

# Reflections Newsletter

Winter 2018 | 888.823.8880 | [gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org)



## We Honor Veterans

### In this Issue...

In March, we will celebrate veterans in our community at our Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration. In this issue, you'll read about two of the many veterans Gilchrist has had the privilege to serve. Also in this issue: a spotlight on Gilchrist Kids, helping bereaved families heal, top honors for Gilchrist staff and programs, and upcoming events you won't want to miss.

Above: Patient and Vietnam veteran Ron Girvin with his hospice care team, (left to right) chaplain Tyra Curley, nurse Trisha Ferner, and social worker Maureen Hulse.



# Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration



Honoring Vietnam Veterans in  
our community

Friday, March 30, 2018  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Martin's West

The event is free. Registration  
is required. To learn more, visit  
[gilchristcares.org/whvv2018](http://gilchristcares.org/whvv2018).

## Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

Gilchrist will hold a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day breakfast and celebration on Friday, March 30. The celebration honors the veterans we serve as well as all of the veterans in our community, and coincides with Maryland's Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, signed into law by Governor Larry Hogan in 2015. This event is one of the many ways Gilchrist recognizes the unique needs of veterans and thanks them for their sacrifice and service to our country. We are proud to honor those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

## Living with Honor

Though his time in the Vietnam War made up only a fraction of his life, Ronald Girvin's identity as an Air Force veteran still defines him nearly 50 years later. Now 69 and receiving hospice care for cancer, Ron becomes emotional when reminded of his service—even hearing the National Anthem can change his mood.



Ron Girvin, with his wife, Pat.

These past few months have been difficult for Ron. His frustrations mount each week as he loses more independence—the ability to get dressed, shave or even bathe on his own. His wife, Pat, struggles too. Being his sole caregiver takes both a physical and an emotional toll, and her husband is reluctant to give up what little control he has. Ron has put off accepting help from a hospice aide, but after talking it through with Pat and his social worker, Maureen Hulse, he agrees that it is time.

"You were a leader all your life and so independent, and to have that dwindle away is so difficult," acknowledges Maureen. "We will help ease that," she assures him. "You are not alone."

### Caring for More than the Illness

For many people facing serious illness, losing their independence is one of the most difficult things to accept. The loss of who they were and the fear of what's to come may induce anxiety and unanswered spiritual questions. That's why every Gilchrist patient's team includes a social worker and a chaplain, in addition to a physician, nurse, hospice aide, bereavement counselor and volunteers.



Maureen discusses coping skills with Ron and Pat, and helps them work through feelings or conflicts. Over the past two months she has helped them prepare an advance directive, connected them with VA benefits and educated them on what to expect as the illness progresses. In between visits, they can call the Gilchrist Nurse Helpline, day or night. "Any question I have, they resolve it," says Ron. "I am 100 percent pleased with everything."

As Ron reflects back on his life, he speaks proudly of his 30-plus-year career in telecommunications engineering. But when the topic shifts to his service in the war, he shares only bits and pieces: he was stationed at Takhli Air Force Base, in Thailand; his assignment—building bombs. He has never spoken about what his service has meant to him, but in the coming days he will meet with Gilchrist chaplain Tyra Curley to talk about matters of spiritual faith and perhaps feelings buried, unspoken or unresolved.

*"The Gilchrist team have been angels to us.  
We are so grateful."*

*-Ron and Pat Girvin*

## Honoring Those We Serve

Knowing Ron's strong identity as a veteran, Maureen arranged for a "We Honor Veterans" ceremony to honor him. Gilchrist serves many veteran patients and recognizes that veterans have unique needs at the end of life. Our "We Honor Veterans" program offers veteran to veteran companionship, pinning ceremonies and other initiatives to ensure that the contributions and needs of veterans like Ron are recognized and respected.

