

A PUBLICATION OF GUNDERSEN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

# PATHFINDERS

Where generosity changes lives



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Healthcare is changing at a tremendous pace as we navigate new obstacles and pursue new opportunities amidst workforce constraints and high inflation. In this environment, many organizations have been forced to make difficult decisions, and communities are losing important healthcare services.

I want to acknowledge the seriousness of these challenges and reassure you that although we are not immune, *we are different*.

Gundersen Health System remains deeply committed to our community and has a mission and strategic plan to ensure we will be an important part of meeting the current and future healthcare needs of our region. We remain committed to Behavioral Health, Pediatrics, Neonatal Intensive Care, Medical Education and Research as we expand philanthropic support for long-term sustainability.



Your generosity has played a role in shaping who we are today, and your continued partnership will influence our success into the future. In 2023, we received gifts from 1,334 new donors. If you are one of them, we are excited to welcome you to the groundswell of supporters who are committed to ensuring one of our community's greatest assets: healthcare close to home.

This issue of *Pathfinders* is filled with stories that demonstrate the value of your partnership. You will learn how your gifts allow us to support and grow programming for Behavioral Health patients, as well as nurture and support our staff members in difficult times so they can continue providing compassionate care. Together, we continue to deliver on Gundersen's promise of Love + Medicine. +

All the best,

Stephen Shapiro, MD  
Chief Medical Foundation Officer  
Chair, Gundersen Medical Foundation

Gundersen Medical  
Foundation

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# Join our community of healers and helpers.

When Mike and Sara Taggart started Coulee Region Cornhole, they never imagined the countless lives they would touch. With the help of their generous community, the Taggarts have raised nearly \$200,000 and counting to help their friends and neighbors. Together, we can achieve remarkable things.

"It's heartwarming that it's not going anywhere. It's here. The money Children's Miracle Network Hospitals® raises is helping the people right here in our neighborhood."

*Mike and Sara Taggart, grateful donors and local superheroes*



**Join Mike and Sara in enhancing the health and well-being of our community with a gift today.**

- **USE THE QR CODE** or visit [gundersenhealth.org/spring](https://gundersenhealth.org/spring) to donate online
- **RETURN** the enclosed gift envelope
- **CALL** (608) 775-6600 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 56600



# PRAVEEN CHOPRA

Leader, innovator and change manager



Praveen Chopra, chief digital and information officer for Bellin and Gundersen Health System, learned important lessons early in life from his parents.

“As an Air Force family, we moved around a lot, so I learned that change is constant,” he says. “My parents also taught me to value creativity and innovation, to commit to integrity in all aspects of life and to love others.” These principles—in combination with his faith—shaped the person and the leader Praveen would become.

After high school, Praveen pursued an education and began a career in computer science and engineering in an industrial and manufacturing conglomerate. Then, one of his early mentors encouraged him to get involved in Total Quality Management (TQM) and Just-in-Time (JIT) processes for continual improvement. As a result, the international company he was working for in India asked him to take a short-term assignment in the U.S. in 1997. Though he had not planned on staying in the U.S., Praveen’s life took a happy turn when he met his future wife.

Over the next two decades, Praveen progressed in his career, eventually holding executive roles in retail, consulting, academics and healthcare organizations throughout the country. At one point,

he realized he was looking for more fulfillment, and that is when he took a job at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta as chief supply chain officer and, later, chief information officer. “Changing the life of a child impacts an entire family,” says Praveen. “That knowledge gave me a deep sense of purpose.”

Having found the mission within healthcare that spoke to him, Praveen was recruited to Gundersen in 2021. “In addition to the high quality of life in this region, I am fulfilled because I believe we have the right people, the right purpose and the right potential,” he explains.

Soon after joining Gundersen, Praveen was invited to serve on Gundersen Medical Foundation’s Board of Directors—a role that also connects with his sense of purpose. “The work of the Foundation speaks to me,” he says, “because we are more than just fundraising. We are training future healthcare providers, solving complex medical problems through research and touching so many lives through programs like Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals®, Resolve Through Sharing®, a street medicine program and more. Gundersen, with support from the Foundation, has a real commitment to community—and better healthcare for all.” +

