

Reflections Newsletter

Fall 2020 | 888.823.8880 | gilchristcares.org



Gilchrist's Faces of Caring

In this Issue...

The exceptional care that Gilchrist delivers is a direct reflection of the people who work there. Hospice and palliative care are difficult lines of work—only the most dedicated and compassionate can fill these shoes. The people of Gilchrist go the extra mile because their work is more than a job. They share a higher sense of purpose. That's why we are dedicating this issue to the heroes of Gilchrist. In this issue, you'll read about just a few of the many extraordinary staff who are answering the call during this pandemic.

Above: Gilchrist hospice nurses Kristin Metzger, BSN, RN, CHPN, Nicole Barnes, RN, and Susan Miller, BSN, RN



Gilchrist's Many Faces of Caring

Gilchrist's hospice and palliative care team members are true Faces of Caring, rising to the challenge to continue their care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The way our teams deliver care is much different today than a few months ago. There are fewer in-person visits and more virtual ones, and those used to offering a hug or a comforting touch must offer only words instead.

In addition to their usual care, our staff now have the added responsibility of addressing families' fear and uncertainty. The work is difficult, but they are pushing past the challenges to do what they are trained to do. Here are just a few of our many Faces of Caring.



Nurse practitioners Tracie Morgan, Amanda Wiese and Esther Schaftel

Palliative Care for COVID+ Patients

Since March, our palliative care nurse practitioners have been working day in and day out with the COVID-positive nursing home population. They help the residents and their families cope with the illness and the associated losses, as well as their symptoms. They also facilitate difficult conversations, ultimately helping patients set their goals of care and weigh their medical decisions.



Hospice nurses Delores Williams and Erica D'Alesandro

Hospice for COVID+ Patients

Our nurses are continuing to provide vital hospice care to patients and families in their homes, including those with COVID-19. To ensure the safety of both the clinician and the family, a "safety buddy" accompanies each nurse visiting a COVID-19 patient. The safety buddy nurse helps ensure safe and correct donning and doffing of the other nurses' PPE.



Hospice nurses Kristin Metzger and Oksana Horwitz

Inpatient COVID Unit

In addition, Gilchrist opened the only COVID-19 dedicated inpatient hospice unit in Maryland, providing patients with an alternative to a hospital death. This allows patients to die with a loved one by their side while our teams care for their medical, emotional and spiritual needs.

"We are here because our patients need us, and because we made a promise, as nurses, to show up in their time of greatest need," said Kristin Metzger, a hospice nurse on the unit.

Hope Through Music

Although the COVID pandemic brings much anxiety, uncertainty, fear and confusion, for some, it offers unexpected opportunities. For one Gilchrist Kids family, music therapy helped two sisters bond with one another and create a unique "soundtrack." While isolated at home, after schools closed, big sister Sarah became a regular part of her sister Amanda's music therapy sessions. And so, with the help of the music therapist (and mom and dad), these two sisters recorded favorite songs, piano improvisations and original music written about everyday life. Now, they will have a memory of 2020 that is filled with love, hope and joy.



Pediatric hospice patient Amanda Gonzales with sister, Sarah, and music therapist Lacy Kidwell

Virtual Grief Counseling

Like every other team, grief counselors have shifted to offering virtual services, including grief telehealth by phone or video. They also have organized online virtual support groups and created a Facebook group designed to offer education, support and reassurance to bereaved as they mourn and heal.

Our grief counselors have found that people need grief services now more than ever. "Grief can be very isolating," explained grief counselor Carol Hallinan. "Add a pandemic and you have a lot of loneliness. Like most of the world, our counselors have been able to adapt so we can continue to support our bereaved who are now struggling with many kinds of loss. Sometimes, just providing presence for those in mourning, even virtually, can go a long way in the healing process."



Carol Hallinan speaks with a grief counseling patient virtually using Zoom.

Determined to Rise Above

The pandemic has brought out the best in people determined to rise above. Team members have stepped up to overcome challenges they never had to face before. Social worker Kerry Riggs sums up the collective feeling of many at Gilchrist: "Working on the emotional frontlines for families of patients, this has been some of the most challenging, exhausting, and also rewarding work of my 24-year career," she said. "I can't wait until the time when I can offer a comforting touch or hug to our patients and their families."



