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SHARING THE *gift*

A NEWSLETTER OF GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE VOLUME 6 | NO 1 | WINTER 2006

The Graces of Being Together at Gift of Life Transplant House

WHEN MY HUSBAND JIM WAS DIAGNOSED WITH LEUKEMIA, OUR LIVES BECAME A TANGLE OF QUESTIONS AND FEARS – WHAT WOULD HIS DAYS BE LIKE AS THE ILLNESS PROGRESSED, HOW WOULD OUR YOUNG ADULT KIDS HANDLE LIFE WITH THEIR BELOVED DAD SO SICK, WERE WE OKAY FINANCIALLY, COULD WE KEEP AND MAINTAIN OUR HOME, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WITH JIM'S JOB, WITH MINE? HOW LONG WOULD JIM BE WITH US? IT WAS SO HARD TO THINK AND IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAN MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS AHEAD.

A bone marrow transplant became available, thanks to a brother's perfect match, and we headed to Rochester with cautious hope for Jim's renewed health. In one of our meetings, a social worker told us about Gift of Life House and we visited. Although the house was orderly and comfortable looking, and Sisters Margeen and Jane welcoming and enthusiastic, it was the last place I wanted to be. I was struggling to maintain hope and enthusiasm for our own situation. I didn't think I had enough energy to be part of others' sadness and confusion, and I assumed that the atmosphere in the house would be gloomy and fearful. I wanted to find a room somewhere where I could be alone when I wasn't at the hospital.

But the issue of my lodging nagged at Jim. He had to know that I would be okay during his transplant, that I would be somewhere safe and close to the hospital, that our children could come to visit and stay with me. With great reluctance, we called Gift of Life House and found that indeed a room was available. Only a few blocks from the hospital, the House would at least give me shelter until I found something I liked better. I wouldn't have to get involved with anyone there, I told myself. I could get up in the morning and go immediately to be with Jim. I didn't have to let anyone know how scared I was.

So I moved into the House, unaware of the graces it would bring. I couldn't have guessed that I would share those challenging months with the warmest, most optimistic, prayerful, laughing people I'd ever known – people whose courage and ability to find joy would stay in my heart forever.



Jim and Jane Hense

I don't even know how it all came about. I found myself drawn into this small community and I did become involved in others' stories. And it was wonderful. Being together took us out of our worries somehow. We celebrated the good news of others' progress and prayed for those struggling to survive the night. We waited with hope for a liver to become available for our fifteen-year-old housemate. We took walks when we weren't at the hospital. We cried when a young husband died after his transplant. How could I have been so distrustful of that experience? What if I had never known the powerful medicine that being together could offer?

Our weeks at Gift of Life House were thirteen years ago. Jim spent some time with me there as did our children. Then we came home and spent eight years seeing children marry, welcoming our first three grandchildren, enjoying time with family and friends, and knowing the loveliness of life. Jim died five years ago, not from leukemia. So much of our talk during and after those months in Rochester centered on our days at the House. I am convinced that my stay there was an essential part of Jim's survival. He released his concerns for me, knowing that I was safe in so many ways. My children and I will always support Gift of Life House. Right now, knowing there are families at the House comforted as we were, I am again grateful for the kindness of Sisters Margeen and Jane and for the blessing of Gift of Life House. I pray for those who shared my months there and for those who need its miraculous shelter today.

knowing the loveliness of life...

– Submitted by Jane Hense

The Many Wonders of Holiday Generosity

During Christmas, everyone anxiously awaits the bearded man. That's true at Gift of Life, too, where he can be found scurrying about the kitchen making last minute preparations for Christmas dinner. No, it isn't Santa...it's Jim Gander!

Jim, the owner of Superior Plumbing of Rochester, and his wife Lisa, GOL public relations committee chairperson, have made serving Christmas dinner at Gift of Life a joyful part of their holiday festivities for many years. When Dee Dee Gulley, kidney transplant recipient and house guest, donated the first Christmas dinner for our residents in 1995, Lisa Gander agreed to be the organizer. With her hard work and the assistance of good-hearted volunteers, Christmas dinner was a delicious success.

Since then the entire Gander family has served Christmas dinner to our guests, making the true spirit of Christmas their family tradition. "Serving dinner gives Jim a chance to meet many of the guests, each of whom shares a story that he carries in his heart for years. He is touched by them as much as they by him," says Lisa.

"It's wonderful to see the happiness in the faces of the guests and their families," Lisa adds, "especially since our dinner gives them the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with their loved ones and many new friends."

"The Canadian Honker Restaurant has always catered the dinner for us. Their incredible staff prepares an affordable and delicious dinner, and we thank them sincerely for helping us to maintain the Gift of Life's mission, especially at Christmas," concludes Lisa.

