

SHARING THE

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

DONATE LIFE MONTH

Join us in recognition at the following April events:

April 13 - Walk of Remembrance

April 14 - Timmay 5k

See our Facebook for details.

gift
gift of life



GIFT OF LIFE
TRANSPLANT HOUSE

A HOME THAT HELPS
AND HEALS

AWAKENED BY THE GIFT OF LIFE

Ask Teresa Hoff what her favorite movie is and she will tell you empathically it is *Sleeping Beauty*. Unlike the Disney movie, Teresa's story is not a fairy tale and she wasn't awakened by a prince. Teresa was awakened by a liver transplant!

It all began at age 14. Teresa swam in a hometown lake which contained the e-coli bacteria. She spent the entire summer becoming increasingly ill and a visit to the doctor revealed a diagnosis of both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. The course of treatment was prednisone and while not completely recovered, Teresa completed her high school career with honors. She entered the University of North Dakota, but grew increasingly ill. She was referred to Mayo Clinic at age 19 and was told her colon would have to be removed. Teresa had the procedure performed and, amazingly, returned to college, graduating in 2005 with a degree in Physical Therapy.

It was during this time that Teresa learned she would need a liver transplant. Teresa confesses she felt abandoned by God and questioned how God could allow this to happen to her. But she clung to her confirmation verse: Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope."*



Teresa, on right, four days pre-transplant with her sister, Mary.

While this was an intensely difficult time, it was also a happy time. Teresa met and married her husband, Brad in May of 2005 and began her 1st job. A bout of cholangitis landed her back at Mayo Clinic and in June 2008, Teresa received her 1st life-saving liver transplant. Teresa felt immediately better and credits her recovery to Gift of Life Transplant House! She received encouragement, support and nurturing. The guests and caregivers became her family and even at her lowest point, they were providing support.

(continued on next page)



In April of 2010, baby Liam was born and Teresa continued to thrive. She was enjoying being a mother and wife. Just as Liam was starting preschool, however, during a follow-up appointment to Mayo, Teresa suffered a massive seizure and remained in a coma for four days. Teresa will never know the reason for the seizure or coma, but she thanks her doctors and the transplant staff for helping her through this difficult time. During one of her follow up appointments, she learned that she would need another liver transplant. One year later, Teresa had still not received her liver and she made the decision to come to Rochester to wait. Teresa chose to stay at Gift of Life Transplant House where she had received such wonderful support during her first transplant. Months went by and still no liver and at Christmas of 2017, Teresa prepared herself to say goodbye to those she loved. She could feel herself dying and with no phone call saying a liver was available, Teresa made the decision that she was going to return home and spend

her last days with her family. She sent her caregiver home, knowing her mother would be flying in the next day.

Then the miracle occurred that rivals any Disney movie – on December 28th at 9:30 am, Teresa received the call! A liver was available, and Teresa needed to be at Mayo Transplant Center as soon as possible. Since she was alone at the house, another caregiver drove her. Along the way, Teresa tried frantically to get in touch with her husband and mother, but was unable to do so. Her husband and son were driving to pick her up and her mother was in the air. Finally, just as she was being taken for her transplant, Teresa shared the great news with her husband!

After her first transplant, Teresa shares that she did not follow the advice of her doctors too well, however, this second transplant brought renewed determination to be an exemplary patient. Teresa exercises daily and is using her



Teresa post transplant.

experiences to counsel others. Gift of Life Transplant House has played a special role in Teresa's story – a place where Teresa found her hope restored and the courage to live on!

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

By Nick Pompeian, Board of Directors

Dear Friends,

As spring approaches and the snow melts, I believe we can confidently say spring is here to stay. What a difference the change in the weather makes for everyone as we welcome this change in season with open arms.

Gift of Life remains very busy as we continue to serve our patients and caregivers by providing them with high quality, affordable accommodations in a supportive, home-like environment. Our staff and volunteers continue to do an exceptional job by exceeding our guests' expectations. Our guests and caregivers continue to live life and provide hope and healing to one another.

As many of you are aware, the month of April is known as Donate Life month. This is a very special time for our entire Gift of Life family, as we remember and celebrate all who have been affected by all types of transplants. It also is a constant reminder of how important it is to continue to raise awareness for organ, eye, and tissue donation. Last year we celebrated with several events, and this year is no exception.