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### **Board service**

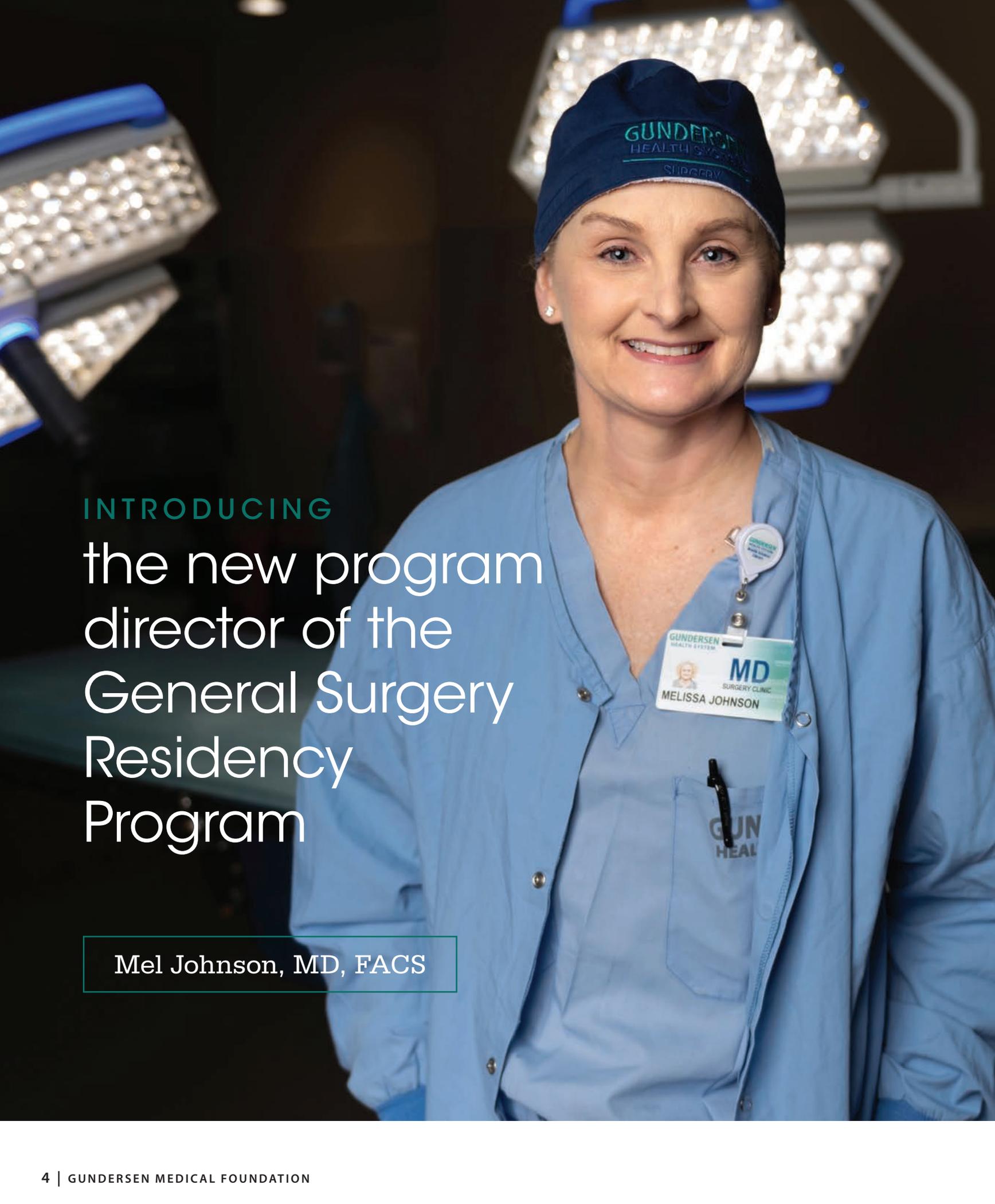
- Three years

### **Expertise**

- Leadership
- Change management
- Digital transformation

### **Professional role:**

- Chief Digital and Information Officer, Bellin and Gundersen Health System



INTRODUCING  
the new program  
director of the  
General Surgery  
Residency  
Program

Mel Johnson, MD, FACS

# Q&A

**G**undersen Medical Foundation is excited to introduce Mel Johnson, MD, FACS, program director of the General Surgery Residency Program.

Dr. Johnson joined Gundersen Health System in March 2020 and became the associate program director of the General Surgery Residency Program in July 2020. In addition to clinical interests in general, breast, acute care and endocrine surgery, she is passionate about surgical education.

As she begins her new role, we invited Dr. Johnson to share a bit about herself, her experiences and her goals.

**How did you become interested in medicine?**

I began working as a registered nurse (RN) at the University of Minnesota hospital in 1992 on a Medical-Surgical unit, primarily with patients with cancer and end-stage AIDS. Through that early exposure to cancer patients, I became a chemotherapy and infusion nurse.

