

SHARING THE

FALL/WINTER 2022

gift
gift of life



GIFT OF LIFE
TRANSPLANT HOUSE
A HOME THAT HELPS
AND HEALS



How I Spent My Vacation?

By Gary Slarks

In 2013, Mayo doctors diagnosed me with autoimmune hepatitis. The disease caused cirrhosis of the liver. The liver transplant doctor recommended that I undergo the standard transplant tests so I would be ready if, and when, a transplant might be needed. Because I had suffered a heart attack in 2001, they recommended doing an angiogram just to be sure my heart was healthy. As a result, the cardiologist recommended a triple bypass surgery to fix my diseased heart.

They wheeled me into a St. Marys operating room on Tuesday morning, June 18, 2013.

I woke up on Wednesday but I was surprised when I was told that it was June 26th and that I was in the ICU at Methodist Hospital. However, the biggest surprise to me was that I now had a new liver. That was a lot to comprehend!

"What happened?" That was my burning question. The heart surgery was successful but the surgeon wasn't sure if my heart was strong enough yet to withstand a transplant. The liver doctors didn't want to "waste" a good liver if I was going to die on the operating table. The critical care doctors said they needed to take action to save my life. My Meld score had risen from 18 to 38. (Doctors recommend surgery once your score reaches 30. If your score reaches a 40, then you're dead). Everyone finally agreed to move forward with the transplant.

On Sunday, June 23 they unplugged the machines and disconnected all the tubes and rushed me off to a waiting ambulance for the short ride to Methodist Hospital where the transplant team were waiting for me. They completed my transplant in about 2 ½ hours as compared to the usual time of 4 – 8 hours. My "sedated vacation" continued until Wednesday when I woke up in the ICU.



Gary Slarks and Dr. Rosen

The surgeries were the easiest part of my journey. The "real work" was my recovery; it really proved to be difficult with a lot of twists and turns. My first outing in a wheelchair was on July 4th. My wife wheeled me into a waiting room and we watched the fireworks by looking out the window and at another window in the building where I could see the reflection of the fireworks. It's really easy to get discouraged when progress is not fully noticeable at first.

After celebrating my birthday in the rehab unit, I was not feeling well the very next day. The doctors thought they nicked my pancreas after they performed a bile duct enlargement procedure. As a result, I was diagnosed with pancreatitis and a couple of days later they shipped me back to Methodist Hospital to recover. The pain was the worst pain I have ever experienced.

I fought off organ rejection with a 1000 mg IV of prednisone every other day for a week. The rapid response team was called to my room as my heart was racing at 130 beats per minute even though I was just lying on my bed. The kidney doctors determined that I was dehydrated and a couple of IV bags of fluid resolved that situation. I became diabetic during my hospital stay which fortunately ended before my release. (However, it returned permanently at 1 ½ years later.) I received several blood transfusions because my red blood cell count was too low. Doctors performed several other minor procedures and operations during my stay. I lost 75 pounds at one point.

I triumphantly walked out of Methodist 75 days later, (okay, I rode out in a wheelchair) to return home. Once home, I continued therapy for several more weeks. At my last PT session I walked a mile on the treadmill. My full recovery to "normal" took about 7 months.

Special thanks to the many wonderful doctors, nurses and medical staff at Mayo for saving my life. A very heartfelt and sorrowful thank you to my donor who lost their life but saved mine. The support from my family especially my wife and 2 sons carried me through many adversities. This experience reminded me of the power of prayer. I received the thoughts and prayers from numerous people even from some that I didn't know! I often prayed to Jesus to give me the strength to overcome the next obstacle in my path. The end result is 9 years later my liver works great and I'm enjoying life to the fullest.

Gary and his sons have been golfing in our Annual Golf Tournament since 2014! He hopes his story will inspire and encourage you!



Letter from Leadership

Board President: Adrienne Pompeian



Dear guests, staff, volunteers, donors, and friends,

It has been a busy few months for Gift of Life! We had a fun summer of events which included the 38th Annual Golf Tournament, the July 4th dinner thanks to 2 Cavemen Grill'in food truck, the 2nd Annual Car Show, the Gift of Life Walk/Run 5K at TerraLoco, the annual BBQ on the lawn of the Pompeian House, and the September Tribute Month honoring the donors and recipients near and dear to us. Extensive planning and collaboration went into these events and all were a success! Thank you to those of you who participated!

Gift of Life has not only been busy with events but also at the houses too. I am happy to report that, as of September, Gift of Life's occupancy has returned to pre-pandemic percentages. Both houses have been full! Thank you to those of you who continue to raise awareness about Gift of Life so more transplant patients can experience this special place. I am grateful to our guests for choosing to stay at Gift of Life and for our donors' generosity. Without either, there would be no Gift of Life Transplant House.

