

Reflections Newsletter

Spring 2024

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Living Every Moment

In this Issue...

Ten years ago, a group of seven widowed, each grappling with the profound loss of their spouse, met at a six-week grief group hosted by Gilchrist. Unbeknownst to them at the time, these sessions were merely the start of a remarkable journey that would guide them through the most challenging times of their lives, fostering an unbreakable bond.

Also in this issue: A Gilchrist patient embraces life's final chapter surrounded by family and friends, a tribute to a Gilchrist volunteer marking 30 years of dedicated service, an in-depth exploration of Gilchrist's music therapy program, a heartfelt Welcome Home to our Vietnam Veterans, and more.

gilchrist

30 Years
Living Every Moment

A Decade Together: The Unbreakable Bond of a Gilchrist Grief Group

Ten years ago, a group of seven widows, each grappling with the profound loss of their spouse within a span of six months, found themselves brought together by fate. They met at a six-week grief group hosted by Gilchrist called Loss of a Spouse/Life Partner. Unbeknownst to them at the time, these sessions were merely the start of a remarkable journey that would guide them through the most challenging times of their lives, fostering an unbreakable bond and forming a unique family of sorts.

The Early Days:

Gilchrist's grief groups serve as safe havens for members to share their deepest sorrows and struggles. "When I finally got to the point where I was with these people, it was like, 'oh, now I can let it down'," Meg B. reflects on her first meetings. "Everybody understands. I don't have to explain a thing. I don't have to pretend that I have it all together- I had nothing together." Dave S. recalls when he joined the group, sharing: "The timing was perfect for me. It was about nine months after my wife passed away, and I was in the 'What do I do with myself now?' mode."

"It's just been a good group. We're all from different backgrounds, different ages, different whatever. And we've all just gotten along and gelled from day one"
- Margy M.

As time progressed, the shared experiences became the foundation of a deep and enduring connection. "We had one session where we were asked to bring in a photo of our spouse and everyone had an opportunity to talk about them," Dave S. shares. "That was such a catharsis for me to know that I wasn't alone, and I probably was hurting no more or less than any of these other folks. That was so reassuring to me."

The unique comfort found in the grief group contrasted with the general discomfort often encountered in other settings. "Sometimes talking about our spouses with other people after they passed away made other people uncomfortable a bit," Meg B. says. "But in this group, we talked about our spouses. Even to this day, I mean, we still talk about them. Carl will always be a part of my life. He's in the air."

Growing Together:

After the six sessions ended with Gilchrist, the group ventured on to monthly dinner meetings. Jeanne J. reminisces about the initial group's gatherings, "We just sat around a dinner table and talked," she reflects fondly, "We got to know each other. And we connected. We talked about children and family and politics. And we needed help. Different people would have different things they were going through that we would discuss then."

The Impact of Togetherness:

Over the decade, this group has been there for each other through more than just grief. They've vacationed together, celebrated retirements, supported each other through illnesses and surgeries, and even attended one another's weddings. And when they aren't together in person, they communicate in other ways. Through COVID, the group stayed in touch through Zoom calls. And one member, Beryl R., still makes sure to send the group members a joke of the day each and every morning.

Looking Ahead:

The group looks forward to continuing its tradition of support and friendship. It plans to keep traveling, celebrating, and being there for one another, proving that the bonds formed in the wake of loss can last a lifetime. The Gilchrist Grief Group is a testament to the power of human connection in healing, demonstrating that the most unexpected and sustaining friendships can emerge from the depths of sorrow.

Explore Gilchrist's grief support options at gilchristcares.org/grief-support.

Embracing Life's Final Chapter and Finding Family in Hospice



In the serene setting of Gilchrist Center Howard County, a remarkable story of courage, acceptance, and peace unfolds through the experiences of Michael Bartels. Diagnosed with colon and liver cancer in August of last year, Michael chose the path of hospice, guided by a profound acceptance of life's inevitable conclusion and his desire to experience his last moments to the fullest. "Gilchrist has been like being placed amongst family; everyone treats you with dignity and respect. You get personalized care," Michael states, highlighting the comfort he's received at Gilchrist.

"Gilchrist has been like being placed amongst family... everyone treats you with dignity and respect."

Michael's story is not just a battle with a terminal diagnosis but a narrative that reflects a lifetime of service, resilience, and the pursuit of meaning. A native of Iowa, Michael's life changed direction in 1974 with his military enlistment, leading to global travels and a notable period in Germany. Over seven years, his military service fostered values of discipline, honor, and the bond of camaraderie.

Michael's legacy as a veteran was honored at Gilchrist in a Salute to Service Tribute that he describes as "Wonderful, very moving, and dignified." Gilchrist's We Honor Veterans program arranges for veteran volunteers

in full uniform to pay tribute to fellow veterans, providing a poignant and respectful final salute. This initiative has offered thousands of veterans and their families a special and memorable acknowledgment of their service. For Michael's salute, participating Vietnam veterans representing his era paid tribute to his service, affirming the respect and gratitude owed to him for serving his country.