I loved taking care of patients but desired more medical knowledge and greater autonomy in directing the care of patients. I started medical school at the University of South Dakota (USD) Sanford School of Medicine in 1997 and continued to work part-time as an RN throughout medical school. In 2001, I pursued general surgery residency training at Rush University Medical Center and Cook County Hospital in Chicago.

Upon graduation in 2006, I worked clinically as a general surgeon with an emphasis on endocrine surgery, breast surgery and surgical oncology at Sanford USD Medical Center and the Sioux Falls Veteran's Affairs Medical Center (VAMC).

**How were you first introduced to Gundersen?**

I have always been passionate about medical education, and in 2011, I was invited by my surgery mentor, Gary Timmerman, MD, to help develop a new general surgery residency program at Sanford USD Medical Center as the associate program director. We modeled the program after Gundersen's, which has an excellent national reputation. Tom Cogbill, MD, and Ben Jarman, MD, were instrumental in helping us shape the new program at USD. —>



## Mel Johnson with her husband, Matt, and their two children enjoying a boat ride on the Mississippi River.

### What brought you to La Crosse?

On June 25, 2019, I received a text from Dr. Jarman indicating there was an open surgical position at Gundersen and inviting me to apply. Knowing the history of Gundersen's Surgery Residency Program and their leaders, I decided to look at the program in person.

When I interviewed at Gundersen on July 8, 2019, I witnessed that Love + Medicine was not just a slogan; it was a philosophy that guides patient care and impacts the way colleagues treat each other. I realized that Gundersen's approach to care aligned perfectly with my own, and I knew that I had found "my people."

Dr. Jarman successfully recruited my husband and two kids to the La Crosse community, and I accepted the position (and bought a house!) on August 18, 2019. Our lives completely changed course in the span of just two months!

### What do you love about Gundersen Health System?

I have worked in many types of healthcare settings, and too often money dictates time and priorities. Surgeons can be treated as a commodity. Gundersen's philosophy is different because there is an institutional commitment to education.

Here, you must be highly skilled in your role as a physician or surgeon, and you must also love to teach. The commitment to education, along with the dedication to research and serving the community, is not typical of all organizations.

### What excites you most about your new role?

Developing individual residents—watching them grow and become autonomous in skill development and clinical judgement and taking a leadership role in patient care—is like becoming a parent. It is like raising incredible kids every day. I have tremendous pride in our graduates and the impact they will make by serving a wide variety of communities as general surgeons.

### What should people know about the Foundation's Medical Education General Surgery Residency Program?

First, I hope people understand the excellent reputation Gundersen has in the medical community nationwide. We recruit four general surgery residents each year. Typically, there are over 600 applicants, and we interview the top 40. Gundersen attracts the best of the best candidates—and many of them will choose to stay at Gundersen or in the region after they graduate.

Next, I hope people recognize the scope of our program's impact. The United States is facing a significant shortage of general surgeons. Yet, about 80 to 90% of general surgery residents nationally go on to complete a subspecialty fellowship instead of becoming general surgeons. At Gundersen, though, approximately two-thirds of our graduates go on to practice true broad-spectrum general surgery. For the one-third of our graduates who complete fellowship training, the majority of them continue to practice general surgery and also bring a subspecialty skillset to their community.

By giving residents opportunities that guide and reinforce their interest in general surgery, we will help combat the national shortage. In some cases, our graduates may help keep small rural hospitals throughout the nation and across the globe alive. In all cases, these surgeons will take Gundersen's special brand of Love + Medicine with them to positively impact the people and the communities they serve.

### How do you like to spend time outside of work?

My husband, Matt, is a professor of Special Education at Viterbo University. Because we are both educators, we share our mutual love for lifelong learning with our two kids.

Our daughter is a high school senior who is passionate about playing tennis, the Health Science Academy and serving the community. Our son is a sophomore who is passionate about school and playing football, basketball and baseball. So, we spend most of our free time at our kids' sporting events, but we also have two English labs that enjoy long walks. +



(Above) Bonnie Holley, MD, and Jessica Schweigert, MD, are pictured alongside photos from their medical missions in Sarstun, Guatemala, and Fairbanks, Alaska.

## Enriching the experiences of surgical residents

Providing opportunities for residents to volunteer with national and international surgical teams not only helps them develop their technical skills, but it also offers a deeply rewarding affirmation of their chosen career.

