

FALL 2023

MONARCH

*Called
to Care*



Called to Care

Angela Hospice would be nothing without its exceptional team. But what inspires these compassionate, caring souls to pursue this noble profession? Read their stories to learn how hospice helps them to fulfill their purpose each day.



Marwa Mallah thrives in her role as Patient Family Liaison because she loves helping people.

"My favorite part about my job is working with the families, and just sensing the relief that they feel, knowing that our team members are there to help."

In her role, Marwa spends time talking to families, introducing the hospice philosophy, discussing what hospice care is and isn't, and how it might align with a patient's own goals. If hospice is a good fit, she prepares for their admission.

"It's really making sure that everything is in place, that there's not much that they're worried about during that time, because it is a really trying time for them," she explained.

She knows she's making a difference when she can see their anxiety subside, or when they tell her, "thank you so much, you're an angel!"

"I just really love working for an organization where my life values and life morals also line up with the morals and values of our organization."



Melissa Alsobrooks is grateful for every patient she meets in her role as an Angela Hospice nurse.

"I love to cross paths with people in different stages of their life," she said.

Melissa came to Angela Hospice in February 2023, as her first nursing job. While in nursing school, she was working as a photographer and met a family whose child was in hospice care. It was then that she first realized hospice nursing could be a good fit.

"That was a very sacred thing for me to be part of," she said. "That was my first introduction to hospice nursing."

Now having been a hospice nurse for eight months, her favorite part of the job is still connecting with patients and families.

"To be able to sit with them while they're holding something that can be so terrible and so heavy at the same time, but also reflecting on their beautiful life... there's just so many elements to it, and I think it's a privilege to share that with somebody."

"Thank you for sharing your fears with me. And thank you for allowing me to take care of you."



Coming off maternity leave, social worker **Dominique Lamar** thought, if she was going to be leaving her twin baby girls to go back to work, she better be doing something important.

"I wanted to do something that was purposeful," she said. She wanted to change lives, so she started applying to hospices.

Part of what interested Dominique about hospice was realizing her grandmother, who died from stomach cancer in her 50s while Dominique was still in high school, could have benefited from hospice care.

"I think that in the African American community, sometimes we lack the resources that are available to us," Dominique said. "I think years later I asked my mom, 'How come we never did hospice for Grandma?' And she was like, 'I just didn't know much about it.' So I think being able to provide awareness to my community was a part of the reason."

"I enjoy connecting with the patients and I enjoy connecting with their families... you get to kind of see them through this journey."



When **Ricky Middleton's** Aunt Sherry had cancer, he was in the hospital with her a lot.

"I saw her get good care, I saw her get bad care... I felt the reaction I got when a good nurse was in the room explaining everything, showing that they care, and they're not just there to make money," he said. "Once I saw the good ones... I had that feeling inside. I just knew I wanted to provide that for other people."

Ricky joined the Angela Hospice team as a home care nurse eight months ago, and since that time he's seen how he can help families' stress and anxiety wither away.

"When you come into a stressful situation – someone is struggling for months – then over time you change it, you change things for the better as best as you can... it gives you the most overwhelming sense of love... You just feel whole," he said.

He's glad to be part of the Angela Hospice team, where his colleagues' empathy and caring is evident in all they do. Ricky's compassion shines through just as brightly.

"Give it your entire heart, your patients and the families they deserve it."

BE YOURSELF

We invite you to share your unique gifts and talents in this welcoming environment as part of our caring team where each day **WE CELEBRATE LIFE.**

Come celebrate with us.



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After losing her 2-year-old daughter Riya in 2013, and her infant daughter Cana just three years later, **Jamie Gibbings** knew she needed to do something to help other grieving parents.

"I'm a believer in God and I know that there's reason for my pain," she thought. "I'm not made to feel so much hurt... there has to be something more for it. So I became a birth and bereavement doula."

Jamie began doing advocacy work for parents facing miscarriage and infant death as well, but she kept running up against the same hurdle.

"It was like nobody really wanted to talk because I wasn't a nurse. So I was like, 'OK, well, then I'm going to go become a nurse now.'"

She reached out to Dr. Nadia Tremonti who had helped her so much during the passing of her daughters, and she said, "Come work with me at Angela."

Now Jamie is caring for Angela Hospice patients, including patients in the My Nest is Best Pediatric Program.

"I love it," she said. "I kind of feel selfish sometimes, working this job, because it makes me feel closer to my daughters. And when I was telling that to my husband, he said, 'You know, that's called purpose.'"

Jamie continued, "It's very rewarding to just be with people in such vulnerable times. And knowing that I've experienced it, I think really helps parents through it."

