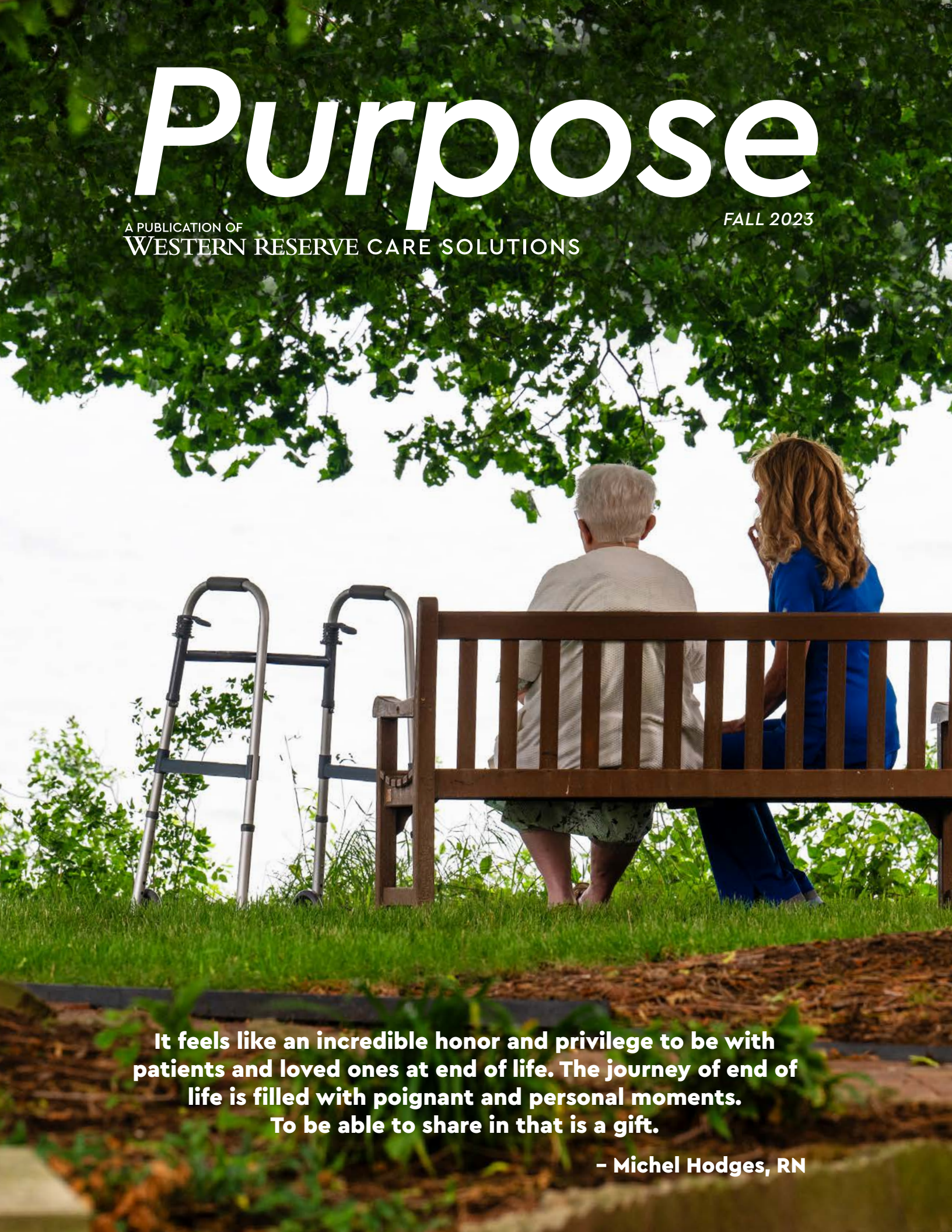


# Purpose

A PUBLICATION OF  
WESTERN RESERVE CARE SOLUTIONS

FALL 2023



**It feels like an incredible honor and privilege to be with patients and loved ones at end of life. The journey of end of life is filled with poignant and personal moments. To be able to share in that is a gift.**

**– Michel Hodges, RN**



FALL 2023

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 2

## OUR MISSION

*Hospice of the Western Reserve provides palliative and end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio.*

*In celebration of the individual worth of each life, we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care, and support effective grieving.*



at



**Purpose** is produced by the Marketing Communications team at Hospice of the Western Reserve. To contact the team, or request the digital edition, please send an email to [communication@hospicewr.org](mailto:communication@hospicewr.org).

