

SPRING 2024

# MONARCH

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NURSE PRACTITIONERS TALAR TAKESSIAN & JORDAN RICHTER  
STEP UP & TAKE ON NEW ROLES AS ANGELA HOSPICE EXPANDS.



# FINDING A SENSE OF *peace & comfort*

Christine Kuszai knows not everyone believes in psychics, so she was never one to go around offering predictions – but at least once she was able to deliver a message from beyond the grave.

It was at the coffee shop she owned in Savannah, Georgia. She was talking to a couple who had come in when she felt a hand on each of her shoulders. Christine told the couple, “Look, I don’t know what your belief system is... I’ve got two people here and they want me to convey a message.”

The couple burst into tears. They had just come from a funeral for two dear friends who had been killed in an accident.

She told them, “They want you to know that they are safe, that they are loved and adored, and that everything is OK. They enjoyed the service and the kind words, but they were fine, and not to worry and not to cry anymore because they were well taken care of. They felt terrific – all their wounds were healed.”

Despite Christine’s access to the spiritual world – her own abilities started when she was just a child – she was never one to seek out psychic readings for herself (although it was a psychic that approached her in a restaurant that first told Christine she was pregnant; her daughter, Noa, is now 22). But after coming to the Care Center, Christine’s sister Cara suggested they have a psychic come.

“I figured what better way to... do things that you enjoy, talk to people that speak your language?” Cara said.

Christine and Cara both felt it was a beautiful experience when the psychic came in

“She found out that I’m on my path, and I’m doing well,” Christine said. “I’m doing and saying what I’m supposed to say.”

They felt a sense of love and comfort – just as they’ve been feeling from the team at Angela Hospice.

Part of following her path is being with her family and friends, and making the most of their precious time together, even as Christine faces stage four cancer. Learning there was no way to cure her body was a shock to her and her family, but after stopping harsh treatments, they’re glad to have their vibrant, funny Christine back.

“We were able to all sit here and just talk, and have our true feelings. I was able to thank them for being my brother and sister, and talk about our childhood and

share stories with Noa, because that’s a whole lifetime of stuff she didn’t even know,” Cara said.

Their family is truly seizing the day, diving into the curious in-between, having deep and intriguing conversations, exploring the mysteries of their present and the future. They’re living out their mantras: *Stay With People Who Make You Feel Like Sunshine*, and *Add To Your Happy Every Day*.

Cara added to her happy by buying an RV in hopes they would all be able to travel together. At the least, she plans to park it outside Christine’s window at the Care Center so they can dream about new adventures.

They’ve been learning together, too, through their hospice journey. In a chat with one of the Care Center social workers, Christine and her family learned about anticipatory grief and were grateful to know there’s a name for what they’ve all been feeling. And instead of running away from these topics so many find uncomfortable, they’ve embraced them.

“I feel stronger, and passionate, and I feel passionate about this topic about end of life,” Christine said.

**Cara has been documenting their journey on social media, what they’ve experienced, what they’ve learned, and what they wished they would have been told sooner.**

“She’s very passionate about medical transparency,” Christine said of her sister. “And Noa is very passionate about quality of life.”

It only made sense for them to have a party, to invite their friends and loved ones in on their experience, to give them the permission to



**“Christine is the kind of person that when you meet her, she’ll change your life a little bit.”**

~ Kristina Kosta  
Care Center Nurse Practitioner

talk about what is really important. So they planned Christine’s “Peace Out” party.

They had about 50 people visit in her room at the Care Center. There were photos everywhere, rainbow colored decorations hanging from the ceiling, and hot pink balloons spelling “PEACE OUT.” A full spread of

food included cake and Christine’s favorite candies. Together they talked, joked, sang, and reminisced. It was an amazing day that left Christine with a message she feels compelled to share.

“We had a ‘Peace Out’ party because I’m on this side. I’m over here. I’m alive. I’m talking to you,” she said. “I want to get it out that... don’t lose your person. Don’t put them in the ground without having a party first, because they should go to the party. I would love to die knowing that everybody loved me. I could have gone to sleep that night after the party and been like, ‘What a fantastic life. I didn’t know they all love me like that. Wow.’ I still feel that way, and I wish that for others.”

