

UPDate

Three year old Brandon Leathers and his family stayed at the Family House earlier this year while he recovered from a life-saving kidney transplant



Help support kitchen updates and provide more meals to transplant families

Over the last seven years, the Family House kitchen has truly become a place of love and support. Thousands of Home Cook Hero volunteers have worked hard to give our guests one less thing to worry about and have welcomed them "home" to over 200,000 warm, home-cooked meals, and hundreds of transplant families have formed friendships and supported each other through the difficult transplant journey.

To help keep our kitchen running smoothly and accessible to transplant families, WE NEED TO RAISE \$40,000 FOR NECESSARY EQUIPMENT UPGRADES AND TO PROVIDE MORE MEALS.

Our Home Cook Heroes program provides our guests with a warm meal each night and access to our full-service kitchen, beverage station, and pantry. Whether families are just returning home from a long day at the hospital or looking for a snack or cup of coffee, they can grab what they need without worrying how to get there or how they'll afford it.

TIME AND OUR INCREASED OCCUPANCY is causing WEAR AND TEAR on our appliances and equipment.

Over the past few months, the Family House's occupancy levels have increased and we are pleased to be able to support so many families! However, more patients and families does mean more wear and tear on our appliances and equipment, more food and kitchen supplies, and higher utility and operational expenses.

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Our kitchen also hasn't been serviced since opening our doors in 2011, and it's in need of some repairs and updates. If you're a past guest or a Home Cook Hero, you may know that some of our appliances—specifically, our ovens—aren't working properly and need to be replaced. Our guests would also benefit from more accessible and practical storage updates to our cabinets.

Although the Family House has a supportive community that often donates items to our pantry, we must also restock food and kitchen supplies as needed for our guests. On nights where there are no Home Cook Hero volunteers, our staff must step in and prepare the evening meal as well.

FOOD CAN BE A HUGE WORRY for transplant families.

While food can be a nourishing comfort, it can be a huge worry, especially for transplant families far away from home. The question "What's for dinner?" can be a difficult one for them. Many are tired after a long, stressful day and have little energy left to take care of themselves. Some don't even have access to a kitchen, and eating out every day can get very expensive.

At the Family House, we take care of dinner for them.

When they come back "home" to the Family House from the hospital each evening, the Leathers family enjoys a warm, home-cooked meal prepared by volunteers in our kitchen. Kirk, his wife, Carla, and their children stayed at the Family House together earlier this year with their three year old son, Brandon, who received a kidney transplant in December 2018.

They also cook all of their other meals in our kitchen using ingredients donated by Home Cook Heroes and other members of our community.

"Eating out all the time would be a financial strain for us," Kirk explains. "But there's always food in the pantry here for us to make. The other day, I made pancakes and bacon for my kids and other guests sitting in the dining room. We've also made mac and cheese for lunch, and spaghetti and meatballs."

Kirk Leathers was able to care for himself and his family while at the House by cooking







Stella prepares many of her own meals in the Family House kitchen

FAMILY HOUSE GUESTS TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES in our kitchen.

Stella has been away from her home in Brooklyn and staying at the Family House for a few months while her husband, Albert, received treatment and later, a double-lung transplant. Use of our full-service kitchen is important to her because she keeps kosher. While she is able to eat some of the foods our Home Cook Hero volunteers prepare, she often prepares her own kosher meals.

"I don't have the time to go the supermarket," Stella says. "I have to be at the hospital with my husband."

Thankfully, Stella can use some items in our pantry like green beans, carrots, rice, potatoes, and eggs.

At the Family House, transplant families sit down for MORE THAN JUST A MEAL.

During dinner, our guests make lasting friendships and memories with people who understand what they're going through. It's a time for our families to take care of each other.

Families who gather in our dining room have the opportunity to connect and share stories with other families who know what they're going through. The friendships they make are important sources of support.

"Sometimes we push the tables together in the dining room," Stella says. "We all sit together and I've made a lot of friends. Food makes people comfortable and we talk about our days. It's the best part about the House."

