

Hearts for Hospice

WINTER 2025

A Personal Mission

*One volunteer's
special connection
to Gulfside*

Moments of Grace

*A day in the life of a
hospice nurse*

A Personal Mission

One donor/volunteer's special connection to Gulfside

When Laurie Bartel and her husband Bill moved from Cleveland to Pasco County in 2005, they were struck by the strong sense of community in their new Land O' Lakes neighborhood. Conversations with neighbors soon introduced them to Gulfside Hospice, where many volunteered their time. Inspired by these stories, Laurie and Bill joined the mission of helping ensure no one is turned away due to their inability to pay for hospice care.

"It's an over-55 community ... and several of our friends and my neighbor in particular volunteered for the thrift store," Laurie shares, "And we thought maybe we'd start doing some volunteer work as well." So in 2017 they joined their friends and neighbors at one of the four Gulfside Thrift Shoppes in Pasco County.

As the need for hospice care in the county quickly grew, so did the need at Gulfside, including Laurie and Bill's passion for helping and being involved. "They needed people with computer skills. We came into the Corporate Resource Center, and we would input the tax donation slips people were given for items they donated to the thrift store," she remembered.

They volunteered together at events like Gulfside's Hearts for Hospice 5K, Charity Casino Night, and Candace Glewen Charity Fashion Show; events that make providing care in our local community possible. These events hold a special place in Laurie's heart. One of her proudest contributions is walking on the stage



Laurie Bartel

at the fashion show each year, something her husband encouraged her to do.

"The first year I was asked to participate, I said I didn't think I could do it, but Bill pushed me and said, 'You need to do this – you can do it!'" Laurie laughed, adding, "So I've been doing it for seven years now, and my friends come to the show, cheer me on, and it makes me feel good knowing I'm helping hospice along the way." Laurie fondly remembers how their teamwork brought joy to their lives. "It was fun because it was with my husband."

The connection between the Bartels and Gulfside became even more personal when Bill required Gulfside's care in 2020. Laurie was ready to call The Rucki Hospice Center, in Zephyrhills, home but Bill's condition improved slightly. She joked, "They wound up sending him home because 'you're too well to be here,'" they told her.

After five days at the Rucki Center, they went home where Bill peacefully passed a month later, with his wife by his side. Gulfside's team supported Laurie and Bill every step of the way, making his final month as comfortable as possible.

"It was very difficult because he died right before the COVID lockdown, and I was really, totally on my own," Laurie reflected. "Not having any family here was hard, but the neighbors that turned to friends, and the friends I made at Gulfside, through Women for Gulfside and volunteering, became my saving grace. It kept me busy and kept my mind off being as sad as I might have been."

Even after Bill's passing, Laurie's dedication to Gulfside remains unwavering. She wants to make sure every patient receives the same compassionate care her family experienced. She's chosen to donate to Gulfside's capital campaign, *Raising Hope for Hospice*. Her generous contribution is helping build the new hospice care center in New Port Richey, set to open in Spring 2025. With her heartfelt donation, a room will bear the names of her husband and son – a deeply moving tribute to their memory and a legacy of love that will bring comfort to countless families for generations.

"Gulfside Hospice is such a wonderful organization," Laurie shared. "The people are caring, compassionate, and kind. It's just been a wonderful experience, and I've made a lot of friends since doing this for almost 10 years. To know that my contributions - both my time and financial support - are helping families in need means everything to me."

Every day, Gulfside Hospice cares for more than 630 patients and their families.

Your Opportunity to Help



Bill & Laurie Bartel

Join Laurie and donors like her in supporting Gulfside Hospice's mission with a gift of any size. Your generosity will help ensure no hospice patient is turned away because of an inability to pay.

Visit www.gulfside.org or call (727) 845-5707 to make your gift today. Together, we can create a legacy of compassion.



Quiet Champions

These special programs are funded exclusively by your donations

Your support of Gulfside means that patients receive the care they need regardless of ability to pay. But it also means that special programs receive funding -- programs that provide additional services and care to patients and their families. Some of those programs:

Family Bereavement, offering grief counseling to anyone in the community dealing with loss;

Pet Peace of Mind, which helps hospice patients and their pets stay together;

Gulfside Nursing Academy, a program that supports professional development and an annual skills fair for nurses;

We Salute Veterans, which addresses the unique end of life needs of veterans and their families;

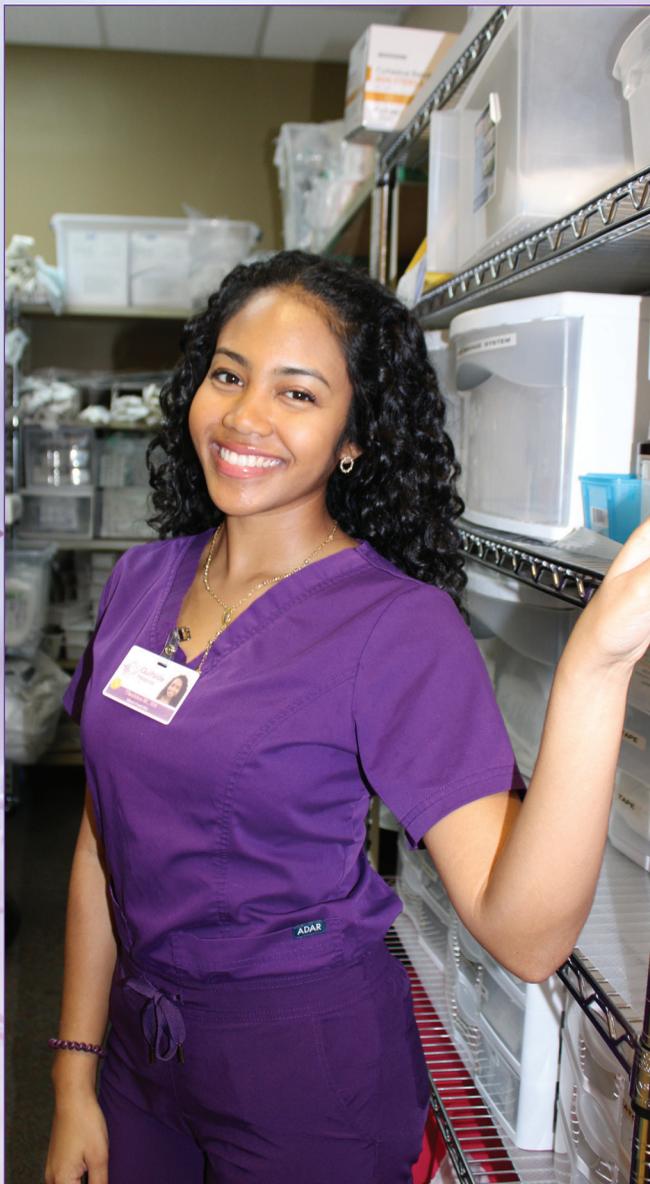
Hospice Hero, honoring Gulfside staff and volunteers who helped a loved one.

