



GIFT of LIFE  
Howie's House

# UPDATE

# SHOWER THE HOUSE this Spring

Help support the construction of  
**FOUR NEW, MORE ACCESSIBLE SHOWERS**  
at the House

At Gift of Life Howie's House, guests are provided with a private bedroom and bathroom that comes equipped with many of the necessities that families rely on when away from home. **Many of those guests, however, experience limited mobility due to significant physical challenges that come with transplant and request rooms that are more accessible.**

Donna Nelson with her husband, Dana Nelson, a lung transplant recipient



Approximately 25% of guests make these requests. Unfortunately, many have to wait for a more accessible room to become available.

**Out of 32 guest rooms, only 5 have bathrooms that are equipped with walk-in showers.** For some guests, navigating over the wall of a tub can be incredibly challenging or even impossible. Many patients require the use of a shower chair, which is also difficult to maneuver in an already tight space with a wet surface, like the bathtub.

Replacing a bathtub with a walk-in shower makes getting in and out much easier on both the patient and the caregiver. Guests with limited mobility do not have to worry about navigating over the wall of the tub, and those who require the use of a wheelchair have easier access inside of the bathroom and can transfer to a shower chair more smoothly.

*continued on Gift of Life Howie's House page 2*

In order to meet the demand for more accessible showers, a project was planned to install 4 new showers over the next 2 years. Each shower upgrade costs approximately \$10,000. We need your help to raise \$40,000 to complete this important work.

By supporting these upgrades you will be helping families like the Nelsons who relied on this increased accessibility during their stays at the House.

Dana Nelson received a life-saving lung transplant in 2019 after developing Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis following a Rheumatoid Arthritis and Lupus diagnosis. Dana's illness was related to his military service, as he joined the Marine Corps after graduating high school and fought in the Gulf War.

Dana experienced medical issues post-transplant which required additional trips to the hospital in Philadelphia and the couple utilized the House for his doctor's appointments. During many of his visits Dana used a wheelchair and relied on Donna's assistance while he regained his strength. The couple requested one of the more accessible guest rooms during their stay.

"I was on oxygen and was still very weak and hadn't developed my muscle back which is why I needed the accessible shower," says Dana. Donna adds, "You don't realize what you need until it happens to you...when you have someone in a wheelchair, the ability to be able to maneuver in a space like the bathroom is important."

Having a more accessible shower also meant that Dana could have some independence, and Donna would have one less thing to worry about as his caregiver. "You never know when you go somewhere

if it's going to be accessible, so knowing that we had this room where he could maneuver was a relief. It allowed him to have his privacy and independence, and I could have a little bit of free time as well. Even if it's ten minutes where I could read a book while he showers, it makes a difference," says Donna.

Both Donna and Dana are incredibly grateful to be able to utilize all the services that the House provides. The couple especially

appreciates the affordability of their stay and are frequent participants in the Caregiver and Patient Support Groups. To show their gratitude, Donna hosted multiple birthday fundraisers, and even makes a monthly contribution to support other families like them.

Most importantly, Dana says he is grateful to his donor and his donor's family for making the decision to give the gift of life.

At the House, the goal is always to continue to improve and create an environment that facilitates comfort, recovery and healing. By supporting this urgent need for more accessible showers, you will allow more families to have an easier journey to recovery during their stay at the House.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to help reach the goal of \$40,000 this Spring for the construction of new showers.

Gifts of all sizes are needed and appreciated. As Dana says, "It's always the little things that nobody thinks about that make the biggest difference."

For your convenience, you can also use the enclosed envelope or donate online at [GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org](http://GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org).



SCAN HERE to make your gift today



## Thanks to you, GIFT OF LIFE HOWIE'S HOUSE reached A NEW MILESTONE

of providing more than \$12 million in subsidized care to transplant families since opening in 2011.

At the House, guests are asked to pay a highly subsidized room fee of only \$40 a night rather than the actual cost totaling more than \$180. No family is turned away if they cannot afford the fee. This is made possible thanks to the incredible community of supporters who have steadfastly championed the House's mission for more than a decade.

Generous friends helped provide more than \$12 million of subsidized care to families including warm and safe lodging, home-cooked meals, transportation, access to a supportive community along their transplant journey, and more!

Florida natives Robert and his wife Ana have been guests at the House with their daughter Savannah, a liver transplant recipient, for over 10 years. The support they receive at the House is a gift unlike any other, they say.