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The Gander family at our 2005 Christmas dinner (left to right): Lisa, Jim, and Lou Gander; Donna Schurmeier; and Deanna Gander



Vice President's Letter

Greetings for the New Year,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and current guests, I extend best wishes for a kind and caring 2006 to you, our Gift of Life family.

As I anticipated the New Year, it was fitting to reflect on our past so that we may prepare for our future. Gift of Life was busy in 2005 in many arenas.

Gift of Life continued its mission daily in 2005. The house occupancy remained constant and demand for lodging exceeded our capacity on many nights. Our Board of Directors once again was faced with increased demand for services.

We began the year planning for ways to meet guest demands. After careful deliberation, the Board endorsed a \$300,000 capital campaign, "Continuing the Dream," for the duration of 2005. Thanks to your generosity, the campaign closed successfully on December 31, 2005.

Staffing remained optimal at Gift of Life. Sister Margeen, executive director, and Sister Jane, facilities manager, continued staff recruiting efforts. Alison Amundson, former night resident manager, became our new administrative office manager. We once again are thankful for our ongoing relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis and our volunteers. They provide our home with hope for healing and peace to our guests on a daily basis.

Especially meaningful this year was the response from you, our Gift of Life family and supporters. You continue to give freely so that those embarking on the transplant journey will have a house of hope and healing while in Rochester. Gifts of service and financial contributions once again allowed Gift of Life to carry forth its mission. The Board thanks you for your generosity.

Gift of Life hosted its first Wine Tasting event at Mayo Civic Center in 2005, and this is surely to be a yearly fundraiser. The annual Gift of Life golf tournament was also a great success.

On behalf of the entire Gift of Life family, I thank you for responding positively to the ongoing needs of those participating in the transplant journey. To each of you, I extend a heartfelt thank you for partnering with us in fulfilling our mission.

Pace e Bene,

Roger A. Erickson, Vice-President
Gift of Life Board of Directors

YOUR GENEROUS RESPONSE CONTINUES THE DREAM FOR GIFT OF LIFE

Early in 2005, Gift of Life's Board of Directors discussed ways to enhance and sustain our mission, necessitated by an increase in demand for services – specifically, guest rooms. Open dialogue and lengthy discussions identified immediate guest and House needs. In a time of economic insecurity coupled with increased service requirements, the Board endorsed a capital campaign initiative for Gift of Life.

In the Spring of 2005, "Continuing the Dream," our capital campaign, kicked off. Specifically, the campaign would replace the current *Judd House* roof, provide the campus with a new two-story storage facility, and allow for upgrading the infrastructure and remodeling of our 714 First Street house for short-term stay guests. The remodeling of 714 opens up three new guest rooms. All essential guest services are self contained at 714, including lodging, laundry, cooking, communications, and a family room.

Our Gift of Life family came through once again. The campaign successfully closed on December 31, 2005. The Board of Directors graciously accepted your kind donations. Because of you, all projects were completed on time.

As demand for our services continues, let us recap our history. In 1984, our humble beginning consisted of an eight-room house, which was quickly outgrown. To accommodate this, we leased 12 additional rooms at the St. John's Convent. With still an inadequate amount of space, in 1994, ten years after opening the original house, we relocated to 705 Second Street SW, our current location. Then in 2002, the *Gillette Wing* was added. Finally, the upcoming opening of 714 First Street SW, now known as the *Founders House*, brings us to a total of 51 guest rooms. One may wonder what project Gift of Life will undertake next. Rest assured, the Board remains committed to our mission and being responsive to you, our Gift of Life family. The future remains bright for Gift of Life.

– Submitted by Roger Erickson, Vice President, Gift of Life Board of Directors

A Taste for Life – Our "Classy" Fall Fundraiser Cheers Attendees

The 1st Annual Gift of Life *A Taste for Life* wine tasting event held on September 23rd at the Mayo Civic Center Ballroom was an incredible success!

Countless hours of planning proved worthwhile for committee members who planned and organized every aspect of this inaugural event including the invitations, sponsorships, programs, menu, and decor.

Mayo Civic Center, Special Day Design, Canadian Honker Catering, and Le Jardin European Floral worked together to create a splendid atmosphere. The coordinating table linens and extraordinary floral arrangements were a top-notch addition to this classy evening. In addition, the buffet table was beautifully decorated to complement the décor. Chef Nick Lensing provided a delicious variety of gourmet appetizers and desserts to pair with each wine. Finally, Le Jardin expertly tied the décor together by entwining real grapes in the three-foot candelabras.



Sister Margeen Hoffmann, O.S.F., offers her warm appreciation to Kristy Jack and Brad Kuehn, both of Kuehn Motors, one of several *A Taste for Life* Silver Sponsors.