Kerry Riggs, Gilchrist social worker

Grief Group Creates Long-lasting Bond



The "Grief Gang," which has been meeting for more than seven years. Back row, left to right: Dave Shegan, Charlie Conklin, Meg Berman, Jeanne Galvin. Front row, left to right: Margery Mazor, Beryl Rosenstein, Bonnie Henry, Bonnie Wilson. Photo from December 2018

by Beryl Rosenstein, MD, on behalf of the "Grief Gang"

The article on "Lessons on Love and Grieving" in the Spring 2020 issue echoed my own experience with Gilchrist's grief support—in my case, how the Gilchrist's Widowed Person/Life Partner Support Group can lead people through the grieving process after the loss of a loved one.

I can recall the evening of January 8, 2013, when nine of us, all coping with the recent loss of a spouse, sat down in an office suite in Hunt Valley for our first meeting with a Gilchrist grief counselor.

We were all strangers pulled together by our losses and the need to navigate the grieving process. We easily related to each other, the chemistry was good and we bonded for what we could not predict would be a rather remarkable journey.

One member of the initial group dropped out, but the remaining five women and three men have continued to meet regularly for more than seven years. Initially, there was sadness and many tears, but over the years they have been replaced by optimism and much joy and laughter.

After the completion of our six grieving sessions, our group has continued to meet every two to three months for rotating potluck home dinners, which eventually transitioned to dinners at local restaurants and an annual in-home holiday dinner party. During COVID-19, we have continued to meet virtually, thanks to Zoom.

"Initially, there was sadness and many tears, but over the years they have been replaced by optimism and much joy and laughter."

– Beryl Rosenstein, MD, grief support client

Over the years, three members of the group remarried, and we have shared many life events, such as travels, retirements, weddings and births. I don't know if there are longevity records for grief support groups but ours must be near the top, hopefully for many years to come. We greatly appreciate the role Gilchrist played in launching us on our rewarding journey.

To learn more about Gilchrist Grief Services, visit gilchristcares.org/grief.

Living and Dying With Honor

Gilchrist has long been committed to honoring and caring for veterans at the end of life. But with the threat of COVID-19, our volunteer visits to veterans, including Salute to Service tributes, had to be curtailed. Our dedicated group of veteran volunteers felt helpless when they initially thought these tributes could not continue.

But the team quickly implemented a workaround solution to continue these meaningful tributes. While volunteers are no longer permitted to visit patients, Gilchrist nurses and social workers are. One of these staff members visits the patient at home with a "salute kit" in tow while a military volunteer joins them via FaceTime to conduct the ceremony.

The salute kit, assembled by Gilchrist volunteers, consists of a pin for the veteran, a patriotic scarf and pin for the spouse, a handmade lap blanket, a 'Veteran' door sign and a "Thank you for your service" card made by students.

Families tell us they will be forever grateful for these moving tributes to their loved one. Our volunteers say that conducting these salutes has been just as meaningful to them. They share our dedication to providing honor and respect to dying veterans. Those who fought for us and risked their lives to serve deserve nothing less.

To learn more about Gilchrist's We Honor Veterans program, visit gilchristcares.org/whv.



Some of our recent virtual Salute to Service tributes. These moving ceremonies allow Gilchrist to continue honoring our veterans during the pandemic.

"Thank you for making my dad feel so special. It was such a wonderful experience for him and all the family. You and the other volunteers are a very special group. You gave your all for this country and continue to give back. God bless each of you!"

– Fran Ciampaglio, family member

Healthcare Decision-making in the Era of COVID-19

Many people put off healthcare decision-making, especially if they are relatively young and healthy. But the COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that serious illness can affect anyone, any time. Thinking through your health care wishes and documenting them in advance is one of the most important things you can do—not only for yourself but also for your loved ones.

What Is Healthcare Decision-making?

Healthcare decision-making, also known as advance care planning, refers to making plans in advance for deciding how you want to be cared for if you are no longer able to make medical decisions.

Why Is Healthcare Decision-making Important?

Imagine you have a stroke, an accident or a sudden serious illness that leaves you incapable of making medical decisions. Without an advance directive, doctors will either make these decisions for you or, in the best case, look to your family to make them.

Some of these decisions could be heart-wrenching, such as whether you would want to be put on a breathing machine or feeding tube when there is little chance of weaning off of them. Would your family know your wishes? Or would they struggle with the weight of these decisions—perhaps even long after the decision is made?

