



Volunteer Voice

September 2025

Message from the Director

By JoAnn Bross, Director of Social and Volunteer Services



Dear Volunteers,
As we move into the Fall season, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for the heart, compassion, and time you give to our patients and families. This quarter, I encourage you to remember the impact of the “small things” you provide. A gentle conversation, a listening ear, or simply sitting quietly with someone often means more than we realize. Families frequently tell us that your presence gave them strength in a difficult moment.

Our agency continues in a chapter of growth and development. Planning is well underway for the opening of the new hospice in Pinellas County, while our Hillsborough Hospice has already begun admitting patients, expanding our reach and ensuring more families receive the compassionate care Gulfside is known for

In addition, we are preparing to launch a new electronic medical record (EMR) system in October, which will enhance communication, streamline care planning, and support our commitment to providing the highest quality of service. Closer to home, the new Weil Care Center in New Port Richey is expected to welcome its first patients by the end of September. We hope you will join us in celebrating this milestone at the official ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, September 19th at 5:00 p.m. These initiatives reflect Gulfside’s commitment to reaching more people, meeting them where they are, and ensuring access to excellent hospice, home health, and palliative care.

We are also continuing to strengthen how we support you in your role. Whether through ongoing education, regular check-ins with clinical staff, or opportunities to share your experiences with each other, our goal is to ensure you feel connected and valued. Please never hesitate to reach out with ideas, questions, or even just to share a story.

Together, we are making a difference - one visit, one smile, one moment at a time – across our service areas. Thank you for being an essential part of our hospice family and for walking with us through this exciting chapter of growth.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Director
- Sneak Peak
- Bereavement
- Volunteer spotlight
- From the Heart
- Event Spotlight
- Tell a Friend

Dates to Remember:

September 17th: Constitution Day

September 22nd: Autumn Equinox

October 13th: Columbus Day

October 31st: Halloween

November 11th: Veterans Day

November 27th: Thanksgiving

November 30th: First Sunday of Advent

Sneak Peek: Volunteer Services at Weil Care Center

On July 24, the Volunteer Coordinators, along with the Manager of Volunteer Services, got a tour of the new Weil Hospice Care Center. Director of Inpatient Services, Bryant Shurley, led the group through the 24-bed center, still under construction at that time. Even in its unfinished state, the beauty of the building shone through. The layout has been carefully thought through, and every detail meticulously chosen to enhance the grace and serenity of the care center.



The ceiling in the Serenity Rom is just one of the unique features of the new center.



Donna Ramos, Volunteer Coordinator, Sheri Florizone, Manager of Volunteer Services, Maritza Amaro, Volunteer Coordinator, Janie Bennett, Veteran Volunteer Coordinator



The new center has two spacious cafe areas

Volunteer Services is working on a volunteer roster in preparation for the grand opening on September 19, 2025. If you are interested in volunteering opportunities at this location, please reach out to Janie B. at janie.bennett@gulfside.org

Bereavement

A Day for the Grieving

National Grief Awareness Day - August 30

By Kaitlin Marquez, MSW, GC-C, CT

To the hearts that are healing, grief has a way of arriving uninvited. It appears quietly in the stillness of early morning or boldly amid laughter. It doesn't follow a schedule or come with a manual. That's why August 30th, National Grief Awareness Day, matters because it gives us permission to acknowledge what we often try to hide. Founded by Angie Cartwright in 2014 after the loss of her mother, sister, and husband, she dedicated this day as a reminder that grief is not something to be fixed, but a process to be honored. Whether your loss was yesterday or years ago, it's still valid..



You've probably heard people say, "Time heals all wounds." But anyone who has grieved knows that's only partly true. Time may dull the sharpest edges, but grief remains in the folds of our lives within memories, anniversaries, and quiet reminders. National Grief Awareness Day recognizes that truth. Society often rushes people through grief, expecting quick recoveries and brave faces. This day challenges that narrative. It invites us to sit with the pain and let others do the same, without judgment.

You might mark the day by lighting a candle, writing in a journal, sharing a memory, or simply taking a breath and saying, "This still hurts, and that's okay." There's no right way to grieve, only your way.

If someone you know is grieving, consider reaching out. You don't need the perfect words. Just say, "I'm thinking of you." Be present, listen, and let them lead the way. Small gestures like sharing a memory, bringing a meal, or sitting in silence, can mean everything.

