

SPRING 2021

MONARCH

STORIES OF:

- RESILIENCE
- DEVOTION
- GIVING





I AM *Lyle*

"WITHOUT MUSIC, I CAN
HONESTLY SAY, IT'D BE A
DARKER WORLD. "

— LYLE MONFORTON

Deep down, Lyle Monforton already knew he had cancer. He'd discovered a lump in his stomach even before he moved to Georgia to live with his sister. At first he wrote it off as possibly a hernia from his work. But it got progressively worse. Lyle's mom begged him to go see a doctor, but he still resisted.

"I admit, I didn't want to know," Lyle said. "I didn't care. I pretty much already knew what was...where it was going."

Lyle was in pain every day. He would vomit every morning. Finally, he told his sister, "Take me to the ER."

"They did a CAT scan and panel test, pretty much diagnosed me on the spot, and sent me to oncology there," he explained. His mother came and brought him back to Michigan, but their journey was just beginning.

Lyle couldn't find a primary care provider that was accepting Medicaid patients, and his appointment with an oncologist was a month away. He only had three days worth of pain medication.

"I was rationing what medication I had," he said. So he thought, if he went to the ER, if he was physically there, someone would have to help him. But he was told he needed to see his primary care doctor, and was sent home. So he told his mom, "Just call Angela Hospice."

Lyle had watched his uncle's difficult battle with cancer, but he had also seen the "phenomenal" care he received from Angela Hospice.

"I already said flat out from the start: I'm not doing chemo. I'm not doing radiation," Lyle said. "I want to be me."

Angela Hospice was able to help him do just that.

"Within three days we had everything accomplished that we couldn't get accomplished within three months," Lyle said. "Angela Hospice has been nothing but a godsend. Literally, without them, I couldn't tell you where I'd be right now."

Instead, Lyle was at home with his family. Some couldn't understand his decision at first to forgo chemo and radiation. But they did see how his choice let him express himself.

"Everybody's looking at me, they're like, 'You're

still Lyle,'" he said. "Normally, people with stage four cancer, they'll be bedridden."

Lyle may have been content with the choice he made, but it doesn't mean it was always easy.

"Have I accepted the fact that I'm going to die? Yes," he said. "Do I want to go yet? No. I still have things I want to do."

"To keep myself going, I'm just like, it's a day at a time. I want the best quality I can get out of the rest of my life. If it's gonna be six months, I want it to be the best six months I can get."

Even in the midst of the pandemic, Lyle was able to really live. He and his mother took a trip to Mackinac Island and had a wonderful time. He visited Frankenmuth for the first time as well. And he did something he had always wanted to do: he left his mark musically.

Lyle had been playing guitar since he was about eight. He loved music. So when his friend Ron called to say he was writing a song about Lyle and wanted his input, Lyle jumped at the opportunity. Together they spent 12 hours in the studio "putting all the layers of the onion together," as Lyle described it.

The result was "I Am Lyle," a beautifully orchestrated song. Lyle sings on the recording, telling his story in his own words and his own voice. It's both a testimony and a legacy.

"This is me," Lyle said as he listened to the recording.

"Raw, uncut, it's me."

PICTURED L TO R:
LYLE & HIS MOM,
TRACY STONE



ENGINEERING A NEW *tomorrow*

Being diagnosed with ALS is something no one can prepare for. ALS is a neurodegenerative disease in which a person's brain loses connection with the muscles — and it is always fatal. Accepting the reality that there is no cure can be devastating, which is why Matt McKeown is so remarkable. His drive and determination are truly inspiring.

At 39 years old, Matt McKeown has been battling ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease) since the summer of 2017. It all started with a twitch in his left shoulder, which spread to his entire arm a month later. ALS is tricky in the sense that it is difficult to diagnose. It is only by ruling out other diseases that doctors can conclude a patient has ALS.

Before his disease progressed, Matt worked as a mechanical engineer, a career that would ultimately change his life for the better. "I have the gift of unbelievable stubbornness," said Matt, "and that is really an asset when you are fighting something like this. I fight tooth and nail to stay independent."