With your help, these programs can continue to provide exceptional comfort and relief to all who need it.



Moments of Grace

A day in the life of a hospice nurse



No two days are alike in Thaddea Morris's world. While she clocks in and out for work like any other nurse, she says it's the faces she meets and the stories she hears that make each day unique. "One of the wonderful things of being a hospice nurse is being able to sit down and speak to my patients, especially the elderly ones. My patients love to reminisce and talk about their lives, giving advice to the youth. I find myself at times getting sidetracked, lost in conversation, and enamored by people's stories," Thaddea says with a smile.

A Gulfside Hospice nurse since 2020, Thaddea dedicates her time to ensuring patients spend their final days in peace, comfort, and love ... something she is familiar with all too well. "When I lost my father at the age of 16, I realized I wanted to be like the nurses who not only cared for him but carried my family and I through his dying process." Having experienced loss at an early age, she feels able to connect with her patients and their families on a deeper level. "People need compassion and kindness during this time, and I do my best to be a part of that," Thaddea says.

Caring for patients makes an impression in the lives of Gulfside nurses too. Thaddea remembers one patient who was a sweetheart. "We would laugh, he would crack jokes, and he would talk about his life all the time." As he approached the end of his

life, he became minimally responsive, but this did not change how she treated him. "I would come in and talk to him anyway, even though I wouldn't get a response back."

She remembers having to leave work on a Friday, fearful that her patient would not make it past the weekend. "I walked in to say goodbye to him and, suddenly, he opened his eyes and smiled at me. For a moment, he gained all his energy and reached for my hand." She will never forget what he did next. "He said, 'I'd know that voice anywhere' before sharing that he knew he was going to die and was thankful that he got to spend this time being my friend. I still carry this memory with me, and it brings a smile to my face."

While some days can be lighthearted, other days bring the challenging task of helping families say goodbye. "The hardest part for me is having to call the families and let them know that their loved one has passed. It is never easy having to be the one to break the news and to hear or see their first reactions to this," she explains. Despite these challenges, she relies on her faith and strength to keep going. "I believe that there is more to this



life than just what's on this earth. What gives me hope is that I know my patients are moving on to something greater," she shares.

Taking care of hospice patients every day, Thaddea sees first-hand the impact that donations make. "There are some patients who don't have much, and I've even had patients who were previously homeless," she explains. Thanks to donations, no hospice patient is turned away because of an inability to pay.

In fact, patients and families are often relieved when they learn there is no charge for any medications, medical equipment, or nursing care related to their hospice diagnosis that is provided to them. Instead, they can focus on spending time with each other instead of worrying about another medical bill.

Every day, Gulfside Hospice nurses like Thaddea pour their hearts into their work, bringing comfort to patients and families when it is needed most.

Your support helps nurses like Thaddea to guide hospice patients and their families through their final days with peace, comfort, and love. Visit Gulfside.org today to learn how you can help make hospice care possible for family, friends, and neighbors in our local community.



In Loving Memory

Recognizing gifts received between August 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024

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Francis T. Zuilkowski

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar to support Gulfside patients!

SATURDAY
FEB
22



Gear up for our annual motorcycle poker run, Hittin' the Road for Hospice. Join us for a scenic ride through Pasco County, supporting compassionate end-of-life care. Riders of all levels are welcome to participate in this exhilarating event that combines fun, community, and a great cause. Tickets and sponsorships still available; contact Marissa Hartley at marissa.hartley@gulfside.org or visit HittinTheRoadForHospice.org.

FRIDAY
APRIL
25



Try your luck at our Charity Casino Night, an evening filled with thrilling games, delicious food, and entertainment. Whether you're a poker pro or a first-time player, it's a night to support Gulfside Hospice while enjoying the glamour of Vegas-style gaming. Get tickets now or become a sponsor by contacting Marissa Hartley at 727-845-5707 or marissa.hartley@gulfside.org or visit CharityCasinoNight.org.



Ready to have fun and bring healing to YOUR community?



WomenForGulfside.org

Join the Women for Gulfside, a philanthropic group of women passionate about helping hospice patients, as you:

- Make friends
- Attend member-only events
- Get involved with fundraising events
- Collectively direct how donations are used

To learn more, contact Katya Guillaume at 727-845-5707 or katya.guillaume@gulfside.org.

@GulfsideGiving



Follow us on our new Facebook and Instagram pages to keep up with the latest event news and information!

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 **Gulfside
Hospice**
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