The Eric F. Brekke, MD, General Surgery Residency Global Health Fund makes these kinds of training opportunities possible. Dr. Brekke, who served as a general surgeon at Gundersen for 22 years before he passed away in 2015, was passionate about providing residents with life-changing experiences that, in addition to helping people in need, would impact surgical skill development.

Like her husband, Sandra Brekke, MASL, BSN, RN, believes volunteer medical experiences

are an important part of healthcare. “The practice of medicine is, at its core, a social responsibility. We all must take on the responsibility to improve the field of medicine globally,” she says. “For surgical residents, medical mission trips allow them to be part of the solution instead of just being a student who studies the problems.”

Last year, support from the Brekke Fund allowed Bonnie Holley, MD, and Jessica Schweigert, MD, to complete volunteer surgical experiences.

Dr. Holley volunteered for a rotation in Fairbanks, Alaska, from November through December of 2023. There, she worked with Abe Tsigonis, MD, (also a Gundersen graduate) to learn about broad-based surgical work. “The one-on-one training and exposure to new

medical situations (such as the removal of an ingested foreign object) were invaluable,” says Dr. Holley. “This was a life-changing opportunity that I could not have afforded without the Brekke Fund—so I am incredibly grateful.”

In August 2023, Dr. Schweigert volunteered to be part of a 10-day humanitarian service in the remote village of Sarstun, Guatemala, through MissionGroup. The surgical team, which included the Foundation’s chair, Stephen Shapiro, MD, performed several gallbladder and hernia operations for people who would not otherwise have had access to surgical care.

“Professionally speaking, having Dr. Shapiro observe and critique me gave me confidence and made me

a better surgeon,” explains Dr. Schweigert. “On a personal level, the entire experience was deeply rewarding. The people we treated walked for miles and miles to receive care; their appreciation was incredibly moving.”

Sandra Brekke continues to support the fund because of the impact mission trips can make on surgical residents and on the community being served. “When a surgeon—a highly trained and specialized professional—volunteers to lend their time, knowledge and expertise to communities in need, it has a remarkable impact on the health outcomes achieved in those communities,” she says. “Each trip helps reignite the passion for medical practice.” +

# Ensuring the legacy of Love + Medicine



*Joan and Carl Bethke are grateful for the care their son, Steve, received at Gundersen.*

**C**arl and Joan Bethke are longtime Gundersen Health System supporters who recently had cause to update their estate plan. Inspired by gratitude for the care their family has received over decades, the decision to include Gundersen Medical Foundation in their estate plan just seemed right.

As Legacy Society members, the Bethkes are at peace knowing their gift will help others receive the same high-quality, compassionate care that made such a difference in their lives, as well as the life of their son, Steve.

## THE VALUE OF BEING SEEN

Steve Bethke was born ten weeks prematurely on February 15, 1980, in Madison. Just before his first birthday, Steve was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a condition that occurs when parts of the brain that control movement are damaged or do not develop fully. Steve began using a wheelchair before his third birthday and underwent several procedures throughout childhood to address his medical needs.

During these early years, Steve doctored at a large Wisconsin health system that specializes in neurodegenerative diseases and developmental disabilities. Carl and

Joan were initially satisfied with Steve's care, but over time, they became less so. "At times, we felt Steve was treated as a medical case instead of a person," recalls Joan.

When Steve was 7, things changed. Steve was undergoing orthopedic surgery and the procedure had to be halted so Steve could be treated for anaphylactic shock. Later, when it came time to reschedule the surgery, Carl and Joan did not feel comfortable proceeding. While they were considering what to do, the parents of some of Steve's classmates shared their positive experiences with Gundersen Health System. At their recommendation, Joan took a tour of the La Crosse campus, and the family decided to move Steve's care to Gundersen.

It didn't take long for Carl and Joan to notice a difference. "Steve was legally blind, nonverbal and non-ambulatory," shares Carl, "but everyone at Gundersen took time to get to know him and how he communicated. They greeted him and interacted with him. Steve was treated as a person—not a case to be studied."

### **A CARE TEAM THAT TRULY CARES**

One of the first providers the Bethkes met with at Gundersen was Todd Mahr, MD, a pediatric allergist who diagnosed Steve with a latex allergy—the likely reason for his previous anaphylactic shock. With this information, the abandoned surgical procedure was rescheduled at Gundersen. Joan knew Steve was in good hands when she found Dr. Mahr sitting near Steve's hospital room around midnight the evening before the surgery. "Dr. Mahr made a joke about why he was at the hospital so late, but we knew he was consulting with the surgical team and

watching out for Steve," remembers Joan. "That made a huge difference to us."