What if your family members disagreed about what would be best for you? Without an advance directive, your family members will be left to guess what you would want. Whatever they decide, they may later second-guess themselves and live with regret. Leaving these decisions up to your loved ones can be a heavy burden for them to carry.

Most of us would prefer to be given a choice for how we wish to be treated rather than have the choice made for us. By thinking about your wishes now and documenting them, you will free your family from the burden of having to make these difficult decisions in the event that you are no longer able. It will help eliminate disagreement between your loved ones and lessen worry, guilt and regret.



Gilchrist Chief Medical Officer W. Anthony Riley, MD was interviewed last month by Mary Beth Marsden on GBMC's "Greater Living Live" about advance care planning and the special considerations of medical decision-making in the era of COVID-19. To watch, visit gilchristcares.org/news.

How to Get Started

First, begin conversations with your family about your wishes. The Conversation Starter (theconversationproject.org) is a useful tool to help you have a conversation with a family member or friend about your wishes for end-of-life care. It is important to name a health care decision-maker who you trust to carry out your wishes.

Then, consult the following resources to learn more about advance care planning and the forms that should be completed. Let your loved ones know where your documents are kept or give them copies.

- **FiveWishes.org** – A comprehensive, easy-to-use resource for documenting your care choices. Five Wishes addresses all aspects of care: medical, emotional, personal and spiritual.
- **MarylandMolst.org** – Filling out the Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form makes your treatment wishes known to health care professionals. You can state your preference for medical orders such as CPR and comfort care.
- **SpeakEasyHoward.org** – Useful resources for naming a healthcare agent and preparing for healthcare during the pandemic.
- **Maryland Advance Directive** (MarylandAttorneyGeneral.gov/Pages/HealthPolicy/AdvanceDirectives.aspx) – A guide to Maryland law on planning health care decisions. Includes forms to document your care preferences.

For more information about advance care planning, visit gilchristcares.org/hospice-resources.

2020 Taste of Howard County



**Taste is coming to you...
VIRTUALLY!**

Sunday, October 18, 2020 | 6:00 p.m.

Join us in celebrating Gilchrist from the comforts of your home and experience behind-the-scenes culinary magic from some of Howard County's best dining spots including 18th & 21st, Alexandra's, The Turn House, Touché Touchet Bakery & Café, and more!

GILCHRISTCARES.ORG/TASTE

General Admission: Free, registration is required.

VIP Experience: \$150 by October 1, includes access to exclusive at-home wine tasting experience for up to 4 people, hosted by Joe Barbera of AIDA Bistro at 5:00 p.m.

50/50 Raffle Tickets: \$25 or 5 for \$100

Silent Auction

Sponsorships available.

Event Chair: Linda Sorg Ostovitz **Vice Chair:** Cyndi Gula

Contact: Julie Kolankiewicz at 443.849.8245

Did You Know?

You can donate to Gilchrist using one of the following charitable campaigns:

Gilchrist
Hospice Care

#3155

- Baltimore City Employee United Way Campaign (formerly Combined Charity Campaign)
- United Way of Central Maryland Fundraising Campaign
- Maryland Charity Campaign

#82571

- Combined Federal Campaign

Gilchrist
Center Baltimore

#3023

- Baltimore City Employee United Way Campaign (formerly Combined Charity Campaign)
- United Way of Central Maryland Charity Campaign

#1095

- Combined Federal Campaign

Chaplains: The Heart of Hospice Care



Three of Gilchrist's chaplains: Tyra Curley, Don Hohne and John Yoo

The work of our 19 Gilchrist chaplains is especially important now during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients may be separated from their loved ones and feeling anxious about the virus. Most of their religious routines and gatherings are canceled. And they may be feeling increasingly isolated at a time when they most need togetherness and serenity.

What Do Chaplains Do?

Chaplains help address a patient's spiritual needs, providing counseling and comfort. These needs may include finding meaning in the face of suffering, finding a way to leave a legacy, making decisions about treatment, fulfilling their spiritual wishes and taking part in rituals of their faith.

At the end of life, many people grapple with upsetting emotions and feelings about death and dying. Some may experience fear, remorse or anger, while others may feel at peace with their life and impending death. Hospice chaplains can help people come to terms with whatever emotions they are experiencing and address their spiritual needs at the end of life.

