



The Linus Brennan Fund

name when being interviewed for this article.

A couple of years later, Linus came into the world unexpectedly. Unlike the birth of his sister, Ourania, there was no indication that baby Linus would be taken so

Alison and Daniel Brennan have been blessed with five children: Calliope, Ourania, Thalia, Linus, and Clio. Both Ourania and Linus are in Heaven. Though their lives here on Earth were brief, these two children have helped and continue to impact the lives of many. Here is their story.

Dr. Michael Farrell helped Alison and Daniel to prepare for the birth of Ourania after he explained that their baby girl would not survive very long, if at all, after she was born. From the time of diagnosis to the time of birth, the Brennans prepared for her arrival. They had every support in place, from the medical to the spiritual. They were as prepared as any two parents could be, given the circumstances. When the time came to bring Ourania into this world, Alison and Daniel were ready. Both express great appreciation for Dr. Farrell's thoughtful and tender care for them as a family during this extraordinarily difficult and painful time in their lives. They also recount how loving and caring the nurses and other staff were with them. Father Chris, Karen Roeske, and Brianna Pompey were mentioned by



soon. Daniel rushed Alison to the ER. As it was early morning, he had to go back home and tend to the other children and bring them to daycare and to school. He got back to the hospital just in time as Alison was being prepped for the premature birth of Linus. The nurses and doctors supported these loving parents as they held their baby son and said their hellos and their goodbyes.

Out of their grief, Daniel and Alison set up the Linus Brennan Fund to assist grieving families with the funeral and burial expenses for babies who were called to Heaven. This fund, maintained by the *Lourdes Hospital Foundation*, provides financial relief to families so they may navigate through their bereavement without the added worry of the unexpected financial burden of burying a child. In honor of Ourania, the Brennans have set up

a scholarship fund at SUNY Broome. This scholarship is given on a yearly basis to student parents, including those who have lost a child. Typically, at least two scholarships are given annually.

The Brennans have twice endured the loss of a child. Daniel speaks for both he and his wife when he mentions that the Linus Brennan Fund and the Ourania Brennan Memorial Scholarship are both manifestations of a spirit of gratitude they share for the precious time they had with their children. Daniel



considers it a 'corporal work of mercy' to help others in memory of his two children. Alison and Daniel agree that proactively helping others has helped them on their healing journey.

Though the Brennans still mourn the loss of their two little babies, they can reflect on the fact that, however small their stature, and however brief their time on Earth, the lives of Ourania and Linus have made immeasurable impact on many families. Thanks to the stewardship and courage of their parents, these two children continue to give strength and comfort to the grieving and inspire hope in the hopeless.

Your generosity really makes the difference in people's lives!

We receive countless requests from individuals and their families in need on a frequent basis. The Lourdes Hospital Foundation is privileged to assist those people through its various funds.

- **Most recently**, the Lourdes Hospital Foundation assisted an individual battling cancer. This patient was assisted in the payment of current medical bills through the Geller Fund, one of our cancer funds here at the Foundation. The patient took time to write a thank you note to the Foundation and expressed how much of a blessing it has been to have this financial burden lifted from him especially in this challenging time.
- **Another patient** is most grateful to be able to stay in his home. Illness has left him unable to climb stairs and he could not get to his bedroom on the second floor of his home. He was sleeping in his living room for weeks. He could not afford to move to a different place. The Lourdes Hospital Foundation assisted this patient by providing a stair-lift for him, thus allowing him to stay in his own home. He says the stair-lift is "life-changing" and is very much appreciated.
- **A palliative care patient** expressed his deep appreciation for his new BIPAP machine. In his words, "The BIPAP machine that you provided to me has helped to keep the swelling in my feet down. It also prevents swelling around my heart and lungs. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't helped me by purchasing the machine for me. I feel truly blessed by God because of the assistance given by the Foundation. It was a very generous act, and I want to thank everyone who was involved in making this happen."

News



Sustaining the vision. Supporting the mission.

FALL 2022

In This Issue...



An Interview with Betty Canestaro
Lourdes Hospice Volunteer Coordinator



The Linus Brennan Fund
This amazing family shares their story!



We Welcomoe Dr. Kimona Issa
Lourdes Hospice Volunteer Coordinator



<https://foundation.ascension.org>

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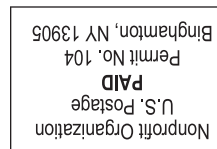
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Gifts can be made to the Linus Brennan Fund via the Lourdes Hospital Foundation. Simply state you would like your gift to be designated to that fund.



Courage, Commitment & Grace



Bettye Canestaro

is the Lourdes Hospice Volunteer Coordinator. She has been involved with Lourdes in various capacities for over 30 years. She has held the position of Hospice Volunteer Coordinator for the last 17 years. Her passion, courage, and commitment to her life's work began at a very early age. Her parents took Bettye with them as they visited the home-bound, lonely, and sick. Her parents helped their community in any way they could. Their selfless acts instilled in Bettye the ethos of service – *do what you can when you can to help others*. The continuous thread in her life has been service to others.

