a business leader, she has a unique

perspective on the role hospice plays in the lives of those seeking our care. When two worlds collide is the best way to describe Staci LaToison's life's work and her philanthropic efforts. In her day job with Dream Big Ventures as founder and CEO, Staci is passionate about raising awareness and educating underserved communities about access to capital and having a growth mindset when it comes to money.

In her work with the board of directors at Houston Hospice, Staci plans to also raise awareness and educate these same communities about the positive impact

hospice care has on families who may be experiencing loss and grief. It is her belief underserved populations are not fully aware of the options available to them when it comes to end-of-life care.

"I'm proud to be part of an organization helping people at one of the most vulnerable times in their lives," said Staci. "Houston Hospice is a great partner that supports patients and their families in this very significant time of need."



**Cora Guinn Robinson**  
*Board of Directors*

Cora Guinn Robinson recently was elected as a director of the Houston Hospice board of directors. As a community leader, she has a unique

perspective on the role hospice plays in the lives of those seeking our care. Cora Robinson is no stranger to volunteering and service to community. At a young age, she learned from her parents giving back is important and it's a lesson she has carried with her into adulthood. You might even say it's second nature.

As a board member with Houston Hospice, who also sits on the philanthropy committee, Cora intends to raise awareness about the depth and breadth of the organization's services in Houston's minority communities. She wants more people to understand hospice is not only about death and dying. The relief offered to families during their time in hospice and

the support they receive after a loved one passes is instrumental in for them to move through their grief and continue living life.

"End-of-life affects people from every walk of life," said Cora. "I want to help support and guide families, so they understand they are not alone."

Cora will make an impact by bringing her experience in diversity and inclusion to Houston Hospice, so the organization reflects the diversity of Houston both in the community at-large and as a workplace of choice.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*The Newsletter is published by Houston Hospice, a nonprofit organization providing comprehensive end-of-life services and education to Greater Houston and surrounding communities.*

### SPECIAL FEATURE:



# WISHES FUND

## Allows Families to Focus on the Important Things

At a time when families are undergoing unimaginable burdens, Houston Hospice understands the toll – physical, emotional and financial – the end-of-life experience can take on many. Our Wishes Fund is in place for just this reason. It allows us to offer non-medical emergency financial assistance when we become aware of a family's urgent needs or fulfill any final wishes patients may have.

#### **A few instances where Houston Hospice was able to provide non-medical emergency assistance over the past year:**

- Funeral costs for an infant patient in our Butterfly Program. Already experiencing trouble with ongoing bills, these parents were unable to work while providing full-time care to their child.
- Helped with funeral expenses to a single parent of a 23-year-old patient who was the sole breadwinner to a family of six and was unable to work so they became delinquent with bills.
- Assisted with the repair of an air conditioning unit during the heat of summer so a patient under our care and their family could stay in their home.

Since last year, thanks to the generosity of our donors, like you, Houston Hospice was able to offer financial assistance to 38 patients and families. These efforts are supported completely through philanthropy and alleviate some of the pressure families experience so they can make the most of their final moments together.

