

Reflections Newsletter

Summer 2019 | 888.823.8880 | gilchristcares.org



Always By Your Side

In this Issue...

Facing serious illness can be overwhelming, and each stage brings a different set of concerns. But with Gilchrist by your side, you don't have to go through it alone. This issue of *Reflections* highlights stories that show how Gilchrist adapts its care to help families through different stages of an illness over time. Read about how Gilchrist continues to care for patients even if hospice is no longer needed.

Also in this issue: counseling for caregivers, helping families focus on what's most important, touching Gilchrist Kids stories, upcoming events and more.

Above: Hospice nurse Lisa Hogan (left) and Elder Medical Care nurse practitioner Yolanda Greene (right) visit patient Virginia Calivas at her home in Phoenix, Md.



Helping Aging Parents Live in Comfort

Virginia Calivas has struggled with congestive heart failure for years and is legally blind. The 91-year-old has undergone three open heart surgeries and numerous respiratory infections. After years of endless doctors' appointments, her health further declined. With her daughter Aspasia and other family members as her caregivers, Virginia began home hospice.

The Gilchrist hospice team provided care and attention for Virginia and support for her family. After several months, her health stabilized to the point where she no longer needed hospice. Gilchrist's Elder Medical Care team assumed her care.

From Hospice to Elder Medical Care

For patients like Virginia who "graduate" from hospice, the Elder Medical Care program provides a safety net. For Virginia, it allowed her to continue receiving at-home medical care, but not every week and without the same intensity of services. If not for the program, seriously ill patients and families could find themselves suddenly without services and unsure where to turn for help. For those who need hospice again, Gilchrist makes the transition seamless.

"They treat my mom like their mom...The way they take care of her is just the most amazing, comforting experience, and my family and I are forever grateful."

– Aspasia Oosterwijk, Virginia's daughter

"Gilchrist's Elder Medical Care provides comprehensive services to help people 'age in place' and offers continuity of care," says Yolanda Greene, Virginia's nurse practitioner. "It also helps alleviate the stress of having to find transportation to and from the doctor."

A Team of 'Angels'

Virginia is now back on hospice and has resumed care with some of her original Gilchrist team, including hospice nurse Lisa Hogan, social worker Maureen Hulse, chaplain Marelle Mayers and volunteer Susan Liddard. Aspasia calls them "angels." They hug Virginia when they visit, hold her hand and spend time talking with her. "Every staff member that has walked into



Virginia Calivas laughs with Yolanda Greene, Gilchrist nurse practitioner, during an Elder Medical Care visit to her home.

our home from Gilchrist has been absolutely phenomenal," says Aspasia. "They treat my mom like their mom...The way they take care of her is just the most amazing, comforting experience, and my family and I are forever grateful."

Virginia also receives visits from a hospice aide, a music therapist and a volunteer. This care has increased her quality of life and allowed her to continue doing the things she loves, like visiting with family and helping to make some of the special Greek dishes she is known for.

From the time she started with Gilchrist two years ago, Virginia has stayed out of the hospital and doctors' offices. All of her medical care and testing—including x-rays, bloodwork and echocardiograms—take place at home. "To know that she's in the comfort of home and being cared for with home visits, there really are no words," Aspasia says, adding, "With Gilchrist, there is truly passion and empathy beyond expectation."

To learn more about Gilchrist's Elder Medical Care and Hospice Care programs, visit gilchristcares.org.

Counseling for the Caregiver



Nancy Woodside receives counseling and emotional support from Gilchrist clinical counselor Laurel Freeman—helping her cope with feelings of loss and the challenges of caregiving.

Nancy Woodside cared for her seriously ill aunt in Florida until she passed away. Soon after, she returned to Baltimore to take care of her mom, who had suffered two strokes. She had little time to grieve and was now feeling overwhelmed from the responsibilities of caregiving. Friends encouraged her to contact Gilchrist's Counseling & Support program for help.

Many people don't realize that Gilchrist provides counseling and support to families even if their loved one was not a Gilchrist patient. It doesn't matter where you live or where your loved one died. Gilchrist's grief counselors are available to offer support.

Nancy was paired with clinical counselor Laurel Freeman, who she has seen for the last several months. The two talk about Nancy's feelings of grief over the loss of her aunt and the difficulty in watching her mother change, both physically and mentally. As a hospice clinical counselor, Laurel has a keen awareness of the feelings of loss that occur when a seriously ill parent is not the same person they once were.