Gilchrist offers our patients a range of comprehensive programs, from music therapy to bereavement counseling. In his journey at Gilchrist, Michael has experienced a few of the holistic care programs we provide, including Reiki sessions and visits from a therapy dog. Additionally, the intimate setting of Michael's room overlooking the patio and garden has become a haven for visitors where Michael can connect and share precious moments and memories with friends.

Michael's advice to others is to cherish every day as if it were the last. "You will be rewarded more by the people you touch," he says. Michael Bartels' story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit in the face of life's most daunting challenges. For the past 30 years, Gilchrist has provided not just medical care but a sanctuary where individuals like Michael can find peace and honor and live every moment to its fullest.

Mr. Bartels passed away peacefully at Gilchrist Center Howard County on March 28, 2024.

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



The Enduring Impact of a Volunteer:

Marjorie Oakey's 30 Years at Gilchrist

Marjorie Oakey, a steadfast advocate, stands in the heart of Gilchrist's remarkable volunteer program, among the 380 devoted souls who offer their time and compassion. For 30 years, Marjorie has been an integral part of the Gilchrist family, representing the spirit of selfless service and profoundly impacting the lives of those around her.

Marjorie, who is about to celebrate her 90th birthday this year, has woven the fabric of her life with the threads of volunteerism, long before it was recognized as a formal concept. Reflecting on her journey, she shares, "In my generation, volunteerism wasn't called volunteerism—when somebody needed help in the neighborhood, you did it." Her commitment to serving others began in the schools of her 11 children and continued to flourish as she moved from Chicago to Maryland. After her children were grown, Marjorie transitioned her volunteer efforts to GBMC and subsequently to Gilchrist, right from the moment it opened its doors.

Marjorie's contributions at Gilchrist have been as varied as they are significant. She has done everything from administrative tasks and computer work to the simple yet profound act of making coffee. Stationed at the front desk of Gilchrist Center Towson for years, she was often the first point of contact for families in their most vulnerable moments. Marjorie's warm smile and gentle greeting provided a much-needed sense of comfort and familiarity. "I felt people coming in just needed someone to have a smile on their face and say hello. When you ever have to go through an experience like that, it's very hard emotionally," she recalls.

"I felt people coming in just needed someone to have a smile on their face and say hello."

The evolution of hospice care over the past three decades has not gone unnoticed by Marjorie. She has witnessed a growing awareness and a broader support system extending beyond the patients to include their families. Gilchrist's comprehensive approach, which includes grief counselors, chaplains, and volunteers like Marjorie, ensures that no one has to navigate their



Marjorie Oakey, Gilchrist Volunteer

journey alone. Marjorie fondly remembers her small gesture of leaving cookies and a tea bag for a grieving wife, a token of kindness that was never forgotten.

Gilchrist's volunteer program is enriched by activities that range from offering companionship, delivering nourishing meals, and crafting memory bears to the comforting act of baking cookies on-site, infusing the hospice with the comforting aroma of home-baked goods. Some volunteers have even embraced the sincere role of death doula, providing solace and support at the bedside to those nearing life's end.

Marjorie Oakey's 30 years of volunteer service at Gilchrist is a testament to the overwhelming impact one individual can have on the lives of many. Her journey of selfless service, marked by empathy, kindness, and a deep understanding of life's most delicate moments, continues to inspire and resonate within the Gilchrist community and beyond.

To learn more about volunteering for Gilchrist, visit gilchristcares.org/volunteer.

Philanthropy Spotlight



Paulina Nemec, a New York Life agent, along with her husband Ed and son Mason, proudly presented a \$25,000 Community Impact Grant to Gilchrist Center Howard County courtesy of New York Life. Margaret Kim and Sonny Richardson from the Gilchrist Board, along with our dedicated Center staff, gratefully accepted this generous grant on behalf of the Center. This funding is pivotal in enabling Gilchrist to provide compassionate care to countless hospice patients throughout the county annually.

Leaving your Legacy with Gilchrist

Single Life Immediate Charitable Gift Annuity Rates effective January 1, 2024:

AGE	RATE
65	5.7%
70	6.3%
80	8.1%
90	10.1%

A charitable gift annuity with Gilchrist is a gift that gives back. It can provide you and/or another beneficiary with stable income for life. You may also receive an immediate income tax deduction. Current rates have increased for the third time in 18 months, so right now an annuity could provide you with more income and more financial security while also supporting Gilchrist's legacy of exceptional patient care.

See for yourself what these new rates, effective January 1, 2024, might mean for you.

To learn more about legacy giving options such as Charitable Gift Annuities, IRA rollovers, or beneficiary designations, please visit gilchristcares.org/giving.

“Supporting Gilchrist through a bequest allows me to leave a legacy of compassion and kindness. My aim is to have a lasting impact on the lives of patients and families in need in Howard County. Knowing that my gift will support compassionate care for patients with critical illness brings me immense peace. It reflects my belief in the importance of providing comfort and solace to those facing end-of-life challenges. I’m honored to support Gilchrist’s mission and to contribute to the well-being of others.”

