

Reflections Newsletter

Winter 2021 | 888.823.8880 | gilchristcares.org



Every Day Is a Gift

In this Issue...

At Gilchrist, nothing is more important than the wellbeing and safety of our patients and families. That means taking every safety precaution so we can keep patients in their homes and out of the hospital while maintaining the highest quality of life. Read how our Gilchrist Kids team worked together to help one of our youngest patients and her family make every day meaningful while staying safe. **Also in this issue:** how home-based elder medical care helped an “amazing” patient get back to what matters most, our latest grief services offerings, Gilchrist in the news, and our upcoming Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Celebration.

Above: Two-year-old Shoshanna Drinks, Gilchrist Kids patient.



Keeping Her Safe

Shoshanna Drinks is a sweet, cherub-cheeked two-year-old who was born with Tay-Sachs disease, a rare genetic illness for which there is no cure. After developing normally for the first year of life, she started losing abilities such as feeding herself, sitting up and communicating. Last summer, her parents noticed Shoshanna's symptoms growing more serious. After consulting with their pediatrician, they started care with Gilchrist Kids.

Shoshanna's mother, Renny Drinks, says the Gilchrist team has helped improve her daughter's quality of life and provide valuable support to her and her husband.

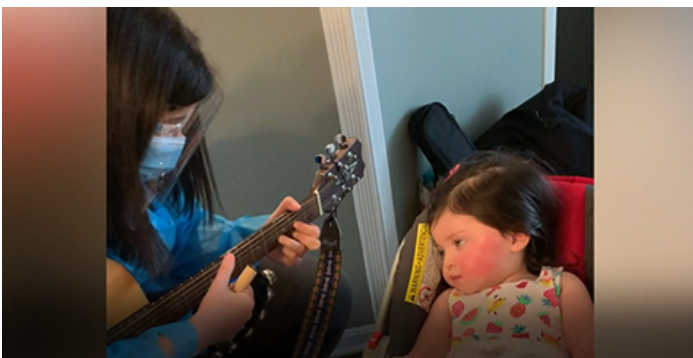
"This is a scary situation—we have never done this before and we don't know at times what's happening with her," says Renny. "It's really helpful to have a team to help us through so we are not alone."

Shoshanna has a weakened immune system, so keeping her safe during the pandemic has been paramount. The family has been quarantining in their house as much as possible since last March, allowing only the Gilchrist Kids team to visit.

To ensure safety, Gilchrist team members follow strict safety protocols when visiting Shoshanna, as they do for all patients. These measures include meticulous hand washing and wearing full protective gear such as masks, a face shield, a gown and gloves.

The family is grateful to receive medical care for their daughter at home, rather than a doctor's office where the risk of infection would be higher. They also appreciate having a comprehensive team—a Gilchrist physician, nurse, social worker, chaplain, hospice aide, music therapist and child life therapist—working together to address all of their needs.

Renny notes that while pediatric hospice implies something bleak, it is comforting to have the caring support of hospice.



Lacy Kidwell, Gilchrist music therapist, plays guitar and sings to Shoshanna.



Shoshanna Drinks with mother, Renny, and father, Eric.

The team, led by Dr. Bridget Pekrul, focuses on allowing Shoshanna to experience the highest quality of life possible. Gilchrist Kids nurse Erin Bull takes care of all of Shoshanna's medical needs and provides support for Renny and her husband.

"It's nice to have access to an expert 24 hours a day to consult with about her symptoms and what to do next," Renny says.

Lacy Kidwell, a music therapist, sings to Shoshanna to engage her. Hospice aide Kimberly Ross provides "Caring Touch," a type of massage, three times a week. Child life therapist Kyra Georgas uses play therapy and works with Renny and her husband to create memory keepsakes. And social worker Adele Black and chaplain Don Hohne provide emotional support.

"We know how difficult it is for families who have a seriously ill child," says Erin, Shoshanna's nurse. "Everyone on our Gilchrist Kids team has dedicated ourselves to this work. We will always do everything we can to help kids like Shoshanna have the highest quality of life and to walk with families through their journey. No family will ever be alone."

Shoshanna died peacefully at home with her family on January 8, 2021.

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

Getting Back to What Matters: A Love of Life



Philip Easter, dubbed "The Amazing Memory Man" by local news, holding the first newspaper article written about his uncanny ability.

Elder Medical Care's home-based services made all the difference for Philip Easter.

Philip Easter has an extraordinary memory, with an encyclopedic knowledge of dates and events in history. Name any date and he can tell you a famous person born on that day or its historical significance. His memory has garnered him media attention from newspapers and local TV and radio shows. Philip has even been the subject of a Johns Hopkins research study: Neuropsychological Investigation of "The Amazing Memory Man."