When two volunteer veterans arrive at Ron's house dressed in uniform to salute him for his service, he fights back tears. The ceremony opens with a prayer to relieve suffering and ease fear, followed by the pledge of allegiance and a military salute. Russ Griffey of the All Veterans Honor Guard pins a Vietnam veteran pin to Ron's shirt "in honor and recognition of your service and sacrifice to your country," and Air Force Vietnam veteran Sherman Canapp presents him with a framed certificate. He is given a stars and stripes blanket, hand knit with gratitude and admiration by Gilchrist volunteers.

"You don't know how much you are appreciated," Sherman tells him. "Thank you for your service." As Ron's emotions well over, Russ and Sherman stand tall, giving Ron a final salute before saying goodbye.



Gilchrist volunteer and Air Force veteran Sherman Canapp presents Ron with a framed certificate thanking him for his service.

# Honoring His Service

When social worker Elizabeth Badskey learned that Gilchrist would be honoring veterans in a special Veterans Day pinning ceremony last November, she immediately thought of 97-year-old Harmon Pulcinella, whom she cares for in Keswick's skilled nursing facility in Baltimore. On good days, the World War II Army veteran, who has dementia and heart disease, sometimes spoke with Elizabeth about his time in the service.

He was a codebreaker, he told her, cracking codes to decipher secret communications between the Germans. All these years later, he still remembers dodging shrapnel during combat in the Battle of the Bulge, trudging through France and Belgium, and sleeping in tents, using extra parachutes at night to keep warm.

*"I could tell how much his service meant to him, so I wanted to show him how much his service meant to us."*

*-Elizabeth Badskey, Gilchrist social worker*

During the pinning ceremony, Harmon and other veterans served by Gilchrist were honored. Harmon's son, Armand, proudly stood by his side, along with his granddaughter and great grandson.

Elizabeth visits Harmon at Keswick regularly, along with a Gilchrist nurse and a hospice aide. A chaplain is available when needed. Gilchrist has provided "a wonderful extra layer of care and attention," says Armand during a recent visit with his dad.

In between visits, the Gilchrist team keeps the family up to date on Harmon's progress, reassuring them that he is in good hands. "They are great communicators," says his daughter-in-law, Kay. "His care has been fabulous."

Not only does the team attend to Harmon's medical needs, they spend time talking to him and arranging extra care such as volunteer companionship. A Gilchrist volunteer sits with Harmon doing things he loves like watching old movies or listening to opera, which he grew up listening to in his Italian household.

Harmon loves children, and lights up around his four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He was known throughout his life for helping others, a kind and gentle person who family and friends could always count on.

"Mr. Pulcinella is such a sweet man," says Elizabeth. "I'm honored to care for someone who gave so much of himself to others and to his country."



Gilchrist social worker Elizabeth Badskey (left), along with hospice aide Nicole Harris and nurse Latetia Smoot, visit hospice patient and World War II veteran Harmon Pulcinella at his residential care facility.





Members of the Gilchrist Elder Medical Care Rehabilitation team, with director Leana Hoover (bottom right).

# Gilchrist's Rehabilitation Unit Ranked Among the Top Maryland Nursing Homes

The Gilchrist Elder Medical Care Rehabilitation Unit was named a "Best Nursing Home" by *U.S. News & World Report* 2017-18, and one of 38 best nursing homes in Maryland.

The Gilchrist Rehabilitation Unit is comprised of 27 beds and is regulated as a skilled nursing facility with a focus on short-term stays, averaging about two weeks. The Rehabilitation team, led by Director of Elder Medical Care Leana Hoover, cares predominately for elderly patients who need additional therapy in order to return home and lead an independent lifestyle. These patients may be recovering from joint replacements, fractures, cardiac or respiratory issues, or other illnesses.

*"The collaboration between the nurses, therapists and patients starts on day one."*

*-Leana Hoover, Director of Elder Medical Care and Gilchrist's Rehabilitation Unit*

According to *U.S. News*, only 15 percent of nursing homes in the U.S. achieve the "Top Performing" status of 4.5 or higher. The Gilchrist Rehabilitation Unit achieved a perfect 5.0 rating.