“Laurel is an amazing listener and such a compassionate person.”

—Nancy Woodside, grief counseling client

She also helps Nancy deal with the challenges that come with caregiving, such as balancing caring for her mom with taking care of herself, and adjusting to the reversal of roles within the family. Nancy says Laurel provides helpful insight and strategies to cope with the strain and exhaustion she is facing as her mother's primary caregiver.

“Laurel is an amazing listener and such a compassionate person,” says Nancy, who meets with Laurel every other week at Gilchrist's Hunt Valley office.

It's important for people to not ignore the stress of caregiving, says Laurel, because it can affect their own health and well-being. “When I meet with clients, I try to find out what their stressors are—what keeps them awake at night,” she says. “Self-care is also vitally important.”

Nancy appreciates the opportunity to have someone skillful and knowledgeable spend time making sure she cares for herself. “This is my one hour to focus on what I need to do to strengthen my inner self,” she says. “It's very empowering.”

To learn more about Gilchrist's Counseling & Support program, visit gilchristcares.org/counseling.

Never Alone

Gilchrist Kids nurse Erin Bull was at home putting her kids to bed when she got the call. Five-year-old Amanda Gonzales, a former Gilchrist Kids patient, was at the hospital in cardiac arrest after a bout of pneumonia. Though it had been two years since Amanda had been a patient, the first call her parents placed was to Erin.

When Erin arrived at the hospital, Amanda was receiving CPR. She recalls Amanda's parents, Laura and Ron, immediately falling into her arms sobbing. Thankfully, doctors were able to revive Amanda. Erin acted as a medical liaison to the doctors to help guide her care. Amanda was in the hospital for almost a month and faced a difficult recovery, but Erin and the Gilchrist Kids team resumed their care right where they left off.

Care Even Before Birth

Erin had known Laura since before Amanda was born. Laura had contacted Gilchrist Kids after her baby was diagnosed in utero with Trisomy 18—a disorder the doctor had told her was “incompatible with life.”

Erin helped with emotional support for the couple throughout the pregnancy and explained what to expect. She helped Laura with a birth plan and was

there when baby Amanda was born. Amanda was dedicated to God by their pastor immediately after birth, and Laura and her husband prayed to be able to hold her, if only for a few hours.

Coping With Uncertainty

Laura and Ron knew each moment with Amanda might be their last, so they were thankful when they were able to bring her home. The Gilchrist team—including Erin, a social worker and a chaplain—was there for every need and continued their support as Amanda made it past the first days and weeks.

Gilchrist child life therapist Beth Solomon worked with the couple's other daughter, Sarah, and gave advice to Laura on how to talk to her about Amanda. A Gilchrist volunteer also visited so Laura could spend extra time with Sarah.

It was difficult to cope with the uncertainty, but with Gilchrist's help, Laura learned to focus on living in the moment instead of worrying about what might happen. Each day, she focused on the joy Amanda brought with her laughs and smiles. Months became a year, and then three years. Amanda never got sick except for colds.



Gilchrist Kids nurse Erin Bull visits with Amanda Gonzales and her family at their home.

Gilchrist Grief Counselors Bring Hope and Healing to Military Survivors



Peace of Mind

The day came when Amanda no longer needed care from Gilchrist Kids. Erin explains, “We wanted her to focus on life, not death.” Erin helped connect Laura to resources within the community and reassured the family that Gilchrist Kids was only a phone call away. For the next two-and-a-half years, Amanda remained healthy. Then she developed pneumonia, leading to her emergency room visit.

Today, Amanda has completely recovered from the illness that brought her to the hospital. Though the future will always be uncertain, it brings the family peace of mind to know they will never have to face it alone.

“The most important thing has been their presence and knowing they’re going to be with us. With the Gilchrist Kids team there, I don’t feel alone.”

—Laura Gonzales, Amanda’s mom

“We will continue to do everything possible to add to Amanda’s quality of life,” says Erin. “No matter what, Gilchrist Kids will be there.”

To learn more about Gilchrist Kids pediatric hospice program, visit gilchristcares.org/kids.