"We don't have to panic about where we're going to stay," Ana says. "We know we have a safe place to land. It's a sense of comfort that is hard to describe."

**THANK YOU** for your generous support over the years, touching the lives of the hundreds of families like Savannah's who enter our doors each day.

## Volunteer to DRIVE THE SHUTTLE!

"I am a volunteer shuttle driver for two main reasons. First, to honor the memory of my daughter Kellie. She passed away in 2014 and was an organ donor. I also drive so that the families who stay at the House have one less thing to worry about. For me, it's truly a labor of love!" —Bob Baur



The Gift of Life Howie's House Shuttle Program is a vital service for House guests and provides free transportation to and from the local area hospitals. Driving the shuttle is a great opportunity to interact with transplant families and help relieve some of their stress by not having to navigate the city on their own.

To apply, you must be:

- 18 years or older
- have a clean driving record
- be an experienced city driver
- enjoy being with people of all ages

Volunteers are needed for both morning and evening shifts. Training is available. For more information, call 267-546-9800.

# FACES OF THE HOUSE

"Alice and I staying at Gift of Life Howie's House has been an integral part of our heart transplant journey. The House has provided us with pre- and post-transplant support in the form of clean and safe housing, great meals, shuttle service and an excellent staff. We have truly appreciated meeting other transplant recipients and knowing we are not alone on this journey. The House and our successful transplant have truly been a Christmas gift from heaven."

— Tom Fennell, Iowa City, Iowa



Tom and his wife Alice were guests of Gift of Life Howie's House in 2022 for over 6 months. Although 1,000 miles away from home, they are grateful for their "home away from home" and of course – the gift of life.



L to R: Joe and Donna Ferrier, Lori Peruto, Esq., Jan L. Weinstock, Chief Administrative Officer & General Counsel, Gift of Life Donor Program; Rick Hasz, President & CEO, Gift of Life Donor Program

## Brake-ing News: NEW SHUTTLE SPONSOR!

The Nicoletti, Ferrier and Peruto Families committed to a multi-year sponsorship of the Shuttle Program at Gift of Life Howie's House.

Many organ transplant patients and their families depend on the free, regularly scheduled shuttle service to travel back and forth from the House to the local area transplant centers. This much-needed service is offered to guests so they don't have to navigate an unfamiliar city or pay expensive parking fees while caring for a loved one undergoing the transplant process. Since its opening in July 2011, the House has provided more than 11,000 trips to and from the hospital.

To recognize their generous support, a special celebration and presentation of the shuttle logo was hosted at the House.

Thank you to **Lori Nicoletti Peruto, Esq.**, **Donna** and **Joe Ferrier** and **Mark Nicoletti, Esq.** for supporting this valuable service! The shuttle was sponsored in honor of the **Nicoletti Kidney Transplant Center at Jefferson Transplant Institute at Jefferson Health.**



## Caregiver Lifeline Spotlight



by Colleen Brand, Volunteer Coordinator  
Department of Public Affairs and Family Services,  
Gift of Life Donor Program

## Organ Donation and Transplant Advocacy through Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

**Volunteerism and civic engagement can impact communities through the sharing of vital information about organ donation and transplantation. Transplant patients and caregivers have a unique opportunity to advocate through the lens of their personal experience and story.**

Oxford dictionary defines advocacy as "public support for or the recommendation of a particular cause or policy." Volunteerism and civic engagement provide individuals and groups the opportunity to share their passion for a particular cause while also sharing vital information. As information is shared, knowledge becomes more readily available. This is pertinent to a cause; allowing the advocacy group to expand, share, and encourage others to become involved. Additionally, volunteerism and civic engagement can boost an individual's well-being. In recent years, research has shown that a person's level of civic engagement has a substantial impact on how they view the world, themselves and how they sustain personal connections with others.

Gift of Life Volunteer Ambassadors and advocates for organ donation and transplant serve as educators and mentors and are critical to fulfilling our life-saving mission. Not all transplant patients or caregivers can volunteer regularly through Gift of Life, however they can still advocate and engage in their community through sharing their personal transplant story. Storytelling can be an effective way to encourage others to support organ donation and transplant.

