

Passages

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THE EXPERTS PROVIDING A HIGHER QUALITY OF CARE SINCE 1987

A LADY OF SERVICE

The Life of Elizabeth Collins

Elizabeth Collins helped many people over the span of her life. What makes her especially unique however, is the many ways in which she led a life of service. As a nurse, a master seamstress, philanthropist, and volunteer, “Bet” as her family called her, served her family, country, and community with a sense of pride and dedication that has left its lasting mark with not just those who knew her, but also the many community projects with which she was involved.

Elizabeth Collins, originally born in Bartlesville in 1922, built a new house on the land that she’d been raised on back in 1992. Yes, you read that right, at the young age of 70, she went back to the land which her father and uncles had owned and operated in the early years of the 20th century, as a cattle and yearlings ranch, to set up house. The “Little Brothers Ranch,” appropriately named after her father, Frank Little, and his two brothers, is one of the famous ranches of statehood that began with a simple 160 acres and quickly became a sprawling 25,000 acre cattle paradise just north of Tulsa in Ramona, Oklahoma. Together, the three brothers had a beautiful, grassy utopia for the cattle ranching they did for themselves as well as for those who rented lands from them.

From a young age, Bet wanted to be a nurse. The Depression hit her father’s cattle business hard but she recalled being thankfully sheltered from it. To help out her family, she left the ranch and went to Bartlesville where she volunteered at the hospital after graduating from Ramona High School in 1940. For the following year, until she was old enough to join the nurses program at St. John’s Hospital, Bet was paid \$15 a month as a “Blue Girl” which she described as a glorified maid. Then after three years of training, Elizabeth finished nursing school in the spring of 1944 and enlisted in what we know now were the final months of WWII. Elizabeth was part of the Army Nurse Corp, and the 123rd Army Evac. After six weeks of basic training at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, she traveled by train to Alabama, where she met a young Drill Sergeant named Fred who later became her husband. Her next stop was Fort Diggs, New Jersey, where she and her unit set sail on the S.S. Brazil, a converted cruise ship, on Christmas Eve, 1944 which was headed for France.

In January of 1945, her medical group set up camp at a location called Lucky Strike. They landed in devastated surroundings. There had been a train wreck nearby and though she never saw the site itself, her unit helped



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many of the people involved in the accident, several of whom she couldn't even begin to describe their injuries. From there they moved to Rethel, France, close to Cologne. That location was called Clover Patch, due to its physical appearance, but Bet remembered it being very scary the entire time they were posted there because the area was constantly under heavy fire. Her title at Clover Patch was Ward Nurse. She did much of the record keeping and medication dispensing as well as assisting in surgeries. Elizabeth never made it to the Pacific due to the war finally ending, but she did get to take trips during leave to the Riviera, and Switzerland, which is where she was at the war's end.



Upon returning home, and reconnecting with her former Drill Sergeant and Motor Officer, Fredrick Collins, Bet didn't waste any time and married Fred in May of 1946. Their children, Elizabeth, called Beth, and son Rick soon followed. Her nursing career ended with the war. Once her kids were in the picture, life was all about family. Fred worked at H.P. Price until 1981. He retired that year and unfortunately passed two months later; he was only 60.

Needing something to fill her time, Bet and her sister, Jane, bought an old apartment building and turned it into "Wool-N-Things." The sisters teamed up to create custom designed art work and fine needle point creations which were commissioned by surrounding neighbors and community members. She focused on the shop throughout the 1980s during which time she traveled to China, Australia, and the Netherlands fulfilling a lifelong love of textiles and travel. She also frequented the Southwest and loved New Mexico's art influence, which was prominently displayed in her home at the ranch. Although she loved serving her community in this capacity, Elizabeth was ready to try something else, so by the early 90s she sold out her portion of the shop and began her philanthropy and community service work.