800.707.8922 | [hospicewr.org](http://hospicewr.org)



Striving for Excellence:  
Kristin Jenkins, RN

3

Death Certificates:  
A Duty to Patients and Families

4

Diversity, Equity,  
& Inclusion Update

5

Ask A Clinician:  
India Rice, RN

6

Elizabeth Ford Pitorak:  
Pioneer of Hospice

7

About Town

9

Strengthening Belief Systems  
in Spiritual Care

11

Nonprofit Hospice vs.  
For Profit Hospice:  
What's the difference?

12

Wags and Warm Welcomes

13

Case Western Grad Volunteers  
with Comfort and Compassion

15

Honoring Service through Song

16

2023 Walk to Remember Recap

17

Welcome, Stacy Gilbert!

19



***Innovation.*** A word we use in describing a new idea for a product or a service. Over the past several decades, innovation has been a hallmark of healthcare. New methods are discovered every year which can predict oncoming disease. The progress made in surgical procedures is nothing short of revolutionary, and advances in public health have improved the lives of billions of people. With hospice services focusing on the end-of-life journey, what are the pathways for innovation? Are there new ideas that can help us provide the care and services in ways that enhance access and improve quality of care for those we serve?

Hospice care was born from innovation. Enhancing comfort is a key element of our care, yet it took some institutional discomfort to bring "hospice" into our lexicon. You will learn more about that legacy in the following pages, and how our history of creativity, dedication, and innovation is pushing us forward into the future.

As we enter our 45<sup>th</sup> year of operation, "innovation" is our celebratory theme. Hospice of the Western Reserve is dedicated to educating and engaging our community on the progress made in hospice and palliative care. Our purpose is to provide the best quality care to our patients and families, and it takes a spirit of innovation to fulfill that purpose.

Though the nature of work is calming and serene, what our staff and volunteers do through teamwork, and determination was once radical. Clinical teams help patients prepare for their final moments of life, bereavement counselors guide loved ones through their grief, and all of us work together as a team to provide a comfortable end-of-life journey for our neighbors throughout Northern Ohio.

We hope you enjoy the stories in the following pages showcasing our innovation over the past four decades.

For 45 years, you have supported us in our purpose. Indeed, you are our purpose, and we are grateful for your inspiration and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Finn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Bill Finn**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

A portrait of Kristin Jenkins, RN, a woman with short, wavy blonde hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a bright blue V-neck top and a delicate necklace with a small pendant. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light grey.

## *Striving for Excellence:* **Kristin Jenkins, RN**

**Western Reserve Care Solutions (WRCS)** takes pride in the expertise of its staff. Those who have the option to earn a certification in their field are strongly encouraged to do so. That strive towards excellence is evident throughout the entire service area, including territories served by newly acquired Stein Hospice.

Kristin Jenkins, RN, is the team leader for Stein's River team. She has 30 years of nursing experience, having been a surgical nurse, a director of nursing for a nursing home, and now, a hospice nurse. When HWR's education team opened up the agency's certification process to Stein's staff, Kristin jumped at the opportunity.

With her nursing experience, Kristin is no stranger to tests. Her drive, determination, and high standards for herself are evident. During the study and testing window to become a certified hospice and palliative care nurse (CHPN), she was juggling staff changes and an increased workload, and could not prepare in the way she wanted to. With Clinical Director Mike Marsh's encouragement, Kristin still sat for the test and passed with her certification.

Clearly, Kristin is a strong and skilled clinician. She holds a Master's of Business Healthcare Administration, a Master's of Business Marketing and a Master of Science in Nursing. She is also an influential team leader. Her success in becoming certified has her team wanting to become certified in their disciplines as well.

"Everybody does a good job," says Kristin. "People are good at what they do. So why don't you get the recognition of the job you do so well? You already do incredible work. So I'm encouraging my team to get the certification to recognize that."