Staffed by a team of 50 physical and occupational therapists, nurses and geriatric nursing assistants, the multidisciplinary team works together to help each patient achieve their goals. Hoover asserts that the quality of the Rehabilitation Unit results from the team's ongoing focus on patient-centered care for each individual they treat.

When it comes to care for your parent or loved one, you want assurance that they will receive excellent care. With the ratings from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and rankings in *U.S. News*, families now have a reliable way to judge quality of care, safety, staffing and outcomes.

**To learn more about our rehabilitation services, visit [gilchristcares.org/emc-rehab](http://gilchristcares.org/emc-rehab).**



# Touching More Lives

In 2017, friends like you helped support vital services to enhance the quality of life for more people than ever before.

*Compassionate, personalized hospice care for over **825 people each day**, a total of 5,400 people over the year*

*Pediatric hospice care for **more than 50 children and families**, who often need more resources than adult patients*

*Elder Medical Care for **7,500 patients** who are not yet ready for hospice*

*Grief counseling and bereavement services for **6,500 families***

Thank you!



## Like Gilchrist?

Want to keep up with the latest Gilchrist news, stories and events? Follow us on social media. You can also subscribe to our blog to receive stories in your inbox.

## Join Our Online Community

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# Giving Under New Tax Laws

Wondering how the new tax laws may impact your tax benefits for charitable giving? The good news is that the **2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act does not change the deduction for charitable gifts. If you itemize, you can still claim your donation to Gilchrist.**

The new tax law also retains the tax benefits of the IRA rollover (Qualified Charitable Distribution) and gifts of appreciated securities.

At 500 pages, the new law is complex and nuanced and will impact people differently. We know the law may change how you give but not the why. Your support is needed now more than ever as we provide hospice care to more than 825 people daily and expanded services to the seriously ill and their loved ones.



Every year, thousands of generous donors give to Gilchrist to help us deliver compassionate care to patients in need.

Many of them give in gratitude for the kindness, dignity and support shown to them and their loved one under our care. As a nonprofit, we rely on these gifts to sustain our work and provide care to all in need of our specialized services, regardless of ability to pay.

**To learn more about the impact of the new tax law and charitable giving, email Jamie Lynch, Director of Development, at [jlynch@gilchristcares.org](mailto:jlynch@gilchristcares.org).**