Over time, Carl and Joan continued to be impressed by the dedication of Steve's care teams. When he was 12, for example, Steve needed surgery on his hip. The procedure was successfully performed by Virginia Wintersteen, MD, and once the cast was removed, Steve began physical therapy at a facility in Richland Center. At the end of a therapy session, Joan suspected that something was wrong with one of Steve's legs. She contacted Dr. Wintersteen who suggested Steve come to Gundersen for an X-ray. By the time the family got to the ER, it was early evening—long past the end of Dr. Wintersteen's shift. Yet, the surgeon had waited for them to arrive so she could assist with Steve's diagnosis.

"Looking back, we have so many examples of times we were impressed with Steve's care at Gundersen," shares Joan.

### **COMPASSIONATE CARE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST**

In 2017, Steve moved to Pine Valley Community Village, a nursing home in Richland Center, after Joan was diagnosed with repetitive motion injury. Steve adapted well and quickly formed relationships with the staff and other residents, which was a great comfort to Carl and Joan.

In March 2023, though, Steve was unexpectedly diagnosed with stage three kidney disease after a somewhat

*"We developed trusting relationships with Steve's caregivers. Since Steve was a people person, he was always excited to go to his medical appointments because he knew he would be seeing his friends."*

—Joan Bethke

routine blood test. He was due to see a nephrologist on June 2 when the nursing home called to say that staff were having a hard time waking Steve. He was then transported to the local hospital for tests before being sent by ambulance to Gundersen. The next day, Steve passed away peacefully with Joan and Carl by his side. Naturally, the loss of their son was incredibly difficult, but the couple continues to be grateful for the care they all received in the final hours of Steve's life.

"We were so touched by the care with which Steve's doctor helped us prepare for Steve's final moments. She took the time to discuss his condition, to verify the advance directive that was already in place and to offer comfort and support," explains Joan. "In that moment, Carl and I decided we wanted to help ensure others could receive the quality of care that Steve and our family has received from Gundersen."

When it came time to update their will, Carl and Joan decided to include Gundersen Medical Foundation in their estate plan. They contacted the Foundation and expressed their wish for the specific use of the bequest to be decided by the Foundation. "We trust the Foundation to be good stewards of our gift," shares Carl, "and however the gift is used, we know there will be a positive impact." +



*To learn more about joining the Legacy Society, please contact Jon McKenzie, philanthropy officer, at (608) 775-6609 or [jsmckenz@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:jsmckenz@gundersenhealth.org).*



# Tea for the Soul

## Caring for our caregivers

One important lesson the pandemic taught us is just how essential medical professionals are to their communities—and how important it is for them to feel valued and appreciated.

“The Foundation’s support for this initiative has allowed us to bless our caregivers by making more frequent deposits of gratitude into their emotional bank. We convey to staff that they are valued, recognized and loved—both by Gundersen and by the community—and that is powerful.” —Rev. Christian Ricker, BCC

The very nature of medical work means that most staff, periodically or consistently, encounter crisis situations. Even outside of unique times such as a pandemic, they are forced to make difficult decisions, deal with patient death and process trauma. Plus, the nationwide shortage of doctors and nurses adds additional stress to staff within departments that are operating at less than full capacity.

Since caring for our healthcare professionals is a cause close to our hearts, Gundersen Medical Foundation is proud to help fund “Tea for the Soul.” This initiative, proposed by Gundersen Health System’s Spiritual Care and Clinical Pastoral Education departments, expands the traditional role of spiritual care to recognize and respond to the challenges of daily work rather than primarily focusing on times of crisis.

“The Foundation’s support for this initiative has allowed us to bless our caregivers by making more frequent deposits of gratitude into their emotional bank,” explains Rev. Christian Ricker, BCC. “We convey to staff that they are valued, recognized and loved—both by Gundersen and by the community—and that is powerful.”

### A NEW APPROACH TO SPIRITUAL CARE

Currently, nine chaplains and several residents make up Gundersen’s Spiritual Care and Clinical Pastoral Education departments. While they provide bedside support to patients and families, including hospice support and education in advance directives, the faculty are also traditionally called upon to help both patients and staff during times of medical crisis.

In the past, though, much of the spiritual care that was provided to staff came during peer support meetings called “Code Lavender.” These interventions are typically held following a particularly stressful or traumatic event because they can help staff process the crisis and begin to heal.

In January 2023, however, Sister Philomena Adah, FSPA, was the Spiritual Care team member assigned to the fifth floor of the hospital, which includes high-needs areas such as Pediatrics, the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and prenatal intensive care unit (PICU).

