

# SHARING THE

FALL WINTER 2018-2019

*gift*  
*gift of life*



GIFT OF LIFE  
TRANSPLANT HOUSE  
A HOME THAT HELPS  
AND HEALS



## SAYING GOODBYE TO 'WORLD CLASS' KIDNEYS

**A**s a young man, Gene Okun had watched his father's health slowly deteriorate while on dialysis to treat his Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). So when Gene was diagnosed with the same disease he was determined to find another solution. Gene and his sister, Tina, began doing research that took them from Florida to California to Maryland and eventually to Rochester, Minnesota.

A PKD Conference in Orlando introduced them to the prevention, slow down, and transplantation process for people with PKD. While Gene and Tina's knowledge about Polycystic Kidney Disease was expanding, so were his kidneys.

The increase in size and other complications of PKD challenged the normalcy of his independence. Gene was a professional body builder and passionate about exercise, but found the symptoms and increased size of his kidneys prevented his normal routines. In addition, the rigors of running a renewable energy company greatly impacted his effectiveness and functionality at the company. Gene and Tina's continued research convinced him that his best option would be a kidney transplant although he knew that his greatest challenge would be finding a qualified living donor.

Gene Okun continued exploring hospitals and



eventually met a doctor in Los Angeles who suggested a consultation at Mayo Clinic. Gene met Dr. Prieto who explained the laparoscopic procedure he would perform for his kidney transplant and Gene was soon approved for a kidney transplant. He also met Dr. Schwab who told him about Gift of Life Transplant House as an excellent place for recovery due to its affordability, clean environment and opportunity to connect with other transplant patients. "I knew right away this was the place I'd like to recover", Gene recalls after his tour. The final step in his transplant journey was identifying a donor and an old friend selflessly offered the gift of life to Gene.

Gene's donor needed to lose 50 pounds to qualify for the surgery, so Gene offered encouragement and support. Once his donor was approved, it was

**The greatest challenge would be finding a qualified living donor**

Gene's turn to lose weight. His kidneys were recorded at 25-30 pounds each and possibly held the record as "The World's Largest Kidneys".

His donor spent one week at Gift of Life Transplant House, while Gene spent the next 30 days recovering. He recalls his thrill to be walking 24 hours after surgery and his recovery continues to be excellent. This summer, Gene joined Gift of Life Transplant House and DonateLife in the Rochester Parade. Gene walked the entire route and was a great encourager and advocate for organ donation

Gene's other passion is to spread awareness about PKD. During his illness, he created a website called "My Big Dumb Kidneys", taking a humorous approach to the challenges of this disease. He has also created a YouTube channel that demonstrates what it is like living with the symptoms of PKD. Gene

is grateful for his donor, support group, care team and doctors and will continue being an advocate for PKD awareness, Mayo Clinic and Gift of Life Transplant House.

For more information on Gene's Story visit his website at:

[www.mybigdumbkidneys.com](http://www.mybigdumbkidneys.com)



Gene Okun (Right) with his surgeon, Dr. Prieto (left).

## LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JOE FORRER

*Dear Friends,*

As the cool weather and fall colors welcome us into a new season it reminds me of how busy the last few months have been at Gift of Life Transplant House.

JUNE brought us the end of the Trails4Transplant ride with a wonderful finale at the county fairgrounds. This group of riders came from all corners of the country to ride for 6 years and 2000 miles to raise transplant awareness and donations for transplant related charities. My wife and I were invited to join the posse for one of their last rides and after spending time with these folks we recognized how blessed we are to have this friendship. The remarkable effort of this group is funding the new outdoor living space for our guests, which is scheduled to begin next spring!

JULY brought us a very successful 34th Annual Golf Tournament. We were fortunate to host former Viking/ Hall of Famer/ past guest of the house Carl Eller and his wife as our guest speakers this year and I don't think there was a dry eye when they were finished. In addition, past caregiver and guest Eric and Chris Graf made a long journey to donate an array of sports memorabilia and an original life size façade of Carl in his purple people eater uniform created by Eric. We were also fortunate to have James Rabe donate his time and linguistic talents as the MC. Altogether the event was a sold out success and we look forward to seeing many of you at next year's event!

In AUGUST we had the first annual Table Inspirations – A Celebration of Home where we had a number of volunteers commit their time and décor skills to design a wonderful collage of table settings.

SEPTEMBER brought us the Gala of the Decades – the 1880's. This was an event that, "you had to see it to believe it". The dedicated committee not only spent hours planning and building facades, but they also pulled together a last minute venue change without a hitch. We can't thank them enough for all their hard work and dedication to bring us another successful Gala of the Decades!

Change is the one sure thing we can count on in life and the board has seen a number of talented, wise, and dedicated members retire after many years of service. I am privileged and honored to have served with these pillars of the board and have learned much from them. We are thankful for their continued service and insights shared on committees and future events. We also welcome a number of new faces on the board and look forward to them sharing their talents to face new challenges and opportunities.

In closing, I would like to thank our dedicated staff for their efforts not only with their daily duties, but also going above and beyond by contributing their time and talents to make every one of these events a success. I would also like to express my gratitude to all of the volunteers that have donated their time and talent. I am amazed and humbled with the willingness and level of support from so many in our community. We could not achieve our mission without you!