"Everybody's going to pass away at some time, regardless if it's a two year old or 102 year old. And being able to make that journey for them, and the process, just a little bit easier, and to maybe give them and their families some memories and a better quality than sitting next to a hospital bed... is a wonderful thing to think about. Because if it was your loved one, which would you prefer?"



When **Kristine-Joy Sidon** talks about her patients, her face absolutely lights up. She works nights at the Care Center, so it's a special treat when one of her patients is a night owl.

"When there are those little bits of time that we get to just hang out with a patient, it's so cool," she said.

When families come to visit or stay the night, she likes taking care of them, too. She lost her own father suddenly at a young age, so she's grateful for the chance to make someone else's journey a bit easier, even if it's just getting them a blanket or some ice cream.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm always hosting a slumber party... especially if there's family staying over," she said.

On those nights when families aren't visiting, she knows they often worry they can't be with their loved one, so Kristine-Joy makes it her mission to keep them company, especially if they are close to transitioning.

"I always make sure that they don't ever feel like they're alone," she said.

And when someone has taken their last breath at night as she held their hand, she called it a humbling and peaceful experience.

"It's such an intimate thing that if you haven't experienced it, it's just hard to describe... It's really a gift, honestly," she said.

"We get to come in and treat those symptoms, and then the family just gets to hang out as their loved one, not their caregiver."



PROTECTING THE *Pope*

On the wall of Donald "Don" Zimmerman's room in the Angela Hospice Care Center hung what simply looked like a photo of two men shaking hands, a simple moment in a simple frame, surrounded by countless other family mementos in his room.

That moment was anything but simple though, much like Don, a man who was larger than life, both literally and figuratively.

In that frame was a photo captured by the Secret Service as Don shook Pope John Paul II's hand – Don towering over him – in 1987. That day Don was in charge of the pope's security when he visited the Pontiac Silverdome, a story he told with pride from his bed in the Care Center, the feet of his tall frame sticking out from under the covers as he did.

"It was a highlight," Don said.

During that time Don was the Bloomfield Township Chief of Police, a role he served for nearly 20 years.

Meeting and protecting the pope was a highlight for Don's family as well. His wife, Phyllis, said the pope was delighted that there were nearly 95,000 people in attendance that day.

While the day itself was clearly a core memory for Don, knowing that Pope John Paul II is now a saint – he was canonized in April 2014, giving him the fastest journey to sainthood in history – was an addition to the story Don was proud to tell.

"When I saw that picture, I said that was our hero meeting the world's hero," said Daniel Zimmerman, one of Don's sons.

And Don was his family's hero, having protected so many throughout his career, including the time he spent attending the FBI Academy in Quantico, and in the Army from 1956-1959.

He was not only a proud army vet – he served as Military Police in Inchon, Korea – but was incredibly proud of the work he did with the Bloomfield Township police department, where he started as a police officer and worked his way up to Chief of Police, totaling a career that lasted almost 40 years.

DON (CENTER) WANTED TO BE AT
ANGELA HOSPICE AFTER SEEING THE CARE
HIS LOVED ONES HAD RECIEVED.

LEFT TO RIGHT: VINCENZA, DANIEL, & PHYLLIS



DON MEETING POPE JOHN PAUL II IN 1987.
BOTH WERE MEN OF COMPASSION, JUSTICE,
AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS.

"I had a pretty good idea about what God would say to him when he arrived at heaven, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant,'" Daniel said.

While few things can compare to such an amazing experience for Don as getting to protect Pope John Paul II, his love for his family rated quite high as well. That love was evident in how his room at the Care Center was constantly full of family and friends, reminiscing with him and each other during the 12 days he spent there before he passed in August.

The love between Don and his wife, Phyllis, was evident in every glance they exchanged, every touch, every smile. Sixty-two years of marriage together and they still looked at each other like they were the luckiest person in the world to have found the other.

Angela Hospice was lucky and proud too, to serve a man like Don, allowing for a full circle moment to serve and protect someone who had dedicated his entire life to doing just that for others.



C'est La Vie

Throughout the 11 days Carl Misch was in the Angela Hospice Care Center, he and his family shared many special memories together, one standing out from the rest: his We Honor Veterans ceremony.

In a quiet room where Carl was sleeping, they were able to honor the soldier he had been during World War II with the Third Infantry, and the proud veteran he was every day after his service ended.

"It meant everything to us, that he would be able to have that honor," said Claudia Crane, one of Carl's four children. "I know they said he could hear it... I wish he had been able to see it. I guess he was watching from the rearview mirror."