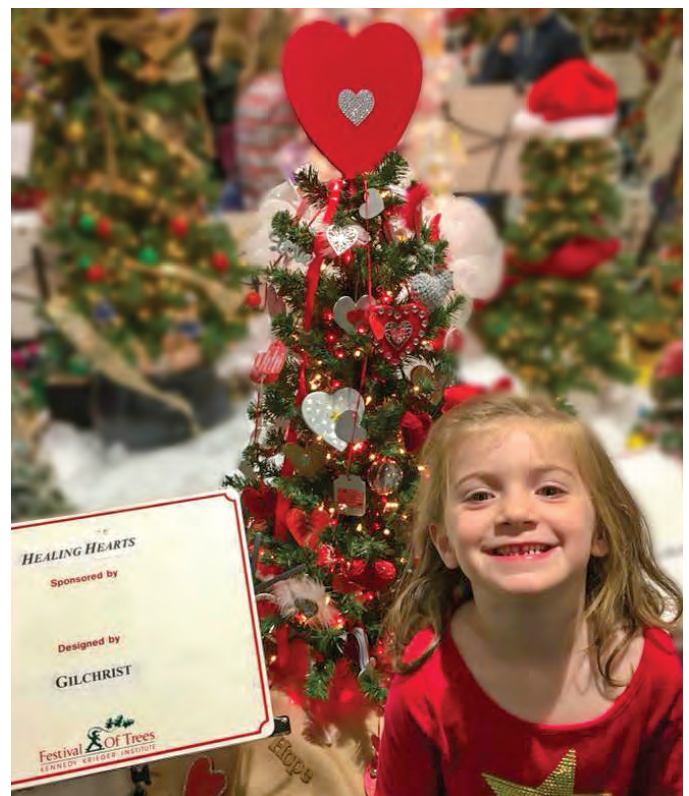
# Healing Their Hearts

Gilchrist's Counseling & Support program organized a tree decorating event during the holiday season for families who have experienced a loss. Participants made ornaments in honor of their loved ones and designed a tree they called "Healing Hearts," for Kennedy Krieger Institute's Festival of Trees. "This was a way to help our bereaved families to reconnect," says Gilchrist grief counselor Hilary Harrington, who coordinated the event. "Using a creative activity to promote healing and honoring a loved one is important in the grief process."

The tree decorating event is one of numerous Gilchrist events and activities held throughout the year for grieving families. Our Counseling & Support team provides extensive grief services for families through one-on-one grief counseling, support groups and remembrance events.

**To learn more about our Counseling & Support services, visit [gilchristcares.org/counseling-support](http://gilchristcares.org/counseling-support).**

5-year-old Madilyn Astarita, daughter of Gilchrist nurse Sarah Astarita, poses in front of the Gilchrist Healing Hearts tree.



# Against All Odds

When Leo D’Orazio was four days old, his parents, Dan and Brandie, learned devastating news. Despite a healthy, full-term pregnancy, their baby boy was born with a rare genetic brain disorder. Because his brain stem was underdeveloped, he would be unable to see, hear or even breathe on his own.

Doctors said Leo had little time left. He was baptized in the hospital, and family and friends gathered to offer the support the family would surely need in the coming hours. Dan and Brandie held and kissed their tiny baby goodbye as his breathing tube was removed.

## From Hours to Days

Against all odds, Leo kept breathing. The minutes turned into hours, and then days. Soon, Dan and Brandie were able to take him home, where the family would receive care from Gilchrist Kids. “The doctors said he would probably die at home within a few days,” recalls Brandie. “The scariest thing was not knowing when.”

A Gilchrist Kids nurse, social worker, child life specialist and chaplain teamed up to provide not only medical



Leo shortly after his first birthday, with his mother, Brandie (left), and Gilchrist nurse Julie Ward.

care for Leo, but emotional support for the whole family. Leo’s siblings, Stella (8), Anna (4 ½) and Luca (2 ½), are adjusting to Leo’s illness with the help of their child life therapist, who uses art and play therapy to work through their emotions and questions. And when Brandie needed time to recover after a surgery,

# A Magical Moment for Siblings

A carload of superheroes braved an early winter storm in December to pay a visit to families like Leo’s who could use a reason to smile. Gilchrist nurse Julie Ward helped arrange the superhero visit for Leo’s siblings, knowing that it would be a special moment for them. Amidst the sadness, joy, disbelief and despair swirling around them, Leo’s siblings can hold tight to the memory of the magical moment when superheroes visited them one snowy day.

**To learn more about Gilchrist Kids, visit [gilchristcares.org/gilchrist-kids](http://gilchristcares.org/gilchrist-kids).**



Arranged by staff at Gilchrist, superheroes from the Foundation4Heroes visit the D’Orazio family at home. Pictured: Gilchrist Kids patient baby Leo with siblings, Stella, Anna and Luca, and dad, Dan.



# Medical Director Named Top Doc

Gilchrist was there to offer inpatient respite care for Leo at Gilchrist Center Baltimore, giving her a much needed break from the constant demands of caring for a medically fragile child.

## Changing Perspective

Brandie turns to her faith in dealing with the uncertainties to come. "It's totally in God's hands...All I can do is take care of him." She says Leo has changed their family's perspective—made them more thankful, humbler, and stronger.

He has also made a lasting impact on the Gilchrist team who cares for him. "Everyone on Leo's journey has grown together," says Julie Ward, his Gilchrist nurse.