Sincerely,

*Joe Forrer*

*Board President*

# A Heart Full of Love and a Hero to Thank

Lily was just 3 months old when she came down with RSV, but it didn't go away like it does for most children. New Year's Day, usually a time for new and happy beginnings was quite the opposite. 2018 began with a visit to the emergency room in Valley City, North Dakota and shortly followed with an ambulance ride to Fargo. Her father, Ryan, knew of his family history of heart complications and knew it had to be more than a cold. With a 50 percent chance of passing down the gene, Ryan pressed for an echo cardiogram revealing a diagnosis of Dilated Cardiomyopathy which was shortly followed by a flight to Saint Mary's Hospital in Rochester, MN.

Lily's journey to a new heart began. Blood transfusions, a temporary LVAD, Berlin Pump, a breathing tube, and multiple medications helped her through the 6 month wait. For most heart transplants at Lily's size the wait is an average 3-4 months. As time surpassed the average wait, the nerves grew until the day they finally got the news that a heart was available.

DAY 190 was a day to remember. July 10th 2018 Lily received her new heart. From *"the scariest time of [their]*

*lives"* when Ryan and Trista Montgomery thought their baby girl was dying, to a day of hope, courage and strength began their countdown to go back home. Less than one month later, Lily and her mom left the hospital and came to Gift of Life Transplant House where she would spend the next month and a half recovering and celebrating her 1st birthday! She was a piece of sunshine at Gift of Life Transplant House, "becoming more social by the day, giving everyone at the house big smiles." Once out of the hospital, they started with three appointments a week, dropping to two, and eventually just one visit a week until the 90 days passed and she was cleared to go home.

"Our story may inspire others. Out in the 'real' world, you have no idea this is going on. It's amazing what stories are told in this house." Ryan, Trista, and Lily are deeply grateful for the donor and donor family who are the *"true heroes in this story."*

Lily's future is bright and recovery has been quick. As Lily takes her first steps, her parents are preparing for a lifetime of adventure and activities that come with a soon-to-be toddler.



Trista Montgomery holding her daughter, Lily (post-transplant), enjoying a late summer sunny morning



## 3 Minutes Until Midnight, A Pancreas Awaits

**A**re you Ziegler? We've been waiting for you," were the comforting words Jillian Ziegler heard when she arrived at the Mayo Clinic Transplant Center. Jillian and her family received the call that a new pancreas was available, but they would need to arrive in Rochester no later than midnight. With 3 minutes to spare, Jillian's transplant journey began. Getting there had been no small feat. With no outgoing flights available from California, Jillian and her family were able to find a friend who flew them on a private jet. As Jillian says, "In God's time, everything falls into place...Every part of this story is a total blessing".

Prior to her transplant needs, Jillian was a healthy, active college student pursuing her dream of a Criminal Justice and Sociology Degree to start her career in Law. At 18, her health took a drastic turn and eventually, she was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, a shock to the family as she had always been a healthy child. Her tear-jerking phobia of needles was overcome quickly when it became a choice of life or death. Within 3 years she went to the hospital 50 times for DKA (diabetic ketoacidosis) and within 5 years, she was falsely labeled non-compliant by doctors, was put on 10,000 units of insulin (the amount of 2 pumps

**"In God's time,  
everything falls  
into place"**

in Insulin) to prove there was something else going on, and had doctors from all departments running tests. She even went to Europe for a trial Subcutaneous Pump which worked for 2 weeks when it broke. She had the same surgeon for 5 years, 49 ports placed in her chest, and 43 Picc Lines (which was her actual lifeline), but there was a limit to how many more they could do with all the scar tissue that built up.

Jillian's final diagnosis was Type 1 Diabetes Subcutaneous Insulin Resistance. She can only absorb insulin through her skin and being Type 1, it was impossible to live without being connected to a 24/7 IV pump connected to her port.

In 2016 a doctor suggested Mayo Clinic where they recommended a transplant. Jillian had never considered this as an option. When she arrived at Mayo she was asked how she felt about the care-plan and made sure she understood everything they were discussing. Her visit to Mayo Clinic inspired hope and faith that she had not experienced before. Jillian was the first patient seen with this diagnosis and that would be treated with a pancreas transplant.

In June 2016 she was placed on the transplant list, and she kept telling herself, "In God's timing, I am going to



get that pancreas". In July, 2018 Jillian's faith became a reality. During recovery, Jillian and her mom were guests at Gift of Life Transplant House and Jillian's willingness to share her story, her quiet faith and her winning smile were well known to all.

Jillian reminds us all to count each day as a blessing and not something to be taken for granted. She also insists that all she went through will simply help doctors treat other patients and is an important part of her recovery. Jillian will be returning to school to finish her degree and then hopes to become a Diabetes Educator.

## GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE WISH LIST

- ◇ New Commercial Vacuum Cleaners
- ◇ Toilet Paper
- ◇ Paper Towels
- ◇ Facial Tissues
- ◇ \$30 for a guest room night
- ◇ Forever postage stamps
- ◇ Ziploc bags, assorted sizes
- ◇ Wrapped Candy
- ◇ Gift Cards to Wal-Mart, Target, or Hy-Vee
- ◇ Liquid hand soap (large refill bottles)
- ◇ Liquid dish soap
- ◇ Hand Sanitizer refills
- ◇ Scrubbing Bubbles
- ◇ Soft Scrub
- ◇ Regular & Decaffeinated coffee



# STAFF RECOGNITION



Steve Tarara receiving the Mayo Clinic 'Above and Beyond Award' from Dr. Charles Rosen.