Like other members of the Spiritual Care Team, Sr. Philomena was on hand to help staff during times of crisis. However, she began to recognize that the ongoing demands of their work (further complicated by the additional stress of working during a pandemic) meant that staff needed to feel loved →



and supported during all times, not just when something went wrong.

Adopting a model used at other institutions, Sr. Philomena began visiting the unit more often, bringing with her a cart full of care items, snacks and beverages—including tea—to share with staff. The conversations that sprang up around the cart sparked connections and allowed Sr. Philomena to provide both physical and spiritual nourishment, which is why these visits are referred to as “Tea for the Soul.”

Chaplain Resident Brian Petry, currently assigned to the fifth floor, finds a great deal of value in the Tea for the Soul initiative. “As a resident, I am a new face, so it allows me to develop relationships naturally. I am connecting with the team, creating a communal atmosphere, before there is a problem,” he says. “Spiritual care becomes a long game, not a Band-Aid.”

The new approach was so successful that between 2023 and 2024, the Spiritual Care Department applied for several grants from the Foundation to expand the program beyond the hospital’s fifth

floor to other high-needs areas such as the Cancer Center, Medical Specialty unit, Onalaska Renal Dialysis Center and Gundersen’s Critical Care Hospitals.

### HONORING RELATIONSHIPS

Staff who work in the Cancer Center often develop close relationships with patients because of the prolonged nature of their illness. These relationships are an important part of providing compassionate care, but they can also result in grief.

“The staff and clinicians, especially those who frequently encounter patient mortality, grieve the loss of their patients. Without an outlet to do so appropriately, they risk burnout and further trauma,” says Theresa Hueker, program coordinator for Clinical Pastoral Education. “Left unresolved, this kind of moral injury can have negative consequences on mental and physical health.”

This knowledge led Chaplain Sam Schauvane, who provides spiritual care to the patients and staff in the Cancer Center, to request a grant from the Foundation to apply the Tea for the Soul model. In

addition to the cart of snacks and self-care items that helps her connect with staff on periodic visits, Chaplain Schauvane uses scheduled mindfulness and de-stressing activities to help promote self-care among the staff.

“These opportunities for spiritual care not only help staff heal from trauma,” she says, “they also foster a sense of community and strengthen resiliency.”

Chaplain Schauvane also conducts group discussions and processing sessions. One of the most healing activities, though, is a monthly patient remembrance event. Using funds from the Foundation to purchase supplies, staff and clinicians in the Cancer Center create and decorate a wreath to honor each patient who has passed away.

“The process of sharing stories while decorating the wreath helps us celebrate the patient, process grief, and above all, honor the relationship that was cultivated,” says Chaplain Schauvane. “These moments are only possible because of the community’s support of the Foundation.”



*The Foundation is proud to support initiatives led by the Spiritual Care and Clinical Pastoral Education departments that promote self-care among staff and help them heal after stressful or traumatic situations.*

## EXPANDING STAFF SUPPORT

Most recently, this new model of spiritual care has been expanded to include two other areas within Gundersen: the Medical Specialty unit (where the program is called “Bounce Back”) and at Critical Access Hospitals (where the program is called “Zen Den”).

Since patients in the Medical Specialty unit of the hospital have often been diagnosed with co-morbid medical conditions (like kidney disease, pancreatitis or cellulitis) or acute behavioral conditions (such as schizophrenia, major depression, anxiety or addiction), these patients require special care. Some Behavioral Health patients may be at risk for suicide or on a Chapter hold, which are situations that sometimes cause patients to become aggressive towards staff.

According to Chaplain Ricker, the degree of challenge faced by the medical staff on this unit makes spiritual care essential. “This model of care elevates the human story and emphasizes the value of relationships,” he says. “We are replacing

the cycle of fatigue and burnout with a cycle of love and support by being humans caring for other humans.”

As with most large organizations that have several campuses, it can be difficult to make all parts of the organization feel connected. Such was the case for Gundersen’s Critical Access Hospitals—especially during COVID.

However, by using the Tea for the Soul model and making monthly visits, Lead Chaplain Megan Pike was able to start conversations and collaborations that improve feelings of connectedness to the system and promote self-care in staff by creating a program called “Zen Den.”

Zen Den is a model of support in which staff are invited to take time away from their work area to refresh, renew and relax. Chaplain Pike transforms a space, typically a conference room in the Critical Access Hospital or Onalaska Renal Dialysis Center, that welcomes staff and provides stations where staff can experiment with various zen-inspired activities.