I am also grateful for our staff and volunteers who continue to work hard keeping the houses clean, safe,

welcoming, supportive, and beautiful for our guests. I am especially grateful for Mary Wilder, our Executive Director. My father would at times—with a big smirk on his face—call her “Sister Mary.” Mary is indeed reminiscent of the incredible Sisters of St. Francis that ran Gift of Life in its earlier years. She is devoted to serving others. Furthermore, Mary wears many hats at Gift of Life and truly is THE face of the organization. On a daily basis, she ensures Gift of Life is running smoothly; that our staff are empowered and supported; and that our guests are comfortable and safe. Mary's leadership and dedication to Gift of Life, along with the hard work of our staff and volunteers, are why Gift of Life continues to be cherished by our guests. Thank you to Mary, our staff, and our volunteers for your unwavering dedication.

Lastly, I am grateful for you for supporting Gift of Life's mission and for being a part of the Gift of Life family. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish you a blessed holiday season and a happy and healthy beginning to 2023.

Warm regards,
Adrienne Pompeian

GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE

WISH LIST...

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ◇ Napkins | ◇ Gallon Ziploc Bags | ◇ Regular & Decaffeinated Coffee |
| ◇ Paper Towels | ◇ Toilet Bowl Cleaner | ◇ Disinfecting Wipes |
| ◇ Toilet Paper | ◇ Clorox Cleaner | ◇ Aluminium Foil |
| ◇ Facial Tissues | ◇ Hand Sanitizer | ◇ Storage Containers |
| ◇ \$30 for a guest room night | ◇ Lysol Spray | ◇ Forever Postage Stamps |
| ◇ Wrapped Candy | ◇ Soft Scrub | ◇ Scrubbing Bubbles |

Find our Amazon Wish List and links to items on our Website: www.gift-of-life.org/make-a-donation

SEPTEMBER TRIBUTES

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 4,100 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

Adler, Nanette
Gary Adler

Allen, Carol
Jan Lewis

Anderson, Linda
Larry Anderson

Audette, Richard
Beverly Audette

Axelsen, Patricia
Don Truman

Babb, Paula
Curtis W. Babb

Belter, Wesley
Judy Belter

Bieringer, Jan
John Bieringer

Braaten, Deanna
Dawna Walczak

Broderick, Pamela
My husband, Dennis Broderick

Burnaby, Dawn
Tiffany Forrest

Bush, Linda
David M. Bush

Carver, Donna
Alaxandra Contreras-Rogers

Chafoulis, Ted
Betty Jean Avant

Dahlquist, Linda
Richard Dahlquist

Danduran, Cheryl
John King

Dick, Gloria Bills
James M. Bills

Dierkes, Ann
Joe Dierkes

Dietz, Char
Nancy Russo

Doble, Lynne
Dave Aker, triple transplant recipient

Donato, Mary Margaret
My husband, Lou Donato

Dotz, Nancy and Jared Anderson
Steve Dotz

Enge, Miriam
Allen D. Enge

Erickson, Roger
Daniel Jon Martin

Erickson, Roger
Phil Erickson

Erickson, Roger
Ervin Arndt

Erickson, Roger
Hank Anderson

Erickson, Roger
Marlene Denscher

Erickson, Roger and Sandra Hart
Valena Renee Stake

Erickson, Roger and Sandra Hart
Eugene E. Zmolek

Geiger, Barbara
Stephen R. Geiger

Grieme, Mark
Ken Bullock

Griepp, Mary Lou Hess
Robert "Bob" Qualset

Hart, Sandra and Roger Erickson, Donna and Galen Heimle
Janet Fish

Helgeson, Paul and Pamela
Our daughter, Corin Helgeson-Selman, R.N.

Hickman, Michael and Sharon
Katie Hickman

Hill, Craig and Jennifer
Judy L. Hill

Hoech, Gary
Peter Christian Hoech

Holmes, Ginger and Dr. David
Joshua Aaron Holmes

Isaacson, Katie
Steven Isaacson

Isobe, Amy and Ann Toyota
John Isobe

Jacklitch, Patricia
John King

Johnson, Mark and Sandra
Joanne Satterlee and Ron Martens

Keller, Sarah
Ed Pompeian

Kile, Jeffery and Beverly
John Lutzka

Kirsch, Pamela
Robert "Bob" Qualset

Klahr, Inga M.
Garrett Klahr

Kurhajetz, Joanne M.
Judy Cooper

Ladin, Karl and Lynn
Joyce Baumler

LaFlair, James
Mona LaFlair, wife and mother

LaPlante, Cindy
Kaitlyn Griffin

Leingang, Robert
Mary Ann Leingang

Lent, Robert
Our sister, Marcia A. Nelson, liver recipient



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

Levin, Arnold and Brenda
Dr. H. Harvey Koenig Foundation
Vivian Seltzer

Lien, Scott
Christine Ann Lien

Loven, Marlys
My husband, Sheldon Loven

Luckman, Michele
Elizabeth Luckman

Lund, Eric and Kim
Steve Shank

MacIver, Cynthia and Douglas
*Sherry Vlasak’s sister. Sherry is a
member of the Charlton 9a
Transplant Team*

