

Hearts *for Hospice*

WINTER 2026

A Bridge to Solace

*Supporting families through quiet
and profound moments*

Charity Care

When Patients Come First

New Years

Reflections



Hello, and Happy New Year!

Thank you to all of you, who so graciously and generously support Gulfside Hospice through the years. We are forever grateful for friendship, partnership and commitment to our hospice mission in serving those in need.

2025 was a very eventful year for us! We launched Hospice services in Hillsborough County after the Agency for Healthcare Administration awarded Gulfside Hospice the Certificate of Need to serve that county in need. We opened our second free-standing Hospice Inpatient Care Center, the Dr. Jay Weil Center for Hospice Care, and are now serving patients and families. We launched Hospice services in Pinellas County following another successful Certificate of Need award through the State agency. We converted our patient electronic health record from KanTime to MatrixCare to provide more efficiency, higher technology, and minimization of manual input, so that our clinicians could focus on what they do best — caring for patients at bedside. And finally, we surpassed our Pasco County Hospice census above 700 patients served daily in our founding County due to our excellent patient care and the support of the Pasco County healthcare community.

All of this growth, expansion and success was made possible by the entire Gulfside Team. Every department, employee, leader, volunteer, staff level,

and service line helped in making the greatest impact on the Tampa Bay region, our patients, the communities we serve and each other. Gulfside Healthcare Services is strong due to the commitment of over 500 employees and over 300 volunteers making a difference every day.

I hold firm to the goal of remaining a mission-driven, non-profit health system that never turns anyone away for the inability to pay nor having insurance. Because of our special and appreciated Donors, our fundraising activities and initiatives, and our Thrift Shoppes, we can serve anyone in need, even if we are not reimbursed or we receive less reimbursement than what it costs to care for a patient. That is our passion and mission, and what makes Gulfside unique and committed to anyone in need.

Again, my deepest thanks to you! I look forward to a very successful, growth-oriented 2026 in serving more people in need of our excellent Hospice services throughout the Tampa Bay area. May each of you have a healthy, happy and joyful year.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Linda L. Ward in cursive script.

Linda L. Ward
President and CEO

Charity Care

When Patients Come First

When a patient is facing a life-limiting illness, the weight of uncertainty can feel overwhelming. Add the rising cost of healthcare, and that burden becomes even heavier. Too often, patients and their families find themselves quietly wondering how they'll afford care during one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

As a nonprofit, Gulfside Hospice ensures that no patient or family is ever turned away due to an inability to pay. Through Gulfside's Charity Care Program, patients receive the hospice care they need.

Charity Care is not just financial assistance; it is compassion in action.

In the Tampa Bay area, more than 10% of local residents have no health insurance. For neighbors facing an end-of-life illness, Gulfside's Charity Care program is much-needed lifeline by providing compassionate, expert care when they need it most.

Funded by the generosity of individual, business, and foundation donors, the Charity Care program exists for one simple reason: to ensure that **no patient is turned away because of an inability to pay.**

Through Charity Care, patients receive the same high-quality services as every Gulfside family — including medications, medical equipment, nursing care, counseling, and bereavement support. In 2025, more than 5,000 patients spent their final days surrounded by comfort, dignity, and support, without the added fear of medical bills, thanks to the generosity of donors like you.

As Gulfside continues to expand hospice services into Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, the need for Charity Care grows as well. With more families reaching out for support across the Tampa Bay region, your support of the Charity Care Program ensures that access to compassionate end-of-life care is never limited by financial circumstances.



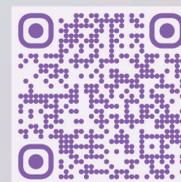
For families of hospice patients, this relief is profound. Instead of worrying about costs, they can focus on what truly matters — holding hands, sharing stories, and being present with the people they love.

Charity Care is not just financial assistance; it is compassion in action. It is neighbors helping neighbor, made possible only because of generous donors like you.