With a love of community and service firmly planted in her core, Elizabeth provided volunteer services for a number of years as one of Gilcrease Museum's "Gillies." She also spearheaded fundraising for the Caney Medical Foundation in Ramona. Her instrumental efforts in the success of this medical clinic were greatly appreciated and recognized by the community. This encouraged her to continue her community work and focus her efforts on the development of the Ramona Chamber of Commerce. In conjunction, Bet was also a main voice in the restoration efforts of the Ramona Seniors Activity Center which had been home to the town's post office and originally the bank. Much of the project was paid for by her tireless grant writing efforts and steadfast commitment to the mission. She raised enough to renovate the building next door, the old jail, which now holds wedding receptions and is the town polling location, among many other things. They even left two of the jail cells inside the building, for storage, of course...

Elizabeth Collins certainly led an amazing life. One of not only adventure and travel, but more importantly, family and service to her community and country. We were honored here at Hospice of Green Country to pay our respects, as well as provide our exceptional care to this one-of-a-kind "lady of service". There just aren't enough people like her and we could all stand to learn a thing or two from this pillar of outstanding strength, intelligence and kindness. If only she'd had enough time to share with us as well. We would have loved having her as a part of our volunteer team!

COURTESY CARE SERVICE CONTINUES TO CLIMB!

HGC honored to be named as a Finalist by BCBS of Oklahoma

Hospice of Green Country was honored to be named a finalist in the Champion of the Uninsured Category for the 2015 Champions of Health Awards presented by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma. The 2015 Champions of Health Gala celebrating all the winners and finalists was held on the evening of September 29th at the Cox Business Center in Tulsa. As a finalist, HGC received a \$1,000 grant which will be used to help even more Courtesy Care patients. Last year, HGC increased our Courtesy Care outreach by nearly 50% and is on pace to increase the number of courtesy care patients served again in 2015 – thanks to supporters like BCBS and YOU!!



DID YOU KNOW VOLUNTEERISM IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

Hospice of Green Country is in Need of Caring & Committed Volunteers

As we begin to wrap up 2015, take a moment and reflect on all that you've done this past year. Are you feeling fulfilled? Or does it feel like something is missing? Do you feel like you have more to give? To lower blood pressure, reduce stress, reduce risk of heart disease, or to treat/prevent depression, why not volunteer a minimum of two hours per week with us?! If you are indeed thinking about it, Hospice of Green Country wants YOU! We are so proud to be the second oldest non-profit hospice organization in northeastern Oklahoma. We want our hard work and as much of our funding as possible to go right back to our patients and their families. In order to do that, we rely on the generosity of time and effort given by our team of amazing volunteers.

Contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Colleen Helms, and ask as many questions as you'd like. Too often people assume that volunteering with a hospice organization would be "too sad" or "really scary." That couldn't be farther from the truth. We have a highly trained clinical staff of RNs, LPNs, hospice aides, chaplains, and social workers who take excellent care of our patients' medical and emotional needs while they are on service with us.

The crucial role our volunteers play is one of a "normal day" capacity. Some of it is as simple as doing a few things around our offices. Or providing your time sitting with someone while their caregiver gets away for a few hours to run errands or do other necessary tasks. Whether it's getting the groceries yourself for a family, some light yard work or housework, or being part of our Pet Peace of Mind program and taking a beloved pet to a vet check-up, or just on a nice walk around the block. It's all immeasurable to the patients and families we serve. Just think of what it might mean to you and your loved ones...

Do you have retail experience? HGC will be opening a Resale Shop in 2016 and we are looking for 40-60 volunteers to help bring our store to life! Whatever your gifts, HGC has a spot for you!!

SEASONS OF CHANGE

HGC Volunteer, Stephanie Castell



One of the things that brought our newest HGC volunteer to us was Tulsa's change of seasons. Tired of the constant heat in Houston, volunteer Stephanie Castell and her husband, Mark, left Texas about five years ago to set up residence in the Sooner State. Stephanie's love of change began at an early age. Originally from Eunice, Louisiana, one of her favorite childhood activities was riding her bike. She loved seeing where the day would take her; outdoor adventures, friends' houses, and an afternoon ice cream cone. Stephanie has enjoyed this change in weather just as much as the many other changes in scenery she has encountered in her life.