"That's where my list of tools started," Matt explained. "My fingertips are pinched, so I found these miniature needle nose pliers that I could just palm, and those became my fingertips. It just unfolded from there."

With his engineer mindset, Matt put together a list of almost 100 objects and tools to help make living with ALS a little easier. Matt found that barbecue tongs work great to fish clothes out of the dryer, and if something is too slippery to hold, he just adds some tennis racket grips. You can find the full list of Matt's tools and tricks on our website at angelahospice.org/als-care/.

With the help of his friend, Matt even built a feeding robot that can grip silverware and spoon food. He named his invention Seymour. Matt constructed Seymour with materials that cost around \$300. The feeding robots currently on the market can go from \$4,500-\$6,000. "The cost was my original aim for this invention," said Matt. "I was actually offended when I saw what they charge."

Building Seymour has allowed Matt to create a legacy for himself, and the ALS community will remember his effort to make an affordable option for people struggling long after he is gone.

"Obviously ALS is one of the hopeless diseases, because from day one you know exactly where it's going...I always try to find inspiration and motivation through all my gadgets and the robot. If one other person reads this and thinks, 'that'd be great for my uncle' or 'I've got a friend that does engineering' and if they reach out and make that happen, then all the hours of interviews are 100-percent worth it. That's kind of



MATT MCKEOWN (LEFT) WITH HIS BEST FRIENDS
AND CAREGIVERS CAT AND DAVE NAY.

the best I was able to do with this disease, fabricate my own goals and motivations, and I believe that's kept me healthy for as long as I have," said Matt.

What else has helped Matt stay happy and healthy? The support and care of Angela Hospice.

"I thought hospice was a one or two week thing, just near the end," said Matt. "When I found out I was eligible, and met with the intake team, my jaw hit the floor with everything that Angela provides. No exaggeration, I wish I would have been put in contact with everyone here a year or a year and a half ago. Just the handling of the medication alone has saved me so much time. It's rare in life where you find such a large group of people who are so compassionate and helpful. In today's day and age, it almost seems like that was a thing of the past. It's changed my life for the better," Matt said.

Your donation to Angela Hospice can help patients like Matt get the care they deserve. Patients with ALS tend to have greater needs. Your generosity can help provide the equipment they need and aid caregivers in supporting ALS patients, allowing for overall improvements to patients' quality of life.

Matt's positive attitude is truly exceptional, and he offered some advice to help guide others dealing with the diagnosis of ALS: "Everyone gets upset, there's no way to avoid that," Matt said. "Step one is to let yourself be sad, or feel whatever feelings you have, because that's natural. My symptoms started in July, and I kind of broke down in October. I was coming back from a hunting trip after that breakdown and I decided that truly every day I have left is going to be the best day of the rest of my life.... I've tried like hell to live that way for the last 3 ½ years."

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with ALS and is seeking advice or care, please contact Angela Hospice at 734.464.7810.

THE SOUND OF Music

Fantaisie - Impromptu.
(Oeuvre posthume . Vers 1834.) (Op. 66.)
(Publié par J. Fontana.) Fr. Chopin.

Elaine Thibeault was the kind of mom that all the kids in the neighborhood loved.

Her daughter Dawn Pfeiffer explained, "All the neighborhood kids would come and talk to her. She would make you feel secure. And she told you the truth. She was very blunt at times," Dawn added with a chuckle.

But when Elaine came to the Angela Hospice Care Center in October, it was her daughter's opportunity to make her mom feel secure.

"It is a scary thing because I've never dealt with the death of a parent," said Dawn, who helped care for her mother along with her sister, Laura Mathers.

Nurse Bart Wingblad came and sat with them, making sure everyone was comfortable.

"He said, 'Just talk to her,'" Dawn recalled. And so she did.

"I just said, 'Mom, I love you. Mom, I am so proud that you are my mom. It's OK, I'm here and I'm going to be by your side. You're not all alone.'"

Along with the hospice team, Dawn spent the next 48 hours comforting her mom and offering her reassurance. Dawn noticed the little touches that made the place feel like home: the pretty pink and white pillowcase made by a volunteer when she stayed overnight, the beautiful handmade afghan her mom was given, the calming colors in the rooms. She was struck by the respect and love shown to her and her family by the hospice team. It all helped bring comfort to the experience.

