



HOUSTON HOSPICE

Life Matters

VOLUME 24 | ISSUE 1

‘Nurse Hadley’ Brings Life to End-of-Life Conversations at 23rd Butterfly Luncheon

Hadley Vlahos, R.N., shared her belief that there is “a lot of life in end-of-life care” as the keynote speaker at the 23rd Butterfly Luncheon. Over 240 people attended the April 17 event at The Junior League of Houston, which raised \$190,000 for Houston Hospice and its pediatric Butterfly Program.

As a hospice nurse and palliative care advocate, Hadley breathes fresh air into an often-misunderstood area of health care. She documents her journey and the power of compassion during end-of-life care with more than 3 million social media followers as she educates them with patient stories – a few of which she shared with attendees at the Butterfly Luncheon.

In addition to Hadley’s inspiring talk, Houston Hospice honored three remarkable individuals during National Volunteer Month – Dody and Robert Carter and Margaret Dixon.

The Carters, and their three beloved corgis, have been a source of comfort and joy at our Texas Medical Center campus since 2016, offering pet therapy and assisting with bereavement mailings. Margaret Dixon’s steadfast dedication to volunteering at our El Campo location for 30+ years speaks volumes about her compassion and commitment to our patients and families.

The contributions of our volunteers, as well as our sponsors and donors, ensure Houston Hospice can continue impacting patients and families who come to us for care during their most challenging moments.



Hadley Vlahos, RN, signing books for luncheon attendees



Cora Robinson and Melanie Lawson, event emcee and anchor for KTRK Channel 13



Houston Hospice board members: Conrad Johnson, Rana McClelland, Joyce Salhoot, Paul Mansfield, Sally Rice



Lucia Benton, Adele Bentsen, Harriet Alexander, Katherine Lucke, Carol Price

Houston Hospice Earns A+ Rating

Once again Houston Hospice renews its standing as the hospice of choice in Southeast Texas by earning an A+ rating from Community Health Accreditation Partner after its February survey, which included in-person site visits and documentation review.

According to the CHAP website, the Seal of Accreditation demonstrates Houston Hospice meets the industry's highest and nationally recognized hospice standards. The survey is demanding and focuses on structure and function; quality of services and products; human and financial resources; and long-term viability of the organization.

Houston Hospice's rating is 97.5%, which indicates we meet CHAP's standards of excellence. Surveyors noted exemplary care and complimented several staff for their above and beyond care as providers. Kudos to our teams for a job well done!



Dr. Gary Erwin, Founding Board Member of Houston Hospice, Retires

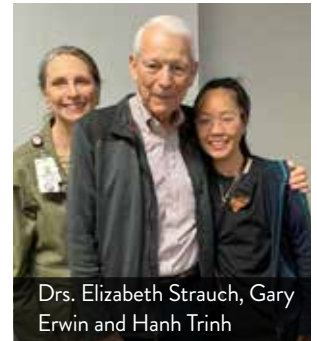
For 45 years, Houston Hospice counted on Dr. Gary Erwin to deliver the best, most compassionate, end-of-life care to its patients and families. And deliver he did! Dr. Erwin recently retired from Houston Hospice and when asked what he would miss the most, he didn't skip a beat and said, "My patients."

Dr. Erwin's passion for truly connecting with patients and families has been evident throughout his career. He didn't merely treat their physical needs; he took time to understand his patients on a personal level, a practice instilled in him from his early days in medicine. And if there were furry friends in the mix, Dr. Erwin was equally delighted to share his warmth with them.

Trained as a medical oncologist, Dr. Erwin took the lessons from his early medical instruction to heart and they served him well over the course of his career as a hospice physician. As a founding board member and medical director of Houston Hospice, he shared the same care philosophy as the organization. He wasn't interested in punching a clock or looking at his watch to see how much time he spent with a patient. His approach wasn't about minutes spent, but about the quality of those moments.

Dr. Erwin was a great source of knowledge to his colleagues and a mentor to many. His team enjoyed his comradery and humor and could count on him to provide guidance and compassion when it came to the patients and families in their care.

While we will miss Dr. Erwin, he leaves a legacy that will carry on at Houston Hospice for generations of families to come. His tireless dedication set a standard of excellence that will continue to shape the future of compassionate care.