Under the guise of giving a presentation to the Transplant Center's Grand Rounds, Steve Tarara, Operations Manager at Gift of Life Transplant House accompanied Mary Wilder to Mayo Clinic. However, little did Steve know that he was to be presented with the prestigious "Above and Beyond Award"! The award is presented quarterly to that individual who exemplifies the traits of selflessness, willingness to serve and exceeding the expectations of both staff and patients. During the presentation of the award, Dr. Charles Rosen, chair of the Division of Transplantation Surgery at Mayo Clinic and professor of surgery at Mayo Clinic School of Medicine, cited Steve's many acts of service, including missing family Thanksgiving for the past 11 years to serve Thanksgiving Dinner at Gift of Life Transplant House. A non-Mayo employee has never received this award! *Congratulations, Steve!*

## "Lemonade for Sale!"

### 6-Year Old Raises Money for Gift of Life Transplant House

**K**endall Larsen, a precocious, bubbly 5 year old, was spending Monday Funday with Grandma Larsen! While watching a Disney show, she was inspired to have a lemonade stand just like they did on the show. "Please can we have a lemonade stand, Grandma?", she asked and even though it was 95 degrees in Iowa, Grandma Deb Larsen agreed. "Shall we charge for the lemonade?" Kendall responded. They decided to charge \$1.00 and Deb asked what they should do with the money. Kendall thought for a moment and then said, "Let's send it to the place that made Grandpa better." Kendall was referring to Gift of Life Transplant House.

In 2006, Jim (Grandpa) and Raeann Flick came to Gift of Life Transplant House for Jim's pancreas transplant. Jim had been waiting for a match for some time and had finally asked to be taken off the transplant list. He promised his daughter, Katie, that he would be asked to be put back on when she graduated. Katie graduated in June, 2006; Jim was put back on the transplant list and 9 days later, he received the call that a pancreas was waiting for him! "I'll never forget that call", Katie's husband Colin recalls. A few years before, Jim had also had a kidney transplant donated by his sister.

The time Jim and Raeann spent at Gift of Life Transplant House had a powerful

impact on their lives and both made friends with whom they still keep in touch. The support they received at Gift of Life Transplant House helped Jim to recover quickly and well. They have kept those stories and legacy alive in their family and while Kendall wasn't born when Grandpa Jim had his transplant, his stories have left an impression on her!

Giving is an attitude this family is committed to. In 2016, Kendall donated 104 of her Beanie Babies to Ronald McDonald House! So, when asked where she wanted to give the money from her lemonade stand, it was natural for Kendall to want to donate it.

We learned of Kendall's lemonade and cookie stand in June when we received an envelope containing the funds she had collected and a newspaper article showing Kendall and her great-grandma in front of her lemonade stand. Kendall collected \$235.00 to donate to Gift of Life Transplant House! On Sunday, August 26th, Kendall, mom and dad, Katie and Colin Larsen, and both sets of grandparents, Raeann & Jim Flick and Deb and Marty Larsen, took the trip to Gift of Life Transplant House to see the place that had made Grandpa better!

*Thank you, Kendall!*



Kendall Larsen and her family, visiting Gift of Life Transplant House.

# SEPTEMBER TRIBUTES

Each year in September Gift of Life Transplant House honors the legacy of hope and renewed life by celebrating Tribute Month, a month-long recognition of donors and recipients. The names to follow have shared the legacy of hope and renewed life. Tributes not only honor donors, recipients, and loved ones, but assists in continuing to provide "a home that helps and heals" to more than 4,500 guests and caregivers each year.

The recipient is listed in *italic* and benefactor is listed in **bold**. We are thankful for everyone who took part in this special tribute opportunity.