"How did I know she was going to die, my hand on her when she took her last breath?" Dawn said. "When she died, I was still at peace. I didn't start crying. It was her time."

Funded through donor support, the Care Center is a unique and precious community resource, which has helped provide meaningful connections for hundreds of families.

Dawn said she will always remember how peaceful

the experience was. What made it even more memorable was the sound of a piano being played as Dawn and her sister left their mother's room the morning of her passing.

"We both stopped in our tracks and then we looked straight out where the piano was, saw the sun just rising and how beautiful it was — the most sunny day. And it was just so relaxing and comforting," Dawn said. She stood there for a while, just listening. Volunteer Tom Moylan was playing a song adapted from Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptu in C Sharp Minor, Opus 66" more commonly known as "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows."

"Listening to that music calmed me, but gave me energy too," Dawn said.

She had watched her mother struggle through congestive heart failure, Alzheimer's, and dementia, but being right by her side when her mother died so peacefully was transformational.

"It was a very pleasant, overwhelming experience," Dawn said. "Yes, it was a loss, but it's an experience you will never forget."



PICTURED L TO R: LAURA MATHERS, ELAINE THIBEAULT & DAWN PFEIFFER



by playing piano at Angela Hospice and Beaumont Hospital, where his wife was cared for.

"More and more, I've been playing since my wife passed away," Tom explained. "That was five years ago now. The house was so quiet."

It was the hospital that asked Tom to start playing. He was hesitant when they first asked him. Until then he had never played in public — he just played for his own enjoyment. But his sister encouraged him to give it a try.

SOULFUL SERENADE

Tom Moylan started playing piano as a little boy, but he didn't want to practice. So when he took the instrument up again in his thirties, he made it a point to play a little each day, even while busy with his work and young family. These days, you're very likely to find him at the keys, volunteering

"I was pleasantly surprised by the reaction I was getting from people," Tom said. "A lot of time people would thank me for lowering their blood pressure. They would say they were pretty stressed coming in for surgery."

He started volunteering at Angela Hospice too, after receiving grief counseling following the death of his wife, Imogene.

"After she passed away, it just broke my heart, of course," Tom shared. "So I went in every Tuesday for therapy sessions. And I noticed you had a piano there."

He asked if he could play, and starting playing each week before his counseling appointment.

"It was good therapy for me too, because music — there's a lot of research, it's good for the brain," he explained. "I found it very relaxing and helpful, and the families there at that time seemed to appreciate it."

Tom plays classical, spiritual, and popular music, especially music from the 1950s and 60s.

"Music is good for the soul, and it's relaxing, the kind of music I play," he said.

Compassion at work

Do what matters.

At Angela Hospice, compassion and respect for human dignity drive everything we do.

Learn more about our work, and the opportunity to find your calling as part of our amazing team.

Visit angelahospice.org/careers



THE GOOD THAT YOU DO WILL LIVE AFTER YOU.

— ANGELA GUSCOTT
HOSPICE AIDE, 11 YEARS



I LOVE IT HERE BECAUSE THIS PART OF A PERSON'S JOURNEY MATTERS TO ME. I THINK THE DIGNITY AND THE RESPECT THAT WE GIVE THEM IS WHAT I WAKE UP TO DO. IT MATTERS, IT REALLY MATTERS WHAT WE DO.

— VANESSA RUCKER
HOSPICE AIDE, 18 YEARS



I THINK THE BEST PART ABOUT WORKING HERE IS JUST THAT THE TEAM LIFTS YOU UP. YOU'RE APPRECIATED FOR ALL YOUR GIFTS AND YOUR TALENTS. IT'S JUST A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO WORK.

— ERIC SIMPKINS
NURSE, 9 YEARS



WHEN I WENT INTO NURSING SCHOOL AT THE AGE OF 40, I DECIDED THAT THIS WAS MY PASSION.

