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Hospice of Green Country, a non-profit, community-based, multi-cultural, multi-faith, United Way agency has been dedicated to providing compassionate and quality end-of-life care to patients and families — regardless of ability to pay since 1987.

www.hospiceofgreencountry.org



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Hospice of Green Country - The Pet Friendly Hospice

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Hospice of Green Country would like to thank Mike Henson and family for producing a wonderful holiday light show and donating the proceeds to HGC programs.



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One Last Journey

Janet Gentry and her husband traveled the world. Now she embarks on her final journey.

At 21, Janet Gentry decided she wanted to travel. That decision led her on a fantastic journey that would take her almost around the world and log so many miles it would be impossible to count.

“I was born in 1929, grew up right here in Tulsa and graduated from Rogers High School,” explains Janet, “after graduation, I began working as a secretary for the National Bank of Tulsa and then for Sinclair.”

“One day I answered an ad for an airline hostess and interviewed with the Chief of Stewards who was staying in a hotel here in Tulsa. After the interview, I got the job.”

However before her adventure began, she had a few people to convince. “Mama wasn’t too thrilled with the idea of me moving away, but Daddy knew how important it was to me and he somehow managed to talk her into it.”

Once her parents gave the OK, it was off to Cheyenne, Wyoming for several weeks of “learning to walk and talk” on the airplane, followed by a move to Denver to begin work.

“I was assigned the overnight from Denver to New York and after a while, I moved to New York. While I was there, I continued my overnight flights to Denver and sometimes to Cleveland.”

One trip to Cleveland, however, stands out in Janet’s mind. Shortly after takeoff, Janet noticed that the side door to the aircraft was slightly ajar. Concerned, she called the co-pilot back to assess the situation. “He said there was no way to shut it since we were already in the air and over the Great Lakes, so we just kept it open the entire time. Boy was it loud.” A constant professional, Janet began serving passengers, despite the potentially menacing situation.

After a year and a half and countless miles traveled, Janet hung up her uniform and headed back to Tulsa. “I liked my job, but it kind of lost its glamour,” she laughs.

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www.hospiceofgreencountry.org

A Quiet Hero

One Hospice of Green Country volunteer goes the extra mile to ensure patients and staff have everything they need.

When asked to be profiled for her countless hours of volunteer work at Hospice of Green Country, Vena Farmer sat quietly for a moment, then gave a surprising answer: “But why me? I don’t feel like I’ve done anything that special.” But she does, and her road to hospice volunteering and the lessons she’s learned are extraordinary.

“Before I became a hospice volunteer, I really had no idea what it was all about,” explains Vena, “I have a habit of cutting out articles or things that interest me out of the paper, and I put them in a folder to read when I have time. When I was going through the folder one day, I noticed that I had about six different clippings about hospice and how to become a hospice volunteer. I told God that if I saw it again tomorrow, I would call about it and get some information.

“The very next day, there was an announcement for becoming a Hospice of Green Country volunteer. “I called the number and was sent some information. I went to the training and I’ve been doing it ever since.”

Vena is unique in that she doesn’t specialize in one particular area of service; she does it all. From administrative duties such as assisting in medical records, helping the development department with mailings, to patient visits and respite care, Vena goes the extra mile to ensure Hospice of Green Country patients and staff are well cared for.

“Vena is also a part of HGC’s Eleventh Hour program,” explains Director of Volunteer Services, Joan Crager. “She always volunteers to come at the most difficult times: from midnight to 4am or 4am to 8am. She’s willing to get out of bed and vigil to the dying.”

A new endeavor by Hospice of Green Country, the purpose of the Eleventh Hour program is, according to Rev. Delana Taylor McNac, director of spiritual care, “...to train hospice volunteers

“You have to learn about death before you can learn about life. Every patient has touched my heart.”



in the art of end of life vigiling. By working collaboratively with residential hospice staff, caregivers and families, these volunteers bring a calming presence in the room and in doing so, create a sacred space.”

According to Crager, one of Vena’s more amazing qualities is her ability to establish a compassionate rapport with the patient almost immediately.

“Vena once sat with a patient who had previously been totally unresponsive. She happened to notice the patient’s hands were rough and calloused,” says Crager, “She began holding her hand tighter and told her she must have served her entire life and those hands belonged to someone who worked her life caring for others. At that point, a single tear rolled down the patient’s face.”

According to Vena, each patient is special. “I’ve never had one stand out more than another. Each one brings something into my life. God brings everyone into your life for a reason, and it’s up to us to figure out why and what you’re supposed to learn. Every patient has touched my heart.”