Though now certified in her discipline, Kristin still considers herself a lifelong learner. She keeps her mind open to learning new things and always keeps her patients as the top priority.

"You always learn no matter what day it is," she says. "You should never want to stop learning. You want to give your patients and families the best benchmark care, and continuing your education will help foster that."

# Nonprofit Hospice vs. For-Profit Hospice: What's the difference?

The accessibility of hospice care has empowered millions of Americans to make their own medical decisions. Even though hospice is relatively new in the medical field, its revolutionary and holistic approach to end-of-life care is now woven into our healthcare system. It's been over 40 years since the first hospice opened in the United States, and today, half of all Americans die in hospice care.

Yet in the last 10 years, a shift has taken place. A November 2022 ProPublica report showed that today, more than 70% of hospices are owned by for-profit providers. For-profit hospices tend to focus on patients living with diseases like dementia, which usually involve longer stays but less costly interventions.

However, nonprofit hospices accept all patients, including those who require more costly interventions and complex care. In some instances, with for-profit hospice agencies, shortcuts and bottom lines take precedence over holistic needs. When profits are prioritized over patients, communities can suffer.

Western Reserve Care Solutions has been providing quality, comprehensive, holistic care to our neighbors in Northern Ohio for 45 years. We work collaboratively with our providers, our community partners, our distinguished board of directors, and others to ensure that we are providing care of the highest caliber. Profits are not our priority, our patients are.

It can be confusing when deciding where to turn. But there are steps you can take to ensure the best hospice choice. Consider these questions when deciding on who will care for your loved one:

- **Are hospice staff certified in their specialty?**
- **Does the agency offer enrichment programs such as comprehensive grief services and pet therapy?**
- **Is there specialized care for children? What about veteran-specific care?**
- **What is the reputation of a particular hospice program in your community?**
- **What are the agency's quality scores on [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov)?**
- **Talk with friends, neighbors, or coworkers who may have walked this journey before. Who would they recommend?**

The choice of hospice is an important one. If we have open dialogues with our loved ones about death, and if we seek out the options we have available to us, we can make sound decisions about what we want for ourselves, and for those we love.







# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Update

A Letter from  
Rev. Heidi L. Barham,  
M.Div, CT, CDP®

**As it says in our mission,** our purpose at Western Reserve Care Solutions is centered around celebrating the individual worth of each life as we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care and support effective grieving.

In furtherance of that mission and fulfilling our purpose, WRCS has been intentional in our efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This begins on day one of New Hire Orientation with a presentation focused on our organizational culture and strategy that includes our commitment to creating and sustaining our workforce by fostering a sense of belonging. Additional opportunities for education and engagement are made available to staff and volunteers.

We recognize that there is a level of mistrust of the healthcare system in general that can be greater within certain communities. We also acknowledge the existence of myths and misperceptions regarding hospice and palliative care that can create barriers to accessing the valuable services and resources we provide.

We have seen continued efforts that result in widening divisions across all lines, including, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, political affiliation, and socio-economic status. However, we believe that

we are better together and that there is great value in celebrating the unique gifts and talents we all bring to the table.

That is why WRCS remains committed to fostering stronger relationships and connections within the diverse communities we are privileged to serve. One way we do that is by working in collaboration with local organizations and community stakeholders to provide education and programming that addresses healthcare disparities and promotes health equity. These organizations include the Council on Older Persons (COOP), the Minority Health Alliance (MHA), the Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition (NEOBHC), and the Northeast Ohio Association for Hispanic Health (NOAHH), just to name a few. We are also engaged in this work on a national level through our work with the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI) and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO).

It was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, "All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." WRCS has been a part of the fabric of Northern Ohio for more than four decades. We will continue to do all that we can to strengthen the ties that bind us together.

## India Rice, RN

Site Supervisor at  
HMC Hospice of Medina County



### **What is hospice?**

Hospice is a holistic approach to providing quality, supportive, and compassionate care to individuals who are facing a terminal illness or life-limiting disease. The goal of hospice care is to achieve comfort at end-of life. This is accomplished by providing patient-centered care focusing on the whole person (the body, mind, and spirit). Hospice also provides caregiver support and comprehensive grief services.