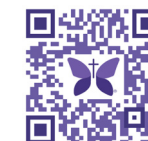


**CHRISTINE (CENTER) EXCLAIMS “PEACE OUT” WITH HER FAMILY.**

**FROM LEFT: HER BROTHER AND NIECE, JOEL AND JOYA KUSZAI; NEPHEW DYLAN MCWILLIAM; SISTER CARA MCWILLIAM; AND DAUGHTER NOA KUSZAI.**

Angela Hospice’s donor-supported Care Center is a welcoming place that allows for beautiful moments. Families like Christine’s can enjoy their time together, secure in the knowledge that their loved one is fully supported in their medical needs, while they each receive the healing benefits of Angela’s caring embrace.

**This transformational care is only possible thanks to the generosity of caring people like you. To show your support and help more families like Christine’s today, visit [angelahospice.org/donate](http://angelahospice.org/donate)**





# PLANTING

# joy



Imagine dozens of begonias, different colors combining together to make a beautiful image in the ground, an entire picture complete in what once simply looked like a typical yard in front of a home.

This was the kind of work that Angela Hospice patient Shirley Refalo-Scalcucci did for years, and she loved every minute of it.

"It was one of the most fun jobs I've ever had in my life," said Shirley, who was in Angela Hospice care for six months. "We had a good time every day."

Once she moved into her home, Shirley really began to create spectacular designs, including her first garden, a heavenly place that was full of brightness and color, and dedicated to her daughter, who she lost at a young age.

For Shirley, that first garden she created was her favorite and the one she's still the proudest of, knowing her daughter was looking down at those flowers, watching over them and her mom.

Shirley's the first to admit she's had a hard life, one full of loss and tragedy, and yet, despite all of that, she's stayed strong, much like a flower that blooms through the storms, rarely dwelling on any storms that crossed her path.

"She's pretty special and inspiring," said Liz Lakins, the Angela Hospice social worker who was with Shirley throughout her entire time on hospice.

And Shirley is quite full of gratitude for all she's gotten to see and do, including those she's met through Angela Hospice who have provided care for her.

"You guys are the closest thing we have to peace when

we're dying, and that's very important to have – that peace of knowing that you're going to get through it, even though it's the unknown," Shirley said.

While she doesn't completely know what the future holds, she does know a few things, like how she wants "The Rain, The Park & Other Things" by The Cowsills (also known as "The Flower Girl") played at her funeral.

"That's one of the songs I'm having at my funeral because I want it to be uplifting and not depressing," Shirley said.

Given Shirley's history with flowers, she couldn't have picked anything more fitting.

Her love of gardening goes back to her childhood, growing up with a garden that was full of an abundance of fruits and vegetables. As an adult, she owned her own floral design company for six years, creating breathtaking designs not only for homes in her neighborhood – including her own – but for some local celebrities too, including multiple Detroit Red Wings players.

Just as her career brightened the landscape and lives of so many, the joy that Shirley radiates is evident to the staff at Angela Hospice too, even on the tough days.

Every day Shirley sets a timer and gives herself five minutes to moan and complain, getting it all out. She's learned to set her own limits and focus on passing goodness along, even in times of sorrow.

"When I'm feeling sorry for myself, I try to do something good for someone to bring them joy and happiness," she said. "I found out that giving joy and happiness is free, and it is very rewarding to make people smile."

# meant TO BE

At 22, your typical person probably isn't thinking too much about hospice; Talar Takessian isn't your typical person though.

"Even still today people are like, you do what now?" said Talar, who has worked at Angela Hospice since 2018. "But I tell people it's not as scary as they think, it really is a beautiful thing, and most people do see the beauty."

Talar certainly did when she, in her early twenties, was a caregiver for a 91-year-old who spent the last month of her life at Angela Hospice. That time in the Care Center was Talar's first exposure to the work hospice nurses do, and ultimately changed the trajectory of her path in life.

"I think it was definitely very eye opening, that death could be so peaceful, and so normalized," Talar said. "To know that there was a place that it could be a comfort to someone, that it could be a beautiful thing, was something that I really gravitated towards."

"I just had this feeling that I wanted to keep coming back to Angela, and even today, I have not lost that feeling and that passion for what we do here," she continued.

Even after completing her clinical rotation while at Madonna University, and working at different facilities, Talar continued to compare everywhere to Angela Hospice; she didn't feel the same anywhere as she did while working in the Care Center.

She felt such a sense of reward, like being at the Care Center had given her a life purpose; that this was the work she was supposed to be doing.