Hospice volunteers will be the first to tell you that the work is some of the most rewarding you’ll ever experience, but sometimes it makes you examine your own soul. “Since I began almost four years ago, I’ve learned a lot about life,” says Vena, “You have to learn about death before you can learn about life. You *cannot* take things for granted, everyone lives their life differently, but we all end up in the same place. I believe hospice is my purpose in life,” she continues, “I love doing it,” She laughs, “I even have a hard time going on vacation. I don’t feel like I need a break. I *love* doing this.”

For more information about becoming a Hospice of Green Country volunteer, please call (918) 747-2273.

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Back in Tulsa, she began working as a secretary for American Airlines. It was there that she met her first husband, Lamon.

“Lamon was a mechanic and a hard working man,” remembers Janet. “He had a little girl and I stayed home with her. Eventually we adopted a little boy we named Bruce. He was such a precious baby. When Bruce was around nine, Lamon died of a heart attack. His daughter went to live with her mother and I was left to care for our son.”

Soon Janet found herself back in the working world, this time as a single mother. Working during the day at her sister’s office at J.E. Mabee Co., she maintained a loving home for her son.

“In 1971, I married Nelson Gentry, who was actually a friend of Lamon’s. They both worked together at American Airlines.”

Nelson brought with him six children, the youngest being the same age as Bruce.

Janet and Nelson made their life together raising children, creating a home and countless memories. “My son Bruce passed away at the age of 37 from a heart attack,” remembers Janet. Another reminder that those you love can leave just as quickly as they entered.

Shortly after his retirement, Nelson hit the jackpot, remembers Janet, “He won a cruise from American Airlines. He didn’t want to go at first, but I told him ‘it’s free...we’re going.’ He had a wonderful time, but I think he liked the food more,” she laughs.

The Gentry’s maiden voyage sparked an interest that had been hidden for quite some time: travel.



Janet and Nelson took more than 18 cruises, numerous vacations by plane; car rides and bus trips. If there was someplace to go, the Gentry’s were the first in line.

“We were on a bus trip in Europe when Nelson began to tire easily,” remembers Janet, “even though he wouldn’t

admit it. When we returned home, he was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and he steadily declined. We had already scheduled a trip to Hawaii, and it took some talking, but he decided it would probably be best not to go.”

Shortly after canceling the trip to Hawaii, Hospice of Green Country was called in to care for her husband.

“They took such good care of him; and me. They were so gracious and made sure he was comfortable in his last days.” After experiencing the loss of two husbands and a son to heart conditions, Janet kept herself busy customizing her new home and volunteering at a local hospital. “My sisters-in-law wanted me to travel with them, but it just wasn’t the same. I think keeping busy allowed me to deal with the grief in a healthy way.

Janet was diagnosed with cancer last year after a 15 year remission. As the disease became progressively worse, she knew she couldn’t do this alone.

“I called Hospice of Green Country because I knew they would take excellent care of me. They did such a fine job with Nelson.”

Janet has regular visits from a Hospice of Green Country nurse, hospice aide, a social worker and Nelson’s surviving children. “They make sure I’m OK. Nelson’s kids are *very, very* good to me. Everything is taken care of. I couldn’t ask for a better organization or a better family. I know I’m safe.”

“I called Hospice of Green Country because I knew they would take excellent care of me.”

Caught Between the Past and the Present:

Learning to Cope with Grief

A year ago this past December, I lost my grandmother to breast cancer. Although the pain is still there and far from over, I am learning how to cope with grief. While I cannot speak for others on the journey through loss, I have learned some things along the way that I hope will prove helpful to another traveler.

1. It's okay to laugh.

I have a plant from my grandmother's funeral that I keep in my kitchen window. Like many of you, I heard a long time ago that talking to plants encourages them to grow. I think about my grandmother and talk to her when I water it each week, turning it so it will grow evenly, trimming it here and there to keep it healthy. Recently, I noticed that the plant was taking over the planter and needed repotting. I began to laugh as I thought about the similarities between my grandmother and the plant. "Here you are, MeeMaw," I laughed, "trying to take over the kitchen, as usual." The laughter made me feel closer to her in that moment, and allowed me to remember even some of the challenges in our relationship with a smile.

2. The relationship is not over, it's just different.

When I first began to grieve her loss, I thought about my grandmother every day, about what I would miss about seeing her and talking to her. When my life began to return to normal, I felt guilty when I stopped thinking about her daily. Then I remembered that we lived several hours apart and I didn't talk to her every day when she was alive. Why, then, would I expect myself to think about her every day now? It doesn't mean that I love her or miss her any less--she is *still* in my life, just in a different way. I have learned that it's okay to go on with *my* life, remembering her, but going forward. My grandmother would have wanted me to do just that.