### **Who is eligible for hospice?**

A person is eligible for hospice care when a physician or health care provider believes that the individual has a life-expectancy of six months or less. For those with a serious or advanced illness who may not need hospice, we also offer palliative care through our Western Reserve Navigator program. Palliative care ensures that you can continue receiving tests and diagnostics while also receiving holistic support through our services.


### **Where can I receive hospice care?**

Hospice care can be provided anywhere someone calls home, such as a private residence, a nursing facility, and even non-traditional locations such as a prison or shelter. Western Reserve Care Solutions has four inpatient units where patients can receive services in a peaceful setting, including HMC Hospice of Medina County.

### **What can I expect when receiving care at HMC Hospice of Medina County?**

When a patient is admitted to our inpatient unit, they can expect a sacred space to receive high-quality, compassionate care provided by highly trained individuals. Our care team consists of physicians, advanced practice nurses, registered and licensed practical nurses, state-tested nursing assistants, licensed social workers, spiritual care coordinators, bereavement coordinators, and extraordinary volunteers. Most of our clinicians are certified in hospice and palliative care, ensuring the expertise in their field. We have open visiting hours, so families can visit their loved ones any time of the day. Patients have access to our many complementary therapies, including music therapy, art therapy, reiki, and pet therapy. Families can also enjoy amenities such as our large family rooms with a television and fireplaces, our grounds with a picnic area and walking labyrinth, and a direct pathway to Carolyn Ludwig Mugarage Park. At HMC Hospice of Medina County, patients and families are treated as a member of our family.



A portrait of Elizabeth Ford Pitorak, a woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing a green tweed jacket over a brown top. She has a name tag on her left lapel and her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Elizabeth Ford Pitorak:

Pioneer of Hospice





Hospice Care is a relatively new practice in the United States. Post WWII, modern medicine became integral to American optimism. Excitement grew from curative treatments, new procedures, and progress. Yet there were those in the halls of doctors' offices and hospitals whose illnesses couldn't be cured. Where was their place in this culture?

It was the pioneers of hospice care who provided such a place built in dignity, comfort, and peace. Northern Ohio had its own pioneer in the late Elizabeth Ford Pitorak.

Elizabeth founded what is today Hospice of the Western Reserve. She had been in healthcare as a nurse and was familiar with the experiences of those who were terminally ill. In the 1960s, hospice care was taking off in the United Kingdom thanks to the ingenuity of Dame Cicely Saunders. By the late 1970s, the practice had made its way across the pond to the United States.

David notes how he learned a great deal from Elizabeth's expertise, and further explains how radical hospice care was for its time.

"If you go to the doctor for a broken bone, they're going to bill insurance according to certain codes," he says. "Those codes are defined and refined to the slimmest margin. Hospice is absolutely contrary to that notion. Instead of narrowing and focusing, you're widening and expanding. The patient is the focus, and the family is the plan of care."

Elizabeth's influence is deeply felt by current HWR staff who followed her leadership.

"In addition to the high expectations Elizabeth set for patient care, she taught me many principles related to healthcare education," says Judy Bartel, Chief Clinical Officer. "She was a stickler for making sure that every PowerPoint presentation had standardization. Anyone

---

***She not only supported research and scientific-based clinical care and outcomes... she was also acutely aware of the art of hospice care and the importance of its delivery.***

---

In 1978, Elizabeth joined forces with a small group of professionals who believed better services were possible for dying people. Cancer Family Service started on a shoestring, with the goal to provide comfort, care, and companionship to patients in their homes. Hospice was a revolutionary practice, and many healthcare institutions saw the effort as counterintuitive to the work of curative treatment.

"The best way to describe Elizabeth's work is to see her as a fighter against odds that were very difficult to overcome," says David Simpson, retired Executive Director of Hospice of the Western Reserve. "People didn't even know how to pronounce the word 'hospice.' That's the evidence of the degree to which all of this was foreign to our culture."