The Annual Walk of Remembrance will once again kick off the month led by our amazing partners at the Mayo Clinic and LifeSource. Our wonderful friends and partners at the Tim Rasmussen Foundation will hold their 4th annual Timmay 5k on Saturday, April 14th. Last year, the 5k was unbelievable, so sign up today so you do not miss out on this incredible event.

These are just a few of the events that will headline an incredibly busy month for Gift of Life. For more information on these events and other events during the month, please check our community calendar on our website, or ask the staff at Gift of Life.

In closing, I would like to say thank you to each and every one of you. It has been an absolute pleasure and honor acting as your board chair for the past three years. We have done a lot of great work as an organization, and each and every one of you have played a role in that success and progress. Even though we have more work to do, our future is bright, and I have full confidence that the entire Gift of Life family will continue in the mission with great pride and excitement. Thank you again for all you do, and have a wonderful spring.

WORDS FROM MARY WILDER

Executive Director

Connections

As you read this newsletter, you will notice a common theme – **connections**. Lives intermingled with one another in amazing, miraculous ways. Human connections are deeply nurtured in shared stories and it is those shared stories that transforms Gift of Life Transplant House into a *'home that helps and heals'*! The connections happen at meal time, in hallways, on the elevator, in the Mayo shuttle, at the Transplant Center and all have the same result – a strong bond is formed. We have the privilege of hearing the stories every day – not just from our guests and caregivers but from our benefactors as well.

Your stories inspire and encourage us to continue the mission of Gift of Life Transplant House – 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

HOPE AND A FUTURE

When Leslie Johnson and her husband Mark came to Gift of Life Transplant House last April, they were “randomly” assigned **Room 137**. Leslie had come to Mayo to begin the process of harvesting her stem cells in preparation for a stem cell transplant. But it wasn’t her story that Leslie was interested in sharing with me – it was the story of **Room 137**.

As Mark and Leslie passed by **Room 137**, they noticed the memorial placard on the side of the door. It reads:

In Honor of Jay Tennesen

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

Tim & Cindy Tennesen

It was the story of Jay Tennesen that Mark and Leslie wanted to share with me.

Jay was just entering his senior year of high school when in September of 2004, he learned of his diagnosis of leukemia. Despite facing the rigors of treatments, Jay persuaded his parents, doctors and basketball coach to allow him to continue playing varsity basketball. Jay not only played but started at forward and was the

team’s second leading scorer. Jay’s teammates were inspired by his determination to overcome his illness and continue playing. The Mustang’s went on to the State tournament. A broken nose received from a mis-placed elbow during the tournament didn’t deter Jay from taking the team to a 4th place victory and earned him all-tourney team honors.



Leslie and Mark Johnson.

Jay came to Mayo Clinic in April of 2005 to receive a bone marrow transplant and stayed at Gift of Life Transplant House. He had a goal: recover in time to graduate with his class. Jay realized his dream! During a family trip to California

in July, Jay became ill and the family quickly returned to Mayo. Jay lost his battle with leukemia in September 2005, but the family wanted his memory to live on. So, they dedicated **Room 137** at Gift of Life Transplant House to Jay.

Mark and Leslie sent a photo to Tim Tennesen when they arrived and Tim texted back – “After all these years, Jay is still making a difference.” Mark and Leslie knew Jay’s parents, Tim and Cindy, because they recently catered for their son’s wedding.

But there is one more connection – Teresa Hoff, our front page article, was staying in **Room 137** when Mark and Leslie returned in January 2018. Mark and Leslie met Teresa and in conversation, learned that Teresa’s husband also knew Jay. They all marveled at the amazing set of circumstances that had brought them together and the significance of the verse that Tim and Cindy chose for Jay’s memorial plaque.

Leslie received her stem cell transplant in January 2018 and she is grateful to Gift of Life Transplant House for providing a nurturing place for her recovery!



FACILITIES

- **CHILLER PROJECT** is underway! With the breakdown of our 18 year old chiller at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home, work has begun to replace the chiller and piping to continue to supply adequate air conditioning during our warm summer months in MN. The project will be completed in early spring and will cost approximately \$250,000.
- **TILE REPLACEMENT PROJECT** for the Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home “yellow” kitchen will be completed in mid-April.
- New **DINING ROOM CHAIRS** have been ordered for the dining room at the Anne and Henry Zarrow Home.

