

**Address by Madeline Childs**  
**William Childs Hospice House 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
**Palm Bay, Florida**  
**October 10, 2009**

One of the biggest regrets of my life is that this House was not yet built when my husband, William, spent his last days on earth.

It must have been that same lack for those others so long ago who felt the need for a better place for patients and families. We owe our thanks to those folks who, in the early 70s, sought a better way to help people facing the end of their lives. Nurses volunteered with patients after working their shifts at the hospital. They organized, they eventually became Hospice, they began thinking about a place for these patients.

This House is here today because of those early pioneers. They were touched as we have been. They're the ones who worked so diligently over all those years to bring this House from an inspired idea to life - to become the lovely, and loving, facility we celebrate here today. Many people were involved in those years of effort. Thanks to them we have this beautiful place, and thanks to you for helping keep this dream alive by participating today.

Back in 2004 we intended to open for patients in August, not October. Maybe you remember that summer like I do, nothing but hurricanes! We suffered our way through 3 of them, all within a few weeks of each other. We barely recovered from one when another showed up! But, good often happens in the darkest of circumstances. We were able to open the House to emergency personnel and first responders as a base of operations. It served them well and was a great test for the House. The staff got to see how it functioned in the worst possible conditions. The House survived that hurricane season with flying colors and the staff learned many valuable lessons. So that's why we opened our first wing to patients 5 years ago today, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The House was completed with the opening of the second wing 3 years later in June 2007.

In the most basic terms this House is a medical facility. While we've seen more than 2500 patients pass through the House since it opened, we know it's so much more than a patient room and hospital bed. In addition to medically caring for patients facing an end of life illness, this House is a loving sanctuary for both patients and families struggling to cope with the stress and uncertainty of the huge loss they are facing. Hospice and this House provide the calm, dignity and respect so lost in many other medical environments.

I'm guessing nearly everyone is here, as I am, because of a loved one or a friend, lost. My gratitude to Hospice was overwhelming as I watched my husband pass through

that phase in his life. That last segment of his life turned from pain and fear to comfort and peace. Seeing that transition take place in him brought me enormous relief. His peace gave me the courage to "let him go", to accept his going. Someone in the healthcare profession here recently told me - and I hope she doesn't mind my sharing this with you - that even though she deals with this on a day-to-day basis, when it happened to her family it became personal. This IS a personal event in our lives, NOTHING could be more personal.

I'll be forever grateful for the loving care and compassion of all the nurses, volunteers and staff who are Hospice, not only during my husband's final days and hours, but for all those who passed through this House since that first patient 5 years ago. The folks who man this House give unconditionally not only for the patient but for the whole family. The care Hospice offers extends beyond the days and months of illness and beyond those final moments to encompass and surround those of us left behind. Because not only did my husband lose his life, I felt I lost mine. So, I accepted the help they offered me. They helped me reinvent and rebuild myself. They helped me see there really is "life after death", for me, and I believe, through this House, for my husband, William.

Because of that loss in my life, I remain connected to Hospice. This is why today I'm so honored to recognize this House and its soul - those who work here and those who make this place possible. And to celebrate you, and the community, who through your generosity keep this House alive. We want to thank you all for coming to help us celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The William Childs Hospice House with this "Walking to Remember" event and the brick memorial service. I hope those of you who went on the Walk enjoyed it and found comfort in remembering. And I pray those of you who are here to see your brick will feel that connection you're seeking. You honor this House and your loved one with that memorial gift and your time here today.