Recently, staff have been able to participate in make-and-take activities such as creating zen gardens, making their own glitter gazer calming bottle or enjoying a DIY trail mix station. “In contrast to Tea for the Soul, where the support is taken to the staff in their work environment, the Zen Den experience allows staff to take time away from their work stations to enter into a space of intentional recentering,” says Chaplain Pike.

Given the success of these spiritual care initiatives, Chaplain Ricker hopes that the model may be expanded to include other areas of the organization in the future. For now, though, he is grateful to the many Foundation donors whose support made these successes possible.

“Together, we have been able to seize and create opportunities for staff care that have been curated and created for location and particular staff needs within the health system,” he says. “Whether staff are feeling grief, stress, anxiety, are unable to relax or wondering how to make sense of a situation, we want to assure them that they do not have to carry the weight alone.” +

# Committed to **community**

Healthcare organizations across the nation are facing a variety of complex challenges. A general trend in rising costs and a shortage of healthcare workers are just two difficulties many institutions are grappling with. While some facilities are closing, others are cutting back on the types of care they provide. Unfortunately, since insurance companies do not fund behavioral health services the same way as other medical needs, mounting fiscal pressure can make these services vulnerable to cuts.



Gundersen Health System is not untouched by these challenges, but at a time when some organizations are making the difficult decision to eliminate services supporting patients with conditions related to mental health and substance use disorder, Gundersen has one of the largest Behavioral Health systems in Wisconsin. With options for therapy and psychiatry, as well as inpatient and outpatient services (for both adults and adolescents), Gundersen provides a full continuum of care.

“We all want to live in a community where everyone thrives,” says Josh Court, clinical operations director for Behavioral Health at Gundersen. “Taking care of our most vulnerable community members is the right thing to do, but it also creates a ripple effect that benefits our entire community. The result is fewer

patient visits to the ER, fewer hospitalizations and less stress on other community resources (such as first responders, police departments, etc.)”

Court, who joined Gundersen in 2019, believes that one reason the system is different is because of the level of commitment from the organization’s leaders. Even though the Behavioral Health service line costs the organization a significant amount of money, the cost to the community would be much greater if the services were not available. “Gundersen’s leaders just get it,” he explains. “There is a strong commitment to doing what is right for the community—and that is not the case everywhere.” →

*Josh Court, clinical operations director for Behavioral Health*





In a time when resources are tight, Court points out that grant funding from Gundersen Medical Foundation is more crucial than ever. Without such support, it would be difficult to respond to rising patient needs while also creating an environment that attracts and retains providers. Because of this ongoing support, Gundersen Behavioral Health has significantly increased the number of providers while health systems across the country struggle to find applicants.

In the past five years, the Foundation has provided 72 grants totaling approximately \$400,000 to support Behavioral Health. These grants have improved facilities and programs that directly impact patients and staff. Here are just a few examples:

### GRANTS FOR INPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:

**A \$41,000 grant allowed the Inpatient Behavioral Health unit to update the audio distribution system. The user-friendly system makes it easy for staff to play music (or white noise) in patients' rooms.**

*"Music plays a large role in mood regulation and well-being. The option to listen to music in rooms has improved many patients' experiences and is a valuable coping tool, which also creates an individualized space to heal."* –Staff member

*"I am so grateful for the music provided. It made my stay so much more comfortable. When I was in a moment of crisis, I was able to listen to my favorite music to help me relax."* –Patient

**A \$30,000 grant allowed the Inpatient Behavioral Health unit to update the gym space, allowing staff to address with patients the important connection between physical health and mental health.**

*"The exercise equipment has made a huge impact on our patients' care by encouraging daily movement and providing opportunities to learn about proper techniques and safety. Our exercise program has led to decreased anxiety, improved self-esteem and less agitation on the unit. A special thanks to Gundersen Medical Foundation's donors for their generosity."* –Staff member

*"When I went down to the workout room, I was amazed by the updated equipment. At 56, I am trying to make better choices in the way I eat and exercise. The machines were explained to me, and I felt very safe—I smiled the whole time. Thank you!"* –Patient

**A \$700 grant made it possible for the Inpatient Behavioral Health unit to purchase supplies for a garden area for patients.**

*"As recreational therapists, we encourage engagement in activities that support social, cognitive, spiritual, emotional and physical wellness. Gardening in the courtyard has made it possible for patients to touch on each of these dimensions of wellness."* –Staff member