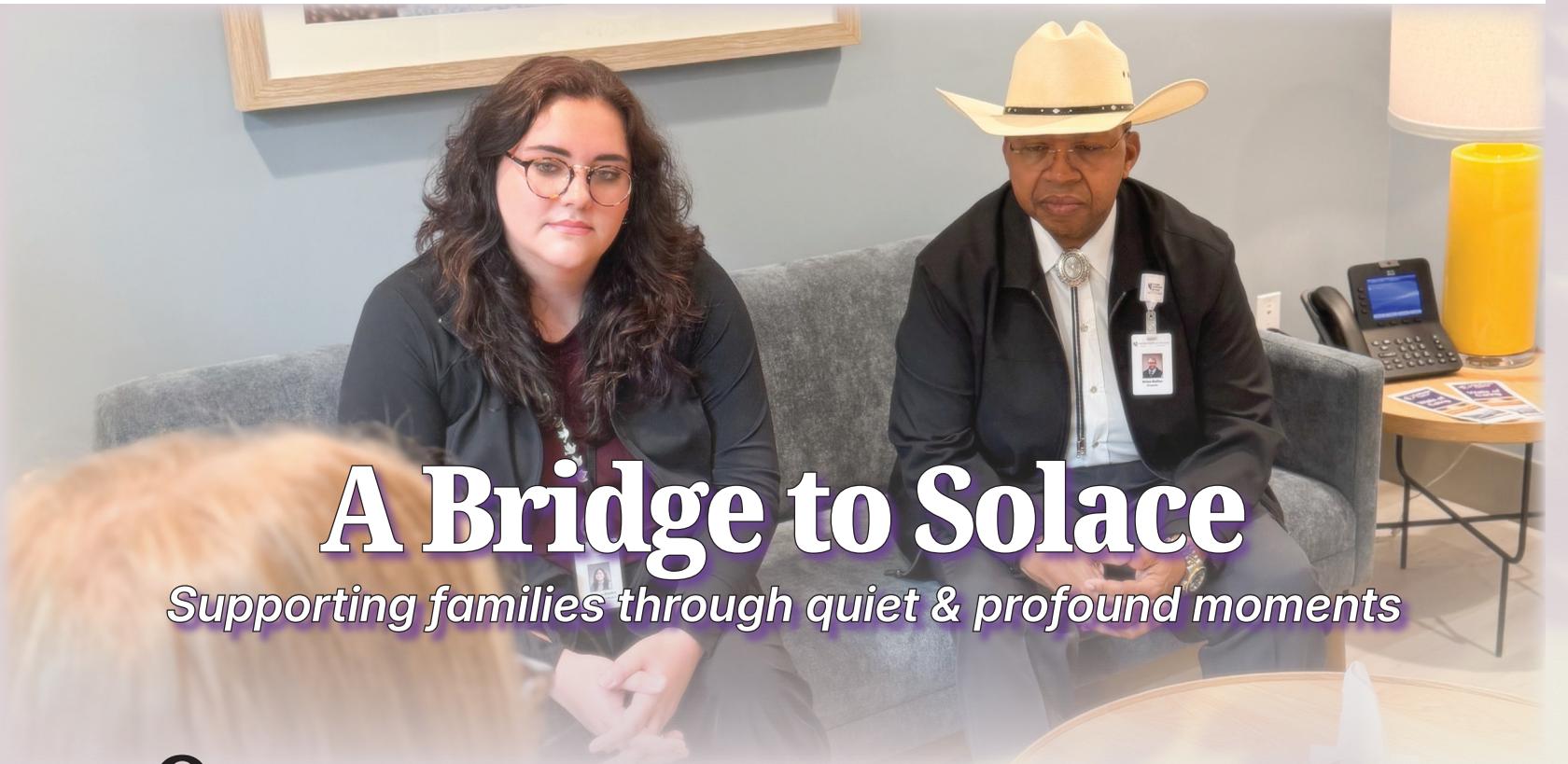
The QR code below connects you to ways you can support your neighbors throughout the year. It's a simple way to help ensure comfort and dignity are always within reach for families who need it most.

With the help of generous donors like you, patients across **Pasco, Hillsborough, and Pinellas Counties** will experience peace, comfort, and care in moments when they need it most.

Together, you can help ensure hospice care remains available for anyone facing an end-of-life illness who turns to Gulfside, now and in the years to come.



Make Compassion Possible



A Bridge to Solace

Supporting families through quiet & profound moments

Q uiet moments. Small acts. Presence over procedures.

There are moments at the end of life that families don't always recognize in real time.

The room grows still, the monitors fade into the background, conversations soften, even time seems to slow down. While families may experience this as a quiet pause, the Gulfside Hospice care team understands its significance and knows these moments call for presence, not procedures.

For chaplains, this work is less about having the right words and more about simply being present.

Brian Butler has served as a chaplain at Gulfside Hospice for nearly six years and has spent more than 26 years walking alongside patients and families at the end of life.

"The quiet moments are the times I spend with non-responsive patients holding their hands, offering whispered and sometimes silent prayer at the bedside."

When families are sitting in silence, presence itself becomes the care they need.

"Being present means offering spiritual and

emotional support without words, through eye contact, open posture, and simply being there."

What many people misunderstand about end-of-life care, Brian says, is the idea that hospice is defined by tasks or treatments.