House Happenings

OPERATIONS

- **WEBSITE** upgrade is in the planning process. Requests for bids will go out to vendors shortly.
- **INTER-FAITH SERVICES** continue at the Gift of Life Transplant House Campus every other Sunday afternoon.
- Our **MASSAGE THERAPIST** is on campus every week and very popular with guests and caregivers.
- The **ARTIST IN RESIDENCE** program has opened and we appreciate all who want to share their gifts with our guests.
- Updated **ACCESS POINTS** have been added to Gift of Life Transplant House campus, increasing internet strength.
- Research is underway for obtaining a grant to **UPGRADE OUR PHONES AND TECHNOLOGY**.



Kylie, Katelyn, and Brockton Bray delivering the Valentine's Day box.

A CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE AND A BLESSING

For Christmas 2017, the Bray family received \$100 from their uncle, Mike Opat and a challenge to use the money to bless a non-profit of their choice in Rochester. Imagine our delight when Kristin Bray called to say that her daughters, Kylie and Katelyn, had chosen Gift of Life Transplant House!

The family went shopping and on February 11th, the entire Bray family delivered a large box decorated for Valentine's Day. The Bray's had bought puzzles, black-out curtains and hand-made Valentine cards for the guests!

That afternoon, Kristin sent this email:

"I shared the girls' 'mission' on my Facebook page and it was so inspiring to read how many others were affected by donation. I added information about registering with Be The Match or making wishes known on licenses or in paperwork, and already one friend has requested a BTM swab kit! I hope the girls realize what a ripple effect their actions are having!"

What a great Christmas challenge - a gift that keeps on giving.

STAFF UPDATES



We would like to welcome our three new staff members at Gift of Life Transplant House!

Karen Benson (pictured top) is our new H.R./Finance Administrator. Originally from New York City, she moved here with her husband in 2015. When she's not at work, she stays busy with their two sons—ages 7 and 8, and enjoys time hiking, camping and traveling. She was attracted to Gift of Life Transplant House as she finds joy in working for a non-profit with a mission she can fully support.



Miranda Halling (pictured middle) has joined as the Marketing/Event Coordinator. She also coaches youth soccer for RYSA and enjoys baking, volunteering, and traveling in her spare time. She grew up in Rochester and is passionate about having a positive impact on the community which is why she was thrilled to accept a position at Gift of Life Transplant House.



Becky Cain (pictured bottom) is our newest Housekeeper. With a love for cleaning, she was eager to start and fell in love with the people at Gift of Life Transplant House, not hesitating to call this her dream job. When she's not busy with work, she spends time with her three children - ages 1, 6, and 7. She also enjoys hiking, being outdoors and anything adventurous.

Walk of Remembrance

A walk to honor and remember our Organ, Tissue and Eye Donors.

JOIN US!

Begin at Saint Marys Francis entrance
flagpole and walk to Gift of Life Transplant
House.

Friday, April 13 at 4:00 pm

Followed by a celebration recognizing the
Legacy of Life shared!



Upcoming Events

2018

● APRIL:

- 2 - Terra Loco 5K
- 13 - Blue Green Day
 - Walk of Remembrance
- 14 - Timmay 5K
- 28 - Volunteer Appreciation Brunch
- 29 - Pasquale's Fundraiser

● MAY/JUNE:

- MAY 19-JUNE 2 - Trails 4 Transplant Ride
- 3- Mayo 5K

● JULY:

- 16 - 34th Annual Golf Tournament
- 29 - Transplant Picnic

● SEPTEMBER:

- 15 - Gala of the Decades—*the 1880s*

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Like us on Facebook to stay
updated on our events, check out
pictures and see what's new at
Gift of Life Transplant House!





Top: Katie with her donations.

Bottom: Katie and her Grandparents.

WHAT AN HONOR

A Gift from an Honor Student

After a 3.5 hour car ride with her grandparents, Katie Daniels, a high school senior from Cameron, Wisconsin, arrived with an incredible gift for Gift of Life Transplant House.

It was Friday, March 2, 2018 that Gift of Life Transplant House was delighted with the gift from the senior of a \$772 check and a car full of donations.

Katie was inducted into the National Honor Society in March of 2017. Each inductee must complete 30 hours of community service. She chose Gift of Life Transplant House to be the focus of her project as it holds a soft spot in her heart. Katie's aunt, who is awaiting a kidney transplant, has been a guest of the house along with her grandparents.

Katie was unsure of what to expect when she began her project; she simply hoped to collect a few items. What started as a simple project turned into an impactful donation to Gift of Life Transplant House. She ended up collecting enough of the

wish list items to cover the staff conference room table at Gift of Life Transplant House.