Drs. Elizabeth Strauch, Gary Erwin and Hanh Trinh

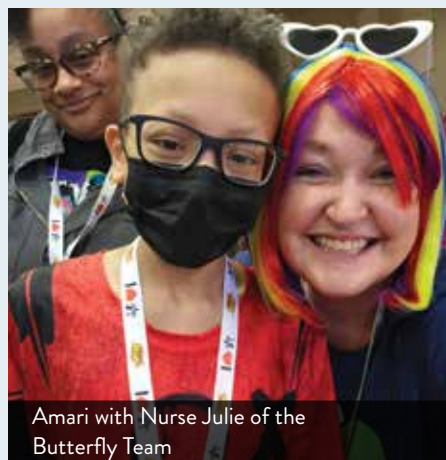


Dr. Gary Erwin and the Purple Team

Wishes Fund: Fulfilling Dreams, One Wish at a Time

In February, we had the privilege of granting a "wish" to one of our pediatric hospice patients, Amari. His wish? To experience the magic of Victoria Comic Con! Amari had an amazing time with lots of smiles and laughter to go around. Our dedicated Butterfly Team nurse, Julie, even tagged along for the festivities.

At Comic Con, Amari had a chance to meet Scott Innes the renowned voice actor for the likes of Scooby Doo, Shaggy, Scrappy Doo and many others! It was a day of pure magic and delight!



Amari with Nurse Julie of the Butterfly Team



Amari with Scott Innes

Houston Hospice IN the Community

Hospice is an often-misunderstood form of health care and this is one of the reasons Houston Hospice makes it a priority to raise awareness about the importance of hospice care. We want to ensure individuals and their loved ones have the necessary knowledge to navigate end-of-life care decisions with confidence.

As a nonprofit organization, community engagement is woven into our foundation, and we collaborate with religious, civic and educational groups in our 13-county service area. As a matter of fact, in 2023 we participated in 143 community events.

Just this spring, our very own Dr. Hanh Trinh shared what it's like to be a hospice physician with students at the DeBakey High School for Health Professions. Additionally, we participated in the "Nurturing the Roots of Our Communal Tree" conference, hosted by the Office of Aging Ministry, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, where we provided insight into our support for patients and families on their end-of-life journey.

During our community interactions, we also learn of misconceptions people have concerning hospice care. For instance, at this year's MLK Day Parade and Festival, we discovered many

attendees were unaware of hospice care services and how they are reimbursed by Medicare and other insurance carriers. We take every opportunity possible to educate and inform our community.

We offer comprehensive educational topics tailored to diverse audiences, including Hospice 101, Advance Directives, Grief and Loss and How to Talk with Your Doctor. Whether it is a community fair, church group gathering, educational seminar or organizational meeting, we have something valuable to offer.

Keep an eye out for Houston Hospice at upcoming events near you. If you're interested in having a representative from Houston Hospice speak with your organization, please reach out to Monica James, our community engagement coordinator, at mjames@houstonhospice.org. Your collaboration plays a pivotal role in expanding our outreach and making a meaningful impact in our community.



Dr. Hanh Trinh & Monica James at the DeBakey High School for the Health Professions



Houston Hospice chaplain, Mark Houston, presents to seniors and veterans at the Wood Haven Senior Living Facility in Conroe



Houston Hospice at the MLK Day Parade & Festival

Last November, a young 36-year-old mother who was in Houston Hospice's inpatient unit, knew her time was growing short and she was sad that she would miss her 17-year-old daughter's high school graduation.

Wouldn't you know ... Our IPU team orchestrated a surprise – a graduation ceremony, courtesy of the Houston Hospice Wishes Fund! The care team rolled the patient (in her hospital bed!) down the decorated hallway as her daughter wore a cap and gown walking alongside her mom to "Pomp and Circumstance" and received a diploma from her younger brother.

Extended family members from near and far were present to enjoy the celebration, as was our newly minted volunteer group ... And let's not forget the cake!



Graduation ceremony, celebration in the Houston Hospice inpatient unit and historic gardens

This would not be been possible without the support of our donors, whose generosity breathes life into the dreams of our patients and their families through our Wishes Fund. We are so grateful for their contributions, which bring moments of joy in the face of adversity.

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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:



Create a Lasting Legacy with Your Act of Generosity

Planned Giving allows many donors to leave a larger charitable gift than they thought possible, reduce their tax burden and create a lasting positive impact for patients and families in our community who are in need of hospice care and grief support.

A few examples include:

Bequest: Leave a gift to Houston Hospice in your will or trust whether for a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, an asset or the remainder of your estate.

Life Insurance Policy: If you have life insurance that has outlasted its original purpose, consider designating Houston Hospice as the beneficiary and/or owner of the policy.

Retirement Plans: Name Houston Hospice as the beneficiary of your IRA and/or 401(k) plan, ensuring your legacy lives on to support our mission.

Life Income Gifts: Explore options like Charitable Gift Annuities and Charitable Remainder Trusts, which provide immediate income tax deduction and lifetime income payments.

To learn more about these Planned Giving options and discover which one is right for you, please visit

<https://houstonhospicelegacy.org/> or reach out to

Aida Matic, CFRE, Vice
President of Philanthropy &
Community Engagement at
amatic@houstonhospice.org.
We are dedicated to helping
you create a legacy that
aligns with your values and
philanthropic goals.