After receiving her Associates Degree in 1974 at L.S.U. Junior College in Eunice, Stephanie worked as a ward clerk at the hospital there. In 1981 she moved to Lafayette where she worked for seven years in the oil and gas industry, which is where she met her husband Mark who also was in the industry. He'd been stationed in Angola, Africa, and in the nine years that they dated before they married, they were able to travel the world during his month long furloughs. Their adventures took them to places like Switzerland, Prague, Vienna, France, Spain, Canada, Amsterdam, and Newfoundland, to name a few. Stephanie retired in 1997, and in 2000 Mark's job moved them to Northern Scotland where they lived for the next two years. As beautiful as it was, Stephanie longed to be back home in the States. She missed friends and the familiar comforts of home; but she joined a ladies group and that seemed to help chase the blues away. In 2002, they left the land of rolling green hills and kilts to come back to their native land, and touched down in Texas until 2009. Then they relocated to Tulsa, and Mark found work with Petro Quest Energy and Stephanie found HGC.

“I've been truly blessed. I find that Tulsa is great about giving back.”

Since she's no longer working, Stephanie has had extra time on her hands which she's put to incredibly good use in the community. One of her most rewarding volunteer experiences while in Lafayette was writing the bereavement cards for Hospice of Acadiana. So after attending the HGC Oysters & Ale fundraiser two years in a row, Stephanie decided that she wanted to devote some of her time to the organization that brought a little bit of her Southern roots here to Tulsa and allowed her to indulge in some nostalgia for an evening. “I like to give back,” Stephanie says, “I've been truly blessed. I find that Tulsa is great about giving back.” It seems especially fitting that along with the Church of St. Mary and Holy Family Cathedral, Stephanie also volunteers at the Oklahoma Food Bank, with which we are the only hospice to have a partnership food pantry for patients. She's one busy volunteer bee! Since joining the HGC team in April, Stephanie has been hard at work doing computer data entry, mailings, tidying up supply closets, and lending a hand to the Pet Peace of Mind program putting together pet treat bags. She's even made a no-sew blanket for patient use.

Stephanie feels that the most important things about volunteering are compassion, commitment and the will to do it. At some point she's really hoping to be able to contribute her services by writing the bereavement cards much like she did years ago in Lafayette at the Hospice of Acadiana. As the seasons of our lives change, so do our needs. Here at Hospice of Green Country, we are particularly grateful for the amazing men and women that continue to give so graciously of their time to help further our mission for compassionate end-of-life care. Our need of committed, caring people is always in demand and we know we would be nothing without our volunteers, who truly are the heart of hospice. Volunteers like Stephanie with big hearts are always in season.

AND LUCY...

Pets are Family Too

The staff at HGC couldn't say enough good things about Lucy, so I just knew I had to make the trip out to meet the dog that can "whisper." Lucy, a seven-year-old Labradoodle with a beautiful butterscotch coloring and fur as soft and wavy as a field of wheat, is the prized "daughter" of HGC patient Margaret, who goes by, Joanie, and Fred Allen. Both Tulsa natives, the Allens have always loved animals, dogs in particular, and can't remember a time when they didn't have a four-legged family member. They've had a yellow Labrador, a Boxer, and a Norwegian Elk Hound, to name a few. Back when Joanie ran a beauty salon out of their garage, and Fred, who worked in electrical and sound security, were busy with their jobs and their children, the passing of a pet wasn't a huge deal. They got another pet to fill the empty place in their home and life continued. All that changed though when Lucy came into their lives.



The day the Allens got Lucy she displayed signs of her loving and playful temperament immediately by playing with Fred's shoes all evening. While Joanie was still working she taught Lucy all kinds of cute tricks and apologized to me for failing to never be able to teach Lucy to not greet company with her fuzzy paws up on their thighs. Even in doggie "middle age" Lucy hasn't showed signs of slowing down. She displays the true spirit of her breed; boundless energy, intelligence and is honestly just a pure joy to be around. It's no wonder that the Allens treasure her.

