

Dear Mary,

Our relationship with East End Hospice began two years ago with my mother under your care at the Kanas Center for Hospice Care. She was losing her battle with breast cancer. Our family was scared and nervous, not knowing what to expect. Those emotions quickly changed to comfort thanks to the most beautiful setting and the excellent care. We learned that the patient is not the only one on the end-of-life journey, it's a family adventure.

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Sadly, nine months ago we had to make another difficult decision. We knew exactly who to call but wondered if it was too soon. Our dad had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given up to a year to live. After a few months of navigating things on our own, we decided it was time to inquire about home hospice. The intake team came while Dad was still doing quite well. They answered everyone's questions and put us at ease. Dad felt like he had reunited with old friends. Next to come were Alexis the nurse and Betty the social worker. What a breath of fresh air. They are the perfect people for this line of work. Dad looked forward to his Monday visits and even had me put snacks out for them. I think he

felt young each time they visited. The visits always resulted in lots of laughing and fun. Somehow, they knew just how to balance what felt like friendship with professionalism. Soon after, Maria the aide was added to our team. Dad felt an instant connection with her. She even nicknamed him "Mr. B." He loved that and smiled whenever he heard it. At first, he was a bit shy about personal care and bathing but that ended quickly, and he insisted on daily showers. Maria would make his lunch and his bed. He wondered if she had been in the Army. He would tell me that you could bounce a quarter off that bed. I need to add one more person to my list of amazing people, Stewart "Stu" Wood - our volunteer. Stu and Dad "hung out" on Thursdays, 1-3pm. This gave me time to step out,



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take a breath, and spend time with my husband and kids, which was invaluable to me. Stu and Dad hit it off from the very beginning. Dad enjoyed Stu's punctuality, neat appearance, and zest for reading. Although Dad wasn't an avid reader, Stu read a book a week, summarized it, and had a list of thoughts and questions to discuss with Dad. Dad felt like a scholar by the end of each visit. My daughter Ava attended Camp Good Grief after losing her grandmother. What an incredible week. That's where we first met Stu. Ava came home each day feeling so much better than when she left. She would spend hours telling us all the things she did and told us about her new friend Stu. What a wonderful man.

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Losing someone you love is the hardest thing ever. Having our Hospice team guide us helped so much. I never felt alone. Because of this incredible group of men and women you provided, Dad was comfortable, well cared for, and felt loved and heard. They always greeted him with a smile and asked how he was doing and what he needed. They gave him much more to focus on than cancer. Although I am going to miss my father beyond words, I am so happy his journey has been a smooth one. When I think about East End Hospice, I get so emotional. I could not have done this without you. Thank you for being there for us.

Sincerely,

*Mary A. Thomas*

(Al Brenner's daughter)