Gilchrist chaplains also support families as the end of life nears and after a death. They may help family members ensure their loved one's burial and ceremonies adhere to their religious or spiritual wishes.

One does not have to be religious to receive chaplain services. Chaplains meet with people of any belief or faith, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist or any other.

Chaplaincy During the Pandemic

Gilchrist chaplains continue to make in-person visits with safety precautions whenever possible and welcome. Donned in full personal protective equipment, they provide much-needed human and spiritual connection in this time of separation.

When in-person visits are not an option, chaplains use virtual visits to support patients' spiritual needs and facilitate family discussions.

The Vital Role of Spiritual Care

The chaplain's role is critical to caring for a person at the end of life. Spiritual care allows people to achieve peace and closure, and accept death without fear or regret. This peace is meaningful beyond measure. For loved ones left behind, the knowledge that their family member died at peace will bring comfort for the rest of their lives.

To learn more about Gilchrist and its many services, visit gilchristcares.org.

“Issues of suffering are the one thing that binds humanity. Especially as chaplains, we are called to serve that suffering through compassion. This is the underlying principle we live by.”

– Chaplain Don Hohne, BCC, Gilchrist's Clinical Specialist for Spiritual Care

Helping Patients a World Away

When Gilchrist heard about the opportunity in 2009 to partner with African hospices—many of which were struggling to care for the growing HIV/AIDS population—we answered the call. Since then, Gilchrist has partnered with a hospice program in Nkoaranga, Tanzania, which serves the chronically ill and dying in the villages near Mt. Kilimanjaro. We support them through education, fundraising and camaraderie.

Gilchrist social worker Robin Stockdale, who has an affinity for diverse cultures and has traveled and lived in other countries, felt compelled to join the effort and has served as the partnership coordinator for 11 years.

“When I traveled to Tanzania for the first time and visited patients with our Tanzanian colleagues, I lost my heart to the country, the people and the staff at Nkoaranga Palliative Care,” says Robin. “I came back committed to supporting them in whatever ways I could.”

Robin coordinates fundraisers throughout the year to help the small program provide medical care and support for the more than 1,300 patients they care for with a tiny staff of five and a handful of volunteers. The team in Tanzania provides medical home visits, medication, wound care supplies, food for the very poor, support groups for adults with chronic illness, “Kids Club” gatherings for children with HIV, education for volunteers and staff, scholarships for children and more.

Through Gilchrist’s fundraising, we’ve purchased laptop computers for the staff, playground equipment for the Kids Club, and even an ambulance.

In the spring, the coronavirus brought added hardships for our partner and their country’s fragile health care system. Nkoaranga faced a dire shortage of protective equipment needed to safely care for the seriously ill without spreading the virus. In response, Gilchrist—with the support of our generous community—helped raise enough to purchase several months worth of supplies.

The passion our teams have for helping those in need extends beyond our community and our borders. And even as we face challenges at home, we will not lose sight of those less fortunate. “It would be easy to succumb to anxiety and to focus only on ourselves,” explains Robin. “But that’s not who we are at Gilchrist.”

If you are interested in supporting Gilchrist’s partnership in Tanzania, contact Robin Stockdale at rstockdale@gilchristcares.org. She is coordinating the sale of hand-made African jewelry, crafts, fabric creations, greeting cards, paintings, fair-trade coffee and chocolate, and more to raise funds for our Tanzania partner.



Some of the children and patients served by our partner hospice in Tanzania

Spotlight on Gilchrist's Peer-to-Peer Award Winners

Shelbi Smith, Gilchrist Kids Nurse, Nominated by Nona Cummings



"When Shelbi joined the Gilchrist Kids team, I knew immediately that she had a passion for pediatric hospice and was a great fit for our team. She and I worked with two patients who spent considerable time at the pediatric inpatient hospice unit for end-of-life care at Gilchrist Center Baltimore. One family was Muslim, and the mom was staying with her infant son. Shelbi took an interest in learning about Muslim traditions and practices and would help the mother with her English—all while caring for the child in the most loving way and guiding the family through the dying process.

The other patient was a 9-year old girl who loved the movie 'Frozen.' She also loved Shelbi. We had just recently taken down our winter snowflake decorations when she came to Gilchrist Center Baltimore. She initially was admitted for symptom management but stayed through the end of life. When Shelbi learned that her patient loved 'Frozen,' she decorated her room with the snowflakes. Later, we gave the family these snowflakes as mementos.

