**Hospice Patient Advocates for the T. Boone Pickens Center - Living and Dying On His Own Terms***By: Alesa Gerald*

When 60-year-old Rick Czerwinski learned of the return of his cancer and his terminal diagnosis, he wanted to be fully informed about his choices and information about his proposed treatments. He chose to decline treatment and instead focus on enjoying his time with his family and friends, not realizing this plan would include the T. Boone Pickens Hospice and Palliative Care Center.

Rick was aware that he would eventually need hospice care and he wanted to receive this care from a place that allowed him to keep his spirits high while living a full life and receiving exceptional professional medical services. This wish list led Rick to the T. Boone Pickens Hospice Center.

“The people that gave me a tour were fantastic and answered all my questions,” said Rick. “They explained how the center worked and how it could help me, but really they didn’t explain the half of it because after coming here not only does it take care of my physical needs but, they provide a certain level of emotional care.”

To be proactive, Rick toured the Center in May of 2020, though he did not expect to need the Center’s services for quite some time. However, a series of events and uncontrollable symptoms changed his plan, and in January of 2021 he was admitted to the T. Boone Pickens Hospice Center.

Rick’s family wanted to be there to care of him throughout his cancer battle. They struggled with his decision to live at the Center once his symptoms were under control, but after experiencing the beautiful amenities available on the nine-acre campus, his family saw the value of his decision.

“It’s like I’m at a hotel, but I have all the treatment that I need,” explains Rick. “My family can stop and see me, or I can go off campus. Everyone can live their life with me going through the progression of cancer and have the highest emotional quality.”

Rick walks daily, races his remote-control speed boats on the Center’s lake, and enjoys the special services offered to all patients including music and massage therapy. Rick believes that because his physical needs are anticipated by the Faith team with around-the-clock care, he has time to focus on the spiritual aspect of his life.

Through his journey, Rick has become an advocate for the T. Boone Pickens Hospice Center. He set a goal of raising $250,000 for the Center’s endowment campaign that will be matched by an anonymous donor. In just a couple of weeks, Rick raised over $120,000 and continues to actively seek additional support. That activity has become a part of his spiritual journey, finding purpose in his final days and adding to his legacy.

“I want to do whatever I can to impact the T. Boone Pickens Hospice to help them and to help future people coming in,” said Rick.

Rick encourages others to openly discuss the end-of-life process and believes that deciding to use the resources the Center provides sooner can drastically improve the quality of their life as well as the experience for their loved ones.

“It’s a neglected part of life, the dying chapter, and people don’t want to talk about it, but there is a way to die well,” says Rick. “We need to make a shift among families so that they bring their loved ones here sooner when they have months to go rather than days to go.”

With the Center’s help, Rick sees the end-of-life differently and more positively than he once did. With his physical needs taken care of, Rick has time to focus on relationships and the spiritual aspect of his life.

“It’s a beautiful and sacred time and it should be treated that way. It should be embraced and by doing so, it makes it easier on everyone. I understand that it’s a transfer from life to death. It’s not this hard end and this frightful thing. It’s a continuum. My legacy, my purpose in life, will live on in my kids and my friends as long as they’re there. So, I will be there with them, living on.”

For more information about the T. Boone Pickens Hospice and Palliative Care Center or Faith Presbyterian Hospice visit [faithpreshospice.org](http://www.faithpreshospice.org). or to help Rick reach his $250,000 goal, visit [forefrontliving.org/foundation](https://www.forefrontliving.org/foundation/).