— TINA FISER
NURSE, 2.5 YEARS

GENERATIONAL KINDNESS:

a legacy of doing for others

DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Bernadette O'Neill isn't someone who is looking for the spotlight. But if you ask her nicely — and she knows she might help someone in the process — she'll tell you the story of how she became connected to Angela Hospice.

It was nearly two decades ago that a doctor referred Bernadette's mother to Angela Hospice. "My opinion of hospice at the time was like it was a ward with curtains between beds," she recalled. "So I all but panicked, because I thought, *no, she can't go.*"

But they gave home hospice care a try. Bernadette was still working at the time, so her mom was alone in the house during the day. The hospice nurse suggested the Care Center where her mother could be looked after 24 hours a day.

"I was so impressed," Bernadette said, after she toured the facility. "A couple days later mom moved in."

Her mother, Mary O'Neill, was at the Care Center for 10 months — a time that stood out to Bernadette because she knew her mom had a good quality of life. "She was peaceful. She knew she was safe," Bernadette said, and she visited her mom every day, before and after work.

Her mother's time at Angela Hospice may have been the catalyst that brought Bernadette to support Angela Hospice, both as a donor and as a volunteer, but the philanthropic seed was planted in her heart many years before, modeled by Bernadette's maternal grandmother.

Her grandmother, Angela Szabo, had come from Hungary to the United States, where she met and married Bernadette's grandfather, a fellow Hungarian immigrant. They owned a grocery store by the Ford Rouge plant, where the air smelled of pollution. "But grandma always said, 'When I smell that smell, I feel good, because men are working and feeding their families,'" Bernadette said. She recalled how her grandmother converted their grocery store into a boarding house offering a week's lodging, cleaning, and meals for just \$5 a week so her guests would have more money to take care of their families. Her grandmother's generous spirit made a lasting impression on Bernadette.

"Grandma had this heart as big as a heart can be," she said. "She was the gift that kept on giving." Giving and doing for others is a big part of Bernadette's life too, but she doesn't think of herself as a philanthropist, per se.

"God gave us His Son. His Son gave up his life. What I do is nothing in comparison to that," she said. Her humility runs deep, just like the values of kindness and generosity she learned from her grandmother. Her faith supports those values, and the work she does as a volunteer at Angela Hospice and with the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

"Wasn't it the Lord that said, 'Whatever you do for the least of them, you do unto me'? I often wondered about that because there isn't anybody less than me," she said. "So it's: Whatever you do for someone, you do for me."

And those who have experienced Bernadette's genuine kindness are all the better for it.



PICTURED L TO R:
MARY O'NEILL,
ANGELA SZABO &
BERNADETTE O'NEILL

"SHE CAME INTO THE
WORLD WITH AN ANGELA
AND SHE LEFT WITH AN
ANGELA."

— BERNADETTE O'NEILL



engraved

IN OUR HEARTS

For over 20 years, Angela Hospice has offered families the chance to honor their loved ones through personalized memorials on the Angela Hospice grounds. Many families who order these trees, plaques, and engraved stones end up talking with Memorial Donations Clerk Pat Squires along the way.

Pat knows from experience, these memorial tributes can be healing for families. She and her children chipped in to buy a stone on the Memorial Walk after her husband Bob passed away three years ago.

"We had to buy the big one because there was so much that we wanted to put on there," Pat recalled. She said that most often, families know exactly what they'd like engraved on their memorial. But when they need a little help, Pat is there to offer them examples and ideas.

"It's been very healing for me. And I do let some of the family members know, when they sound a little doubtful, I tell them, 'I know what you're going through. I've been there,' and they kind of relax after that. It's strange, but it's healing for me and it's healing for them," she said.

Families will often share stories with her about the person they're remembering. The process gives them a chance to talk about how much their loved one meant to them.

"And, too, I think that they know that their loved one meant something to us," Pat said, reflecting on the Arbor Day Ceremony when families are invited to dedicate the memorials.

Some families purchase two memorials, whether it is a pair of brass butterflies placed side by side for mom and dad, or two different types of memorials for the same special person.

"I bought the veterans plate too, which I think is a fantastic way to honor our loved ones that were veterans," Pat said. "I know how proud Bob was to be a veteran."

