



HOUSTON HOSPICE

Life Matters

A Publication of Houston Hospice



Volunteer Recognition & Holiday Reception

20 YEARS

Jan Aragon

15 YEARS

Sandra Kersch and Anita Rincon

10 YEARS

George Bingham, Diane Billings
George Blair, Kelly Howard and
Margaret Stone

5 YEARS

Brenda Chan, Doris Looper,
Susan Yarbrough, Glen Westberry and
Sara Westberry

2 YEARS

Ladan Aghili, Jill Criepp, Rebecca Even
Kristine Flaherty, Ariel Gu,
Alfred Khan, Debra Palacios,
Susanne Reindl, Barbara Schott,
Margot Sechler, Barbara Wadzuk,
Julia Huang and Jessica Castillo

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2017

Judy Calabria

SPECIAL THANK YOU

Catherine Frazier, Linda Martinson,
Jim Bachand and Ilirjana Hyseni

December 2, 2017, 2-4 p.m.

Houston Hospice Chapel

Light Refreshments

Featuring music by

Ilirjana Hyseni

*Volunteers will receive a candle to
light and place on a center table
in remembrance of the people
they have served.*

Volunteer Newsletter

Volunteer Spotlight: Catherine Frazier

Houston Hospice volunteer Catherine Frazier grew up in the shadow of the Texas Medical Center and met, Keith, her husband of 45 years in high school. His job took them to Africa, Asia and the Middle East...seven countries in all. Catherine says each one offered beautiful experiences and some crazy ones too. “We celebrated the Rice Harvest Festival in Borneo by dancing with Dayaks. We camped in the Arabian desert where Bedouin herdsmen came by to visit, along with their camels. Each country taught me a lesson about life and what is important to me.”

As a result of the first Gulf War they came back to Houston and volunteering at church became a priority for Catherine. “My last church job was leading the Evangelism (Welcome) Committee at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church. It taught me to put aside my introverted way of being and focus on hospitality and welcome. I loved it but I thought it was time for me to serve beyond the church walls.”

Luckily for us and our patients, Catherine decided Houston Hospice was the place to serve. She says her volunteer experiences are meaningful and humbling. Catherine likes working one-on-one and believes this work maximizes her skills.

CUTTING HAIR

Catherine started cutting her husband’s hair when they lived in Nigeria. The barbers there were guys who set up a business under a tree. She didn’t think it seemed that hard and says she only cut his ear lobe once!

Keith forgave her and she’s been cutting his hair ever since. Twenty-five years ago, she had a bad hair salon experience and started cutting her own hair. She tells her clients at Houston Hospice, “I am not trained or certified, but I am bold and unafraid.” They laugh and say, “Go for it.”

Catherine says her first client was a gentleman who, according to his daughter, had always been a proud man and cared about looking his best. “When I finished and she saw him, she was so happy because this was the man she remembered as her Dad.”

One of her most moving experiences occurred with another client. Upon opening the door, Catherine could see the woman wore the pallor of pain. “There was no spark of life in her eyes. I cut her hair and we talked about hair products and tips to manage it. I told her how beautiful her skin is and she put lotion on it. Then she added a little lipstick. We talked like two school girls. Everything we did was in the moment. Nothing we did was about her health. When I left, there was a sparkle of life in her eyes. I wept all the way home. We are now good friends.”

LESSONS LEARNED

Catherine has learned that sometime it is the patient that needs to talk and sometimes it is the caregiver. “I have had such a rich and varied life that I can always find a thread that connects us in some way. I pull that thread and we travel back to that place, time, or experience. It allows them to go back and re-live that happy time. It is not



about their health or current hardship. It is freeing.”

Catherine has also learned that whatever energy she brings into the room will be mirrored by the patient and caregiver. She is intentional about bringing a spirit of peace, calm and even a little humor. “I am not about their health. I am all about how good they look. I am sure the last thing to go is our vanity! When I hold up the mirror to show them how they look, they break out into the biggest grin you can imagine. For that smile I am grateful. I enter their home as a stranger but I leave as a friend.”

Holiday Reception

Saturday, December 2, 2017 2-4 p.m.

Music Program in the Chapel

1. Londonerry Air (Also known as Danny Boy)
2. Happy Together
3. The Yellow Roses of Texas
4. Beautiful Dreamer
5. I Dreamed a Dream
6. America The Beautiful
7. Fur Elise - Beethoven
8. Serenade - Schubert
9. When the Saints Go Marching In
10. You Raise Me Up

Volunteer Spotlight: Ilirjana Hyseni

Prior to joining Houston Hospice, Ilirjana was a full-time student at the University of Houston-Downtown (UH-D) where she was completing prerequisite courses for medical school. Nevertheless, Ilirjana says she still found time to volunteer. “As a student, I devoted myself to community service through volunteering with many organizations such as MD Anderson. I also dedicated my time to research at UH-D and at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), investigating pediatric neural and cognitive outcomes after traumatic brain injury.”

After graduating Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor’s of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences and a dual minor in Chemistry and Psychology, Ilirjana started working at BCM Pediatrics Department and Texas Children’s Hospital where she studies the effects of genetics, neural activity, and nutrition in energy homeostasis related to metabolic disorders.