Maier, Michael
Frank Maier

Michehl, Jacqueline
My son, Ross H. Michehl

Milbocker, Nancy
Jerome (Jerry) Coger

Moore, James and Marilyn
Gary and Barbara Swenson

Moxon, Richard and Jean
Greg Moxon

Muller, Michael and Maggie
Jim and Connie Muller

Nelson, Brian
My loved one, Marcia Nelson

Olson, Linda
Kyzier Dauphinais

Olson, Linda
Larry Olson

Overbeck, Theresa
Duane Overbeck

Parta, Abby and Jan
Mike Parta

Pavlicek, Geraldine (Geri)
Daniel Pavlicek

Peterson, Steven E.
Cathy

Phillips, Sherry
Paul R Tine, my dear husband

Pompeian, Adrienne
Ed Pompeian

Pompeian, Jayne
*Ed Pompeian, recipient and Helen
Pompeian, donor*

Pompeian, Nick and Rochelle
Ed Pompeian

Primrose, Beth
Dean Primrose

Rabb, Sarah
*Dick Rabb, my husband and Jan
Lewis*

Raboin, Jeffrey and Sharon
Gail Craycroft

Reil, Julie
Kurtis Allen Reil

Ringhofer, Sharon
Ron Ringhofer

Rowbal, Bob and Stacy
Anne Marie Rowbal

Schacherer, Shirley
*Louie Schacherer, heart transplant
recipient 1995*

Schaffer, JoAnn
Richard R. Schaffer, my husband

Schell, Anne
Paul Schell

Schiek, John and family
Ami Dark Rosen

Schultz, Sheila and Larry Verhulst
My sister, Elizabeth Luckman

Shin, Yueng-gyo
Michael J. Asher

Smith, Mary and Wendell
Margaret Smith Askew

Swenson, Brian and Koren
*Brian’s anonymous deceased major
organ donor*

Tallon, Deborah
Christopher Robert Tallon

Taylor, Don
Beverly Taylor

Tjerstad, Mary
David Tjerstad

Tranberg, Judith
David Tranberg

Tranby, Terri and Scott
Larry Anderson

Ubben, Kathryn
Stanley J. Ubben

Van Dyke, Karleen
Henry C. Anderson

Van Maaren, Lynn and Robert
Jan Lewis and Lynn Van Maaren

Weathers, Mary
*Tom Weathers, 2-time kidney
recipient*

Weible, Westley
Sharon Weible, heart recipient 2006

Wilder, Mary
My dad, Jim

Wineland, Philip
Jean Ann Wineland

Wood, Patricia and William
My daughter, Jessica Hulm

Wynne, Julie A.
Ellen Sunken

SEPTEMBER TRIBUTES

TRIBUTES

Acree, Jr., Lt. Col. Nathan
Austin Acree

Aamot, Bonnie
Rick Aamot

Apland, Joann
Douglas Apland-recipient of new liver

Aspen, Jeanine
A.J. Patrick

Bahr, Arlene and Tom
Gift of Life Transplant House staff

Bartsch, Julie
Carol Zierman

Benters, Kathleen and Elden
Our donor, Adam McCloud

Books, Bonnie
David Books

Bush, Carol
Ken Bush

Carver, Richard and Donna
Richard Carver, liver transplant 6/9/2017

Christenson, Sally
Peggy Hanafin-Donor

Churchwell, Eli and Susan A.
Eli Churchwell, kidney transplant 11/16/2000

Cline, Ron and Deb
Wyvern Bressette Sharlow Kinney

Cosio, Dr. Fernando and Mary Jo
Dr. Fernando Cosio and Kathy Schwab

Dietz, Charlene
In honor of the dedicated employees at Gift of Life that keep GOL a 'home away from home' for all of us who have gone through or are going through transplants. Hopefully the employees feel rewarded at the end of the day knowing they are helping people who are going through very difficult times in their lives.