"Sitting down as a family to eat dinner doesn't happen too often anymore at home," Kirk says. "But here, we put our electronics away and everyone comes together. We ask each other how we're doing. We check in."

CAN HELP SUPPORT THE MEALS TOGETHER MATTER

AND BRING THESE SPECIAL MOMENTS TO OUR TRANSPLANT FAMILIES THROUGH YOUR GIFT THIS SPRING

Here's how you can help us improve our kitchen and provide more meals to transplant families:

Make a financial gift by using the attached envelope or visit GiftofLifeFamilyHouse.org to make a secure online contribution.

Create an online fundraiser on Facebook or on GiftofLifeFamilyHouse.org and ask your friends and family to support our campaign.

Having access to food here at the Family House lifts a huge burden off of our quests' shoulders. Not everyone can afford to eat out all the time and that's also not a healthy option, either. Our evening meals, pantry, and full-service kitchen offer our quests peace of mind, and they don't have to wonder when or where their next meal is going to be.

The transplant journey can be so difficult. We want preparing food to be one of the last thoughts our guests have to worry about. Supporting this campaign to purchase new, working ovens, create more accessible storage, and sustain the Home Cook Heroes program will make meal times so much easier for our quests and volunteers.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution today to support our Home Cook Heroes program.

For your convenience, use the enclosed envelope or make a gift online at GiftofLifeFamilyHouse.org.











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The Family House is thankful for and proud to recognize volunteer groups who supported the Home Cook Heroes program from September-December 2018:

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> **BOLD** = Home Cook Hero All Star All-Stars are committed volunteer groups who provide a meal to Family House guests through the Home Cook Heroes program at least 12 times in a calendar year

Washington Lodge No. 59

Home Cook Heroes team photos are available to view on the Family House's Facebook page at Facebook.com/GiftofLifeFamilyHouse. While you're there, don't forget to like our Facebook page, tag yourself and your teammates, and share your photo - in doing so, you're helping spread awareness about the Family House mission!

FACES

THE FLIGHT FOR MY LIFE

To receive her life-saving liver transplant, Karen Wolbach was airlifted from her home in Burlington, Vermont to a treatment center here in Philadelphia. Her husband and caregiver, Richard, had just four hours to alert friends and family, pack a bag, find a place to stay, and make arrangements for someone to look after their home before the air ambulance arrived.

"There was no time for decisions," Richard said. "We just got on the plane with the nurse, medical assistant, and the pilots."

Karen had been getting sicker and sicker. She was growing extremely fatigued, nauseous, lost her appetite, and was beginning to jaundice. She no longer had the energy to take walks outside with her family, meet up with her friends for lunch, watch her son perform as a clarinetist, and had to resign from her job as a radiologic technologist because she was too weak to work.

Her need for a transplant had not just turned her life upside down, but had suddenly relocated her and her husband over 350 miles away to a city neither had ever been to before.

While Karen was in the hospital, Richard needed to find a place to stay. He initially booked a week-long hotel stay, but with expensive city hotel prices, he knew he could not afford those accommodations for long. Thankfully, someone on Karen's transplant team told him about the Family House. He gave us a call and there was a room available for him.

"A lot of people don't realize that being a caregiver comes with a tremendous amount of stress," he says. "It can be so overwhelming, but the Family House took the worry out of my day so I could focus on caring for my wife."

At the Family House, Richard had access to all of the supportive services we offer for just \$40 per night. He had a safe place to sleep, a warm, home-cooked meal each evening, free transportation to and from the hospital, and an entire community of people who understood what he was going through to talk to. Karen received her second chance at life thanks to an incredibly selfless donor shortly after she and Richard were airlifted to Philadelphia. She was able to join Richard at the Family House for two weeks before they were given the OK to go back home.

of the Family House



Richard, Karen, and Ryan Wolbach had their lives turned upside down when Karen was told she needed a life-saving liver transplant

While Karen was here, she too was able to rest. Each night, dinner was waiting for her as she came down to the kitchen. She hopped on the shuttle's morning run when she had to see her doctors at the hospital. She was also able to talk with our social worker and other transplant families about what she was feeling.