3. Some times are harder than others and that's normal.

I find that I miss my grandmother most when certain situations bring her to mind. My grandmother used to call me when the weather was going to be stormy or when snow or ice was in the forecast, especially when I lived out of state. I could almost predict when the phone would ring with her concerned voice on the other line. Even now, when the forecast calls for stormy weather, I automatically think of her. Then, when I remember that she won't be calling, I feel especially sad. I've learned that's it okay to still miss her that way and to be grateful for her concern. It also helps me to remember to take care of myself and be safe. Even though she isn't physically calling to remind me to do that, her memory reminds me instead.

Grief continued on page 5

Finishing the Race

Using what time you have left wisely.

The year: 1986. The event: Summer Olympics. The place: Mexico City.

The marathon was expected to be won by the runner from Ethiopia. A lot of excitement filled the stadium; a gold medal for Ethiopia!

A terrible accident, however, changed the course of events that day. The runner from Ethiopia was injured in a fall. A rumor raced through the crowd: the runner was going to finish the race! People could not believe it. An hour later he got to the stadium and dragged himself across the finish line to the cheers of the spectators. When asked later by reporters why he had done it, the runner replied, "My country sent me here *not* to *start* a race but to *finish* it."

How will you finish this race of life? For many of us, time is running out. We have done many good things.

Be thankful for that. You may choose to do a Life Review

to leave that list of accomplishments and relationships you have achieved, behind. Perhaps there are some fences you have not been able to mend. Try to accept the things you cannot change. Make the most of the days you have left. Be thankful for the *gift* of life and the good you have done. In particular, don't *quit*! Continue to look for signs of hope; a note from you could still help and a word of appreciation might yet be received.

Remember the name Dr. Tom Dooley? He was a great humanitarian who, though he was struck down early in life, had a favorite passage of poetry he loved to quote: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have miles to go and promises to keep before I sleep." So do we. So do you.

Paul Leaming, DMin serves

Hospice of Green Country as a chaplain

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4. Remembering the good times helps balance the not-so-good times.

When good memories come to mind, like eating her still-warm blackberry cobbler at the kitchen table or watching her pick out jewelry for church on Sunday, I stop and remember the past. Rather than letting sorrow overtake me, I try to focus on the good memories, to remember each detail and somehow strengthen them in my mind. I have found that when I take the time to do that, the good memories sustain me and visit more frequently than the memories of her illness. I know that my grandmother would want me to remember the person that she was most of her life, not just the person that she was at the end. By reinforcing the good memories and not dwelling on the difficult ones, I am helping myself and honoring her wishes, too.

5. Reflect on the aspects of your loved one that made you who you are.

My grandmother was so many things wrapped up in a five-foot tall, red-headed Welsh woman. She was stubborn and strong willed, with a deep respect and enthusiasm for education that extended far beyond the many, many years she taught school. My own love for learning comes from her and her influence on my parents. Her wholehearted devotion to her favorite causes is legendary and she had a deep faith that sustained her through the hard times in life. We shared the same faith, but were devoted to different causes. The love she had for her dog, Copper, is the same deep love for animals that lives in my own heart. Perhaps the very best part of her, the desire to help others, has a lot to do with why I am a part of hospice today. It's her strength that helps me keeping walking on my grief journey and it's her faith living in me that continues to sustain me. Thank you, MeeMaw. Even though you are no longer here, you are still teaching me.

Rev. Delana Taylor McNac serves Hospice of Green Country as director of spiritual care and coordinator of the Pet Peace of Mind program.

Providing Creature Comforts

Hospice of Green Country program ensures patients can keep their beloved pets while on hospice.

Lois Baker gently lifts her hand to lovingly pet her 13 pound cat “Petunia”. As if in a trance, the feline nuzzles up against her purring.

Lois Baker is surrounded by love. Drawings created by her grandchildren adorn the walls; her daughter Katrina lives with and cares for her; meaningful objects collected over the years fill every nook and cranny of her modest home.

“My household consists of my youngest daughter Katrina and her two sons Andrew and James who are both special needs children,” explains Lois, “They’re being helped by therapists all of who suggested having pets to help them with their challenges. So we consider the animals around here family too.”