Wine tasting was only one of the evening's activities. Local businesses and friends of Gift of Life donated many interesting items for a silent auction including themed baskets as well as an eclectic array of wine racks, rugs, furniture, and the piece de resistance... an exquisite Tahitian black pearl necklace set with diamonds.

The true coordinator of this event was Chuck Pagenhart, Gift of Life board member and owner of Silver Lake Liquor. Mr. Pagenhart, along with several local distributors, carefully chose 19 unique wines and micro brewed beers for our guests to sample. A representative from each distributor attended the event to answer any product questions for those interested in purchasing their favorite selections. At the conclusion of the event, Silver Lake Liquor generously donated a percentage of the profit to Gift of Life.

Our special thanks to our *Gold Sponsor: US Bank*. *Silver sponsors: Brentwood Inn and Suites, Kuehn Motor Company, and THINK*. *Bronze Sponsors: Response and Heartman Insurance, Silver Lake Liquor and its distributors, and Canadian Honker Catering*.

If you missed the inaugural event, please save the date of September 29, 2006, for the 2nd Annual *A Taste for Life*. Cheers!

Large or small, "Wish List" donations help keep Gift of Life guests and their caregivers more comfortable every day. Lorraine Libbey smiles alongside the items she and her husband, Chris, brought to the House.



wish list winter needs – thank you for your donations!

- Paper products, including paper towels
- Kitchen cloth towels & kitchen knives
- Anti-bacterial liquid dish soap, and liquid hand soap & refills
- Window cleaner & Vinegar
- Murphy's Oil soap
- Pine-Sol cleaner / disinfectant
- Light bulbs – 60 & 100 watt
- Plastic yard bags (for spring clean up)
- New quartz alarm clocks / clock radios
- Wrapped candy & candy bars
- \$25 to cover a one night stay for a family in financial need
- Pop can tabs (please bag) – recycled proceeds help supply office equipment, or aid toward lodging costs for families in financial need
- Groceries, spices, and baking needs for "house" use
- Postage stamps for office use

Prayer, Grief, and Comfort Are Shared at Gift of Life

– Submitted by Patti Risner, Bone Marrow Transplant Recipient

On April 23, 2003, after a very long hospital stay filled with extensive testing including a brain biopsy, I received the call that no one wants to receive. That call confirmed I had brain cancer. Not just any kind of cancer, but one that has been only found after a patient has died. In addition to this horrific news, it was Stage-4 cancer. My doctor told me he didn't know how to treat this particular disease. For months, I underwent extreme chemotherapy and drug treatment. Then one wonderful day, new test results confirmed I was in remission. Praise God!

From the very beginning while I was in the hospital, I was praying, telling the Lord I was scared. I remembered the Bible passage where Jesus was alone in the garden praying just before He was betrayed. I felt the same way. I was going through the greatest trial of my life, and I was all alone. So clearly then I heard the Lord explain to me Jesus' was a walk he had to take alone and now He was going to take me on a similar walk and told me not to be afraid. He didn't tell me how my story would end, but I had given my heart to Jesus years ago, so if I died I was confident where I would go. A peace came over me. Scripture says, "passes all understanding" and from that day on I can honestly say while everything was falling apart, I had perfect peace.

While I was in remission, my doctor felt we should try to find a cure. A bone marrow transplant might be the answer he said, but he gave me no promises. While

the arrangements were being made at the hospital in Columbus, Ohio, I received a call from Wal-Mart headquarters (I work for Wal-Mart). They explained if I went to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for my treatment, they would pay for everything. The transplant, doctors, housing, airfare, and meals were all covered, not only for me, but for my caregiver as well. Additionally, they would pay for all follow-up visits for one year. How could I pass that up?



Patti Risner in 2005

Early in October of 2004, my sister, Debbie Ohler, and I flew to Rochester. We moved into Gift of Life, our home for the next three months. Not only was the house beautiful, but everyone made us welcome. There we found a family that Debbie and I greatly needed being so far from home. Everyone at Gift of Life understood the struggles we were going through, because they were going through them as well. There was a peace in that. Debbie spent much more time at the House than I, as I needed to be in the hospital often. The other guests at the House were a great comfort to her.

While at Gift of Life, we lived with people from all walks of life and from all over the world. There was a doctor, a construction worker, a lawyer, a teacher, a rocket scientist (literally), and me, a Wal-Mart sales associate. WOW! There was a couple from India, another from Mexico, and guests from all over the United States.

Despite our obvious differences, we had something in common. We were all at the House looking for a new

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holidays continued

A Feast to Remember – Submitted by Denise Stegall

Thanksgiving is a holiday not only for giving thanks but also for enjoying the company of friends and family. Every family has different traditions and means of celebrating this particular holiday, and each year at Gift of Life, those traditions are brought together as we celebrate Thanksgiving with all of our guests, friends, family, and volunteers.