As Cancer Family Service continued to grow and evolve, Elizabeth stayed keenly aware of the work that needed done related to education and awareness about hospice care. She led the Hospice Institute, which was an initiative launched by Hospice of the Western Reserve to provide certification programs for physicians, and to provide healthcare professionals with the necessary body of knowledge of end-of-life care.

trained by Elizabeth became an excellent presenter."

"She not only supported research and scientific-based clinical care and outcomes," says Bob Plona, Director of Residential Services. "She was also acutely aware of the art of hospice care and the importance of its delivery."

Elizabeth is locally, nationally, and internationally recognized as a pioneer and expert in the hospice field. Her accomplishments are numerous, having served on both the membership and foundation Boards of Directors of the Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association. She also traveled to South Korea and Slovakia to teach hospice and palliative care philosophy. Elizabeth died this past May at home after a long illness.

Today, thanks to Elizabeth's extraordinary vision, determination, and innovation, Western Reserve Care Solutions is one of the ten largest nonprofit hospice agencies in the United States. WRCS will continue to honor her with its commitment to providing exceptional care for patients and their families. Elizabeth's legacy will live on in the agency's standards of excellence, dignity, and compassion.

# ABOUT TOWN

Our Provider Relations Team is always hard at work to help spread the word of our services! They attend resource fairs, celebrations, luncheons, community events, and so much more. If you ever see one of their friendly faces out and about, feel free to say hi!









# Strengthening Belief Systems in Spiritual Care:

**Jamie Stewart, BA, MA, CT**



**Jamie Stewart's profound insight** on the hospice profession is enough to draw anyone into the field. As the Spiritual Care Coordinator for Ames Family Hospice House, his work touches patients and families throughout the region, and his career has left him no stranger to Western Reserve Care Solutions' service area.

Jamie has been with Hospice of the Western Reserve since March of 2015. He started at HMC Hospice of Medina County, and from 2007 to 2014, he worked in Spiritual Care for Stein Hospice.

A Columbus native, Jamie earned his bachelors in religion from Cumberland University, and his masters in christian education at Southern Baptist in Louisville. He did additional schooling at Ashland Seminary, and did his Clinical Pastoral Education at the Cleveland Clinic and the Spiritual Care Education Center in Toledo. All of these institutions provided him with a well-rounded education. His

formal education combined with his experience in ministry has given him a sound philosophy for his work in hospice.

"We aren't a hospital. We aren't a counseling agency. We aren't a place of worship," says Jamie. "But we take the best of all three of those fields in caring for people. We come into the lives of our patients and families at a chaotic and tumultuous time, but we can do some amazing and sacred work along the way. It's a privilege to serve these families during this time in their lives."

When a patient receives a terminal diagnosis, Jamie notes that they will experience an existential shift. The news often leads to self-reflection, and it is his job to help facilitate that reflection and determine what spiritual pain may need tended to.

"I am a clinician," he says. "I am not a pastor in this role. My job is not to proselytize, rather, I take whatever belief system is in place and I help

them draw the strengths of that system in helping patients face their final days."

Jamie carries a profound respect for what patients and loved ones bring to Western Reserve Care Solutions. He sees himself as a missionary for the hospice philosophy, and his work in drawing from the spiritual strengths of patients helps to strengthen the agency as a whole.

"The best part of my job is gathering patients' stories, and to learn what they've been through and what brought them here. Those stories are a part of their legacy. That legacy deserves to be heard, celebrated, and honored. It puts flesh and blood into the bones of what we see in our Suncoast sheets. We're not caring for numbers in a database. We are caring for people."



# Death Certificates:

## A Duty to Patients and Families



**When losing a loved one**, there are many conversations, decisions, and documents in the shuffle of arranging their affairs. One such document that is often overlooked in its importance is the death certificate. These certificates are a permanent record of death and are necessary for burials and estates. Information on these certificates can also be used to evaluate the general health of the population or a specific group, allowing for more detailed medical research and the allocation of resources towards common diseases.

In most circumstances, death certificates are the responsibility of the attending physician, which may often be the hospice or palliative care doctor. According to the Centers for Disease Control, a cause-of-death is similar to a diagnosis in that it is an informed medical opinion. This opinion should be based in sound medical knowledge drawn from clinical experience, as well as knowledge of prevailing diseases and local trends.