That passion has continued to show in her work, starting from her time during her clinical rotation, to working the midnight shift as a floor nurse, to Talar's new role as Nurse Practitioner, bringing comfort to patients and their families, and leaving a lasting impression while doing so.

During her last shift as a floor nurse at the Care Center – a role she had for six years – there was a patient's family who had asked for Talar by name to see if she still worked there. When Talar was just starting out in the Care Center, she had met that family when another one of their loved ones was in hospice.



"It just kind of struck a chord because I was like, wow... you do make more of an impact than you think," she said.

For Talar, working in hospice has never been just a job, but more of a calling.

And specifically, a calling to be at Angela Hospice.

"When your morals align with the place that you work for, it definitely makes you want to stay in a company, and I feel like Angela's morals have always stayed the same," Talar said. "They've always put the patient first and the family part first, and I feel like that's what's most important to me, too."

She'll continue to do just that in her role as Nurse Practitioner, working with patients and their loved ones in home care. This role will also allow her to learn more about the ins and outs of hospice while still being able to do what she loves: seeing patients.

"I'm really excited to continue to grow... and do what I love," Talar said.

CAN YOU SEE YOURSELF IN A  
CAREER IN HOSPICE?  
TO LEARN MORE, VISIT  
[ANGELAHOSPICE.ORG/CAREERS](https://angelahospice.org/careers)



YOU CAN BRING GOODNESS TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY  
TO ANGELA HOSPICE. TO MAKE A GIFT TODAY AND HELP SOMEONE LIKE SHIRLEY,  
VISIT [ANGELAHOSPICE.ORG/DONATE](https://angelahospice.org/donate)





# ANGELA HOSPICE *expands*

With an eye toward bringing comforting, compassionate care to more families during a loved one's end-of-life journey, Angela Hospice is pleased to announce our new hospice residence at Lourdes Senior Community in Waterford.

Located 27 miles north of our Livonia Care Center, Angela Hospice will operate a newly renovated 15-bed hospice residence at the beautiful Lourdes lakeside campus, where they currently provide independent living, memory care, assisted living, skilled rehabilitation, and long-term care.

"This is such a wonderful opportunity to expand our programs and services in a way that will add to the continuum of care at Lourdes, and allow Angela Hospice to support more people in their time of need," said Marti Coplai, Angela Hospice President and CEO.



Not only will Angela Hospice at Lourdes offer dedicated inpatient hospice care for residents of Oakland County and beyond, it will also serve as a field office for Angela Hospice's home care teams as they expand their reach further north, providing even greater support for the surrounding areas.

Donations toward Angela Hospice's Grief Care programs, educational outreach, and Good Samaritan program – which offers hospice care free-of-charge for those without insurance or the ability to pay – will make these new services available to the community as well.

"I'm excited to be able to bring Angela Hospice to more places, to more people," said Jordan Richter, who has accepted the position of Director for Angela Hospice at Lourdes.

A nurse practitioner, Jordan first joined the Angela Hospice team in 2021, and has supported both Angela Palliative Care and Angela Hospice as part of the medical team. In her new role, she'll be acting as nurse practitioner and administrator. Jordan will begin hiring clinical staff for the hospice residence in Waterford in March.

"I just want people who want to take as good care of the patients as I want to," she said.

## ABOUT ANGELA HOSPICE AT LOURDES

- Lourdes used the same architect and interior designer in their facility as Angela Hospice used in the expansion of the Livonia Care Center, making Angela Hospice at Lourdes look and feel similar to the Livonia Care Center.
- All patient rooms look out either on the beautiful Scott Lake (pictured at left) or Lourdes healing garden.
- The residence will include family suites, a large gathering area, and sleeper sofas in each patient room for family comfort.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Angela Hospice at Lourdes is tentatively scheduled to begin accepting patients at the residence as of June 1.
- An open house in May will welcome community members who would like to see and tour the facility, learn about Angela's programs, or apply to volunteer.

For more information, visit [angelahospice.org](http://angelahospice.org).



Jordan Richter's passion for geriatric care began when she was still in high school, working as a receptionist at an assisted living facility. Jordan became a nurse practitioner in 2021 and is board certified in hospice and palliative care. She will begin her doctorate program at the University of Michigan later this year.

## GOLFING "FORE" A CAUSE



Returning sponsor Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services will be a Double Eagle Sponsor for this year's outing.