Claudia and her siblings watched as Margot Parr – a fellow veteran and Angela Hospice volunteer, who Claudia called "a gift to Angela Hospice" – performed the ceremony, taking the time to weave in personal details about his time in the army, and his fellow soldiers who had fought in WWII.

Like many veterans, Carl didn't actually talk about his time in the army until much later in life, about 15 years ago according to Paul, Carl's son. And even then, it was only bits here and there, slowly revealing stories that had stuck with Carl after all these years.

As Carl began to reveal more about his time as a sergeant in the army, his family learned he was highly decorated, with eight medals, including the Bronze Star Medal; had been a part of the first platoon to place a flag on Eagles Nest; and received a rosary from Pope Pius XII, which he sent back home to his mother.

"I think, by him bringing it out, it kind of led him to let go of a lot of those things that he kept inside," Paul said. "I think it humanized him in the sense that we never really knew that these things happened during that two-and-a-half years that really formed the rest of his life."



CARL (CENTER), WHEN HE SERVED
DURING WORLD WAR II,
AND CARL AT HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY.



While telling these stories, Carl mentioned that a leader in the Army had once told him "c'est la vie," after a particularly harrowing day. That phrase – meaning, "that's life" – would become something that helped him get through the rest of his time in the service, and how he would often end his war stories. His time in the service made him appreciate life more.

Carl felt his life was a gift, and Paul and Claudia felt finding Angela Hospice for their dad was a gift as well.

"They treated us like we were family," Paul said.

"Like they would treat their family."

"Bottom line, it's heaven on Earth," Claudia said.

"When it comes to your loved one at the end of life, that's what you want, you want them to make that transition from Earth to heaven."

OUR NATION'S HEROES

People like Don and Carl have endured so much to protect our country and preserve our freedom. But their bravery and dedication come with a cost, the emotional and physical toll their service might entail. That is why Angela Hospice is honored to support veterans through the We Honor Veterans program, a nationwide initiative developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As We Honor Veterans partners, we're proud to be able to meet the unique needs of veterans in their final stages of life, to offer them and their families support, recognition, and the compassionate care that they deserve.

You, too, can support these veterans. To contribute to the We Honor Veterans fund at Angela Hospice, and help more families honor their veterans in a special way, please visit angelahospice.org/donate



IMPARTING *peace*

When Daniel Celmer brought his Aunt Clare to the Angela Hospice Care Center, she looked around her room, taking it all in – the furnishings, the blanket made with care that hung over the reclining chair in the corner – then, once settled in her bed, she asked Daniel where she was. He told her that she was at Angela Hospice. She simply nodded, seemingly comfortable with this knowledge of her new home.

Families often feel that peace at Angela Hospice, finding tranquility in the picturesque grounds, the sounds of the fountains, the calmness once they enter the building.

"She was comfortable with that," Daniel said. "She was at peace, and that brought me peace."

As his aunt's caregiver, Daniel had discussed her wishes with her if she ever needed hospice care. She made it clear that she would like to be at Angela Hospice, a Felician-sponsored ministry, so she could stay within the Felician Sisters community. That community had been her home and family since she took her vows in 1946 at only 17 years old, taking the name Sister Mary Valentine.

The whole time she was in the Care Center, the entire family felt the comfort, understanding, and love from the Angela Hospice staff and volunteers.

"Angela Hospice did a wonderful job," Daniel said. "If anything ever happens to me, I've directed people to use Angela Hospice as well."

Sister Mary Valentine was from a very Catholic family and she had many aunts who were also nuns. She taught at Manistee Catholic Central and St. Alphonsus in Dearborn, and also worked at Ladywood High School and Madonna University, two Felician-sponsored ministries.

Those students she taught were quite impacted by her. Daniel said people would see his last name and immediately put their connection together, telling him stories about what a great teacher she was.

After her passing last fall, Daniel received letters from students she had taught, ranging from more recent to those she had worked with 50 years ago.

"When you were around my aunt, you knew she was someone special... close to God," Daniel said.

Sister Mary Valentine certainly impacted Daniel and his family as well.

Families are able to create precious memories at the end of life together in the Angela Hospice Care Center because of supporters like you, whose donations help provide compassionate care for those under our wing. To continue making that work possible, please consider making a donation at angelahospice.org/donate.

"She was just a very enlightening woman," he said. "You just felt that spirit around her, you know? Like, going to church. And I miss it to this day."

When she was brought to the Care Center Daniel was told she would likely only have a few days before she passed, but he had an inkling she wouldn't pass until Nov. 21, which she did. That date was Daniel's father's birthday, and also the day Sister Mary Valentine's mother passed many years ago, making it extra special, a day she now shares with multiple family members.