## MEMORIALS

**Alice King-Moormann**

*Michael Moormann*

**Andrew Davis**

*John Davis*

**Ann Heinzler**

*Neale Sowers, Sister Jane,  
Sister Margeen*

**Ann Semke**

*Karl Semke*

**Bernard and Diane Owens**

*John Owens*

**Bernard Thill**

*Donna Thill, Leila Thill*

**Beth Reller**

*Stacey Sipe Smith, Brian  
Cohran*

**Bill Saba**

*Renette Saba*

**Bob and Cheryl Foeltz**

*Ruth Doebler*

**Bob and Debra Rodell**

*Ron R. Patrias*

**Bob and Diane Svangstu**

*Brian A. Svangstu*

**Bonnie Fisher**

*Charles L. Fisher*

**Calvin and Nancy Smith**

*Gail Craycroft*

**Carol Bush**

*Kenneth Bush*

**Cindy and Doug Barry**

*Robert F. Rowland*

**Dale and Darlene Hofbauer**

*Randall Dale Hofbauer, M.D.*

**Darlene Mayer**

*John H. Mayer*

**Dave and Michelle Burke**

*Mary Brent*

**Dave and Tess Holzer**

*Rachael Pfloughoef*

**Denise Thomas**

*Jerry Thomas*

**Dennis LeFief**

*Angeline LeFief*

**Diana Kramer**

*Gordon Dvorak*

**Dorothy Jacobs**

*Christopher P. Jacobs*

**Doug and Dianne Frantz**

*Daniel D. Holmes*

**Eugene Hayes**

*Loretta Hayes*

**Fred and Rosanne Fibeger**

*Lucille Wehrs*

**Gerald and Marcia Semerau**

*Ron Semerau*

**Ginger and David Holmes**

*Linda Vilmo, Kevin Dotson*

**Ginger Schwarz**

*Jan Lewis*

**Gloria Hosman**

*Jerald Hosman*

**J. Sheldon and Lydia Shelton**

*Jeff Shelton*

**Jacqueline Michehl**

*Ross H. Michehl*

**James and Barbara Weixel**

*Jean Wulf*

**James Early**

*Nancy Early*

**James Leier**

*Tillie Leier*

**Jan and Patricia Strait**

*James M. Bills*

**Jane and Steve Anderson**

*Sandra S. Marquart*

**Janet Beuthin**

*Kenneth Beuthin*

**Jean Herbst**

*Sr. Margeen, Sr. Jane  
Francis, Diane and Jerry*

**Jeffrey and Sharon Raboin**

*Gail Craycroft*

**Jerome Pedersen**

*Thomas A. Pedersen*

**Jill Vogstrom**

*Nancy Kirsch*

**JoAnn Schaffer**

*Richard R. Schaffer*

**Joanne Kurhajetz**

*Judy Cooper*

**Johanna Vander Steen**

*George Vander Steen*

**John and Dawn King**

*Shirley Baune*

**Judd and Jeanne Watson**

*Steven Siegle*

**Judith and Richard Koperski**

*Steven Siegle*

**Karl Keller**

*Margaret Keller*

**Karleen Van Dyke**

*Henry Carl Anderson*

**Käthe Schroeder**

*Wesley Schroeder*

**Ken Hoffert**

*Ardyce Hoffert*

**Linda and Mark Willhite**

*Dale H. Willhite*

**Linda Miller**

*Allen Eric Miller*



**Lois Larry Poessnecker**  
*Gordon E. Dvorak*

**Lois Geroux**  
*Rick Geroux*

**Lyle and Sandra Johnson**  
*David Kasowski, Gladys  
Freeseamen, June Becker*

**Mark and Lesa Nauss**  
*Kary Kleinschrodt*

**Marlene Plantenberg**  
*Mark Plantenberg*

**Mary Ann Monk**  
*Donald E. Monk*

**Mary Ann Smith**  
*Christopher Iannone*

**Mary Tjerstad**  
*David Tjerstad*

**Mary Wilder**  
*James Jacobson*

**Merle Henke**  
*Nicole R. Henke*

**Michael and Eileen Pearlman**  
*Sandi Pearlman*

**Michael and Emily Murphy**  
*Curtis Evans*

**Michael and Sharon Hickman**  
*Katie Hickman*

**Michael B. and Roberta Marcinkus**  
*Carole Marcinkus*

**Michael Backstrom**  
*Jean Anne Backstrom*

**Mike and Pat Just**  
*Stacey Sipe Smith*

**Mike Burke**  
*Velma Burke*

**Miriam A. Enge**  
*Allen D. Enge*

**Myrtle Westphal**  
*Bernard Westphal*

**Nancy Flury**  
*Jay Flury*

**Norma Shipton**  
*Cynthia Patterson Shipton*

**Patricia Meek**  
*Jim Merfeld*

**Patrick and Cindy Petersen**  
*Gelene Rohr*

**Randolph and Sandra Hollingsworth**  
*Natalie M. Dalton*

**Richard and Elizabeth Smith**  
*Dan Fondell*

**Richard Audette**  
*Beverly Audette*

**Richard Carver**  
*Alex*

**Rick Harder**  
*Gail Bakeberg*

**Robert and Cecily Schurhamer**  
*Mike Gengler*

**Robert and Lynn Van Maaren**  
*Jan Lewis*

**Robert F. Kerber**  
*Rita A. Kerber*

**Roger Erickson**  
*Hank Anderson*

**Roger Icenogle**  
*Phyllis Icenogle*

**Ron Youngman**  
*Mary McGovern*

**Rosemary Clark**  
*Donald Clark*

**Ruth Boone**  
*Vernon Boone*

**Sarah Rabb**  
*Dick Rabb, Jan Lewis*

**Shanon and Elaine Polsfut**  
*Nancy Moen*

**Shirley Hardcastle**  
*Jack W. Hardcastle*

**Shirley Schacherer**  
*Louis Schacherer heart #98*

**Shirley Voss**  
*William D. Voss*

**Stefano and Greta Guandalini**  
*Marco Furlani*

**Steve and Catherine Peterson**  
*Rita (Deters) Feddersen*

**Sue Milner**  
*Louie Schacherer*

**Thomas and Janice Donohue**  
*Sister Jane and Sister Margeen*

**Thomas Erpelding**  
*Connie Erpelding*