THE FLUTE

Ilirjana began playing the flute at nine, shortly after her family returned to their home country of Kosovo after years as war refugees in Australia. The destruction of Kosovo’s infrastructure caused schools to remain closed. As they attempted to resume life and rebuild their home, progress was hindered by the lack of electricity. Meanwhile, Ilirjana was an energetic child. To keep her occupied and academically engaged, her parents enrolled her in flute lessons. Playing the flute gave Ilirjana a fun and challenging focus, and a distraction from the difficulty of life after the war.

As Ilirjana’s talent grew, she used music to help others. “I immersed myself in learning how to play the flute, learning new songs, and playing for family and guests. I believe it was also witnessing the atrocities of human warfare and the destruction, pain, and anguish that others can cause, that I started to gain interest in using music as a way to help others by easing the pain of illness and the anguish of loss. I discovered music’s powerful ability to unite others in the most challenging of circumstances.”

The high school system in Kosovo allows students to specialize in their preferred major, so Ilirjana enrolled in an all-music high school curriculum and focused on playing the flute. She also learned to play other instruments, musical theory and history, voice and music composition.

A NEW FOCUS

When her terminally ill grandmother was hospitalized near her high school, Ilirjana helped care for her and played the flute for her and other patients. Ilirjana observed the comfort and reduction of distress that music can yield. At the same time, a passion for healthcare was sparked in Ilirjana to which she has committed all of her energy as a young adult.



HOSPICE

Ilirjana’s sister and brother-in-law sponsored her move to the States and pursuit of a degree in sciences and a career in healthcare because doing that in Kosovo would entail going back to medical high school. In her second year of college, Ilirjana’s brother-in-law’s grandmother was referred to hospice by her physician. The grandmother wished to stay in her home, but she struggled to find someone who could stay with her. Upon learning this, Ilirjana volunteered to move into her home and care for her. A Hospice nurse and the woman’s daughter visited while Ilirjana was in class.

Hospice did not exist in Kosovo so this was Ilirjana’s first exposure to it. “Reflecting on how invaluable these services would have been for my grandmother, and my family by extension, as well as seeing the impact of the nurse’s presence and care for my brother-in-law’s grandmother on her family during such an important, difficult, and transitional period of their lives left a profound impression on me. As such, joining Hospice to provide palliative care and company in the service of others

became a paramount goal.”

When asked what her most moving experience in hospice has been, Ilirjana responded, “It’s seeing the excitement and joyful reaction of patients and their family members when I play the flute. One memorable experience was when I visited a patient and his wife, both of whom had an extensive classical music background. I was told that for the last 20 years he had not spoken and that he was difficult to understand on the rare occasions when he did attempt to speak. So, with that information, I did not expect for him to reply, and I was prepared to do the talking. Upon meeting him, I noticed that despite not being able to speak, he was very alert and responded to me with a smile, nod, or hand gesture. I pulled out my music book and showed him the song list to see if he had a favorite. After his wife made a suggestion, I asked him if he also would like that song and very clearly and loudly he said “Yes, yes”. He then also said “Thank you” at the end. He was even humming along when I played some of his favorite songs. As I was leaving, his wife followed me to the hallway and said that she has not heard him engage verbally this much in years.”

ACKNOWLEDGING DEATH

Illness and the dying experience are unsettling for most people to go through. However, Ilirjana says her difficult past has given her a unique perspective. “Growing up in the midst of a dangerous warfare, I was conditioned to come to terms with my mortality and the mortality of people I love. Acknowledging death as a process of life allows me to stay humble and grateful for my own health and the health and lives of the people I love. Thus, some of my most inspiring observations have been of patients who were able to achieve a level of peace and comfort with this process and who were able to reflect on their fulfilling and meaningful lives. The personalized care and attention provided by the hospice team allows these patients and others struggling with such transition, who might not have anyone at their death bed, to be heard and to know that their life matters and thus their dying matters.”

Houston Hospice
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MISSION STATEMENT

Houston Hospice provides uncompromising, compassionate end-of-life care to patients and families in our community.

Through the efforts of specially trained and highly skilled interdisciplinary teams of health care professionals and volunteers, Houston Hospice patients and their families are guided through the process of illness by receiving clinical care, psychosocial support, spiritual guidance and volunteer assistance.



Volunteer Training
George Library in Richmond (with El Campo)
Tuesdays, February 13, 20 & 27, 2018
Texas Medical Center
Saturdays, June 9, 16 & 23, 2018, and
Saturdays, October 6, 13 & 20, 2018
(Must complete our [volunteer application](http://www.houstonhospice.org) at www.houstonhospice.org.)
Contact [Elisa](#) or [Pat](#) to register, 713-677-7121.

Dear Volunteer,

We are always appreciative of donations of unused, trial size hygiene items to the IPU. Shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, disposable shavers, shaving cream and detergent are often of greatest need. Please drop any items you wish to donate to the volunteer work room in the IPU any time, and we will gladly collect and sort them for you.

Thank you, as always, for believing in our mission and for helping us in so many ways.

2018 Red Tape Days

Red Tape Day is the **mandatory** meeting (for everyone who wants to be an active 2018 volunteer) to complete the necessary paperwork to remain in compliance. You only need to attend **ONE** of the meetings.

Thursday, January 18, 2018 - North - 1:30 p.m. (location TBA)

Saturday, January 27, 2018 - TMC - 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, January 30, 2018 - West Office - 1:30 p.m.

Please RSVP 713-677-7121 or pbooth@houstonhospice.org