In honoring this day, we begin to build a world where grief isn't hidden. Where people don't have to pretend they're always okay. Where grief isn't seen as a weakness, but as a reflection of love.

Volunteer Spotlight: Dog Therapy at Rucki

Hearts of Gold:

Gulfside Volunteer Linda and her dog Lucy are regular visitors to Rucki Hospice Care Center in Zephyrhills. Their visits brighten everyone's day, from staff and visitors to patients and their family members. Lucy is registered with the Hearts of Gold Therapy Team. She is a Golden Retriever with the sweetest disposition and a real heart for hospice, just like her owner!



Meet Lucy!



Lucy offers comfort to hospice family members



All the nurses love Lucy!

**Gulfside Hospice
Thrift Shoppes**

Did you know that Gulfside Volunteers get a **volunteer discount** at all four **Gulfside Hospice Thrift Shoppe Locations**? Volunteers receive 50% off clothing and 25% off everything else! Visit one today to see what discounted treasures you can find!

From The Heart



Lucy and Linda's visits brighten everyone's day, from staff and visitors to patients and their family members.



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More Updates:

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@GulfsideHealthcareServices



Gulfside.org

Paulie Palooza

All-Day Free Music Festival

Sunday, November 16
11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Main Street Zephyrhills (5th Ave)

Live Music | Vendors | Food Trucks | Auction | 50/50 Drawings



All proceeds benefit



@GulfsideGiving

For more information:
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Veteran Volunteer Event

PATRIOT STATION PRESENTS

Tues. Aug 12, 2025



Jaci Bartley, Gulfside Healthcare Services

This month at The Patriot Station (a component of our Veterans/First Responder Program), GHS Social Services Manager Jaci Bartley led a thoughtful presentation on end-of-life planning and provided Veterans with advanced planning documents. Advance planning is one of the greatest gifts we can give our families—it relieves loved ones of difficult decisions during times of stress and ensures our wishes are respected. For Veterans, who often value preparedness and responsibility, having these conversations is especially important. Jaci was able to answer questions and give practical guidance on how to be ready so that families are cared for both now and in the future.



Lunch was generously donated by Baldwin Funeral (Panera Bread) and our community volunteer Roberta McClutchy treated everyone to her delicious homemade crumb cakes. We welcomed 18 Veterans to this month's gathering.

Patriot Station takes place every 2nd Tuesday of the month. All Veterans are invited to come and enjoy a free lunch. This event is made possible through a GHS partnership with One Community Now.

Thank you to everyone who contributes—Patriot Station truly is an amazing event each month!

Tell A Friend

Gulfside's volunteer department is looking for volunteers to help in the following areas:

Caregiver Respite - Assist caregivers by being with a patient in the home while the caregiver runs errands or simply takes some time for themselves.

Companionship - Provide companionship to hospice patients. Companionship activities could include playing cards, reading, or simply talking about fond memories with the patients.

Veteran Volunteers - Match with veteran patients for companionship or respite. May also assist with pinning ceremonies to recognize the veteran patient and other veteran specific opportunities. Hours vary based on need.

Pet Peace of Mind - Deliver pet food to patients. May also assist in completing paperwork for patient's pets to enroll in the Pet Peace of Mind Program. Hours vary based on need.

Kitchen Support - Assist with light kitchen duties at **Rucki Care Center** (East Pasco) and **Weil Care Center** (West Pasco)

Care center reception- Support patients by offering spiritual comfort, regardless of a patient's denomination or faith.

facebook

join our group +

Join the new Volunteer Facebook Group!

Gulfside volunteers have a new way of staying connected! If you are on Facebook, we invite you to join our new Facebook group created just for our volunteers.



We'll share information about what's coming up, fun facts, inspirational messages, photos from events, and more. Plus, you can use the group to share your experience as a volunteer and connect with other volunteers.

To join, visit [FB.com/GulfsideHealthcareServices](https://www.facebook.com/GulfsideHealthcareServices) and go to the "Groups" tab, or scan the QR code above with your smartphone.



Support Hospice

Everywhere You Drive

With every purchase of a Florida Hospice specialty license plate, \$25 goes to support end-of-life care programs and outreach through Florida Hospice & Palliative Care. Plates are available at your local Tax Collector's Office or visit supportfloridahospice.com.