The plate is part of the Veterans Memorial erected in front of the Angela Hospice Care Center in 2018. Located on the Angela Hospice grounds, these memorial items offer families a place where they can go to feel close to their loved ones.

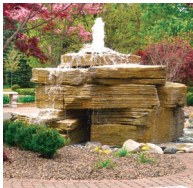


"I feel like he's here with me," Pat said of her husband Bob. "Not just because he passed here, but if I need to talk to him, I can run out at lunch time and talk to him."

Pat said she doesn't always share her personal story, but sometimes it's a way to connect when someone is going through a difficult time.

"I want them to know that as hard as it is right now, the pain eases a little, you know," Pat explained. "Your loved one will still always be in your heart."

- BRASS WALL PLAQUE • \$125
- COPPER WALL PLAQUE • \$250 +
- MEMORIAL WALK BRICKS • \$275 +
- BRONZE BUTTERFLY • \$800 +
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PLAQUE • \$850
- TREE & ENGRAVED PLAQUE • \$1,500
- DONOR WALL GLASS PLAQUE • \$2,500 +
- FOUNTAIN STONE • \$5,000
- PERGOLA SPONSORSHIP • \$50,000



This year our Arbor Day Ceremony commemorating all new memorials added in the last year will take place Friday, April 30, outside the Angela Hospice Care Center. Our featured speaker will be The Honorable Maureen Brosnan, Mayor of Livonia. For details about Arbor Day and to order a memorial in honor of your loved one, visit askforangela.com or call 734.521.0488.



HELPING TO heal

When the pandemic first hit Michigan in the spring of 2020, COVID-19 found its way to Livonia and into the central convent of the Felician Sisters. The sisters were used to living in community, sharing meals, attending mass together — a lifestyle that made them vulnerable to the yet unknown virus that had slipped into their halls. The impact was devastating. Within a few short weeks, 13 sisters perished after contracting the deadly virus.

Even before this tragic loss, Angela Hospice's team had begun preparing a program to address grief and loss among the sisters. As the number of women religious had declined nationally over the past several decades, the sisters were seeing their way of life become part of the past. Consolidation, reorganization, and the loss of community and vocation compounded upon one another, creating this multifaceted sense of grief, even before the sisters lost so many of their own in the pandemic.

"We knew we needed to accelerate our project," said Lisa Norton, communications and development manager. "What resulted, besides being a labor of love, was *Good Grief*, an in-depth and yet manageable approach to working through grief."

Designed as a combination of independent reading,

"For many years it has been a concern of mine regarding the various losses that the sisters were experiencing, especially during this time of the pandemic. I am grateful for the collaboration with the staff of Angela Hospice in the development of the *Good Grief* experience to assist not only the sisters but our lay partners in ministry as they encounter losses in their lives."



— SISTER MARY CHRISTOPHER MOORE, PROVINCIAL MINISTER

journaling, an educational video series, and virtual community support groups, the program offers a variety of avenues for gaining understanding and building community, while processing the realities of loss. The 80-page *Good Grief* workbooks were distributed to Felician Sisters all throughout North America in early February, with alternating videos and virtual support groups taking place each week following.

"The *Good Grief* experience has offered the Felician Sisters spiritual and emotional support as they grieve personal and communal losses," said Sister Suzanne Marie Kush, provincial councilor for the Felician Sisters of North America. "The Sisters have expressed how helpful the guidebook and accompanying webinars have been. The compassion and attentiveness of the Angela Hospice grief counselors have allowed the Sisters to know they were not alone as they tend to the wounds that need healing."

Angela Hospice offers grief support free of charge to the community at large, including telecounseling by video chat or phone, virtual support groups, and special workshops throughout the year.

All these services are made possible with your generosity to Angela Hospice.

To learn more about these services, or to request an appointment, visit [AskForAngela.com](https://www.AskForAngela.com) or call 734.464.7810.

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Artist Edward Stross stands in front of the mural he created outside his Roseville, MI, studio to honor the memories of 13 Felician Sisters who were taken by COVID last year.

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