Having the Gilchrist team has helped the family learn to live in the moment, focusing on enjoying the time they have with Leo rather than worrying about how long they may have left. To Dan and Brandie, the care that Gilchrist provides has been invaluable. "Gilchrist is such an important part of our lives," says Dan. Brandie agrees, adding, "There is no way we could have gotten through this past year without Gilchrist."



Dr. Carrie Hempel, Medical Director of Gilchrist Center Towson

Congratulations to Dr. Carrie Hempel, Medical Director of Gilchrist Center Towson, who was named one of the region's 2017 Top Doctors in *Baltimore* magazine in the Hospice & Palliative Medicine category. The doctors were chosen by their peers based on where they send their own family for the best care. More than 13,000 physicians were surveyed.

This is the second year in a row that Dr. Hempel made the list. "I'm tremendously honored to be recognized by my peers," she says. "It motivates me to continue advocating for hospice and to remain committed to excellence in end-of-life care so people can have the best possible experience in their final days."

As medical director, Dr. Hempel oversees the Gilchrist team in the day-to-day care of patients, in addition to supporting and educating families. Her team at the inpatient hospice center in Towson is dedicated to providing compassionate care and creating a loving space for people going through the hardest time in their lives.

For Dr. Hempel, the inclusion of the Hospice & Palliative Medicine category in recent years signifies a shift in the public's knowledge and acceptance of hospice and palliative care, which she notes has traditionally been misunderstood and even feared. "My hope is that not only my colleagues but the community will be able to see the love and hope in hospice."

To read more stories like this, visit our blog at [thegilchristblog.com](http://thegilchristblog.com).



Baby Leo snuggles with his mom.

**Leo celebrated his first birthday in January, a moment no one thought would come. "We went from a prognosis of only a few days to a few weeks, to preparing for a huge birthday celebration," says Leo's nurse, Julie. "Leo is such a special child and he has an amazing family full of love." The family is donating Leo's birthday gifts to Gilchrist for other children receiving hospice care.**

# Gilchrist Center Baltimore Gets a Makeover

Renovations are complete at Gilchrist Center Baltimore (formerly Joseph Richey House). The buildings in downtown Baltimore now feature a redesigned interior with beautiful, traditional décor that evokes the warmth and comfort of home. The center includes tastefully decorated reception and family gathering areas, a dining room, a library, a chapel and cozy living rooms complete with fireplaces. For our youngest patients, the center offers a colorful children's playroom and private pediatric patient rooms with bathrooms.

To view an online tour of Gilchrist Center Baltimore, as well as our centers at Towson and Howard County, visit [gilchristcares.org/inpatient-centers](http://gilchristcares.org/inpatient-centers).



You or your loved one has a serious illness.  
We'll help with your serious questions.

888.823.8880  [gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org)

Counseling & Support  
Elder Medical Care  
Hospice Care

  
**gilchrist**  
INFORMED CHOICES. BETTER CARE.





# Bringing Joy to Kids

When Jason Stephens Jr.'s nurse, Madeline MacKean, learned the 4-year-old loves fire trucks, she knew what she had to do. She made a few calls and before long, a shiny red fire truck stopped by Gilchrist Center Baltimore, where Jason was receiving respite care.

"When we brought him outside he was in shock and total delight," says Madeline. "He kept repeating, 'It's a fire truck!' over and over again." Jason, who has neuroblastoma, a type of cancer, had the chance to sit in the driver's seat, play with the lights, honk the horn, and spray the fire hose. He gave the firemen a tour of Gilchrist Center Baltimore, even showing them his playroom. Jason made fire truck noises for the rest of his stay, recalls Madeline.