"She's family," Joanie told me, with a choked up voice and tears welling in her eyes. "We'd be devastated if Lucy were gone." One of the Allens' daughters is close by in Sand Springs, but Lucy is their constant companion, ready for anything. Her favorite thing to do is go through drive-thrus with the Allens. She perches like a devoted co-pilot on the middle console and happily waits for biscuits from the bank, wieners from Coney Island, and best of all, bacon from the staff at Burger Street. She's also keen at sneaking outdoors for adventures around the grounds of Inverness Village in south Tulsa, which sometimes gets her in a little hot water when her mischievous behavior gets the best of her. "We wouldn't be here if they didn't allow her," Fred told me. They made sure that when they left their home, Lucy would be welcome where ever they ended up. If not, they said no thanks, and moved on to the next facility.

Lucy is in good hands, but through the Pet Peace of Mind program at HGC, our volunteers can assist patients and their families who do need help with an array of pet care needs. From food and kitty litter, to trips to the groomers or the vet, or simple things like taking the dog on a walk, or giving them a bath; our caring volunteers are ready to lend a hand. And most importantly, if the situation arises that a beloved pet needs a new forever home after a patient has passed, we can help make arrangements for that to happen. People find tremendous peace in knowing that.

During my visit I witnessed many of Lucy's witty tricks, which cover the usual variety of adorable doggie silliness, and involved a tasty treat as a reward. But perhaps one of the most unique as well as enduring tricks that Lucy knows is how to "whisper." Fred explained that when they left their home and moved into a senior community they were concerned her giddy barking would be bothersome to neighbors. So when she begins to bark too loudly, they simply hold a finger up to their lips in a "shhhhhh" manner, and Lucy will quiet her bark to a soft whispering sound. It's the oddest thing. Both heartwarming and hilarious, it also seems to be Lucy's way of saying, "I love you." It's that sweet.

The Allens are a wonderful example of people living life to its fullest regardless of life's circumstances. They would tell you without skipping a beat, that a dog is the remedy for any kind of sadness or loneliness. It's plain to see with that bubbly fur ball around to brighten their days and nights. Lucy really is a member of this family; she's incredibly special. Anyone coming to visit can tell right away. If nothing else they can see it on the Allens' name plate on their front door which reads, "Joanie and Fred Allen." "... And Lucy."



AW SHUCKS...THANK YOU!

An event growing in popularity, Oysters and Ale hosted a successful night in 2015 despite bad weather which caused us to literally switch venues the morning of the event! The 4th Annual Oysters and Ale raised close to \$55,000 to support HGC programs and services. The 320 in attendance were well taken care of by our 61 sponsors, 18 partners, and 48 amazing volunteers who ALL make this incredible FUNdraiser possible. We cannot thank you, our supporters, enough as we strive to have an even better event this coming spring.



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DAY OF CARING 2015

Hospice of Green Country had a very productive United Way Day of Caring on September 11th, 2015, as we had a group of volunteers from Williams plow through a stack of projects in a matter of a few hours that would've otherwise taken us weeks to complete. We are so grateful for the sharing of time, talent and resources by our committed Williams friends each year! You help make our mission possible, Thank You, Williams!

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

This year the celebration and remembrance of the patients we've said goodbye to this past year was held just up the street from us at the beautiful Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, located at 1301 S. Boston Ave. Tulsa, OK 74119 on the evening of Tuesday, October 20th. There was a reading of names, a candle lighting service, food and music. It was a heartfelt evening to remember and pay our respects to our loved ones lost.



SAVE THE DATE!

The 5th Annual Oysters and Ale is in the works for 2016! So get your oyster forks and lemon wedges ready and get set to grab a frosty local ale! Mark your calendars for **Thursday, March 31, 2016** and plan to come hungry! You won't want to miss this evening of delicious dining and engaging entertainment all to benefit the ongoing needs of our worthy patients here at Hospice of Green Country. Stay tuned for more details on Facebook...

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