Donnay, Mark and Carol
Living Donor, Melissa Guetzkow

Dotz, Nancy and Jared L. Anderson
Kris Lamb, donor

Erickson, Roger
Lori Lange

Farm, David and Judith
David Farm

Fuerstneau, Sonia
Jeremias Cooper (Donor) and Al Cooper (Recipient)

Gag, Julie
Charles Johnson, liver recipient 10/3/21

Gilje, Paul and Judith
Jenny Dalsted

Gillespie, Beverly
Ashlyn Nystuen

Gillio, Victoria
Matthew Gillio, donor, and Dr. Robert Gillio, supportive brothers

Gould, Bruce and Zelda
Dale Gould, 2 time donor

Graf, Glen and Karen
Cheryl, Nienhuis, our daughter

Green, Dennis and Patricia
Pat Green

Groth, Marsha
Laura Mangerson-Donor

Groth, Marsha
Jennifer Neu-Recipient

Hanson, Tanya
Gary Melin

Hardesty, Sandy and Glenn
In honor of Glenn

Hauck, Diane and Galen
Galen Hauck, heart recipient on 4/5/2003

Herman, Rick
Rick Herman

Holzer, David and Tess
To all our donors

Hopper, Teresa
Benjamin Iadersona and Sydney Hopper

Hughes, Carol
My sister, Kathleen Allison

Iadersona, Jennifer
Ben and Sydney Iadersona

Iadersona, Tony and Ginny
Ben and Sydney Iadersona

Klaege, William
Teresa Klaege, recipient and Dalia, donor

Knudson, Rebecca
Noah Knudson

Kramer, Linda and Randy
Randy Kramer, BMT 2021

Kruse, Lynn and Raymond
My son and donor, Steven McCluskey

Lahr, John and Joanne
Sarah - Donor

Larsen, Mark and Anita
Mark Larsen, heart recipient 7/24/17

Lee, Russell and Margaret
Russell, BMT 2008

Lien, Scott
Jody Chapin- She donated her bone marrow for her sister Christine Ann Lien

Lilleskov, Anne
Carol Zierman and Sally Heuer

Lohmeyer, Charles
Jessica Lohmeyer, my donor

Loven, Marlys and Heather Ofstehage
Doug Loven, donor for Sheldon Loven

Martin, Sharon K.
My daughter, Deanna Sobeck, kidney donor to me 31 years ago

Martini, Joe and Tina
Liver donor, Scott, 1994; Shawn, Liver and Kidney Donor 2005

McKay, Tom and Rosie
Vickie Aegerter



Meek, Patricia

*Jim Klunder, my bone marrow donor
and Roxanne Chambers*

Milner, Sue

My dad, Louie Schacherer

Moore, Don and Marilyn

*Don Moore and sister, Marlene Duffy,
donor*

Motzko, Shannon

*My 13-year old son, Gavin, heart
recipient*

Muellner, Harry and Joanie

Paula Muellner, double lung recipient

Mumford, Cindy

Sydney and Ben Iaderosa

Myers, Timothy and Mary

Darlene Perkins, my donor

Osborn, Cindy

Grant Ignatius

Owen, Marty

*Jill Owen, kidney recipient; donor,
Wayne VanMersbergen; Jill's brother,
Jeff Willett, kidney recipient; our son,
Joshua Owen, kidney recipient*

Packard, Richard and Linda

*Our daughter, Christine Packard
Stevens, liver recipient, 1997*

Pesta, Tim and Patricia

*Our son, Casey Pesta, donor for dad,
Tim*

Pierce, Phillip and Kathleen

Phil Pierce

Pizano, Mimi

Miguel Pizano

Pompeian, Adrienne

Aaron Pompeian

Pompeian, Jayne

Aaron Pompeian

Pompeian, Nick and Rochelle

Aaron Pompeian

Preimesberger, Jean

Tim Preimesberger

Quam, James

Jeany Kohut

Reps, Shawn

Dave and Deb Serrano

Robillard, Shelby

Danna Livingston-Matherly

Schroeder, Kathe and Suzanne Paulson

All Donors

Schultz, Sara

Ron and Chris Schultz

Schulzetenberg, Sue

Deb Schulzetenberge

Skeen, Joe

Catherine Zaryczny

Smidowicz, Kenneth

Marlene Smidowicz

Stenstrom, Stephen and Marjorie

Marjorie Stenstrom

Sweeney, Brenda and Dan

*Brenda Sweeney, heart recipient
2019*

Swenson, David and Nancy

Brian's donor

Taylor, Karen

John Taylor

Tostenrud, Steven and Pauline

Teresa Tostenrud Hoff

Van Dyke, Karlene

Roger Erickson and Lori Lange

Waite, Deborah

My donor, Jerry Heikinen

Wells, Roger and Carole

*Emily Buck and Sandy Toomey,
"angels in the paired donor program"*

Wernecke, Sharon and Wayne

*Wayne Wernecke, my kidney donor
and husband, and my unknown liver
donor*

Williams, Faith and Rodney Atkins

Rod Atkins, heart/kidney recipient

Williams, Ken and Elaine

*My sister and donor, Lisa Williams
and 11 year anniversary of Ken's
kidney transplant on 9/13/11*