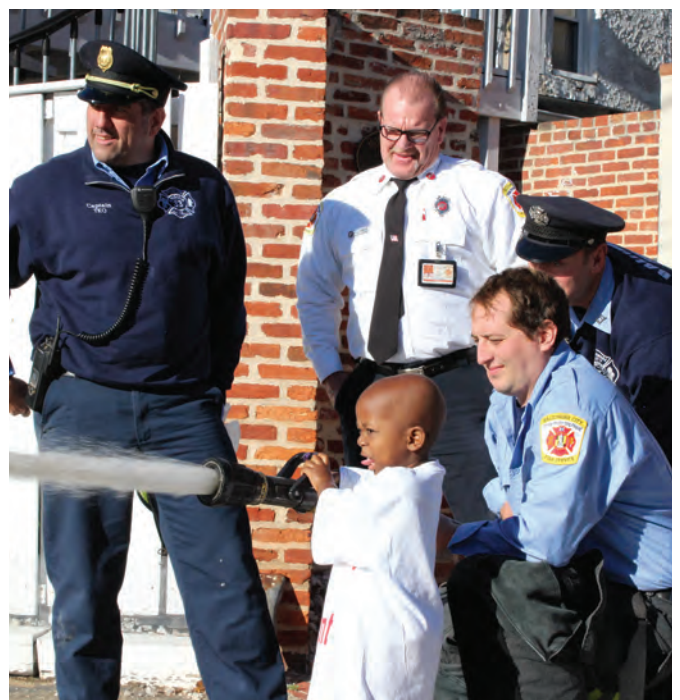
*"It brings so much joy to our team when our focus is on creating normal childhood memories, not just hospice and medicine."*

*- Madeline MacKean, Gilchrist nurse*

The Gilchrist team works hard to create joy-filled experiences for kids during a respite stay, which provides round-the-clock inpatient care for children while families rest and recharge. Providing special activities lets a child just be a kid for once, instead of worrying about their illness. Staff recently secured indoor trampoline park passes for one child, and are in the midst of finding professional wrestling tickets for another.

The team has collected security blankets from The Linus Project and slippers from Tavon Mason Loves the Kids Foundation to help bring the children comfort this winter. When a child celebrates a birthday at Gilchrist, they receive a custom birthday cake. Whatever a child dreams up, the Gilchrist Kids team tries their best to make it happen.

"Our kids have the biggest imaginations and they inspire us daily," says Madeline. "If we can bring joy to their lives, I believe that is success."



Top: Gilchrist Kids patient Jason Stephens Jr. anxiously awaits the fire truck.

Middle: Playing in the Gilchrist Center Baltimore playroom.

Bottom: Jason sprays the fire hose with members of the Baltimore City Fire Department.



1.888.823.8880

[gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org)

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| Kristina Rolfes    | Content Manager                                 |
| Gregg Harrow       | Graphic Design Specialist                       |

### Live on Facebook



Join us **March 14, 12:30 p.m.** for "Greater Living Live," as Don Scott and Mary Beth Marsden host an interactive discussion about pediatric hospice with Gilchrist Kids staff.

**Registration is required:** [gbmc.org/greaterlivinglive](http://gbmc.org/greaterlivinglive).  
In-person space is limited.

### We want to hear from you!

We love hearing from readers. Tell us what types of stories you want to read. Do you want to share your family's experience with Gilchrist? We'd love to hear it.



Email us at [gilchrist\\_marketing@gilchristcares.org](mailto:gilchrist_marketing@gilchristcares.org).



Please join us  
**Saturday, March 17, 2018**  
7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.



## for the 9th Annual St. Paddy's Day Bash

to benefit Gilchrist Center Howard County



Ten Oaks Ballroom  
5000 Signal Bell Lane  
Clarksville, MD 21029  
Hosted by the Paul J. Kelley Jr.  
Charitable Foundation  
[paulkelleyfoundation.org](http://paulkelleyfoundation.org)

## Spring Jazz Brunch

to benefit Gilchrist Center Baltimore

Sunday, April 8, 2018, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Museum

For details, visit [gilchristcares.org/events/jazz-brunch](http://gilchristcares.org/events/jazz-brunch).