Yet even with expertise and available information including medical history, records, laboratory tests, and autopsies, the physician may not be certain of the cause of death. In this circumstance, the CDC recommends "the certifier should select the causes that are suspected to have been involved and use words such as 'probable' or 'presumed.'"

The CDC also provides information on language for death certificates. For elderly patients, causes of death should not include terms such as "old age," as the term is too ambiguous. If the death is caused by multiple conditions, the attending physician should list the process leading to death. This sequence should be clearly listed and explained by the certifier. If the sequence of causes cannot be determined, and the death did not warrant an investigation by the county coroner, the death may be reported as "unspecified natural causes." All unknowns on the certificate must be stated as unknown, undetermined, probable, presumed or unspecified.

There is often hesitancy to fill out the death certificate for fear of inaccuracy. One reason for this apprehension may be the fear of litigation. However, according to the Chicago Medical Society, the delay in funerals or cremations from the postponement of signing a death certificate is also a cause for upset in grieving families.

Filling out a death certificate with diligence and detail can provide families with assurance and closure. At Western Reserve Care Solutions, physicians are committed to filling out death certificates in a diligent and timely fashion. This mindfulness is a service to our families and is just one step in the continuum of compassionate care we provide, from the first conversation to the bereavement process.

# Wags and Warm Welcomes



**It is bright and early on a Saturday morning.** While most grade school students, and even most adults, might prefer a few hours of extra sleep at the start of their weekend, Kane Spring is eager to get his day started.

Kane is a typical 11-year-old in many ways, with his love of football, animals, and Minecraft. However, he is also remarkably insightful, generous, and compassionate. Every Saturday morning, he takes his dog Chester to The Willows at Bellevue, paying special visits to staff and residents.

Chester is an 8-month-old Australian Shepherd and Rottweiler mix. Though still technically a puppy, his temperament is calm and gentle, no doubt a nod to Kane's diligence in training him.

"I think he has the potential to become a therapy dog," says Kane. "He's well-mannered and smart. He's also very playful. And clumsy."



The visits are not part of a school project or requirement. Kane brings Chester on his own time out of the goodness of his heart. Care and compassion certainly run in the Spring family, as Kane's mother Elise is a registered nurse and has been working for Stein Hospice for 15 years.

"It's funny to see how excited Chester gets when we pull into the parking lot," she says. "He knows where he gets to go today."

Kane walks Chester from room to room, meeting with residents who are up for pets and visits. Kane's age and friendliness make him a cherished visitor, and Chester often serves as a reminder



---

***This is something that is a lot of fun for us to do.  
I like getting to walk around and talk with everyone.***

---



of past family pets. One particular resident was prepared to meet Chester, bringing her own treats in a bag on her walker.

"You can give him some of my treats if you'd like," offers Kane.

"Yes, but mine are better," the resident laughs.

Kane and Chester work as a team, bringing company and cheerful greetings to everyone at the facility. The two will continue to learn and grow together, and they both look forward to sharing their journey with The Willows at Bellevue.

"This is something that is a lot of fun for us to do," says Kane. "I like getting to walk around and talk with everyone."

# Case Western Grad Volunteers with **Comfort** and **Compassion**



**Visitors to David Simpson Hospice House** will most likely interact with a volunteer before anyone else. Volunteer receptionists welcome visitors, answer their questions, and provide a calm and gentle voice in highly emotional circumstances. One of these volunteers is Natalie Bawab, a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) who finds time in her busy schedule to volunteer at DSHH.

Natalie is working on her master's in pathology after earning her bachelor's in biology from CWRU in May. She is a prospective medical student, and she started volunteering with Western Reserve Care Solutions in 2021 to get more hands-on experience than she may have received through volunteering at a hospital.

In addition to working at the front desk, Natalie also does compassionate care visits throughout the facility. She sits and talks with patients, enjoying their company and making them feel comfortable and at ease.

Natalie not only gives of her time for the educational experience. She notes how her grandfather's passing was a sudden and horrible experience, and that she felt spoken down to by the staff at the hospital. Natalie has never forgotten that feeling.