You can show your support for Angela Hospice's caring programs at this year's Golf Fore Angela Hospice outing. Taking place Monday, June 10, at Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center, participants will golf an 18-hole scramble with a 9 a.m. shotgun start, including lunch at the turn, and a dinner and silent auction to follow. Golfer packages start at \$190.

"This event is a fun way for our community to show their support for the Angela Hospice mission," said Helen Balmforth, Community Outreach and Event Specialist. "Whether it's golfing as a foursome or an individual, sponsoring a hole, or donating to our silent auction – we're grateful for all the ways we're able to connect with our wonderful donors and support Angela's good work."

For more about golfing or donating to this event, visit [angelahospice.org/events](http://angelahospice.org/events) or call Helen at 734.953.6045.

## WALK OUR LABYRINTH

As the days begin to get longer, and the sun shines more, consider stopping by the Angela Hospice labyrinth, located behind the Care Center in Livonia.

"The grounds here are so serene and peaceful, a labyrinth seemed like the perfect addition," said Jennifer Dale, Angela Hospice Director of Community Outreach and Philanthropy. "We hope that everyone – our staff and volunteers, and the community – use it as a destination for peace and healing, especially for those who may be grieving a loss."

Labyrinths are an ancient tradition that have been used for over four millennia, and the goal is to further aid in stress reduction and anxiety. The labyrinth at Angela Hospice – established through grants from the Livonia Community Foundation and Ford Motor Company – was created in the Santa Rosa style, which includes the unique heart space in the middle.

We hope those who continue to walk the path are able to have a peaceful moment and take a minute for themselves.







## BOOKS OF HOPE

The Angela Hospice Grief Care team has always been asked for book recommendations on grief and loss, so much so that they launched a book club this March.

For Debbie Vallandingham, Angela Hospice Director of Grief Care Services, and the Grief Care team, this is a way to do something a little different with their grief groups for those dealing with the loss of a loved one – another way to support each other.

"We're hoping the book club will help those grieving to realize that in combination with support groups and counseling, there are ways outside of that to deal with their grief and find support," Debbie said. "What a book club does is teach you that you can work on your grief in a different way."

While the book club will have a specific theme focused on books covering grief and loss, it will still run like most do, with lots of discussion about the book, such as everyone's takeaways and general feelings.

Books for the year have already been hand-selected by different members of the Grief Care team, who will each take a turn leading the group, discussing books they personally have found helpful when it comes to grief and loss. These are books they wanted to champion.

The in-person group will meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Angela Hospice in Livonia beginning in March, and is open to anyone who's interested. Coming each month isn't required, people can pick and choose which month they would like to attend, and will need to obtain the book on their own.

"You can take a look at the book, kind of do a synopsis of whether you think it's for you or not," Debbie said. "You could just pick the books that are of interest to you, which is kind of neat."

The book club isn't the only new addition for this

year's grief groups at Angela Hospice. They'll be offering more workshops throughout the year on topics such as cleaning out the closet of a loved one who has passed, cooking for one, and a Day of the Dead workshop.

"We're doing a lot more practical workshops," Debbie said. "Workshops targeting a lot of concerns that grieving people have, like if they've never cooked before in their life, or they're used to cooking for an army."

Last year's popular walking group will also be returning later this spring, and run through the summer.

Each week the group will begin with meditation under the Angela Hospice portico, and the walk will be followed by a discussion, allowing participants the option to share how they felt on the walk, what thoughts came up, and what the walking experience was like for them.

The ultimate goal is to promote that mind and body connection in healing, something the grief counselors at Angela Hospice often tell those they work with.

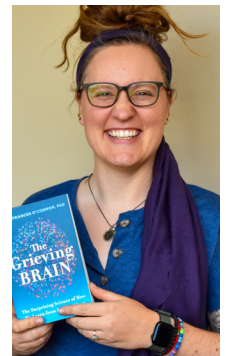
"It's so easy when we're grieving to get literally stuck in a rut," Debbie said. "Something as simple as making a commitment to a weekly walking group, something that gets you moving and out... you're going to get the sunshine, the fresh air, and actual companionship and support. So it's a win-win on every single aspect that we teach."



Becca Guenther



Jasmine Kendrick



Keely Rhiannon

Angela Grief Care programs are funded solely through donations. To help bring transformational support to grieving children and adults, visit [angleahospice.org/donate](https://angleahospice.org/donate).

For more information on Angela Hospice's grief support groups, please visit [AskForAngela.com](https://AskForAngela.com).

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