From baked beans to homemade apple pie, the generous donations of over 50 neighborhood volunteers guaranteed us a feast fit for kings and queens. Dinner included eight turkeys, 50 pounds of potatoes, eight pounds of dressing, 20 assorted side dishes, a plethora of salads and vegetables, and almost every dessert you could imagine.

Twenty-five volunteers spent the entire day cooking and mashing potatoes,

heating food, serving, replenishing, and cleaning up dinner, all to ensure our guests and their families enjoyed a memorable, stress-free holiday. A number of these volunteers who have joined us for several years expressed that they look forward to helping others on Thanksgiving at Gift of Life.

The volunteer to receive a gold star for the day, though they were absolutely all wonderful, was my Mom, Jean. She had come for a week's visit knowing she would spend most of Thanksgiving Day with me at Gift of Life. She came happily expecting to volunteer. For eight hours she worked tirelessly alongside me welcoming volunteers, directing them toward the kitchen, and pitching in wherever necessary.



Denise Stegall enjoys Thanksgiving with her mom, Jean, at Gift of Life.

Duane Osbourne, who had spent Thanksgiving at Gift of Life in 2000, said in a lovely note, "I always think of the House at this time of the year and the Thanksgiving dinner. I just wanted to say, "Thank you," to all the people in the House that help with this event."

Our sentiments exactly!



St. John's Catholic School 5th graders making deliveries to Gift of Life at Christmas time



The Gift of Life staff, at "Home for the Holidays" (seated, left to right): Sister Margeen Hoffmann, O.S.F., and Sister Jane Frances Gregoire, O.S.F. Standing (left to right): Alison Amundson, Denise Stegall, Sister Mary Ricker, O.S.F., Sister Patricia Himmer, O.S.F., Sister Colleen Byron, O.S.F., Helen Pompeian, and Sister Rogene Fox, O.S.F. (Not pictured, Fred Grose.)

BOARD PROFILE: Roger Erickson

A nurse practitioner by trade, Roger Erickson views his duty of serving on Gift of Life Transplant House Board of Directors as an extension of serving transplant patients at St. Marys Hospital.

"The board has had a relationship with Mayo Clinic that had the foresight to take on new building and expansion plans in relation to the growth of the transplantation program at Mayo," says Roger, who cares for patients in the Division of Cardiovascular Diseases. "Although Gift of Life is an independent organization, we have a parallel relationship with Mayo that allows us to reach our vision of offering a home that helps and heals."

During his 18 years with Gift of Life, Roger says he has seen the home evolve, including moving to its current location and expanding from eight to 51 rooms. He has also experienced the Board of Directors embrace Gift of Life founder Edward Pompeian's vision of offering a home-away-from-home for transplantation patients.

During his tenure with Gift of Life, Roger has been involved in many different capacities. He served as the home's first volunteer coordinator, secretary of the board, 20th anniversary committee chair, and a committee member for the executive committee, golf tournament, and National Association of Hospital Hospitality Houses (NAHHH) conference. He also helped with the home's renovation, picked up trash for the adopt-a-highway project, ironed linens for Thanksgiving dinner, and sang at the 20th anniversary celebration (per Sister Margeen's request).

Roger is proud to have seen the House evolve into a nationally renowned transplant home, recognized by the NAHHH. According to him, Gift of Life is a model for other associations planning hospitality houses. But that does not come without reason. Roger truly believes in Gift of Life's mission and says that its talented staff and volunteers truly help make it a home that helps and heals.

"At Gift of Life, patients and their caregivers don't have to go through this unique experience alone," says Roger. "They are in a circle of people who are going through the same thing – they become a family and an amazing support network for one another."

While being involved in a transplantation hospitality house can sometimes take a toll on him, Roger cherishes the connections he's made through Gift of Life. Professionally, the organization allows him to keep in touch with people he has met through the transplantation journey and even develop life-long friendships with many of them.

Personally, Roger says it is simply part of his responsibility to society to give back to others. "It's easy as a board

