

Walked in Their Shoes

Liz Gauthier

I was married at the age of 19 without a degree or job because I fell in love and dropped out of college after my first year to follow my husband to San Antonio, Texas to begin his military career with the United States Air Force. My plans were to continue pursuing my schooling even though I didn't know what I wanted to do when I grew up.

I was taking general education courses off & on in Texas, then Ohio. Two children later, I still had no degree and no idea what I wanted to study; however, we had been married 5 years, when 2 days after my husband's 26th birthday, he was diagnosed with a stage IV inoperable glioblastoma brain tumor. He was medically discharged from the military, and we moved back to Florida to be near his parents during this trying time in our lives.

It was during this time that I received my "calling" to be a nurse. I began pursuing my studies throughout this ordeal and eventually obtained my ASN – well after his passing. I worked my way up through my studies working as a Unit Secretary, CNA / Patient Care Technician, Nurse Intern and finally RN.

I worked 5 years doing hospital work on the Neurology floor and in the Emergency Room. I still felt like I wasn't where I needed to be. Hospice kept floating around in my mind. I applied on-line one day but nothing ever panned out. I walked into Hospice of Marion County on another occasion and figured if it was meant to be, it would happen. Well, it was meant to be.

I love my career, the organization, the people I work with and the families I encounter. People always ask me 'how can you do what you do?' and I just simply say, "It is very rewarding." It is difficult to understand what people are going through unless you have walked in their shoes, and I have walked in their shoes.