Williams, Lisa

Ken and Elaine Williams

Williams, Lori-Anne

Carol Zierman and Sally Heuer

Witzig, Dr. Thomas and Diane

Char Dietz

Wyffels, James and Mary

*My liver donor, Wendy Oftedahl-
Moya*

Wynne, Julie

Kathy Schwab

*"Gift of Life holds a special
place in my heart and
always will. May God
bless all who stay and all
who will stay there."
-Bruce and Zelda*

SEPTEMBER TRIBUTES

CONTRIBUTIONS

Anderson, Glenn and Sandra
Anderson, Lenora A.
Anderson, Leslie
Bandas, Sharon
Baumler, Floyd J.
Bernstein, Rhona and Herb
Blusiewicz, Stephen and Louann
Borgmeier, Jeff and Peggy
Boysen, Sr. Charles G.
Braaten, Deanna and Ryan
Brames, Herm and Karen
Brennan, Mark and Margaret
Carey, Daniel and Katherine
Carroll, Catherine and Russell
Cichos, Mary
Cossette, Kenneth R.
Couture, Karen and Scott
Cummings, Sharon and Tom
*In gratitude and praise on the
25th anniversary of my liver
transplant*
Curley, David and Mary Sue
Dehler, Joann and Robert
Desrosier, Robert and Tracy Gallo
DuBrock, Hilary
Fleet, Mary and Merlyn
Fossum, Ethelyn
Ghess, Gwen and Tim
Giager, Michael and Linda
Gjertsen, Patty M.
Glenna, Marvin and Victoria
Haggard, Dennis and Donna
Haugerud, Eileen and Wayne
Hentze, Gary and Gracia
Hernesman, James R.
Hernesman, Terrance and Marie
Hoefer, Trey

Hontz, Dean
Horntvedt, Dianna and Lester
Jacobson, Craig and Therese
Jackson, John and Cheryl
Johnson, Cathy and Clark
Kapus, Jerry
Karels, Scott and Denann
Keller, Lori and Roger Grimsrud
King, Roger and Deborah
Kleckner, Glenn and Marcia
Klocke, Larry and Nancy
Kukla, Aleksandra and Bogulsaw
Kulkay, Glen and Lynette
LaValley, Richard and Lyn
Lee, Annette
Lee, Mary
Leventhal, Margaret M.
Margalith, Eli and Michal
Mayer, Darlene M.
McCasland, Lori
McIntire, James and Sandra
*We want to thank you again for
the privilege of staying at one of
your transplant homes during my
stem cell transplant. So far I am
cancer free.*
Meyer, Joan and Randal
Moran, Maria Martin
Murphy Property Management, Inc.
Murphy, Nancy and Scott
Murray, James and Helen
Nelson, Gerald E.
Nordling, Bruce
O'Connor, Carol J.
Odom, Ernest
Olhausen, Dennis and Leann
Opitz, Barbara and Tom
Otto, Allan E.

Owens, Michael and Constance
Pagenkopf, Bernard and Charlene
Pfaff, Duane and Jamie
Phillips, Frank S.
Purdy, Scott and Gail Rasmussen
Rabe, James
Rathmann, Larry and Linda
Regan, Cheryl and Gary
Robbins, Bruce W.
Sabin, Geraldine
Sanders, Beverly J. and Richard R.
Schaber, Joseph and Tamara
Schmidgall, Donald
Sihtala, Richard
Smith, Kenneth and Pammy
Smith, Richard and Elizabeth
Smith, Steven
Spitzmiller, Betty L.
Stowe, Mrs. Clayton B.
Strom, Philip and Alice
Swanson, Mary V.
Taner, Dr. Timucin and Binnuro
Tatge, Charles and Sandra
Thoe, Larry
Thomas, Danny and Linda
Thronsedt, David and Sara
Verbick, Donald and Mary
Vincent, Tamara
Wallace, Bob
Webber, Patricia and Gray
Wilhelmi, Gary and Rose
Wills, Pamela J.
Williams, James and Carolyn
Zabel, Glen L.