Until his health declined a little more than a year ago, he led a full life, giving lectures at the library on one of his favorite topics—Olympic history—sharing his knowledge with the community, and publishing a memoir, "Timepoints," about his life experiences, which are plentiful. He has traveled extensively, attended the Munich and Montreal Olympics in 1972 and 1976, and completed eight marathons.

In December 2019, Philip suffered a stroke and fell in his apartment, fracturing his hip and pelvis. Philip, who lives alone, could not get to his phone. Luckily, an upstairs neighbor heard his cry for help and called 911. Philip fell unconscious and awoke in the hospital.

"I spent New Year's Eve in the ICU," he recalls. "I've been in the hospital several times, and it's scary."

His recovery, first in the hospital and then a nursing facility, was long and difficult. For months, he experienced intense pain and weakness. When he

arrived back home, traveling to and from medical appointments was onerous and exhausting, and he had to rely on friends to drive him. At one of these appointments, his doctor recommended Gilchrist's Elder Medical Care program, which provides home-based medical care and support.

"It feels good to have this support and to be connected—it makes a difference. I should have had this years ago."

— Philip Easter

Philip has been in the Elder Medical Care program since last September. Gilchrist geriatrician Dr. Aaron Charles calls Philip regularly to check up on him and manage his medications. Social worker Amy Hewat provides emotional support and helps with things like navigating benefits and accessing community resources.

Amy helped him send an absentee ballot in the November election so his vote would be counted. Voting in 13 presidential elections is a source of pride for Philip, as is his distinction of being the first person to notice that the George Washington Monument in Baltimore was engraved with the incorrect inauguration date of the first president.

Gilchrist's home-based care and support have helped Philip maintain a high quality of life. He doesn't have to leave home to receive high-quality medical care, and twice a month, a Gilchrist volunteer delivers food to him as part of the Pantry

to Porch program.

"I felt lost before," said Philip. "It feels good to have this support and to be connected—it makes a difference. I should have had this years ago."

Philip hopes in the coming year he can restart his lectures at the library. He already has a topic in mind—amazing and touching stories that combine events in his personal life with events in history. In the meantime, he is happily continuing his quest of what he calls a genuine love of life and continuous learning.

To learn more about Gilchrist's Elder Medical Care program, visit gilchristcares.org/emc.



Let 2021 Be the Year of Hope



Gilchrist's Grief Services team is here for you.

As we make our way through the beginning months of 2021, the Gilchrist Grief Services team wants our community to know that we are here for you. Many of us have faced great pain and loss since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Many lives were lost, and we have all become intimately familiar with what it means to feel lonely and socially isolated.

Grieving is difficult enough, but combined with the added stress of the pandemic and social distancing, your grief may feel even more painful and overwhelming. Gilchrist will continue to be here to help you cope with your grief. We have shifted many of our in-person services to virtual offerings to help people out of their isolation while staying safe. Our Grief Services team offers individual grief counseling, support groups, workshops and special events throughout the year.



Individual Grief Counseling

Our master's prepared staff provide short-term grief counseling to individuals and families. While in-person visits are on hold, we are offering grief telehealth by phone or by Zoom. Our counselors will help you to understand what you are feeling and what you can expect as you grieve. Many people wonder if what they are feeling is "normal," but it's important to know there is no one right way to grieve. We are here to support you and help you cope with whatever emotions you may be feeling.



Support Groups

Gilchrist's trained facilitators lead support groups either in a six-week or drop-in format to those who have experienced a similar loss. Support groups allow people to connect, grieve and heal with others who have been in their shoes. The connections you build in such a group often last far beyond the six-week timeframe.

Gilchrist is currently offering a number of virtual support groups during days and evenings to accommodate different schedules. Support group topics include but are not limited to Loss of a Spouse, Loss of a Parent, Loss of a Child, and Men's Group.

Special Events and Workshops

Gilchrist offers several annual events that allow the community to come together to honor their loved ones lost. Our next event, Steps of Hope, will be held virtually in early summer. Other special events include Wellness Day (fall), Honoring the Women in Our Lives (spring) and Twilight in the Woods (early winter).

Our counselors and trained facilitators also lead single-session workshops, designed to heal and educate about grief. Workshops include yoga and breathwork, memory making, journaling, help with the holidays, and more.

We are grateful to be able to continue offering our grief services to the community during this time. We will continue to monitor the pandemic and adapt our



care as appropriate, with your health and wellbeing as our priorities. Our grief counseling team looks forward to a time when we can again meet in person—to share hugs, smiles and laughter—as we help you create a different yet meaningful life full of hope and joy.

Registration is required for all virtual support groups, workshops and events. Most programs are free, but the number of participants is limited.

To learn more, visit gilchristcares.org/grief-support-groups. You can also call our Care Navigation line at 888.823.8880 between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Gilchrist Healthcare Workers Receive Vaccines

When vaccines became available in December, Gilchrist frontline workers were among the first to receive vaccinations. All Gilchrist staff have now been offered the opportunity to receive two doses of the vaccine. The safety of our patients and our community is our priority. Gilchrist staff will continue to take every precaution, including wearing personal protective equipment and washing hands.