"I wasn't just healing physically, but I was healing emotionally," she explains. "It was very therapeutic to sit down and share stories. It reminded me that I am not alone. If we had to stay in a hotel, we would never have gotten this kind of support."

"The Family House has helped me heal, too," Richard says. "We felt a little apprehensive coming back to Philadelphia for Karen's follow-up appointments after all that's happened, but once we came back to the Family House, it was like we were home again."

Now that Karen's health has improved, she wants to get back to work, volunteer in her community, and spend time with her family.

Karen and Richard were away from their home for four months while Karen received her life-saving transplant and recovered here at the Family House. At the beginning of their journey to Philadelphia, they had no idea how long they'd be away from home or how they'd afford to stay together and support each other during this difficult, scary time.

Without the Family House, Richard and Karen may have had to find an apartment, take cabs or public transportation to and from the hospital each day, find meals and a place to wash their clothes, and may not have met any other families on the transplant journey who could offer them friendship and support. Richard may not have even been able to stay by Karen's side while she was in the hospital.

At the Family House, they both received the support they needed.

FUNDRAISER

Anthony Vetrano

When Anthony Vetrano learned his father, Joe, would need a life-saving organ transplant, he and his mother, Teresa, became his caregivers. They both stayed at the Family House for 11 days while Joe received his transplant in Philadelphia in September 2018.

"The Family House allowed me and my mom to be close to the hospital and spend more time there with my father as he recovered from his transplant," Anthony says. "We'd have to drive 100 miles back and forth from our homes in New Jersey if we didn't have another place to stay."

The Family House supported Anthony and Teresa as caregivers while they supported Joe during his treatment and recovery. "As a caregiver, you focus on the patient and less on yourself," Anthony says. "At the Family House, there's someone to focus on you."

Something that really supported Anthony was our Home Cook Heroes program, which offers a warm, home-cooked meal to guests each night as they wind down from what can be long, stressful days. "A meal was really nice to come back to," Anthony says. "It was also nice to eat and talk with other families who understand what you're going through."

While Anthony was staying in Philadelphia, he had the idea to host a Facebook fundraiser to support the Family House. "My Facebook friends know about my father's transplant and I thought I could use my experience to help other families like ours," Anthony says.

Because his birthday was coming up, Anthony decided to "give it up" and ask for donations to the Family House in lieu of gifts.

Anthony hosted a fundraiser for two weeks and with the help of the people he loves, exceeded his fundraising goal!



Anthony, right, with his father Joe, left

"Some of my Facebook friends asked me what the fundraiser was about which even helped me raise awareness about organ and tissue donation," Anthony says. "Not many people know about donation and transplant until they need one."

It's caring people like Anthony that help us continue to be a "home away from home" for transplant families coming to Philadelphia. His generous decision to "give up his birthday" on Facebook and raise money for the Family House helps support families like his own as they navigate the difficult transplant journey.

"I would definitely host a Facebook fundraiser again...it was so easy!" Anthony says.

"It's hard to go through something like transplant and not be changed by it. I want to help out as much as I can."

Thank you, Anthony, for spreading our mission and supporting the Family House!

Are you interested in hosting a Facebook fundraiser to support the Family House like Anthony did? Learn how you can do it here: http://bit.ly/fb-fundraiser-info

THE 2018 "40 HOURS FOR MORE ROOM" ONLINE FUNDRAISER WAS A HUGE SUCCESS! We are so thankful for our Family House community for raising over \$56,000 to support our "Room for More" Campaign

We are so thankful for our Family House community for raising over \$56,000 to support our "Room for More" Campaign. Proceeds are helping create new guest rooms and additional dining space to better accommodate our guests.

Here's why Tom and his family, Family House guests, donated to help make "Room for More":

"[My family and I] immediately realized that Family House was going to make a hard time for us go so much better. I had a left lung transplant as well as a double heart bypass in September 2018. I believe we have stayed over 30 nights and still feel tremendous gratitude to have a place to stay, kind and giving people make meals, transportation, and so much caring. We found that in this radical change in our lives, we discovered so much that is good and Gift of Life will always have our gratitude."