**Wanda Brandt**  
*Marcia Clemetsen Nelson*

**Wendell and Mary Smith**  
*Margaret Smith Askew*

**William and Katherine Hamlin**  
*Al Krech*

**William and Pamela Link**  
*Bob Manly*

*“It’s hard to forget someone who gave you  
so much to remember.”*

# SEPTEMBER TRIBUTES

## TRIBUTES

**Adrian Regan**

*My donor*

**Alene Knesel**

*George Knesel*

**Amy Mazur**

*Tami Konakowitz*

**Carmine Fatigati**

*Tim Ottmann*

**Charles and Vonnie Aug**

*Jim Dunbar, Josh Ommen*

**Connie Doepke**

*Paul Doepke*

**Curt Seehusen**

*Susan Seehusen*

**Curtis and Paula Babb**

*Gift of Life Transplant House Staff*

**Dale and Bonnie Husman**

*Jeanine Aspen*

**Daniel and Beth Hestetune**

*Richard L. Wahlberg*

**Dave and Tess Holzer**

*Paul Martin, Paula Stephens, Tom Stephens, Sharon Martin, Sara Fabian, Stacy Rossin*

**David and Shirley Evenson**

*Martha Evenson Murray*

**Dease and John Charais**

*Cathy Carchedi*

**Douglas Jenkins**

*Marcia Jenkins*

**Dorothy Wenzel**

*Robert Wenzel*

**Egils Augstums**

*Norma Bartels*

**Eric Lovestrand**

*Troy Lovestrand*

**Floyd and Sandra Clark**

*Alex Clark*

**Frank Stubbs and Tom Lee**

*Mark and Robin Nelson*

**Gabriele and Cynthia Dellanave**

*Jim Dunbar*

**Greg Vilmo**

*Allen Watanabe, Dianna Dotson, Steve Tarara, Ginger Holmes*

**Greg Warner**

*Ed Pompeian*

**James Quam**

*The love of my life, Jean*

**John Weeks**

*Lois E. Weeks*

**Joyce Sibson**

*David Sibson*

**Karin Trosine**

*Gene Trosine*

**Karleen Van Dyke**

*Lori Lynn Lange*

**Karmon Taft**

*Lexi Taft*

**Katherine Wilson**

*My husband, Dave Wilson*

**Kathryn Crnobrna**

*Ron Crnobrna - 20 year liver transplant survivor*

**Kathleen Benters**

*My husband and donor, Elden Benters*

**Kathy Blessum**

*Jerry Blessum*

**Keith and Sherri Krebsbach**

*Amanda Krebsbach Vierling*

**Ken Smidowicz**

*Marlene B. Smidowicz*

**Larry Rathmann**

*Linda Rathmann*

**Lisa Williams**

*Ken and Elaine Williams*

**Louis and Bette Jayne Haak**

*Suzanne Miner*

**Lynn Kruse**

*My liver donor, Steven McCluskey*

**Mark and Michele Evans**

*All who give life*

**Mary Rossell**

*My donor, Stacy Rossell*

**Melvin and Suzanne Matson**

*My donor, Darren Matson*

**Michael and Amanda Rose**

*William Schultz*

**Nancy Longley**

*Mary Jo O'Hearn*

**Nick Pompeian**

*Ed and Aaron Pompeian*

**Patricia Meek**

*Pat Meek*

**Patricia Webber**

*Gray Webber*

**Perry Haines**

*Kris Haines*

**Phyllis Briles**

*Dorene Zimdahl*

**Preston and Nancy Nelson**

*My donor, Jerry Nelson*

**Richard and Linda Packard**

*Christine Packard Stevens*

**Robert and Jennifer Oschwald**

*Ann Oschwald*

**Robert Garrity**

*My son, Gregory Garrity*

**Robert Rowbal**

*Alan Rowbal*

**Roger Bird**

*Ann W. Bird*

**Roger Erickson**

*Lori Lange*

**Ryan and Cynthia Thompson**

*Mary Ann Leingang, Rick Hummel*

**Sarah Neall**

*Rodney Nett*

**Scott and Betty Rockendorf**

*My living kidney donor,*

*Mary Ann Hein*

**Sharon Mraz**

*Roger Mraz*

**Sheila and Danny Boger**

*My unknown donor*

**Susan and John Roise**

*The housekeeping staff*

**Tanya Hanson**

*Gary Melin*

**Tom and Judy Rice**

*Terry Fettus*

**Tom and Rosie McKay**

*Vicki Aegerter*

**Tove and Thomas Kinley**

*Bev Dwelly, Mary Coleman*

**Viva Gillio**

*Vickie Gillio*

*“Every day I pray for the person who made the choice to be an organ donor. I pray for the family that honored the donor’s wish. And every day I honor his or her memory by trying to remain a healthy person.”*

*-Gift of Life Transplant House Guest*

## CONTRIBUTIONS

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Tony Montgomery Realty & Auction Co.	Gary and Susan Bouska	Mark and Janelle Clausen
Aileen Williams	Gary Hentze	Mark and Judy Winters
Andrew and Susan Kent	Gaylon and Linda Rust	Michael and Ida Robson
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Dwight and Lisa Bacon	Leon and Dorothy Stokes	William Lehman
Eli and Susan Churchwell, Jr.	LeRoy Mamer	Zeke and Mary Fleet
Florence Anderson	Lydia and Keith Schuck	
Gary and Jean Anderson	Marion Schank	

# Did You Know...

## Gift of Life Transplant House

was founded in 1984 by kidney transplant patient Ed Pompeian. His vision and mission was to provide transplant patients and their caregivers with high quality, affordable accommodations in a supportive home-like environment.