Where Love Lives

The many ways to show your support

From the moment you walk through the front door, you can tell – this is a place where love lives. It is evident when guests and caregivers greet one another at the end of a long day, listening intently to fears and triumphs. It is evident when a “seasoned” caregiver gently shows a new caregiver the ropes in the kitchen. And it was evident when guests and caregivers saw the blue and green ribbons that adorned the front porches during September! For guests staying at the house, those ribbons are a very real reminder that this is a place where love lives!

•• WAYS LOVE CAN GROW ••

Your support of our guests, caregivers and Gift of Life Transplant House can take many forms and we have listed a few here.

CASH/CHECK DONATIONS

Many of you generously support Gift of Life Transplant House via cash or check.

CREDIT CARD DONATIONS

You may prefer to make your donation via our website by going to www.gift-of-life.org/make-a-donation.

WISH LIST DONATIONS

Providing goods used frequently by guests and caregivers is another way to support us.

Go to www.gift-of-life.org/make-a-donation, scroll to the bottom of the page and review our wish list.

AMAZONSMILE

If you use Amazon frequently for purchases, consider using AmazonSmile. Rather than going to Amazon.com, go to Smile. Amazon.com. Simply use your current login information. You will be given the opportunity to choose your charity! Choose

Gift of Life, Inc! A portion of each purchase will be donated by Amazon directly to Gift of Life.

FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER

Have a birthday or a special celebration coming up? Create a Facebook Fundraiser and ask friends and family to support Gift of Life in honor of your special day. Donations are sent to Gift of Life via Network for Good!

GIFT OF STOCK

You may choose to donate appreciated shares of stock to Gift of Life. Please feel free to contact Mary Wilder, Executive Director, for more information. Her number is 507-951-0061.

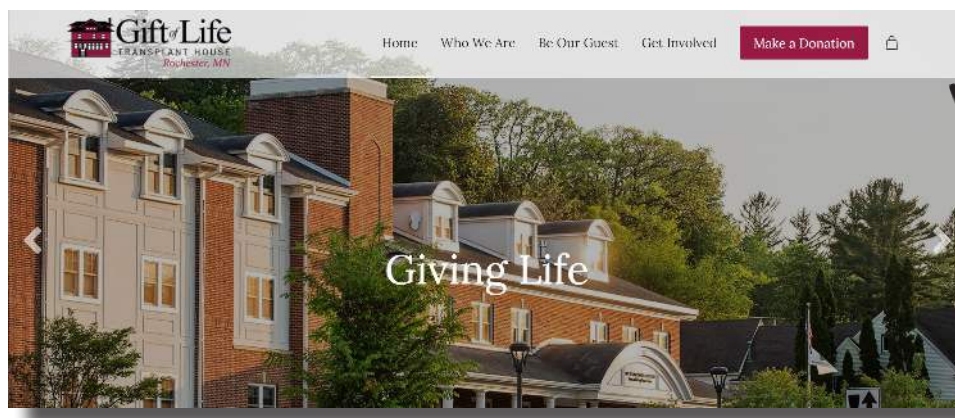
IRA GIFTS

If you are 70 ½ or older, you may make a qualified donation from your IRA. Contact your financial planner for more information.

DEDICATE A PAVER

A paver is a wonderful way to commemorate a loved one or special day! Go to www.gift-of-life/tributes to download your choice of paver.

For More Opportunities to Make Love Grow,
visit www.gift-of-life.org





The power of creativity

By Miranda Halling

"You have this new opportunity to live, but you can't live like before. So you get to reinvent yourself."

Meet Katie. Katie is a guest of Gift of Life Transplant House and Heart Transplant Recipient.

During Katie's transplant journey, she found peace, comfort & hope in creating earrings. What started as part of the Arts at the Bedside Program while she was at St. Marys waiting for a lifesaving heart transplant, quickly turned into a form of therapy to keep her mind busy during what was one of the best & worst seasons of life.

Katie was born with a congenital heart disease - aortic stenosis. Although she knew in the back of her mind that a heart transplant might be a part of her life journey for her "old Buick heart" (after 6 previous surgeries) she did not expect to hear the words "you are in total heart failure" at her checkup.

In March of 2021, Katie was officially listed for a heart transplant and in February of 2022 she began her stay at St. Marys. For the next 3 months, she did what she could to stay busy. She started making clay earrings and found joy in gifting them to her nurses. "To create something instead of being scared about things...it is sort of like a meditative state. It gives me purpose again which is important because it is so easy to get lost." Katie received

her new heart on May 15, 2022, and came to stay at Gift of Life Transplant House during her recovery.

It is no secret that post-transplant recovery comes with many mental and physical challenges. There is also renewed hope. "You have this new opportunity to live, but you can't live like before. So you get to reinvent yourself." She is excited for the new life she will be giving her donor's heart, and the life her new heart will be giving her. She will continue adding beauty and color to the world by creating earrings.