Shelbi is now helping on the COVID unit at Gilchrist Center Towson and embracing whatever task is put before her. She is a true asset not only to the Gilchrist Kids team but to all of Gilchrist."

Esther Schaftel, Nurse Practitioner for Gilchrist's Integrative and Palliative Medicine Program, Nominated by Tracie Schwoyer-Morgan



"Esther strives for excellence in her work every day. Esther is a team player through and through, always stepping up and volunteering to 'jump right into the mess' when needed and in whatever capacity.

Esther was recently asked to help care for long-term care residents at a partner facility while they struggle to endure the hardships of COVID-19 in the building. She has tirelessly provided gentle and caring palliative care to these most vulnerable individuals. She provides friendly interaction for otherwise isolated individuals, listening to their fears and concerns of recovery and loss.

Esther was recently with a resident during his last moments. She held his hand while holding the cell phone to video call his family as he took his last breaths. After he died, she comforted his roommate wife in the bed next to him.

Esther has done this many times, not just this one day—and she will do it again. She has the biggest heart and is most compassionate and empathetic each day that she cares for her patients."

Gilchrist Nurses Are Among Baltimore's Best

Two Gilchrist hospice nurses were recognized in *Baltimore* magazine's 2020 Excellence in Nursing issue, published in September. Congratulations to Jennifer Babcock and Jennifer Nicole Chen for this outstanding recognition.



**Jennifer Babcock, BSN, RN, CHPN –
Nurse Clinical Lead, Gilchrist Center Baltimore**

"Jen is by far one of Baltimore's best! She has one of the biggest hearts, both professionally and personally. Her dedication to her patients, their families and her colleagues is unmatched. She is constantly learning and growing herself to be a better clinician. Without her, our team would not be the same. I'm honored to have her on my team and in my life. She is the best."

–*Katherine Packett, RN, BSN, CCRN
Hospice Clinical Manager, Gilchrist Center Baltimore*



**Jennifer Nicole Chen, RN –
Hospice Nurse, Gilchrist Center Towson**

"Nicole is such an asset to our unit. She remains positive even during the most challenging shifts. She can be seen taking time to talk with a family member or patient to find out what is important to them during their stay with us and providing support and education during a very difficult time. She sets such a positive and professional example. She is the kindest person I know and truly exemplifies the best qualities of a hospice nurse."

–*Gina Ranieri Bender, RN, BSN, CHPN
Hospice Clinical Manager, Gilchrist Center Towson*

Gilchrist Unveils New Ad Campaign

In September, Gilchrist launched a new campaign: A Little Bit More. The new campaign highlights what families have told us again and again—Gilchrist helped them take advantage of all the special moments life provides. That means more precious moments with family. More stories. More laughter. And more memories. Calling Gilchrist means more options, from elder medical care and family counseling to home care and the end-of-life-services we're known for.

Be on the lookout for Gilchrist's new ads, which will appear on area billboards and local TV and radio stations.

For a sneak peak at our new campaign, visit gilchristcares.org/advertising.





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gilchristcares.org

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5537 Twin Knolls Road, Suite 434
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410.730.5072

TTY Maryland Relay Service: 1.800.735.2258
Gilchrist provides services without regard to race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, ability to pay or national origin.

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Catherine Y. Hamel	President
Lori D. Mulligan	Sr. Director of Strategic Initiatives
Stacy Bellmore	Director of Marketing
Kristina Rolfes	Content Manager
Gregg Harrow	Creative Manager

Gilchrist Wins ‘Great Place to Work’ for Third Consecutive Year

For the third year in a row, Gilchrist was certified as a great workplace by the independent analysts at Great Place to Work®. Gilchrist earned this credential based on extensive ratings provided by employees in anonymous surveys.

Employees rated their workplace in areas ranging from atmosphere, pride, communication, leadership, camaraderie and fairness.

Highlights from the survey include:

- **90%** of Gilchrist employees say they feel good about the ways they contribute to the community
- **88%** say they feel a sense of pride about what they have accomplished
- **90%** say when they joined the organization, they were made to feel welcome
- **91%** say employees are given a lot of responsibility
- **91%** say people are treated fairly, regardless of their gender

To learn about careers at Gilchrist, visit gilchristcares.org/careers.