"If I can make someone's journey with death a little bit more positive... a little bit easier... that's what I want to achieve," she says.

Natalie's empathy makes her a natural provider. Once in medical school, she wants to focus on pediatric-related care.

"So much of the medical education is science and treatment," says Natalie, "but it's easy to lose the fact that there are people behind the diagnostics and treatments. As a provider, as a healthcare worker, it's your job to make patients comfortable and at ease. Their comfort is the most important thing."

Her experience with WRCS has been so positive, that she recently encouraged her mom, a retired nurse, to become a volunteer. She also hopes to attend a medical school close by so she can still volunteer with DSHH.

"I can't say what I would or would not have learned volunteering in a hospital, but I'm so fortunate for this experience. My time here has humanized the medical field, beyond what I would have received from just my formal education."

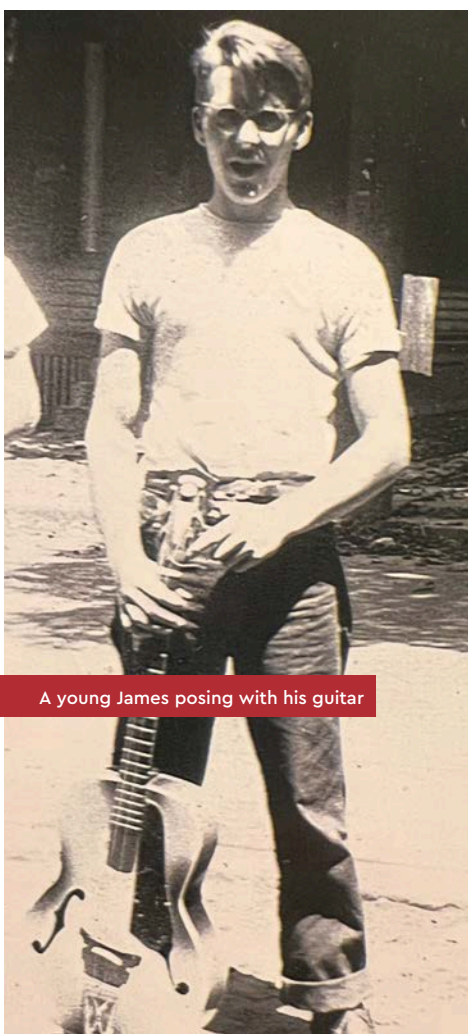




James with his daughter, Jackie

# Honoring Service through Song

**There is no mistaking the power of music**, especially in hospice care. Family, friends, and caregivers have seen (and heard) firsthand their loved one's reaction to music, whether it's a smile, a small dance, or in some cases, a salute.



A young James posing with his guitar

As part of Hospice of the Western Reserve's Peaceful and Proud program, patients who have served in the armed forces are formally recognized for their service. A Veterans Recognition Ceremony is facilitated by a Veteran Volunteer and a Volunteer Service Manager, and the veteran patient's military career and accomplishments are acknowledged with the family present. The veteran is then presented with a certificate commemorating their service. These ceremonies are incredibly meaningful to both the veteran and the family, providing an intentional space for honor and dignity at the end of the veteran's life.

James Oatman was an Ashtabula Resident who served in the Korean war. Volunteer Service Manager Sue Legg facilitated a ceremony to recognize James for his military service, where members of his family attended. HWR volunteer and Vietnam war veteran Danny Pugliese brought his guitar and sang "God Bless America."

James saluted Danny and was so moved by his music that the family asked if he could play a few more songs. Danny then returned twice in the following days to share his music with James, who passed away on March 24, 2023.

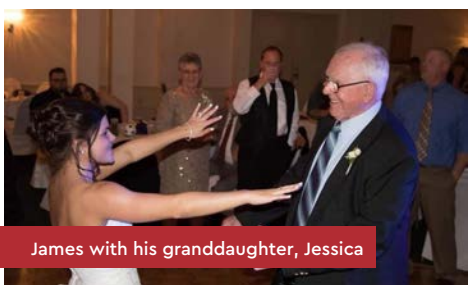
James' daughter Jackie shared that her father was always a music lover. She grew up with a hi-fi in the home, and she has fond memories of her father dancing and singing to music from the 1950s.