When Bettye's three boys grew older and she suddenly had some free time, she knew she would not be satisfied or content to simply be at home. Bettye needed to make a difference and, following the example of her parents, it was then she decided

All volunteers must complete training before being assigned. The volunteer trainings are offered in the Spring for five weeks and in the Fall for two weekends. Trainees receive a certificate of completion and participate in a graduation ceremony. They are subject to a yearly health screening and all other protective health measures in place to help keep everyone safe.

to volunteer. Her first volunteer position was at Wilson Hospital where she began her relationship with Joan Pulse, Volunteer Coordinator. Bettye learned invaluable lessons from her and says she would not be able to do what she does today if not for the mentorship from Joan.

A pivotal moment came for Bettye when her 17-year-old son was treated for cancer at Lourdes. While waiting at the hospital during her son's treatments, Bettye looked around at others in the waiting room. It was then that she noticed the oncology volunteers. When her son had completed his treatments and he was clear of cancer, Bettye signed up to be an oncology volunteer and did the required training. She and her fellow volunteers engaged both patients and families alike. They served in any way they could, offering comfort and smiles to those under the stress of dealing with cancer.

Bettye embraces her humanity and that of others and takes joy in all the little things that can lift a person up when feeling down. Bettye knows something as simple as a smile or a kind word can make a big difference to someone who may be having a tough day. She also takes great joy in listening to people. Bettye says that every person has a story to tell. Most often, Bettye finds that just being a good listener has provided comfort to those in need. She is truly willing to walk a mile in the other guy's shoes, even if that means she'll get a couple of blisters along the way!

Bettye does a self-assessment each day. It is part of her nature to be self-aware and she strives to make each day better than the day before. Although she admits that working

in Hospice can weigh quite heavily at times, Bettye approaches each day with a heart of gratitude and sees the world through loving eyes. She believes the physical, spiritual, and emotional health of individuals is interconnected. The whole person must be cared for. Whether a patient, a staff member, or one of her volunteers, Bettye cares deeply for people.

As for her volunteers, Bettye says their dedication, selflessness, and willingness to walk along side a patient and their family on that final journey is an immeasurable blessing. They do not get paid for their work.

To inform the community about volunteer opportunities, Bettye has gone out to speak at churches, women's groups, and men's groups. Word-of-mouth is also a way that prospective volunteers hear about the program. Often, family members contact Bettye after their loved one has passed and inquire about becoming volunteers. Additionally, volunteers are recruited with the help of Lisa Donovan, Director of Communications and Marketing. Bettye says Lisa is 'phenomenal' and relies on her to promote the program through various media outlets.

Thanks to the courage, commitment, and grace of Bettye, her staff, and the volunteers, the Lourdes Hospice program can continue to provide dignified, loving, and professional care to patients and their families.

As the Lourdes Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, Bettye knows she can rely on the unwavering

support of the Lourdes Hospital Foundation. She is confident that whatever financial or material needs manifest for those in Hospice, the *Lourdes Hospital Foundation* is there to provide what is needed when it is needed.

Thanks to donors like you, we are able to say 'yes' to those in need when they need it most.

Please consider making a secure gift of any size or frequency to the Lourdes Hospital Foundation at:

<https://foundation.ascension.org/newyork/lourdes-hospital-foundation> or call directly (607)798-5684 and our staff will assist you.

If you'd like to support the Hospice program, gifts of any size can be made to the Lourdes Hospital Foundation by mail or online and directed toward Hospice.



A great way to support Hospice is through the purchase of Christmas ornaments. These handcrafted ceramic ornaments are an annual tradition and make a perfect addition to your Christmas tree. They make great gifts! These ornaments are sold in the Atrium in Lourdes Hospital as it gets closer to Christmas. Here is a sneak peek at the Christmas 2022 ornament. Bettye consults with the artist and each ornament is created by hand. This year's ornament features a heavenly Christmas angel embossed onto antique white ceramic.

Welcome



Dr. Kimona Issa

Recently, Dr. Issa was an honored guest at the Lourdes Hospital Foundation Board of Directors meeting and he spoke about his work.

Dr. Kimona Issa joined the Lourdes Orthopedic team after completing his fellowship training in orthopedic spine surgery at the Norton Leatherman Spine Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

Since joining Lourdes he has led the initiative for Lourdes to have a comprehensive program with the goal to become a Center of Excellence for spine care.

Dr. Issa treats patients of all ages and believes in building strong relationships with his patients to help them develop a health plan that fits their lifestyle and meets their goals. He understands that listening to patients and getting to know them is important in providing the best care possible.

Dr. Issa has advanced training in minimally invasive spine surgery, computer-assisted navigation spine surgery, scoliosis and deformity correction, revision, and corrective spine surgery in cervical, thoracic, and lumbar region, as well as extensive experience and interest in clinical research.

Lourdes Orthopedics has strict safety precautions in place to keep both patients and providers safe.

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Virtual visits and walk-in options are also available!