On Memorial Day, Gilchrist grief counselors Amanda Jaska and Hilary Harrington presented at the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) National Military Survivor Seminar, held in Arlington, Virginia. This annual event brings together more than 2,000 survivors grieving the loss of a loved one who served in the military. Amanda and Hilary’s presentation, “Surviving the Stressors of Caregiving and the Loss of a Loved One,” focused on the issues family members face when the death of a loved one was due to illness after their service. The counselors also provided support in a breakout sharing session.



Care Navigators: Helping You Find the Right Care for a Loved One with Serious Illness



The Gilchrist care navigation team includes Counseling & Support director Diane Sancilio, care navigation supervisor Erin Huff, care navigation volunteer Robin Greenberg and care navigators Asma Hussaini, Lynn Duvall and Terri Jones.

**Need help with a loved one
who is seriously ill?**

**Worried about what the future
will look like?**

**Wondering what services can help
and what the next steps are?**

Navigating care options for a serious illness can be stressful, overwhelming and confusing. Gilchrist's care navigators are here to help.

Our highly trained, knowledgeable care navigators are here to listen to your needs, answer your questions and discuss your options for care. They can quickly connect you to the right services and resources for your situation.

A One-stop Shop for All Your Questions

Through Gilchrist's Care Counseling phone line, you can get answers to your questions about care for a loved one not only if they are at the end of life but also if they need care earlier in their serious illness. Anyone can call—the patient, family members, friends or physicians.

Care navigators are available to answer calls Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. If you call after hours, we will respond the next business day.

When you call, our care navigators will:

- Listen to your concerns
- Ask questions about your current care and help you determine your needs
- Explain your care options and assist you in deciding on the right services for you and your family, which may include Hospice Care, Care Choices & Hospice (concurrent care), Elder Medical Care, Counseling & Support or one of our other many programs
- Schedule an appointment with the appropriate Gilchrist service or refer you to staff who can help you get on that service
- Link you to community resources that may help

Taking the Time to Listen

The care navigators often hear from callers how much they appreciate the time given to them. Whether it takes only a few minutes or an hour, they will patiently listen to your needs, answer all your questions, and give you information to make informed decisions. Complex needs will often require multiple phone conversations, which is no problem because their job is to help.

Contact Us

Take the first step to learning more about what Gilchrist can do to help your loved one by reaching out today.

Call 1.888.823.8880 or email

CareNagivat@gilchristcares.org.

Tender Loving Bear



Baby Max with his special edition superhero Scentsy Buddy.

Samantha Burley has made a big impact on the lives of our Gilchrist Kids' families in a very short time. She began working as a pediatric hospice nurse in April at Gilchrist Center Baltimore. It was there that she met a special baby boy named Max, who touched her heart. She wanted to do something special for Max, who was born with a rare genetic disorder, so she located a scented teddy bear called a 'Scentsy Buddy' to give to Max's mom.

Samantha, who is studying to be a nurse practitioner, has done considerable research on how aromatherapy and 'comfort items' can help patients. Scentsy Buddies seemed the perfect combination of both. The bears are not only a therapeutic tool for patients, but also a meaningful keepsake for families. Max died in May, and his mom told Samantha she now sleeps with the bear every night.

Samantha set a goal to have a bear donated for every child on service. With the help of a Scentsy retailer, her family and friends, Samantha raised donations of 40 Scentsy Buddies—well beyond her goal of 20.

With deliveries of the Scentsy Buddies underway, Samantha says, "It's nice to give extra TLC to our kiddos, especially if they are at Gilchrist Center Baltimore for respite care. They are not in the comfort of their own home with their family, and as much as we try to make it fun, it can still be hard. I hope by giving them a little gift the kids know how much we care."



Pediatric hospice nurse Samantha Burley displays donated Scentsy Buddies for the Gilchrist Kids.

Focusing On What's Important



Lillette Jenkins-Wisner (center) and her hospice team (from left to right): nurse Karen Bartosz, social worker Brittany Frazier and hospice aide Jean Gbaye.

Lillette Jenkins-Wisner, 95, has led a full life. A world-renowned jazz concert pianist, she has worked with the likes of jazz legends Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington and performed in Carnegie Hall. She was the musical director of numerous shows on and off Broadway and made appearances on both television and film. Throughout her performing career, she always found time to give back: she taught music in public schools, directed church choirs and volunteered for 30 years playing for seniors in nursing homes.

