

Years of Helping Others Transformed into a Legacy of Caring



“Cancer is no stranger to me,” said Audrey Gilbert, who lost her mother and father to the disease, as well as “many good friends in between.”

The greatest blow, however, came in 2010 when Audrey’s husband of 43 years, John H. Gilbert, passed away after a battle with multiple myeloma.

“John was such a kind, giving person,” Audrey reflected. Known affectionately as “Treetop” due to his height, John volunteered at the Department of Juvenile Justice, Wilson High School, and even became the first director of the Florence Boy’s Club in 1965.

“His other nickname was ‘Mr. Fix-it,’” Audrey said of her husband, who would come home

from a long day’s work as a UPS driver and immediately begin helping friends, family and neighbors.

After his fight with cancer, John eventually required hospice care. His final days were spent at the McLeod Hospice House.

“It’s a place you hope you never have to go to,” Audrey said, “but if you do, there is no better place to be.”

A longtime donor to McLeod Hospice -- having been inspired by the special care a close friend received a decade before -- Audrey was again overwhelmed by the compassion of the staff. “John and I were always very supportive of McLeod Hospice, but we never knew we would use it ourselves. The Hospice House allowed me to be something I was not able to be at home. Here, I was not his caregiver. I was his wife again.”

In addition to her persistent support of McLeod Hospice, through both monetary gifts and hours spent volunteering with the Grief Recovery Program and at the front desk, Audrey also helps the McLeod HOPE Fund accomplish its mission of Helping Oncology Patients Everyday. A member of the HOPE Fund Advisory Committee since its inception in 2014, Audrey advocates for the fund in the community and helps determine how to most effectively address the many needs of McLeod’s cancer patients.

Having an intimate knowledge of McLeod Hospice and the HOPE Fund, Audrey wanted to ensure that these programs could continue well into the future. Therefore, she decided to make a legacy commitment by naming the McLeod Foundation as beneficiary of her IRA retirement account.

“I wanted to honor my husband’s giving spirit,” Audrey explained. “Though John and I had no children in a biological sense, we felt that, in a spiritual sense, our community was our children. We wanted to leave behind a legacy of caring for them.”

Audrey chose to give an IRA both because of the sizable impact it would have, and because of the ease of the process.

“It was very simple,” Audrey recalled. “I spoke with Roxanna Tinsley (Development Officer for the McLeod Foundation), obtained the Foundation’s tax ID number, went to the bank and signed it over.”

Audrey’s IRA was designated to equally support both McLeod Hospice and the HOPE Fund.

“My favorite definition of the word ‘hope,’ is that little voice in your head that, while the whole world around you is saying ‘no,’ is whispering ‘maybe.’”

“Well after I am gone, my legacy gift to the McLeod Foundation will work to make those whispers of ‘maybe’ louder, and perhaps even turn some of them into a ‘yes.’”