"The heart of this work isn't the services we provide or the skills we bring. It's the caregiver, the person who reminds those at the end of life that they are still seen and valued."

While chaplains tend to the quiet moments inside the room, social workers are often supporting everything happening just outside of it — the questions, the worries, and the emotions families carry but don't always say out loud.

For Becky Bonko, a Gulfside Hospice social worker, families often arrive with the same fears.



"They worry about what the dying process will look like and the pain, the suffering. Many often wonder if choosing hospice means they are 'giving up' or failing the person they love."

Much of Becky's work helps families understand that these fears are not only common — they are human.



"I frequently reassure families that their fear, sadness, and even moments of relief are all valid," she shares. "Many also need to hear that they are not doing anything wrong by choosing comfort-focused care."

At Gulfside Hospice, social workers and chaplains work side-by-side as part of an interdisciplinary team — ensuring care extends beyond medical needs to include emotional and spiritual support for both patients and families.

Together, they help families slow down. Breathe. And feel less alone.

At the end of the day, what they hope families remember is not a checklist, but a feeling.

"People will forget what you said or what you did," Brian reflects, "but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Becky hopes families leave with something just as enduring — the understanding that love doesn't end at death, that the care they gave mattered deeply, and that they have permission to grieve in their own way and in their own time.

This is what hospice care looks like when presence matters more than procedures.

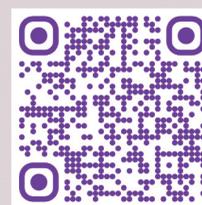
When slowing down becomes an act of compassion.

When families are reminded, they do not have to walk this path alone.

Donations Help Make These Moments Possible

Your gift helps ensure patients and families receive compassionate care — emotional, spiritual, and medical — when they need it most. Consider making a gift of any amount to help a hospice patient and family in need today.

Scan the QR code below to support Gulfside Hospice.



Did You Know?

- More than 40,000 Tampa Bay residents ages 55–64 are uninsured — too young for Medicare, ineligible for Medicaid, and often too sick to work
- Hospice needs are rising rapidly in our community, with patient demand projected to increase by 16% in Hillsborough, 15% in Pasco, and 7% in Pinellas County in the coming year.
- 1 in 4 adults in Florida is currently caring for a loved one with complex medical needs, and 41% experience high emotional stress — yet most have never received respite or grief support.
- Your gift helps ensure patients and families across Tampa Bay receive comfort, dignity, and care — regardless of their ability to pay.

In Loving Memory

Recognizing gifts received between October 15, 2025, and January 1, 2026

Walls of Caring

James D. Grib
Clay Blommel
Daniel Cunneen

Butterfly Memorial Garden

Henrietta Cohen
Michael Giacini
Kathleen Kiely
Richard Smolinski
Dorothy Worrell

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Stories from the Heart

*Quiet moments. Shared humanity.
Stories that heal us.*

At Gulfside Hospice, every family, every caregiver, and every patient leaves an imprint on our hearts. Stories from the Heart honors these moments, the ones filled with tenderness, reflection, and love.

Within these pages, families and caregivers share what hospice care meant to them during some of life's most meaningful days. Their words speak to comfort when it mattered most, dignity through every step, and the power of simply being present.

These stories are possible because of compassionate supporters like you — and they remind us that even in the hardest seasons, connection and love endure.

Have a story to share?

We would be honored to hear it. Call 727-845-5707 or email katya.guillaume@gulfside.org to be featured in a future issue.

Looking for more Stories from the Heart?

Scan the QR code or visit gulfside.org/hearts-for-hospice to read past issues, watch videos, and explore written reflections from families across our community.



Scan to Read More

EVENT CALENDAR

FEB 07



Gear up for an exciting chance to make a lasting impact! Gulfside Hospice is hosting the **14th Annual Hittin' the Road for Hospice** starting at the Gulfside Hospice Thrift Shoppe in New Port Richey. Sign up now for a chance to win the Wings & Wheels Trophy, or become a sponsor. Visit www.HittinTheRoadForHospice.org to sign up.

APR 24



Give back and have fun at the **6th Annual Charity Casino Night** on Friday, April 24, benefitting Gulfside Hospice! Enjoy an evening filled with favorite casino games like Black Jack, Roulette, Poker, Craps, and Texas Hold 'Em, along with adult beverages, delicious food, a photo booth and casino-style entertainment. Visit www.CharityCasinoNight.org for additional details and to purchase tickets.

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT CODE!
Use coupon code **HFH0126** when purchasing to receive \$20 off each ticket! Valid until February 28, 2026.

For more information about upcoming events, contact Marissa Hartley at marissa.hartley@gulfside.org or 727-845-5707.

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Hearts *for Hospice*

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