Maryland is now rolling out the vaccine to the public in different priority groups in order of relative risk. The amount of vaccines received from the state remains very low and, to date, Maryland has not provided a plan for vaccinating homebound patients. Gilchrist is currently advocating at both the state and local levels to make sure our homebound

patients are included and given priority in vaccination efforts moving forward.

We also encourage you to contact your local representatives and state departments of health to elevate the concern and need on behalf of elderly loved ones. In addition, you can utilize state websites for available vaccine locations: www.marylandvax.org and www.covidvax.maryland.gov or you can dial 311 if the patient lives in Baltimore County. The patient will be placed on a registry and the Department of Aging will reach out to help schedule appointments when available.

Please continue to wear masks and maintain social distancing, even if you have received the vaccine.



Gilchrist in the News

Gilchrist and its staff were recently featured in multiple news outlets.

To watch and read these stories, visit gilchristcares.org/news.



Gilchrist President Catherine Hamel was featured in *The Daily Record's* Movers and Shakers column for her promotion to GBMC executive vice president of continuing care.



Gail Blackburn, Gilchrist Associate Clinical Director, discusses the effects of social isolation on hospice patients and the measures Gilchrist is taking to address it.



Dr. Aaron Charles, geriatrician and Associate Medical Director at Gilchrist, discusses common myths about hospice and why the earlier a patient starts hospice, the more they can benefit.

THE BALTIMORE SUN



Multiple media outlets featured Gilchrist in stories about the construction of our new Gilchrist Center Baltimore hospice center at the former Memorial Stadium site.

THE BALTIMORE SUN

Gilchrist President Catherine Hamel was quoted in a story on the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award earned by the GBMC Health System, including Gilchrist.



Tracie Schwoyer-Morgan, Manager of Palliative Care at Gilchrist, explains the difference between hospice and palliative care and who might benefit from each.

Gilchrist Physician Again Named 'Top Doc'



Gilchrist physician Delia Chiamonte, MD was named in the *Baltimore* magazine "Top Docs 2020" survey in the November issue. Dr. Chiamonte was recognized in the categories of Palliative Medicine and Alternative/Complementary Medicine. Gilchrist Board members Paul Celano, MD and Timothy Doran, MD also were named 'Top Docs.' To derive the list, the magazine surveyed 14,000 area physicians asking them which doctors are the best of the best in their specialties. Only about five percent of all the MDs in the area received the overwhelming peer support needed to make this prestigious list.

Sub-acute Unit Ranked Among Nation's Best Nursing Homes

The GBMC Sub-acute Unit, with medical care provided by Gilchrist, once again received the highest possible rating on *U.S. News & World Report's* 2021 list of the Best Nursing Homes, released in October. The report ranks nursing facilities nationwide on a 1-to-5 rating scale, based on evaluations from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, considering 10 quality measures focusing on factors like patient care and safety outcomes, staffing data and health inspection reports. This year, the nursing home profile pages were updated to include a patient safety summary that reflects COVID-19 data alongside other measurements of safety. U.S. News rated over 15,000 nursing homes to come up with the list. The Sub-acute Unit, located at GBMC, is a 27-bed unit licensed as a skilled nursing facility. It serves patients who need short-term rehabilitation following a hospitalization, with the goal of returning to their prior level of function and independence.

To learn more about Gilchrist's rehabilitation services, visit gilchristcares.org/emc-rehab.

2020 Virtual Gilchrist Ball

On December 5, 2020, the community came together *virtually* to raise invaluable funds for Gilchrist at the biennial Gilchrist Ball.

Despite the reimagined format, \$450,000 was raised to benefit hospice services in our three inpatient centers in Towson, Howard County and Baltimore City. The event, featuring members of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the School for the Arts, highlighted several Gilchrist stories. Many thanks to our generous sponsors and incredible donors, as well as to the Gilchrist Ball committee, led by chairs Mitchell and Nell Goetze and honorary chairs Ed and Barbara Brody.

If you missed it, you can still watch the event by visiting gilchristcares.org/GilchristBall.

We look forward to being together in person at the next Gilchrist Ball on December 3, 2022.





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Follow Us:     

Catherine Y. Hamel	President
Stacy Bellmore	Director of Marketing
Kristina Rolfes	Content Manager
Gregg Harrow	Creative Manager



**Gilchrist's 3rd Annual
Welcome Home
Vietnam Veterans Day
Celebration**

March 28, 2021
Virtual Event at 3:00 p.m.

For up-to-date details and to register, visit:
gilchristcares.org/welcome-home-celebration




Flag art by Emily Villagaray, Gunpowder Elementary School

WE HONOR VETERANS