



Big Bend Hospice

your hometown hospice, licensed since 1983

B I G B E N D H O S P I C E
F O U N D A T I O N , I N C .

November 15, 2015

Addressee
Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Salutation,

No father should ever have to bury his child.

But life isn't fair and cancer is brutal. And last year, that's what I had to do.

My son Stephen ... well, let's just say you don't get too many Stephens. That boy was full of life. He always wanted to be the best. That kid could swing the bat and get on third before anyone even picked up the ball. I don't know anyone who ever came in contact with Stephen who didn't love him.



Stephen Crayton

Stephen got sick about a week after his 29th birthday. At first he thought it was just the same head cold his kids had. But then the kids got better and Stephen just got worse. When he started having major headaches and dizzy spells, he went to the ER.

They did a CT scan and found a spot on his brain. They did an MRI and more tests. They even went in and took a piece off his brain. In the end they determined it was a glioblastoma, a cancerous brain tumor. In Stephen's case it was inoperable. His mother and I took him to the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa for a second opinion, and they said the same thing. There was nothing anyone could do. My son was going to die. Still, you hold onto whatever shred of hope there is. So Stephen decided to try chemo and then radiation. His mother and I lived out of the ICU and hospital waiting room for weeks.

Someone suggested we contact Big Bend Hospice, which is close to our home in Tallahassee. Big Bend returned my call that same day, and by the following day we had moved Stephen into a room at the Margaret Z. Dozier Hospice House. Walking into Big Bend was like stepping into a Marriott. It was immaculate. Stephen's room was comfortable. People were kind. His room had a window that looked over a beautiful garden.

I felt like I could breathe for the first time in weeks.

The next evening Stephen started throwing up. It was the most horrible thing you ever saw. I arrived in his room the same moment Stephen's nurse, Diane, did.

And what happened next I will never forget as long as I live.

Please turn over

1723 Mahan Center Blvd | Tallahassee, FL 32308-5428 | 850/878-5310 | 800/772-5862 | Fax: 850/309-1638 | www.bigbendhospice.org

Big Bend Hospice Foundation, Inc., is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 1-800-HELP-FLA. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the State. 100% of funds raised support the mission and services of Big Bend Hospice. SC-00273

Diane went to the bed and held my son like he was her own child, never mind the mess. She hugged him, stroked his head, and held his hand. When they finally got things somewhat under control, it happened again 45 minutes later. And again, Diane was right there. Like her whole purpose in this world was to take care of that boy.

Diane was an angel and Big Bend was as good of a place to be as I could have hoped for. But I'm afraid our story doesn't have a happy ending. After consulting with Big Bend Hospice, one of the hardest decisions my family decided to make was signing my son's Do Not Resuscitate Order. His mother couldn't bear to sign the paper, so I did. After I scribbled my name, I was done. Physically, mentally, and in every way exhausted. I was mad at God, mad at everybody. I went into the little chapel down the hall from Stephen's room at Big Bend and laid face down on the floor.

I didn't cry, didn't yell at God, didn't even think. I was empty. I had nothing left.

After about 15 minutes I heard the door open and I could sense someone was in the room with me. The next thing I knew, somebody had laid down on the floor next to me. I felt an arm around my shoulder. It was Diane, Stephen's nurse. I don't know how long we stayed there. But she did the same thing for me that she had done with my son. She just held me.

People talk about angels and having guardian angels and that sort of thing. I say if you want to really see angels go to Big Bend Hospice.

I used to think of hospice as a place for patients at the end their life. But Big Bend is much more than that. Everyone from the nurses to the administration to the kid who has to clean up the messes—you'd think they were making a million dollars a year the way they treat you. I don't know how they do it. They see death day in and day out, and yet they are the nicest people you'll ever meet. Everyone always went out of their way to ask, "How are you doing?" When I'd start to talk about Stephen they'd cut me off. "I'm not talking about Stephen," they'd say. "I'm talking about *you*, Mr. Crayton. How are *you* doing?"

I'm the president of the Moose Lodge here in Tallahassee, and even before my son got sick, Big Bend Hospice was one of the charities we donated to. (Our favorite charity, as a matter of fact—but don't tell anyone I said that.) We give about \$10,000 a year to Big Bend Hospice, and we've been doing that for quite some time. And I tell you, if we gave them a million a year it wouldn't be enough.

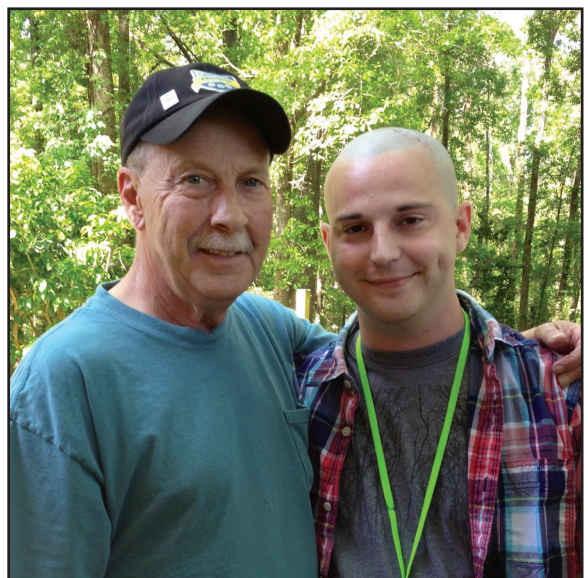
If you're looking for a good cause to support this year, please look no further than Big Bend Hospice.

May God bless you and your family
this holiday season.



Carl Crayton

P.S. No amount of money will bring back my son. But by supporting Big Bend Hospice, I can honor Stephen's memory and help make sure other families who are suffering are able to experience the kind of comfort and care that we did. *Will you please join me in making a special year-end gift to Big Bend Hospice?*



Carl & Steven Crayton



your hometown hospice, licensed since 1983

FOUNDATION, INC.
1723 Mahan Center Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32308-5428

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TALLAHASSEE, FL
PERMIT #134

*Ever seen an angel? I have.
It's not what you think...*