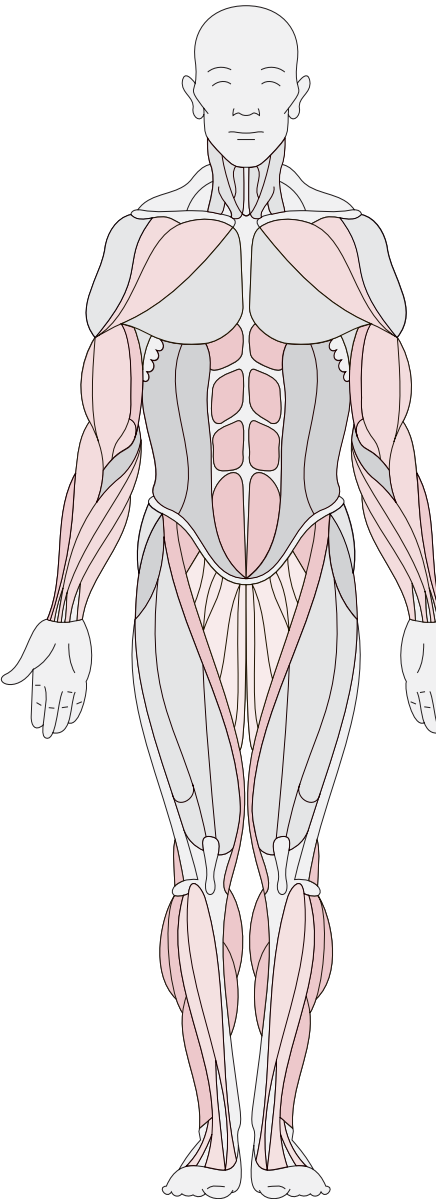
board profile continued on page 6



Roger Erickson

Obesity in Liver and Kidney Transplantation: Issues for Recipients and Donors

Submitted by Julie Heimbach, M.D.,
Assistant Professor of Surgery
William J. von Liebig Transplant Center,
Mayo Clinic



OBESITY IN THE UNITED STATES HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES AND NOW REPRESENTS ONE OF THE GREATEST RISKS TO THE HEALTH OF AMERICANS. Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30, while overweight is defined as a BMI greater than 25. The BMI is a calculated number that can estimate the amount of body fat based on a patient's height and weight. Currently, 61 percent of adults and 14 percent of children in the United States are overweight or obese. These numbers have nearly tripled during the past 20 years and continue to increase at an alarming rate.

The epidemic of obesity seen in the United States is also beginning to be seen throughout the world. Numerous groups have analyzed potential causes of the increase in obesity and believe that it is related to an inactive lifestyle and increased availability of food. Most Americans are not active, and the modern conveniences such as elevators, riding lawn mowers, and remote controls only serve to exacerbate the problem. While in the past, energy was expended without thought on the job or in the home, the population is now much more sedentary and is inundated by calorie dense foods that are offered in larger and larger portions. Obesity has been described as an epidemic of progress. It is estimated that obesity will soon eclipse smoking as the leading cause of preventable disease and death.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PATIENTS WITH END-STAGE LIVER OR KIDNEY DISEASE WHO NEED TRANSPLANTS? While the consequences of obesity for everyone may be severe, including a significant increase in risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer, the issues are particularly important for liver and kidney patients. Obesity may have directly contributed to the development of kidney or liver disease, it may impact a patient's ability to successfully undergo transplantation, and it may impact the long-term graft survival after transplantation.

WHILE IN THE PAST, LIVER DISEASE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT LOSS AND MALNUTRITION, OBESITY-RELATED LIVER DISEASE (CALLED NASH) HAS NOW BECOME ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF END-STAGE LIVER DISEASE.

The same is true in patients with kidney failure, where the proportion of patients who are overweight or obese mirrors that of the general population. Traditionally, many centers have refused transplantation for obese patients as the initial experience demonstrated the outcomes for both patient and graft survival to be poor compared to non-obese recipients. Many centers asked patients to lose weight prior to being considered for transplantation. However, several studies have shown that most patients who are on dialysis are unable to lose weight. In addition, studies have demonstrated that increased time on dialysis leads to poorer outcomes for patients. A clear survival benefit is demonstrated with transplantation versus not undergoing transplantation for individuals who are obese with advanced liver disease.

MORE RECENTLY, DATA HAVE SHOWN THAT WITH CAREFUL EVALUATION FOR HEART DISEASE, OBESE PATIENTS CAN RECEIVE KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS SAFELY WITH GOOD OUTCOMES, though they are at a higher risk for wound healing problems and other complications when compared to patients who are not obese. Ideally, obese patients would begin to lose weight, undergo transplantation with a living donor after careful medical evaluation, then continue weight loss following transplantation. Frequent re-evaluation with attention to heart disease should be performed if a patient has a prolonged wait for a deceased donor kidney transplant.

FOR OBESE PATIENTS WITH LIVER DISEASE, THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEIGHT (LARGE AMOUNT OF WEIGHT IN THE UPPER ABDOMEN) MAY IMPACT THE ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM THE OPERATION. For such patients, pre-transplant weight loss is the only option, and Mayo Clinic has a weight management protocol designed to assist help achieve this goal. Other obese patients with a distribution of weight that does not impede the ability to perform the operation may undergo liver transplantation, though weight loss during the waiting period can significantly improve overall health, decrease wound complications and optimize recovery following transplantation; thus all obese patients awaiting liver transplantation are enrolled in the weight management protocol to help achieve this goal.