Extended members of the family include “Petunia”, who Lois calls a “diva” of a cat. At 4 ½ years old, Petunia can usually be found lounging in a corner surveying her kingdom. “MoJo” is half Chihuahua and half pug dog who showed up one day at the door.

“I wanted to call him Killer,” laughs Lois, “but I was out voted.”

“Jellybean”, another feline companion, is usually being carried around by one of the kids, a form of therapy they both obviously enjoy.

Also in the house are two birds, “Spidey” and “Superman” who were given to them by a relative and serve as a constant source of curiosity for the two cats.

“Let me just tell you that these guys chose us, not the other way around,” laughs Lois.

Hospice of Green Country’s Pet Peace of Mind program assists Lois, her family and other qualifying HGC patients with basic pet care needs such as routine veterinary care, assistance with food, vaccinations and various other needs.



“Delana [Taylor McNac, the Pet Peace of Mind coordinator] has responded beautifully!” beamed Lois. “The program has taken “Jellybean” and “MoJo” and had them spayed and neutered; they provide heartworm medication, flea and tick control and food. I couldn’t ask for anything more,” she explains. Then, as if thinking aloud, begins to laugh, “These animals are very spoiled!”

Hospice of Green Country’s mission of providing quality and compassionate care regardless of the ability to pay went a step further in 2007 when Pet Peace of Mind was launched. Rev. Delana Taylor McNac, HGC’s director of spiritual care and a veterinarian no longer in practice, recognized the enduring bond between patients and their pets, especially during their time on hospice. Each year the program has grown, and is now teaming with Banfield Charitable Trust to introduce the program to non-profit hospices nationally.

“We appreciate it so much,” says Lois, “This is a service that helps us so much. Not only do they make sure I have everything I need as I go through this, but my family as well. These animals are a part of the family and help out my grandchildren in ways we couldn’t ever do. We’re all so very grateful.”

The Pet Peace of Mind program provides assistance to hospice patients who would otherwise have to chose between their own well-being and that of their companion animal.



I know exactly how meaningful and important Hospice of Green Country’s work is.

Only two years ago, while I was a new board member, my mother became gravely ill and was admitted to Hospice of Green Country as a patient. I then witnessed first-hand the way that Hospice of Green Country cares for patients and

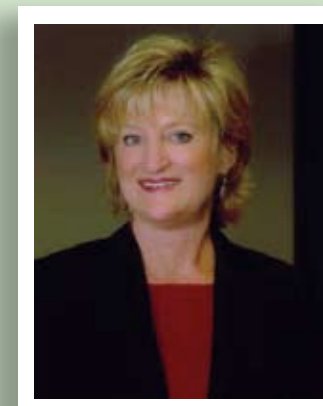
As 2009 begins, I feel privileged to be able to serve Hospice of Green Country as this year’s board president. I am honored to serve not only because I admire and believe in our mission to deliver compassionate, quality end-of-life care to patients and their families regardless of the ability to pay, but also because

their families. The attentive, professional, compassionate care my mother and I received made all the difference during the last months of her life. While I can never adequately express my gratitude or repay the kindnesses that we received, I am happy that I have the opportunity to be a part of this outstanding organization.

Like an intricate machine with many parts, each volunteer and staff person plays an important role in making Hospice of Green Country what it is, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your contribution to making this machine run. I am endlessly impressed by your dedication, selflessness, and commitment to our patients and their families, and I am humbled that I have the opportunity to be a part of the team.

Nelly Vanzetti, PhD
2009 Board President

From the Executive Director



exists because of years of devotion to the people they serve.

While there are many uncertainties of what will happen in 2009, both nationally and locally, there is one thing I am confident will occur. Hospice of Green Country will continue to care for the end-of-life needs of Tulsa and the surrounding communities – regardless of the patient and family’s ability to pay.

If you read about Tulsa’s history, you see that it was built only with determination, dedication and sacrifice. Although Tulsa’s beginning dates back many more years than Hospice of Green Country’s, our founders had these qualities in common. Our great city and our leader in quality end-of-life care only

As jobs are lost and the economy downturn makes it more difficult to afford the basics, the number of people facing end-of-life with limited resources are likely to increase. For Hospice of Green Country to continue to provide the highest quality of care while helping patients maintain dignity and find peace during their most fragile moments, we need your help.

The generous donations from foundations, corporations and individuals over the past twenty-two years made it possible for Hospice of Green Country to live its mission. On behalf of the staff and volunteers, I humbly thank you for allowing us this opportunity.

I welcome you to contact me if you want to learn more about Hospice of Green Country.

Tamra Moore, RN
Executive Director