***“That personal connection—
that rapport—it makes a huge
difference...That’s something you
can’t buy.”***

– Adrienne Harris, daughter of Lillette

After being diagnosed with dementia a few years ago, Lillette’s health began declining. She moved in with her daughter, Adrienne, and last November Lillette began hospice with Gilchrist. Each week, the Gilchrist team visits, providing nursing care, emotional support

and personal care. Adrienne says these visits keep her mom in good spirits. “That personal connection—that rapport—it makes a huge difference,” adding, “That’s something you can’t buy.”

Despite her memory fading and losing the ability to take care of herself, Lillette has not lost her musical talent. She may not remember a conversation from earlier in the day, but she can still play elaborate Gershwin compositions by heart—flawlessly. As Adrienne puts it, “When her fingers hit the keyboard, it’s like some kind of magic happens.”

Nor has she lost her sense of humor. Lillette often has Adrienne and the Gilchrist team in stitches with her quips and easy banter. Adrienne asked her mother during a recent Gilchrist visit, “Mom, how is your memory today?” to which Lillette responded, jokingly, “I didn’t know I had one!”

Lillette has both good days when she is in high spirits and bad days when she spends most of the day sleeping. Gilchrist is there through it all. Gilchrist nurse Karen Bartosz takes care of Lillette’s medical needs, like keeping track of her blood pressure and managing

her diabetes. Hospice aide Jeane Gbye visits most mornings to help Lillette get dressed, bathed and ready for the day. And social worker Brittany Frazier checks in regularly to offer emotional support and help with resources.

As Lillette's illness progresses, Adrienne is determined to preserve her legacy. She is working on a Broadway-style musical about her mother's life. She and her family—including her daughter, Tanya Stargell, who assists with Lillette's care—established the nonprofit Lillette's Foundation for the Arts to provide scholarships for children studying music and art.

Adrienne's goal is to keep her mother as comfortable and happy as possible, for as long as possible. Gilchrist helps her do that. "They've kept my mind at ease so that I can prepare for whatever I need to prepare for," she says. "I don't know what's next—I just want to take every moment that comes because I know that it's precious."

To learn more about Gilchrist's Hospice Care program, visit gilchristcares.org/hospice.



Lillette with her daughter Adrienne in front of her piano.

A Birthday Gift of Giving



To honor the care her father received at Gilchrist, Gina Adams celebrated her 60th birthday in a very special way. She created her own fundraising event for Gilchrist and invited friends, family and the community to support or join her in a 10K walk/run, held on June 15. Her goal was to raise \$10,000 for Gilchrist Center Baltimore, our residential inpatient hospice center on Eutaw Street. With the power of this inspiring group of family and friends, runners, walkers, bikers and donors, Gina not only met her goal, she doubled it and raised over \$20,000! We extend a huge thank you to Gina, her husband, Delbert, and her community of family and friends whose generosity is invaluable to our efforts to provide hospice care for underserved Baltimore City residents.

Interested in creating your own event to raise funds for Gilchrist? Contact Jamie Lynch at 443.829.8241 or visit gilchristcares.org/give/your-own-event.

The Fourteenth Week: My Family's Experience With Gilchrist's Jewish Hospice

Sherri Zaslow, Gilchrist Jewish Advisory Committee Member

We have a principle in Judaism that God sends the "cure" before the "disease." While my husband's devastating diagnosis of glioblastoma—fatal brain cancer—had no cure, it turns out that Gilchrist's Jewish Hospice did provide a type of beautiful cure for my family.

Shocking Diagnosis

In November 2016, my life came to a screeching halt when, without warning, my husband, Darrell, only 61, was diagnosed with stage 4 glioblastoma. Thirteen weeks after his diagnosis, Darrell suffered a catastrophic brain bleed and was expected to die any minute...or any day.

Gilchrist – The Cure

When Darrell's brain bleed was diagnosed in the ER, I immediately called Gilchrist. As a member of Gilchrist's Jewish Advisory Committee, I had firsthand knowledge of the compassionate, culturally sensitive care of Gilchrist's Jewish Hospice. I knew I could depend on the program in our moment of need. By the next morning, Darrell was safely tucked into a cozy hospice room at Gilchrist Center Towson, familiar mezuzah on the doorpost and loving staff enveloping us.