We're making a real difference in the lives of families like Tom's. **THANK YOU SO MUCH!**

We had a very special wish granted...

...we have **NEW laundry** machines!

Last fall, our friends from Hercules, a laundry room equipment provider from Long Island, NY, generously donated five brand new washer and dryer sets to the Family House!

Imagine having to suddenly relocate to a city you've never been to—you have to find a place to stay, food to eat...the last thing on your mind may be where to wash your clothes. You might not even have detergent, a laundry basket, or quarters to put into machines at the laundromat.

Because our guests can take the stairs or elevator right to our laundry room, they don't have to worry about how to get their personal belongings to and from a laundromat. This convenience helps make

Wanda does not have to worry about finding a laundromat or getting her personal items there—she can do her laundry right here at the Family House





Joe Kauffman, Family House Manager, and Bob Marquart, Director of Facilities. with Tom

the Family House feel like "home" and gives our guests more time to focus on what's most important—taking care of themselves and

"What the Gift of Life Family House provides to its residents and their families, in terms of support and inspiration, is truly heartwarming," Andrew May, President and CEO at Hercules, says.

"After our Hercules Account Manager, Tom Jeppestol, brought to my attention the needs of the Family House with respect to their laundry facility, I didn't hesitate for a minute in determining how we could support such a worthwhile organization. The patients and their families certainly have enough to deal with, waiting for transplants and follow-up appointments. It's my pleasure to be able to help make their stay at Family House as comfortable and stress-

The new washers and dryers will allow our guests to do their laundry for free during their stay. They can put their clothes in the wash, head back to their rooms or make a snack in the kitchen, and come right back down when they're ready to be switched.

Thank you so much to Andrew and everyone else at Hercules who made this wonderful qift possible!

Are you from an organization looking to give a charitable gift? At the Family House, we can always use a hand to help serve our transplant families. If you're interested in making a gift, please contact Sara Cohen, Development Manager, by email at scohen@giftoflifefamilyhouse.org or by phone at 267-546-9812.

Welcome Home CLUB

Giving a little each month—a small commitment from you—truly makes a big difference in the lives of our transplant families.

When you make a monthly gift, you'll not only help families now, but you'll help families months from now. You'll help create this week's support group, give our guests access to our kitchen next month, and support a family's stay at the Family House when they need it most. A monthly gift shows you're committed to being by their sides.

If you haven't already, will you join our Welcome Home Club today? Visit GiftofLifeFamilyHouse.org for details.

Also, when you give \$21 or more monthly, you'll be eligible for several benefits including name recognition on our Primary Contributors wall, an invitation to our annual President's Reception, and more!



Jeppestol and Barry Heller from Hercules Laundry

TO OUR MOST GRACIOUS CONTRIBUTORS: for your loyal support and continued generosity in helping us care for transplant patients and families at Gift of Life Family House.

The Legacy Garden

Thank you to those who dedicated

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Contributions of \$250 or more received between OCTOBER 2018 – DECEMBER 2018

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Due to space constraints, honor/memorial gifts and supporter gifts are no longer listed in the newsletter.

to our volunteers in () the community for coordinating fundraising events, wish list drives, and online fundraisers to support the mission of Gift of Life Family House.

Fundraising Events

Ally's Breakfast & Blood Drive Doug Wright Memorial Fund Smyrna High School Softball Fundraise 7th Annual Golf Tournament in memory of Paul W. Penkala

Wish List Drives coordinated by:

Built With Love Camilla Camilli **CHOP Nursing Operations** Department & Kellogg's Employees Hercules Corp

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Team E-Hoot Jeff Hojnowski in memory Jefferson County, WV 4-H Lancaster/Lebanon

To make a contribution to Gift of Life Family House, please visit GiftofLifeFamilyHouse.org or use the enclosed envelope.

The official registration and financial information of Transplant House d/b/a Gift of Life Family House may be obtained from PA Dept. of State by calling toll free 1.800,732,0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. United Way #48974