### Storytelling

Through storytelling, transplant patients and caregivers can form emotional connections and encourage their own community to advocate for the cause and is one of the most effective ways to communicate the impact of organ donation and transplant. While facts are both useful and important, emotional connections made through sharing one's personal experiences is what gets people moving and has the most

impact. When sharing personal stories related to donation and transplant, one must remember to keep three key messages in mind: (1) transplantation works, (2) there are too many people waiting for a life-saving transplant and (3) the solution is simple – we need more people register to become organ donors!

### Where do you share your story?

Talking about your connection to donation and transplant can happen anywhere, anytime, such as in line at the grocery store after someone asks about the meaning behind your 'Donate Life' bracelet, on a college campus, attending a health fair in your local community, with local and state representatives, or even through social media pages. There are numerous opportunities to get involved, and within the sphere of your own influence is an incredible place to start.

Gift of Life Volunteer Ambassadors, individuals who received a transplant or are a part of a donor family, can share their story at local hospitals, colleges, high schools, conferences, community health fairs, local forums, clubs and through casual conversations. An important aspect of sharing your story is having the ability to adapt. For example, sharing your transplant story with high school students and speaking with a member of your church or congregation can be two completely different conversations, and the amount of time and way in which you share your story will vary with every setting.

**The gift of organ and tissue donation can change someone's life and rewrite their story. Every story is both rare and unique, including your own. You have the potential to save a life!**

**For more information on this topic, please watch our recorded webinar on Organ Donation and Transplant Advocacy through Volunteerism and Civic Engagement on the Caregiver Lifeline Program webpages:**

<https://giftoflifehowieshouse.org/bridge-caregiver-support/video-series/>

The Caregiver Lifeline Program is supported in part by TD Charitable Foundation. We are thankful for their partnership and generosity.



# Thank You 2023 Room Sponsors

## SPONSOR-A-ROOM PROGRAM

Generous room sponsors support families by keeping the nightly fee low and covering costs for families who cannot afford it. The House is grateful for room sponsors like the Bachers who sponsored a guest room in 2023.



The Bacher Family ringing the Chimes of Hope

The Bacher family from Lewes, Delaware became familiar with the House when their beloved husband and father, Michael Bacher, received a life-saving heart transplant. They were so grateful for the services received that they decided to reach out to their community and host multiple fundraisers for the House. Some of their funds were allocated to the Sponsor-A-Room Program.

### 2023 Room Sponsors

#### DINING ROOM

Lisa Heller, MD  
and Harry Roth, Esq.

#### GUEST ROOMS

Anonymous  
Friends and Family of Michael Bacher  
David Courtwright and Shelby Miller\*  
Friends and Family of Jerry Curran  
Laura and Tim Gannon  
Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley  
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#### KITCHEN

The Fremont Family

#### The Gannon Cup

Penney Girls Foundation  
Pop-Pop's Miracle  
The Price Family and Friends  
The Prasad Family  
Scott and Vickie Sayles  
Sam's Spirit, Inc.  
Transplant Alliance Foundation, Inc.\*  
*\*Sponsored two or more guest rooms*

## SECURE YOUR SPONSORSHIP

for 2024! When you sponsor a guest or common room through our Sponsor-A-Room Program, you will be helping the hundreds of transplant patients and families who rely on our services each year. The Sponsor-A-Room Program allows supporters to sponsor a guest or common room at the House for a period of up to 3 years. Room sponsors will have their name placed on a sign next to the room in addition to other recognition opportunities throughout their sponsorship period.

For more information on how to sponsor a room, visit [GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org](http://GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org) or call 267-546-9812.

# Make this your BEST BIRTHDAY YET

Help provide a place for transplant families to call home by pledging your birthday to support the House.

Through the "Best Birthday Yet" program, you can celebrate your birthday by hosting an online fundraiser for the House. Instead of a gift, ask your friends and family to support your fundraiser! It's a piece of cake!

As your special day gets closer, be sure to set up your fundraising page on Facebook or at [GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org](http://GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org).

Visit [GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org](http://GiftofLifeHowiesHouse.org) for more information and to get started! We look forward to celebrating with you!



# Thank You

for supporting families during their transplant journey.

## Contributions of \$250 or more received between SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2022

### Founders' Circle

(GIFTS OF \$10,000+)

New members who have made

renewed gifts of \$10,000 or more

Anonymous

The Estate of Susan R. Clark

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Current members who have made

renewed gifts of \$10,000 or more

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The Gitlin Family Foundation

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Peruto Families

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2022 Family Circle

(GIFTS OF \$250+)

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