Our large gang of grandchildren, who were so close to Darrell, always felt welcome when they visited their grandfather. They explored every nook and cranny of the center, including the playroom, and wrote prayer notes to place in the Jerusalem Wall of the meditation room. Every staff member, from the front desk to dining to the nurses and doctors, was so friendly to them. The children's parents borrowed books from the Levinson Jewish library outside our room to read aloud and try to help them understand what was happening.

Our large family rotated stays 'round the clock in Darrell's room, and the staff displayed genuine kindness. One night when I was half asleep in the common room, a nurse came in, and I jumped up thinking I would be told I couldn't sleep on the sofa. However, she sweetly said she was sorry for startling me and was just coming to shut off the lights and close the door so I could get some sleep. That small gesture loomed large in my heavy heart.

There are no words to express my appreciation to the Gilchrist staff who surrounded Darrell and our family with warmth and respect, whether through words or deeds or their sensitivity to our Jewish faith.



The inpatient center at Gilchrist Center Towson, where Sherri's husband received hospice, has a beautiful reflection space with a Jerusalem Wall where families can leave prayer notes in the crevices.

Cultural Sensitivity

Gilchrist's dining director met with me to see how she could help with our kosher meals. She was accommodating to the local Jewish organization who delivered kosher food each day. We formed a bond with the other Gilchrist families in that common room and shared the abundance of food with them. Without the spacious common room, we couldn't have been together for meals or stayed by Darrell's side.

We spent our Sabbath in Gilchrist, and it turned out to be a special 25 hours. Everyone was interested and involved in our observance and sensitive to our needs. When Sabbath was over and our friends and family came to visit with guitars and beautiful song, the nurses came to be part of it all too.

As the week progressed, I was feeling overwhelmed. The beautiful meditation room and outdoor patio overlooking nature provided a comforting atmosphere that helped immensely. They provided a serene ambiance for speaking with the people helping me, from

my rabbi to the person in charge of the cemetery to family meetings. I had some hard decisions to make, and doing so while hearing birds sing and seeing trees and hills provided me the space to just breathe and do so.

Dignity and Support

Darrell died in a tranquil, beautiful, supportive environment after a one-week stay in Gilchrist Center Towson, as our two sons read to him from The Ethics of Our Fathers—special teachings by the Jewish Sages. The staff knew what to do and not do according to Jewish custom.

Out of the 14 weeks my husband suffered with his devastating diagnosis, it was truly the 14th week that gave us the dignity and support we sought. While there is not yet a cure for my husband's disease, I was surely sent the cure of having Gilchrist's Jewish Hospice program for his care.

To learn more about Gilchrist's Jewish Hospice, visit gilchristcares.org/jewish-hospice.

Gilchrist President Profiled in *Inside Healthcare*

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS **Gilchrist**
www.gilchristcares.org / Headquarters: Hunt Valley, Md. / Specialty: End-of-life care and support

"It's all very intimate and powerful work, and we are lucky that we actually get to do this." **CATHY HAMEL, PRESIDENT**

By remaining passionate at serving those in need, Gilchrist finds its work to be very empowering.

Full Lives

Americans may not like to talk about hospice and death, but Gilchrist gives its patients a voice and compassionate care. **By Staci Davidson**

Inside Healthcare

Inside Healthcare magazine profiled Gilchrist and its president, Cathy Hamel, in its latest issue. The magazine covers technology, management and best practices of healthcare organizations and highlights emerging trends and effective leadership. The article, "Full Lives," discusses that while Americans may not like to talk about hospice and death, Gilchrist gives its patients a voice and compassionate care. **To read the story, visit gilchristcares.org/news.**



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Gilchrist provides services without regard to race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, ability to pay or national origin.

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GILCHRIST PRESENTS

TASTE OF HOWARD COUNTY

Sunday, October 20, 2019
Turf Valley ♦ 5 p.m.

Event Chairs: Sherri Collins-Witzke & Gus Carky
Vice Chair: Linda Ostovitz

GO ALL IN FOR GILCHRIST CENTER HOWARD COUNTY


Blackjack, craps, roulette and more!



gilchristcares.org/Taste

Gilchrist Jewish Hospice Program Presents
End-of-Life Ethical Dilemmas:
An Evening with Jessica Zitter, MD

November 4, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Beth Tfiloh Dahan
Community School
3300 Old Court Rd.,
Pikesville, MD 21208



Register at gilchristcares.org/JessicaZitter2019