Ed Pompeian received “the gift of life”, a kidney, from his mother, Helen and years later from his son. He worked for years with Mary Davie, Dr. Sylvester Sterioff, and Greg Warner to build, support and open the original Gift of Life, Inc.—a three-story, eight guest room house.

In 1994, Gift of Life purchased the Judd House, the current 705 Edward and Jayne Pompeian House, and began renovations immediately. In 2000 they expanded again with 48 rooms.

In 2009 the “Expansion for Life” campaign was completed and the Anne and Henry Zarrow House was built, adding 36 guest rooms to Gift of Life Transplant House making it the largest hospitality house in the country.

Today, Gift of Life Transplant House has 84 rooms on its campus and hosts over 4,500 guests a year. Whether eight rooms or 84, Gift of Life Transplant House is a home away from home for our guests. Beginning with “the gift of life” we will continue to value the mission and vision to provide a home that helps and heals.

In 2019 Gift of Life Transplant House will be celebrating it’s 35th Anniversary. Events will be held throughout the year to celebrate 35 years!



## FACTS & FIGURES

- ▷ Founded in 1984 by Ed Pompeian
- ▷ 84 double occupancy rooms make it the largest hospital hospitality house in the US
- ▷ \$30/night - With a one time \$40 cleaning fee
- ▷ The Susan Powers Helping Hand Fund helps provide reduced fees for guests who need financial assistance
- ▷ 95% of donations support the mission of Gift of Life Transplant House
- ▷ Over 100 community organizations prepared and served meals for guests in the last year

## An Evening with Ken Burns

**O**n September 10, 2018, Gift of Life Transplant House founder, Ed Pompeian, his wife, Jayne, Past President, Nick Pompeian, Board President Joe Forrer and Executive Director Mary Wilder were pleased to be invited to the premiere showing of the Ken Burns’ documentary: *The Mayo Clinic: Faith, Hope and Science*. The evening also included a private Meet and Greet with Ken Burns. To say it was a privilege to meet this well-known and well-respected filmmaker would be an understatement!

The two-hour documentary kept the large crowd that filled the Mayo Civic Auditorium transfixed, describing the history of Dr. William Worrall Mayo. Using rarely seen archival film and photos, the documentary wove the story of the legacy of a group of compassionate and determined individuals who placed and continue to place patients above profits.



As the documentary unfolded, however, the similarities between the vision and determination of founder Ed Pompeian were undeniable and just as Mayo Clinic celebrates their history, success and legacy, Gift of Life Transplant House celebrates the continued mission to provide a “home that helps and heals”.

# Clean, Comfortable and Inviting

A frequent comment heard by our tour guides is amazement at the exceptional cleanliness and well-maintained grounds at Gift of Life Transplant House and it is the commitment of our housekeeping and facilities staff that maintains this safe and healing environment for our guests. These dedicated staff members aren't just performing specific tasks; they are creating and maintaining, as one guest told us: an "uncommonly clean and well maintained" home away from home. When a room is vacated by a guest, our housekeeping staff gets to work – laundering all bedspreads, pillowcases and closet blankets; sanitizing all surfaces in the room, including bed frames, nightstands, dressers and on a routine basis, the heating and AC units in each room. They keep the hand sanitizers stocked and rooms disinfected so our immunosuppressed guests feel at ease as they heal.

In addition to the housekeeping staff, the facilities staff keep everything in working order and do whatever they can to help make our guests feel like they are at home. From lawn care to snow removal, parking lot and exterior maintenance, ensuring the cleanliness of the common areas and handling minor repairs in all of our 84 rooms, every day presents a wide variety of tasks. But what makes our housekeeping and facilities staff so unique is their willingness to stop whatever they are doing to spend time visiting with guests and caregivers. These

relationships are as meaningful for the staff as they are for our guests!

Our lead housekeeper, Missy Johnson, emphasizes that it is a team effort to ensure that standards are exceeded. She also recognizes the importance of their work, "working in an environment like this, it takes a special person. They must truly care about their job and the

“We make it our goal to help make this part of our guests' life journey as comfortable and safe as possible.”



well-being of everyone that walks through the door. We make it our goal to help make this part of our guests' life journey as comfortable and safe as possible.”

The facilities and housekeeping staff work very closely together in order to keep the house clean and comfortable for every guest. Without the collaboration between the two teams, the cleanliness and appearance of our campus would not fulfill our mission - to provide high quality, affordable accommodations to transplant patients and their caregivers in a supportive, home-like environment.

## House Happenings



### FACILITIES

**CHILLER PROJECT** is completed! Replacing our 18 year old chiller at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home was a priority this spring and we were able to have it completed and ready for use before the first warm days came.

**CARPET REPLACEMENT PROJECT** is underway! Thanks to the generosity of so many at our 34th Annual Golf Tournament, funds were available to replace the carpet in our office areas as well as the stairwells at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home.