"It was so joyful to see my father respond so well to Danny's music," said Jackie. "Danny knew many of the old songs my father loved. It was really moving."

Danny was recently recognized by the Andy Nowacki Foundation for his volunteer work with veterans at HWR. His music and companionship visits have been healing for families like Jackie's.

"This was a powerful and sad journey," says Jackie, "But everyone was supportive and compassionate. We had so much guidance and support."

For more information about volunteering with Hospice of the Western Reserve, please visit [hospicewr.org/volunteer](https://hospicewr.org/volunteer), email [volunteering@hospicewr.org](mailto:volunteering@hospicewr.org), or call 216.255.9090.



James with his granddaughter, Jessica

# 2023 WALK TO REMEMBER



*presented by*

oswald®

echo®  
payments simplified



**After 21 days without rain and storms in the forecast,** the weather still held out for Hospice of the Western Reserve's 2023 Walk to Remember. Over 2,100 walkers gathered in a celebration of life on June 11 at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

Thanks to the efforts of over 90 teams, the event raised over \$300,000 for HWR programs such as art and music therapy, specialized services for veterans, comprehensive bereavement care and pediatric hospice. For the first time since 2019, teams were able to gather in the zoo's plaza for a formal kick-off. During the short program, presenting sponsors Oswald Companies and Echo Health renewed their sponsorships for 2024.

Walkers had the opportunity to form teams in honor of their loved ones. Most teams could be spotted in their matching shirts that honored loved ones. The customized t-shirts help weave together a sense of community and celebration for the annual

event. Walkers travel from near and far distances to participate, including Bennett's Buddies. Bennett passed away in HWR's care in 2020. Her mom, dad, and her siblings came to walk all the way from Arkansas for the second year, meeting up with a host of friends and family members.

The event illustrates how HWR staff and volunteers are always there to support families. During registration, a grieving mother was overcome with emotion. Yet at just the right time, pediatric RN Jennifer Palmer appeared, and provided the comfort and encouragement this mother needed.

According to Annual Fund & Special Events Manager Monica Cowans, there is a bond shared by all participants in the Walk to Remember.

"There's a sense of, 'We are all going to be okay,'" says Monica. "That's what the Walk is all about. That you are not alone, and we are all here to support each other."

# THANK YOU









17876 St. Clair Ave.  
Cleveland, OH 44110-2602

*Serving the Northern Ohio counties of  
Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Erie, Geauga,  
Huron, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Ottawa,  
Portage, Sandusky, Seneca, Stark,  
Summit and Wayne.*

Life's Treasures Thrift Shop in Medina  
Encore Thrift Shop in Sandusky

800.707.8922 | [hospicewr.org](http://hospicewr.org)



Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage

**PAID**

Cleveland, OH  
Permit No. 848

© 2023 All Rights Reserved

## Welcome, Stacy Gilbert!



Within minutes of meeting Stacy Gilbert, her energy and enthusiasm will make it seem as if you have known her for years. She is compassionate and mission-driven, with a special place in her heart for Medina County. In May of 2023, Western Reserve Care Solutions was fortunate enough to have her join the team as Medina's community relations manager.

A John Carroll graduate, Stacy comes to WRCS from television news, with 20 years of experience in the Cleveland and Steubenville markets. She was looking for a new focus in her career, and WRCS checked all of her boxes.

"It was important to me to stay in Medina," she said. "I love feeling connected to my community."

Stacy also wanted a mission she could put her whole heart behind, and there's no mistaking that Stacy's heart is in HMC Hospice of Medina County. Even though she only started her position in May, her passion and care for her work makes it feel as if she has spent the span of her career with WRCS.

"This position has so much to offer Medina County," says Stacy. "I am excited to be completely immersed in all things Medina and to represent Western Reserve Care Solutions to my community."

Stacy resides in Medina with her husband and four children. Connect with her at **330.461.5145** or at **[sgilbert@hospicewr.org](mailto:sgilbert@hospicewr.org)**.