For the first time in her life, Katie can walk up a hill or on a treadmill without stopping to catch her breath. Her new heart has created a new normal for which the gratitude cannot be captured. "Your normal is normal to you.... and then you get this new organ. It's mind blowing. I can breathe."

Katie is also grateful for the connections, support, healing, and community she has found at Gift of Life Transplant House. During her stay, she has continued to make beautiful clay earrings. She recently surpassed 100 sales and is working on a website to keep up with the growing demand!

Katie was recently featured on WCCO radio with Jordana Green, co-host of The Jordana and Paul Show on WCCO radio. Jordana was recently a guest at Gift of Life Transplant House, where she and Katie met.



Thanks to the generosity of the Arts at the Bedside program, Gift of Life will begin offering art projects to guest and caregivers.



CARLY KELLY, COMPETING AT THE TRANSPLANT GAMES OF AMERICA

Honoring Donors, Inspiring Courage

By Carly Kelly

My name is Carly Kelly and I was born with a genetic condition which, over time, damaged my kidney and liver. In 2004, when I was 8 years old, I needed my first kidney transplant and I received a kidney from my dad, Tim (YEAH DAD!). My condition deteriorated and in 2019 I received a new liver from a deceased donor. Finally, in 2020, I was gifted another kidney from a selfless donor. I am now 27 years old and I have had 3 organ transplants!

As a way to spread awareness about organ donation, connect with other transplant patients,



CARLY AND HER DAD, TIM

and honor my donors and their families, my dad and I decided to compete in the Transplant Games of America in 2022. (The Transplant Games of America 2022 were held in San Diego July 29th – August 3rd.) In July, my dad, a living donor (they can compete, too!) and I went to San Diego as part of Team MN-DAK. This is a team of other transplant recipients and donors from Minnesota, North and South Dakota.

The transplant games are something that takes place every 2 years. Transplant recipients and donors are able to compete in all sorts of activities from basketball and cycling to ballroom dancing and trivia! The transplant games have something for everyone!

The events are super fun! The teams come from every state and every team sponsors a donor family to come to the games as well. We meet so many people, trade pins and share transplant stories. BUT, the main reason

my dad and I attend the games is to honor my donors and their families. We honored my selfless donors during many emotional and inspiring events. Every time I won a medal, I sent a silent blessing to the donors and their families for allowing me this special gift.

The events I competed in this year (this is Kelly and her dad's 3rd Transplant Games) were a 5k run, cycling, pickle ball and corn hole. I received a gold medal for cycling, a gold medal for corn hole and a silver medal in pickle ball. My dad competed in the 5k run, cycling (he received a silver medal) and pickle ball (he received a gold medal!)

This is an incredible and rewarding experience that brings people together along with raising awareness of the importance of organ donation.

The next Transplant Games of America will be held in 2024.

Welcome New Staff:



Jose Trinidad
PR Marketing Coordinator



Xavi Torres
Operations Manager



Wayman Docks
Custodian



Kendall Johnson
Housekeeper

Honoring Genorosity

By Mary Wilder

Josh Keller was born with a congenital heart defect and by the time he was 4 years old, he had had 3 surgeries to attempt to repair some of the defect. Josh reports he lived a fairly normal life and in high school managed the basketball team stats and played the saxophone in the school band. But at age 18, Josh was at home shooting a few hoops and went into cardiac arrest in his front yard. His neighbor who was a police officer, had taken the day off to do a home garage project with an EMT friend and they both rushed to help. Their efforts saved Josh's life and they were later honored for their efforts.

Josh was flown to Mayo where he stayed for 10 days, going home with a defibrillator implanted in his heart. Josh went on to college, earning an archaeology degree. Lon suggested Josh apply at Bell Bank since his condition would prevent any archaeological digs. Josh has been working as a Virtual Customer Support Specialist for 7 years now and his dad, Lon, works as the Director of Studios and Senior Editor.

During a yearly appointment in April 2019, Mayo Clinic suggested it was time to have a transplant evaluation. Josh returned in July, completed the evaluation and was placed on the transplant list. Knowing how quickly a call might



come that a heart was available and how far they would have to come, Lon asked his employer, Bell Bank, if the bank could fly Josh in their private jet when the time came. The bank agreed, and on March 24, 2022, Josh got the call.

Bell Bank flew Josh and his wife, Sam, to Rochester in 42 minutes. A limousine and chauffeur were waiting for Josh and Sam when they arrived at the Rochester airport and they were whisked off to the hospital. Josh was admitted immediately, but due to a delay the surgery did not begin right away.