"The Lord gave me comfort knowing how special that date is now," Daniel said.

These types of conversations with loved ones are so vital, yet so many of us don't have them as often as we should. Having had that conversation with his aunt lead to not only a beautiful hospice experience for her, but the rest of her family as well.



RADIATING *Light*

There are so many myths about hospice: that it's just a place, that it means giving up, that beautiful and joyous memories will be few and far between, and that many on hospice are sad and lonely during their final days.

Elizabeth "Bette" Dishman broke all those myths during her four months on hospice from November 2022 to February 2023, passing just shy of her 101st birthday. She was a prime example of someone who was happy and cheerful during her time in Angela Hospice care, filling up her cup, and others, with positive memories.

"I found her uplifting spirit and positive outlook on life to be contagious, inspiring, and so needed right now," said Liz Lakins, the Angela Hospice social worker who worked with Bette. "What was most intriguing about Bette was her positive energy and warmth she exuded."

As an Angela Hospice social worker Liz sees many patients, with Bette being one of the most positive she had ever worked with, full of light and warmth that radiated from her as far back as their first visit. She smiled the entire time, sharing wisdom about being kind to others.

"She just was so grateful and appreciative of everyone," Liz said. "She just genuinely loved people."

This kind of attitude was one Bette had had her entire life according to her daughter, Sue Daly.

"When people die, they always say, 'Oh, they were always angels.' You don't see the negative anymore. But I can't honestly say there was any negative about my mom," Sue said.

So, what made someone like Bette so positive during her 100 years of life? It was the many blessings she was so grateful for.

From her bed at Fox Run Senior Living, Bette looked at the star shining brightly on her Christmas tree – one she kept up all year – the light glistening in her own eyes while she talked about the beautiful life she had had over the decades, telling stories about the life she



BETTE (CENTER) WITH HER CHILDREN, JIM (LEFT) AND SUE (RIGHT), AND THEIR SPOUSES, COLLEEN AND MIKE.

shared with her husband, Jim, for over 60 years; and how grateful she was to have had so many friends, which she made everywhere she went.

"That's one thing I got a lot of, friends; more than money," Bette said.

Outside of Fox Run, her many friendships included a group of women who met up each month for years too.

The group always said the last one left had to turn the light off, and Bette told her daughter it looked like she would be the one to do after her last friend passed. Even though she had lost friends and family, Bette still felt grateful for all she had had.

"I think I'm pretty darn lucky," Bette said. "I hardly ever even have a headache, that's saying something."

And if she was to give any advice to others about her many decades of life, it would be to never miss a good party, and remember to be kind.

YOUR GIFTS HELP FAMILIES LIKE BETTE'S TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES WHILE IN ANGELA HOSPICE CARE. DONATE TODAY AT ANGELAHOSPICE.ORG/DONATE



caring

FOR SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA



Prior to becoming executive director for Angela Hospice, Jamie LaLonde worked in nursing homes, and it was there that she developed an interest – and a gift – for working

with people living with dementia.

“People who are living with dementia really are living in the present, sometimes the past, and so really having to focus on just having a simple presence with somebody felt really meaningful to me...” Jamie said. “You can do little things throughout your life and throughout your day to make meaningful moments... it doesn't have to be about the next big thing. It could just be about sharing something small with somebody.”

Jamie hopes to share insight on this topic during her virtual presentation, Caring for Someone with

Dementia. This free community seminar will offer tips to help caregivers and individuals who have someone with dementia in their life.

“I would really like somebody to take away some education about what resources are out there, and want them to feel like they're not alone,” Jamie expressed.

Similar to hospice, Jamie pointed out, dementia care involves accepting that the condition is degenerative and there may not be a cure, but life can still be valuable and precious.

“It's focusing on what time you have, what abilities you have, and who you're doing it with,” Jamie said.

REGISTER TODAY TO LEARN MORE:

Caring for Someone with Dementia
November 15, 1 p.m. via Zoom
Register at angelahospice.org/events



ANGELA HOSPICE TREE OF LIFE

Mark your calendars for the Tree of Life Opening Ceremony to take place **Saturday, November 18**, at 10 a.m. on the Angela Hospice grounds. It will be a beautiful outdoor event, featuring Santa, the Angela Hospice choir, and a hot cocoa bar. Invite your family for this special event honoring those we've loved and lost.



Register for this event by scanning the QR code or visiting angelahospice.org/events

ANNUAL REPORT

Our 2023 Annual Report is now available online!
Visit angelahospice.org/publications

The Monarch is produced by the Angela Hospice Communications Team.

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