AFTER TRANSPLANTATION, MAINTENANCE OF A HEALTHY WEIGHT IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE NEW KIDNEY OR LIVER which can occur as a result of complications of obesity such as diabetes or recurrent NASH. While patients who have received the gift of a new organ have the opportunity for a dramatic improvement in their health, everyone who has struggled with his or her weight understands that weight loss is extremely difficult. Indeed, the opposite often occurs and weight gain following transplantation is seen in more than 60 percent of normal weight patients who have received a kidney transplant and in a significant number of liver transplant patients as well. The cause of this is unknown though may be related to increases in appetite due to immunosuppressants or other changes due to the stress of the surgery. At Mayo Clinic, we are in the process of developing an intensive "kidney rehabilitation" program similar to cardiac rehabilitation programs which have been shown to be successful. The goal would be to significantly increase daily exercise while modifying dietary intake in order to achieve and maintain a healthy weight after transplantation. A similar approach may be useful for selected liver patients as well.

THOUGH THE RECIPE FOR WEIGHT LOSS (CALORIES TAKEN IN MUST BE LESS THAN CALORIES BURNED UP) IS QUITE SIMPLE, THE EXPLODING EPIDEMIC OF OBESITY SUGGESTS THAT FOLLOWING THIS RECIPE IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. While there are clearly no easy solutions, facing this difficult problem is the first step. Keeping track of daily weight and food intake as well as joining a group weight loss program such as Weight Watchers®, has also been shown to be very helpful. At Mayo Clinic, we have recognized obesity as one of the most significant problems facing our transplant patients and we are committed to developing strategies to try to help.

prayers and comfort continued

lease on life. During our stay, people in our new family received viable livers, kidneys, stem cells, lungs, and a heart. It was awesome to see medically what was possible. Yet, it was sad, too. Watching a loved one grow weaker and weaker while waiting for a donor was wrenching, and the rejection of a transplanted organ was emotionally deflating for everyone in our new family. We grieved with the families of those who lost their fight. We prayed with those who needed comfort.

There was always something to do at Gift of Life which was one of the things I enjoyed most. The staff and volunteers kept us busy. We spent Thanksgiving at the House and we expected to be there for Christmas. It was emotionally difficult being away from our home and family for the holiday, but the staff, volunteers, and other guests made it easier and quite memorable.

Debbie and I came home December 18, 2004. As happy as we were to be going home, we were sad to leave our friends and new family. I still keep in contact with many of those special people. I praise God for Gift of Life Transplant House and pray often for those who stay there.

It's now January, 2006, and I just came back from Mayo Clinic for my one-year check up. Praise God, I'm still cancer free!

What Cancer Cannot Do!

Cancer is limited.

It cannot cripple love,

It cannot shatter hope.

It cannot corrode faith,

It cannot destroy peace.

It cannot kill friendship,

It cannot suppress memories.

It cannot silence courage,

It cannot conquer the spirit,

It cannot invade the soul,

It cannot steal eternal life.

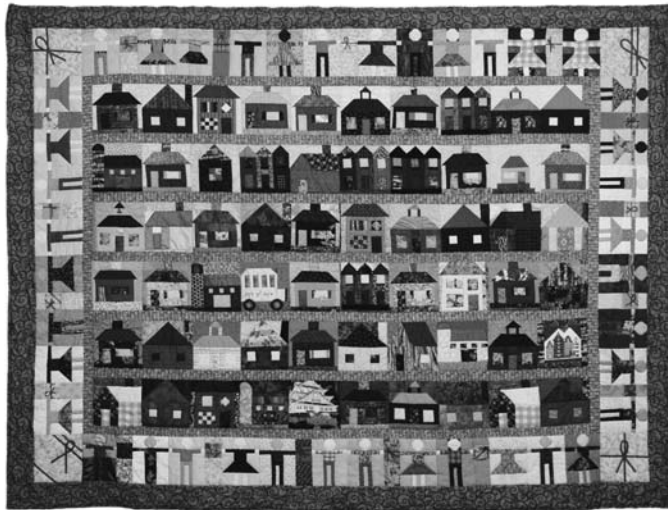
~ Author Unknown

Friendship... Measured by Kindness, Sewn with Love – Submitted by Denise Stegall, Communications Manager

To celebrate Gift of Life's 20 years of service to transplant patients in Rochester, Executive Director Sister Margeen Hoffmann desired something very special to commemorate this monumental anniversary. As we have come to expect, she had the perfect idea! In October of 2002, in the spirit of the "memory quilt" made popular in the late 1980s, Sister Margeen approached longtime Gift of Life friend and volunteer Eileen Harreld and asked her to coordinate the creation of a very unique quilt.

"Sister Margeen knew I was a quilter and asked me to organize the project," says Eileen. "Her vision for this 'House' quilt was to pay tribute to all the patients, donors, caregivers, family members, and friends who contributed their love, friendship, support, and encouragement to our home. Thus, each block would represent someone with special memories and personal connection to the House."