- C. J. Openshaw

Welcoming Home Vietnam Veterans



On Sunday, April 7, Gilchrist employees showed their immense support and dedication by participating and volunteering at the sixth annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration. It was a day filled with heartfelt appreciation for Vietnam veterans and their families, recognizing their courage and sacrifices. The event, led by Senator/Colonel John C. Astle, UMC (Ret.), and Colonel George Forrest, USA (Ret.), featured an inspirational keynote speech from Sammy and Dixie Davis.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all the Gilchrist employees who contributed their time and effort to make this celebration successful. Your participation and volunteer work truly made a difference in honoring our community's Vietnam veterans and their loved ones.

To learn more about our We Honor Veterans program and how you can get involved, visit gilchristcares.org/whv today!



Saluting Our Veterans

Our Vet-to-Vet Task Force, comprised of volunteers who have served in the military along with dedicated Gilchrist staff, organizes special ceremonies for veterans at end of life. One of our inspiring patients, John Angel, was recently honored with a Salute-to-Service Tribute. Enlisting in the US Army Air Forces in 1944, John served as a tail gunner on a B-29 Superfortress, participating in 34 combat missions over Japan and the Pacific Islands during World War II. Witnessing significant events like the departure of the Enola Gay, John's military service earned him numerous commendations, including the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.



John Angel honored in Salute-to-Service Tribute

John's Salute-to-Service Tribute included an opening prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and several patriotic readings. John was presented with the We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration. He also received a certificate from Gilchrist and a patriotic blanket handmade by a Gilchrist volunteer. The tribute concluded with an honor salute by the military veterans and the singing of God Bless America. John Angel proudly returned the salute.

To learn more about our We Honor Veterans program and Salutes to Service, visit gilchristcares.org/whv.

Harmony in Healing:

The Transformative Power of Gilchrist's Music Therapy Program

Lacy Kidwell, Gilchrist's first board-certified music therapist (MT-BC), pioneered its music therapy program nearly 12 years ago. This program leverages clinical music interventions to enhance patient well-being, targeting physical and mental improvements by stabilizing heart rates, alleviating anxiety, stimulating cognitive functions, and bolstering learning.

Lacy discovered music therapy at The Baltimore School for the Arts during a career day encounter with a music therapist. From that first introduction to music therapy, Lacy was captivated. She immediately saw it as the ideal way to blend her musical talents and desire to help others. It felt like the path she was meant to follow. Lacy first realized the power of music therapy in hospice care after a local tragedy, where she played music to comfort the grieving. Following the session, a woman approached her, expressing, "I don't know if I could've made it through that without the music." In that moment, Lacy realized it takes a special kind of person to work with the dying and bereaved. Lacy reflects, "Hospice has always been a calling for me."



Lacy Kidwell, Gilchrist's pioneering Music Therapist

be a wonderful tool for reflecting on their accomplishments and relationships and really celebrating life. "Music can instantly (within seconds) evoke feelings not experienced for years and completely change the mood of a person and bring back beloved and cherished memories that may have gone forgotten," Lacy says.

One of the most significant challenges faced by music therapists is gaining acknowledgment from the medical community regarding the efficacy of music therapy as a legitimate and impactful treatment modality. "While things are changing and music therapy is becoming more talked about, utilized, and recognized, it is our responsibility to continue to advocate, ensure best practice, and do our best to make services available to anyone who needs them."

"Music can instantly evoke feelings not experienced for years and completely change the mood of a person."

Despite the progression of disease, music remains a powerful medium that many of our patients at Gilchrist can still engage with, finding comfort, pleasure, and joy. It offers a space for meaningful self-expression even when words are no longer possible. Music allows patients and their families to connect with each other in their familiar roles, rather than merely as patient and caregiver. "It brings laughter back into what might be a sad space. And for many of our patients, as they face their final days, music can be a wonderful tool for reflecting on their accomplishments and relationships and really celebrating life," Lacy concludes.

To learn more about Gilchrist's Music Therapy program, visit gilchristcares.org/music-therapy.



The music therapy program at Gilchrist gives patients and families the time to engage with one another and brings joy into what might otherwise be a difficult moment. As patients reach their final days, music can



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gilchrist
Steps of Hope
A Tribute Walk

**Sunday, June 9, 2024,
2:00 p.m.**

**Cromwell Valley Park,
Willow Grove Entrance
Parkville, Maryland**

Join us to remember loved ones with an afternoon of healing in nature. Honor them as we walk together in reflection. This event will be held rain or shine.



REGISTRATION:
By May 24, 2024, visit:
gilchristcares.org/StepsOfHope
OR contact Christy Broderick at 443.849.8251.

SAVE THE DATE



**Sunday,
October 20
2024**

Turf Valley Resort | 5 p.m.
Chair: William "Sonny" Richardson



For tickets, visit:
GilchristCares.org/Taste

Join our community at the 39th annual Taste event, featuring top restaurants, live and silent auctions and much more!

**PROCEEDS BENEFIT HOSPICE SERVICES AT
GILCHRIST CENTER HOWARD COUNTY**