**DRY SPRINKLER UPGRADE** is nearly completed! The dry sprinkler system at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home underwent an upgrade this fall and is nearly complete.

### OPERATIONS

**TV'S HAVE BEEN INSTALLED** thanks to a donation by Holiday Inn at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home and the Anne and Henry Zarrow Home above the guest mail boxes. With the help of modern technology, we will soon have digital signage announcing our events, community groups preparing dinner and other important information.

**THANKSGIVING** at Gift of Life Transplant House. Preparations have already begun for Thanksgiving 2018 at the houses. Every year we serve approximately 150 guests that are unable to get home to their own families. Turkeys and all the Thanksgiving trimmings are graciously donated and staff and volunteers help to cook turkeys and serve the meal! To join us for the meal, contact Steve Tarara at [steve@gift-of-life.org](mailto:steve@gift-of-life.org).

# 2018

Thanks to all of you, 2018 was a busy and successful year for our events, from **Donate Life Month** in April, to being inspired by a speech from Carl and Molly Eller at our **34th Annual Golf Tournament** to traveling back in time to the 1880's for our **4th Annual Gala of the Decades**, and celebrating the meaning of home with our first ever **Table Inspirations, A Celebration of Home** event. With the help of our Corporate Partners, event committees, volunteers, and Gift of Life Transplant House supporters such as **Tim Rasmusson Foundation** and **Trails4Transplants**, 2018 was a fun and successful year raising funds to continue providing a "home that helps & heals."



Thank you to our Corporate Partners for making this year a success!

**LEGACY:**  
WEIS BUILDERS

**INVESTING:**  
MAYO SPECIALTY  
PHARMACY

**FRIEND:**  
125 LIVE  
BRENTWOOD  
ONB BANK

**ENRICHING:**  
ALTRA FEDERAL  
CREDIT UNION  
HOME FEDERAL  
COMMONWEAL



34th Annual Gift of Life Golf Tournament



Table Inspirations, A Celebration of Home



34th Annual Gift of Life Golf Tournament



34th Annual Gift of Life Golf Tournament  
Pictured: Jayne and Ed Pompeian



Med City FC players  
donated Wish List Items



34th Annual Gift of Life Golf Tournament  
Pictured: Carl and Molly Eller



The Tim Rasmusson  
Memorial Rain Garden  
Date: MAY 25, 2018  
Pay to the Gift of Life Transplant House \$22,000  
Order of Twenty-Two Thousand + 00/100 Dollars  
For: Jeremy S.H. Danston KC Anna Green

Check presentation from  
Tim Rasmusson Foundation



One of our many dinners  
hosted by volunteers.  
Pictured: Fools 5 Group



Ron Kreinbring, Roger Erickson,  
and Chuck Pagenhart retired  
from the Board of Directors after  
a combined tenure of 80 years!

**SHARING  
THE GIFT OF LIFE**

**CELEBRATING  
THE GIFT OF LIFE**

**INSPIRING  
THE GIFT OF LIFE**



Walk of Remembrance and  
Donate Life Day Rochester



Gift of Life Transplant House  
Gala of the Decades, 1880's



Gift of Life Transplant House  
Gala of the Decades, 1880's



Gift of Life Transplant  
House 5k Run/Walk



**I**t all started in Warren, MN in 2013. Roger Hille, co-founder of *Trails4Transplants*, along with Ashley Peterson, formulated a plan to ride horseback from Warren, MN to Rochester, MN over the course of 6 years. Traveling roughly 300 miles over a 2-week period every year, *Trails4Transplants* riders have traveled over 2,000 miles! Their mission is to alleviate major health issues by raising awareness for the need of organ, eye, and tissue donations and to promote donor registration for said donations.

Roger's son-in-law, Dave Hanson, received a liver transplant at age 26. "Without the gift of organ donation,

I would not have my precious grandchildren," Roger Hille.

Ashley's brother, Blake, was in a car accident in 2000 and succumbed to head injuries. Knowing he would have wanted to donate his organs, his family honored those wishes by gifting his heart, liver, kidneys and pancreas to save four lives. "In 2011, our family met his heart recipient for the first time and were given the opportunity to listen to his heart with a stethoscope 11 years after his death. Blake's legacy will continue through his decision to be an organ donor."

Not only has *Trails4Transplants* done the important work of raising

awareness about organ, tissue and eye donation, but they have also raised over \$91,000 for Gift of Life Transplant House from 2013 – 2015. During our Gala of the Decades, Roger Hille presented Gift of Life Transplant House with a check for \$108,000 – the culmination of their rides during 2016 – 2018. These funds will be used to build a deck and patio area on the east side of the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home in spring of 2019. We are immensely grateful for the partnership and support of this wonderful organization and look forward to continued opportunities to partner together during the coming years!

## The Char Dietz Laundry Room

**1** 126 deviled eggs, countless hours in the laundry room, and unlimited smiles were offered by Char Dietz during her six month stay at Gift of Life Transplant House. Char was a stem cell transplant recipient and guest who returned this summer. Her one condition for staying at the house was that she would get to volunteer her time to help out at the house.

Everyone has their passions in life, and for Char, her passion lies within Gift of Life Transplant House.