While at the house, Executive Director, Mary Wilder, took Katie on a tour with her grandparents who reminisced on their time at the house with their daughter. They were sure to show their granddaughter some of their favorite rooms in the 705 house and shared a few stories.

Before the family departed to get Katie back home in time for the basketball game, she shared that she will be attending the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse in the fall with hopes of one day becoming a trauma surgeon.

It is truly amazing the stories and the impact Gift of Life Transplant House has not only on the guests who stay here, but their friends and family. Gift of Life Transplant House is profoundly grateful for the gifts, donations and stories that are so generously shared with us.

GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE WISH LIST

- ◇ New Commercial Vacuum Cleaners
- ◇ \$30 for a guest room night
- ◇ Paper Towels
- ◇ **Greeting Cards and Envelopes**
- ◇ Forever postage stamps
- ◇ Ziploc bags, assorted sizes
- ◇ Liquid hand soap—large refill bottles
- ◇ Liquid dish soap
- ◇ Hand Sanitizer refills
- ◇ Regular & decaffeinated coffee
- ◇ Wrapped candy
- ◇ Scrubbing Bubbles
- ◇ Soft Scrub—Lemon
- ◇ Toilet Bowl Cleaner
- ◇ Gift Cards to Wal-Mart, Target, or Hy-Vee
- ◇ Pop Tabs
- ◇ **Baked Goods**
- ◇ Facial Tissues



APRIL IS DONATE LIFE MONTH!



DID YOU KNOW...

- More than **116,000** men, women and children await *lifesaving* organ transplants.
- Another person is added to the nation's organ transplant waiting list *every 10 minutes*.
- Each year, there are approximately **30,000** tissue donors and more than **1.75 million** tissue transplants; the surgical need for donated tissue is steadily rising.
- More than **138 million** people, approximately **56%** of the U.S. adult population are registered organ, eye and tissue donors.*

*living donation is not included in a donor registration.
Data from the Donate Life America Quarterly Donor Designation Report and the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) as

**SUPPORT ORGAN, EYE AND TISSUE DONATION.
SHOW US YOUR DONATE LIFE COLORS!**

PHOTO CONTEST YOU COULD WIN A \$100 AMAZON GIFT CARD!

Donate Life America is hosting a **BLUE & GREEN** photo contest. Get involved and show your creativity! Send your photos to the Donate Life America Facebook page starting Friday, April 13 through Tuesday, April 17.

The six photo categories include:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| - Adult Fashion | - Kid Fashion |
| - Pet Fashion | - Group Photos |
| - Food & Drinks | - Places and Spaces |

FOR MORE INFORMATION or to submit your photo(s) check out their Facebook: **Facebook.com/DonateLife**.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

**BLUE & GREEN
DAY**

APRIL 13, 2018

**#DonateLife
#BlueGreenDay**

Information from this page is from the Donate Life America webpage in support of Donate Life month.

**GIFT OF LIFE
TRANSPLANT HOUSE
MISSION STATEMENT**



GIFT OF LIFE INC.
705 Second Street Southwest
Rochester, Minnesota 55902

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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 from the
Gift of Life Transplant House Staff***

(Left to Right)

Front Row: Missy Johnson, Elsa Salazar, Debbie Nichols, Mary Wilder, Kathy Gilbertson, Tami Konakowitz, Kari Wedeking

Back Row: Ladd Baldus, Bob Himmer, Steve Tarara, Mark Stoning, Norm Theel, Mitch Yennie

Missing: Val Koehn, Deb Niemeier, Cory Cody, Norma Mooney, Karen Benson, Becky Cain, Miranda Halling

GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

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Executive Director
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Facilities Manager
Ladd Baldus

Operations Manager
Steve Tarara

Office Supervisor
Kari Wedeking

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Tami Konakowitz

Desk Receptionists
Debbie Nichols, Elsa Salazar

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Norma Mooney

Resident Night/Weekend Supervisors

724 House: Debbie Niemeier
705 House: Val Koehn

Facilities

Bob Himmer, Cory Cody, Mitch Yennie

Lead Housekeeper

Missy Johnson

Housekeepers

Mark Stoning, Kathy Gilbertson, Becky Cain

H.R./Finance Administrator

Karen Benson

Marketing/Event Coordinator

Miranda Halling

Tour Guide

Norm Theel