At first Eileen was overwhelmed. She wasn't sure how to expedite such a complex assignment. Her concerns were two-fold. She was concerned there would be too many blocks, all of which needed to be included. Simultaneously, she worried there wouldn't be enough. Eileen constructed several contingency plans to accommodate either scenario.



The Gift of Life Transplant House 20th Anniversary "House Quilt"

To ease her concerns, Eileen placed an article in the 2003 spring edition of *Sharing the Gift*, inviting people to participate. Those who responded to Eileen's invitation received patterns, fabric swatches, a sheet for the color scheme, and instructions on sizing the blocks. Patterns were available for the beginner, intermediate, and advanced quilter. "Because I didn't want a hodgepodge of unrelated blocks and crazy colors, I chose a 'house and people theme' and then chose the coordinating fabrics."

Once she received the blocks, Eileen organized and stitched them together. This was no small task as there was a tremendous response to her invitation. Eileen received over 100 blocks, 60 houses, and 40 people. Quilters Courtyard, in St. Paul, MN, donated fabric and the machine quilting. Before long, they presented the finished product to admiring eyes at Gift of Life.

Finally, in December 2004, the commemorative 20th anniversary quilt was ceremoniously hung in the Gillette Dining Room on a lovely, handmade oak rack crafted and donated by Leonard McNab. A plaque accompanies the quilt thanking contributors, and reads, "With this quilt, we celebrate the gifts of life that were given with love."

All-occasion (blank interior), beautifully printed full-color "House Quilt" note cards with envelopes are available for sale at Gift of Life for \$1 each, or as a gift packet of 10 cards and envelopes for \$9. Proceeds directly benefit Gift of Life, "a home that helps and heals."

Both love and a quilt should be: Soft enough to comfort you, Bright enough to cheer you, Generous enough to enfold you, Light enough to let you move freely, Strong enough to withstand adversity, Durable enough to last a lifetime, And given gladly, from the heart. ~ Author Unknown

Tips for Caregivers – Submitted by Danielle Peabody, LGSW, Transplant Social Worker, Mayo Clinic

Who are caregivers? They are mothers, fathers, spouses, children, brothers, sisters, friends, in-laws, and co-workers. With no formal training, they become nurses, pharmacists, counselors, secretaries, taxi drivers, chefs, and housekeepers! It's a daunting role, but it is so important and can be very rewarding.

In the hustle and bustle of recovering from a transplant, very often the needs of the caregiver are overlooked. Each day, doctors and nurses dote on the symptoms, lab results, and progress of the transplant patient, meanwhile the caregiver's contribution to the recovery is forgotten.

Caregivers give so much to all of us. When I meet patients during their pre-transplant evaluation, many cannot understand why we "require" them to have a caregiver with them during their transplant recovery. "But, people work! How can I ask someone to take four weeks off work to be with me?" I am asked. Most of these same patients tell me afterwards, "This is so overwhelming; I don't know how I could have done it without my caregiver."

Caregiving is hard work – administering medications, lifting, bathing and dressing, wound care, checking blood pressure, counseling, reassuring, shopping, cooking,

running errands, taking notes, asking questions, paying bills... Caregiving is a full-time job! How does a caregiver find time to care for him or herself?

Here are the 10 Tips for Caregivers. These are printed and quoted often because they work!

1. Caregiving is a job, and you deserve a break! Reward yourself with breaks often.
2. Watch out for your own signs of depression and don't delay talking to someone if you need help.
3. When other people offer to help you, take them up on it! And suggest other things they can do to help you.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's transplant and who is available to help you in the Transplant Center.
5. There's a difference between *caring* and *doing*. Be sure to promote your loved one's independence.
6. Trust your instincts – most of the time, you're right!
7. Caregivers do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling. Get exercise, stretch, and relax. Get a massage!
8. It's okay to be sad sometimes but put a time limit on when you will allow yourself to feel this way. Then, dream new dreams and begin making plans for your future!

9. Seek support from other caregivers. Knowing you are not alone brings strength and comfort. Both are easy to find and all around you here at Gift of Life Transplant House!
10. Stand up for your needs as a caregiver.

Staff at Gift of Life Transplant House and at Mayo Clinic Transplant Center knows how important you are. Your role on the health care team is as important as your doctor's or nurse's or pharmacist. If you are feeling burned out, need a break, or are incapable of caregiving, please reach out for help. Speak with your social worker; sometimes their professional resources are available to give caregivers a break. The best thing you can do for your loved one is to take good care of yourself!