Stories and recipes were shared, phone numbers and emails were exchanged, and friendships were strengthened over her stay.

Char Dietz provided Gift of Life Transplant House with gratitude, house keeping, and delicious food. However, she would tell you that if she could spend her spare time doing laundry, she would. To honor everything she has done for the staff and guests of the house, the laundry rooms at the Jayne and Edward Pompeian Home and the Anne and Henry Zarrow Home were dedicated in her name. The plaque



outside the newly announced "Char Dietz Laundry Room" reads:

*In recognition of the countless, selfless hours Char has volunteered to Gift of Life Transplant House, many spent working in this laundry room. In 2013, Char received a stem cell transplant and stayed as a guest of Gift of Life Transplant House. Her fervent wish was that she would be able to give back to the place that had brought healing to her and so many others. Char continues to bless the lives of all those who meet her.*

*September, 2018*

Char's humility and selflessness is continuously honored and enjoyed by the staff, volunteers, and guests of the house. She made it well-known to her family that this place was her passion. They didn't fully understand until her sisters visited Char at Gift of Life Transplant House and saw how much her face lit up as she gave them a tour and introduced them to staff members and guests. Char has made a lasting impression on all who have met her! If you have the chance next summer, stop by - you will probably find Char in the laundry room with a big smile.

# ANNIVERSARIES

**A**nniversaries mark the passage of time, recall our triumphs and honor our losses. I had the privilege of celebrating my first anniversary as Executive Director of Gift of Life Transplant House recently and what an amazing year this has been! The highlight for me has been listening to the anniversary stories of our guests and caregivers, celebrating 1st, 3rd, 40th years of transplant! The celebrations are as unique as each person – birthday parties to celebrate a 1st “birthday” – one year post transplant to former guests bringing in a cake to celebrate 15 years post-transplant with current guests and caregivers.

2019 will bring another anniversary to Gift of Life Transplant House! We will celebrate our 35th Anniversary! Our planning committee is already working on a year long celebration that will include the community, guests, caregivers, benefactors and

staff. December 10, 1984 the doors opened to the first Gift of Life Transplant House and the most remarkable tribute is that the impact the house has on transplant patients and their caregivers remains unchanged – providing a ‘home that helps and heals’.

35 years is a remarkable achievement and we are deeply humbled and honored to realize that it would not have been possible without your committed support to our mission – *to provide high quality, affordable accommodations to transplant patients and their caregivers in a supportive, home-like environment.*

*From our home to yours,*

**Mary Wilder**

Executive Director



*Offering Hope & Healing*

**Gift of Life**

TRANSPLANT HOUSE

*Rochester, MN*

*Celebrating* **35** *Years*



Join us in 2019 as we celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Gift of Life Transplant House. We have a busy year planned for 2019!

Keep up to date with all of our events by following us on

**Facebook and Instagram!**



[www.facebook.com/giftoflifetransplanthouse](http://www.facebook.com/giftoflifetransplanthouse)



@GiftOfLifeTransplantHouse #GiftOfLifeTransplantHouse



[www.linkedin.com/company/gift-of-life-transplant-house/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/gift-of-life-transplant-house/)



The mission of Gift of Life Transplant House is to provide transplant patients and their caregivers with high quality, affordable accommodations in a supportive, home-like environment.

Gift of Life  
Transplant  
House is  
a proud  
member of



**Thank you to our Gift of Life  
Transplant House Staff:**

(From left to right) Bob Himmer, Kari Wedeking, Norm Theel, Tami Konakowitz, Mitch Yennie, Becky Cain, Miranda Halling, Steve Tarara, Kathy Gilbertson, Ladd Baldus, Debbie Nichols, Cory Cody, Mary Wilder

Not Pictured: Julie Cole, Debbie Niemeier, Val Koehn, Missy Johnson

**GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF**

**Executive Committee**

President - Joe Forrer  
Vice President - PJ Calkins  
Past President - Nick Pompeian  
Secretary - Kathy Jensen  
Treasurer - Jesse Buhl  
Founder - Edward Pompeian

**Board Members**

Arlene Bahr  
Cyle Erie  
Lori Ewoldt  
Bob Groettum  
Dr. Saad Kendarian  
David Liebow  
Paul Mensing  
Sheila Nelson  
Dr. Thomas Schwab  
Brian Sheehan

**Honorary Lifetime Board Members**

Mary Davie  
Sylvester Sterioff, MD

**Gift of Life Transplant House Staff**

*Executive Director*  
Mary Wilder

*Facilities Manager*  
Ladd Baldus

*Operations Manager*  
Steve Tarara

*Office Supervisor*  
Kari Wedeking

*Lead Desk Reception*  
Tami Konakowitz

*Desk Receptionists:*  
Debbie Nichols, Julie Cole

*Resident Night/Weekend Supervisors*  
724 House: Debbie Niemeier  
705 House: Val Koehn

*Facilities*  
Bob Himmer, Cory Cody, Mitch Yennie

*Lead Housekeeper*  
Missy Johnson

*Housekeepers*  
Kathy Gilbertson, Becky Cain

*Marketing Event Coordinator*  
Miranda Halling

*Tour Guide*  
Norm Theel