Since it was so late, the family stayed at a hotel in town, waiting for news of how the surgery had gone. Ten and a half hours later, the surgeon called to say the surgery had gone well and the heart was beating. Despite this news, Lon wasn't feeling well and he soon learned he had COVID. Josh's brother came to stay while the family returned home to quarantine. They moved to Gift of Life Transplant House in May and stayed until July, 2022.



Lon and Josh are both grateful for Gift of Life Transplant House and as an expression of that gratitude, Lon and Josh presented Gift of Life Transplant House with a check for \$18,200 that had been collected as part of the Bell Bank Pay It Forward Program. Each employee receives \$1,000 to use toward any charity they would like to support. Lon and Josh solicited other employees to support Gift of Life and their generosity was overwhelming. Our thanks to Bell Bank, Josh Keller, and Lon Keller.



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Mary Wilder and Mary Mitchell

Rod Anderson Memorial Award 2022

If you have marveled at the beautiful seasonal decorations at Gift of Life Transplant House or looked for and found a greeting card for that special occasion or spent time in our libraries and been happy with the book selection, then you have Mary Mitchell to thank. Mary has been a volunteer at Gift of Life since 2016 and this July, we were pleased to honor her with the Rod Anderson Memorial Award.

The Rod Anderson Memorial Award commemorates board member, Rod Anderson, who passed away in 2017 and is presented to an individual who embodies those qualities of selflessness, humility, and kindness that Rod embodied every day of his life. Mary continues to share her talents and skills with Gift of Life and we are so blessed!

HOUSE HAPPENINGS

OPERATIONS

New faces are in the hallways at Gift of Life Transplant House. Our Operations Manager, Kari Wedeking, made the decision to be a stay-at-home mom and resigned in September. Xavi Torres became our new Operations Manager. With a background in the hospitality industry and under the mentoring of our former Operations Manager, Steve Tarara, Xavi (pronounced Chavy) is ready to take on his new responsibilities!

Kathy Gilbertson, one of our housekeeping staff, made the decision to retire. Kathy had been with Gift of Life for nearly 5 years and we miss her every day. Kendall has joined our staff as the newest member of our housekeeping staff and we couldn't be more pleased.

Mitch Yennie, one of our custodial staff, also made the decision to retire after nearly 6 years with Gift of Life. We are hoping to find his replacement shortly.

And finally, Miranda Halling, our PR Marketing Coordinator, made the decision to fulfill her life-long dream of travel and exploration and resigned in September. She is currently enjoying an extended road trip along the East coast. Jose became our new PR Marketing Coordinator and has picked up right where Miranda left off! This newsletter is an example of Jose's fine work and we are excited to see what his talents will bring in the future!

FACILITIES

TREE DEDICATION

The new oak tree, planted in the front yard at the Edward and Jayne Pompeian home in 2019 in memory and honor of our founder, Edward Pompeian, was dedicated on October 3, 2022 – exactly 3 years to the date the tree was planted. Jayne Pompeian, along with the Pompeian family, led the dedication ceremony.



Jayne Pompeian



The Pompeian Family

38th Annual Golf Tournament



2022 Events

Gift of Life 5K



2nd Annual Gift of Life Car Show



GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT PICNIC



MARY MITCHELL PUTTING UP OUR TRIBUTE RIBBONS



ANNUAL BBQ CATERED BY JOHN HARDYS' BAR-B-Q



SERVING ICE CREAM AT THE TRANSPLANT PICNIC



PERFECT WEATHER FOR OUR ANNUAL BBQ

"We're so grateful for the wonderful stay here at Gift of Life. You all are an important part of our healing" -Bill and Rhonda



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www.linkedin.com/company/gift-of-life-transplant-house/

**GIFT OF LIFE
TRANSPLANT HOUSE
MISSION STATEMENT**



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TRANSPLANT HOUSE

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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.



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Thank you to our corporate partners!

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Emeritus - Jayne Pompeian
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Lori Ewoldt
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Michael Laude
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Honorary Lifetime Board Members

Mary Davie
Sylvester Sterioff, MD
Greg Warner

Gift of Life Transplant House Staff

Executive Director
Mary Wilder

Facilities Manager
Ladd Baldus

Operations Manager
Xavi Torres

Marketing Coordinator
Jose Trinidad

Administrative & Volunteer Coordinator
Tami Konakowitz

Receptionist
Ashley Grant

Resident Night Manager
724 House: Travis Niemeier

705 House: Val Koehn

Facilities Staff
Jerry Jensen, Wayman Docks

Lead Housekeeper
Pollie Goodman

Housekeepers
Connie Thedens, Abby Sand, Mindy Hay,
Kendall Johnson

Data Base Clerk
JoAnn Volker