For more information and support on caregiving, check out these websites:

- Family Caregiver Alliance – www.caregiver.org
- National Family Caregivers Association – www.nfcares.org

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CaringBridge Keeps Patients “Connected”

– Submitted by John Wingate, CaringBridge Media Relations

“I believe the internet has a higher calling – helping bring people together at important times, facilitating love and support that is meaningful for all involved, wherever they may be.” ~ Sona Mehring, CaringBridge Founder

CaringBridge (www.caringbridge.org) is a free, not-for-profit, easy-to-use internet service developed to keep friends and family informed when someone is receiving care. CaringBridge is your first online destination to easily and quickly bring your loving community closer, when you need it most. CaringBridge helps families tap the internet for a higher purpose, creating unique, private web pages that enable a circle of friends and loved ones to *be there* to offer love and encouragement.

“CaringBridge is a blessing,” one transplant recipient says. “We could easily update family without having to field too many phone calls and questions during an exhausting, stressful time in our lives. And each day, we could read what the web page visitors had posted. Their messages of support and encouragement lifted us up at a challenging time.”

How CaringBridge Works

In minutes, families can easily create a secure CaringBridge web page. They can then sign-in at any time to post journal entries and photographs for their caring community. The service allows the family to focus their energies on the loved one who requires healing. Visitors who are provided the web site address and password can read updates and post their own messages of support, love, and encouragement for the family.

CaringBridge Founder and Executive Director, Sona Mehring, says the service makes a profound connection with users and visitors. “CaringBridge takes cold, impersonal technology and uses it to serve a higher purpose in an intimate, powerful way,” she says.

To date, more than 35,000 personalized sites have been created, resulting in nearly 200 million page visits and four million guest book entries. The CaringBridge community includes families in all 50 states and many countries worldwide. For more information, please visit www.caringbridge.org.

Surfing the Net?

Did you know Gift of Life has a website? Our website, www.gift-of-life.org, includes pertinent information, house features, an introductory video, and helpful links to other useful websites. We have enhanced the website recently by changing the color scheme, and we now include current fundraisers, gift shop sales, and special events. By logging on periodically, you will find out about upcoming GOL events. Several guests have mentioned they schedule their medical appointments to coincide with those events.

Happy surfing!

Calendar of Events

April is National Donate Life Month

Organ procurement organizations, transplant centers, and other organizations sponsor special awareness

events and donor recognition ceremonies to promote donation awareness. For more information, please log onto www.organdonor.gov.

Med-City Marathon – Sunday, May 28

Health enthusiasts join *Gift of Life Runners* for a great work out and help further the mission of the House. Runners can participate in the 26.2-mile marathon, 20-mile run, or a 2- or 4-person relay. For additional information, log onto www.medcitymarathon.com. Or, please contact Board Member Timothy Larson, M.D. at (W) 507-266-6953, or (H) 507-288-6221, or by e-mail at larson.timothy@mayo.edu. Don't think you can run a marathon but would like to help? We certainly welcome any contributions in support of this program. Please mail your check (payable to Gift of Life), to *GOL*

Runners, 705 Second Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902. Gift of Life is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

Mayo Clinic Annual Transplant Picnic – Saturday, July 8

Contact your coordinator at the clinic, or Denise Stegall at Gift of Life at denise@gift-of-life.org.

22nd Annual Gift of Life Benefit Golf Tournament – Monday, July 10

The tournament will be held again this year at Rochester Golf and Country Club. Registration information will be mailed in May inside our next newsletter.

board profile continued

member because you see wonderful things happening all of the time,” says Roger. “Whenever I visit the House, people are so appreciative of everything, including the caring environment our staff and volunteers work so hard to create.”

Roger offers this piece of advice to all Gift of Life guests: “There is always hope – and that is something that no one can take away from you,” he says. “Some guests are facing death and at the same time are facing a second chance at life – and they know this chance is because of a generous gift from someone else.”

Like the generous organ donors who often save guests’ lives, Roger says volunteers also play an important role in the transplantation journey at Gift of Life. “Our staff and volunteers are extremely committed to both their work and the mission of Gift of Life – you see that on an everyday basis during their interactions with guests, board members, and the community,” says Roger. “They all play an integral role in supporting our home’s mission.”

Outside of his work for Mayo and Gift of Life, Roger enjoys music, the arts, and spending time with his family, friends, and his dog, Hart. He sings with Rochester Civic Music, the Rochester Male Chorus, his church choir, and at weddings and funerals.

During his tenure with Gift of Life, Roger will never forget the many wonderful gifts he has experienced. The one gift that touches him the most is the gift of life given by all donors. He gives thanks for those gifts, for without them, Gift of Life would have no mission

– Submitted by Nicole Engler

HELP US MAINTAIN OUR DATABASE

Are you receiving duplicate copies of this newsletter? Do you no longer wish to receive our mail? If you need to make a change, please send us a note, email us at office@gift-of-life.org or call us at 507-288-7470. Your update will help us save on postage costs. Thank you!

GIFT OF LIFE TRANSPLANT HOUSE MISSION STATEMENT

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



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