*"The garden has been an absolute saving grace. I am used to being surrounded by nature. The garden creates a space where we can connect with ourselves and others more deeply. I appreciate the value, comfort and convenience of this spectacular facility and garden at Gundersen. I also appreciate the incredible caring human talent of the healers and supporters who work here."* –Patient

### GRANTS FOR OUTPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:

**A \$24,000 grant allowed the Addiction Services Department to receive a comprehensive consultation from Hazelton Betty Ford.**

*"The entire department is so thankful to the Foundation for making this consultation possible. It reinforced that Gundersen's addiction program is strong, but we also got direction on how to make it even stronger. We are better because of this consultation."* –Staff member

Because the challenges facing healthcare organizations will be ongoing, support from the Foundation will be even more critical. "Investments in behavioral health impact our entire community, and going forward, support from our community members will help us continue to grow and innovate so we can meet the needs of our patients and our community," says the Foundation's chair, Stephen Shapiro, MD. +

# CHANGING LIVES THROUGH PHILANTHROPY



Give a gift today!

## A gift to Gundersen Medical Foundation changes lives and improves the well-being of our entire community.

Your support leads to investments in medical education, research and community health initiatives. And, because of you, funding for Pediatrics, Behavioral Health, staff education, hospice care—and so much more—is possible. As the proud stewards of your philanthropy, we offer a variety of giving pathways and recognize your gifts through three recognition Societies:

### THE LEGACY SOCIETY

The Legacy Society recognizes those who create a gift bequest through a will, life insurance, property transfer or life income program (gift annuity or charitable trust). These gifts can play an important role in the estate planning process, enabling donors to make a gift of a sizeable amount many may have thought impossible.

### THE HERITAGE SOCIETY

Your gift today will support innovative education and research programs and foster community outreach programs that will have a lasting impact. The Heritage Society recognizes annual giving at these levels:

FRIENDS .....	\$1–199
ADVOCATES .....	\$200–499
ASSOCIATES .....	\$500–999
BENEFACTORS .....	\$1,000–1,499
PACESETTERS.....	\$1,500–2,499
TRUSTEES .....	\$2,500–4,999
VISIONARIES .....	\$5,000–9,999
CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE .....	\$10,000+

### THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY

When your cumulative support reaches \$50,000 or more, you will be honored as a member of The Founders Society. Your lifetime contribution at one of the following levels will be permanently recognized:

BRONZE.....	\$50,000–99,999
SILVER.....	\$100,000–249,999
GOLD.....	\$250,000–499,999
EMERALD .....	\$500,000–1 MILLION
RUBY.....	\$.1 MILLION–2.5 MILLION
DIAMOND .....	\$.2.5 MILLION+

## WAYS TO GIVE

**Every gift—in any size—makes an impact. We invite you to consider these ways to give:**

### DIRECT GIFTS

The most popular form is through cash or checks, but real estate or stocks and bonds can also be gifted directly.

### LIFE INCOME

Life-income gifts, such as a charitable gift annuity or trust, can provide immediate tax savings and annual income.

### TRIBUTES & MEMORIALS

Gifts to commemorate loved ones on a special occasion can be a meaningful reminder to those who care.

### PLANNED/ESTATE GIVING

Gifts can be in the form of a bequest in a will or living trust. Gundersen Medical Foundation may also be a beneficiary of a life insurance policy, retirement plan or financial account.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity and vision of our benefactors. It is our honor to recognize our Society members on a display in the Legacy Hospital lobby, as well as on an electronic display in the lobby of Gundersen Medical Foundation.

*If you have any questions or would like further information on these Societies or our Pathways of Giving, please contact the Foundation office at (608) 775-6600.*



“As a collective, we practice more than just medicine at Gundersen. The inclusion of an ethics program ties back to the roots of who we are, emphasizing how we as people, as neighbors in this beautiful city along the Mississippi River, can support and value each other.” –Thomas Harter, PhD, Bioethics

# A profile of Gundersen’s Bioethics Department

Some factors that allow Gundersen Health System to deliver on its promise of Love + Medicine are so seamlessly integrated into the organization’s makeup that it is easy to overlook the impact.

Such is the influence of the Department of Bioethics and Humanities led by Thomas Harter, PhD, and supported by Gundersen Medical Foundation.

“As a collective, we practice more than just medicine at Gundersen. The inclusion of an ethics program ties back to the roots of who we are, emphasizing how we as people—as neighbors in this beautiful city along the Mississippi River—can support and value each other,” says Dr. Harter. “The fact that Gundersen has had a bioethicist on staff for nearly 40 years speaks volumes about the organization.”

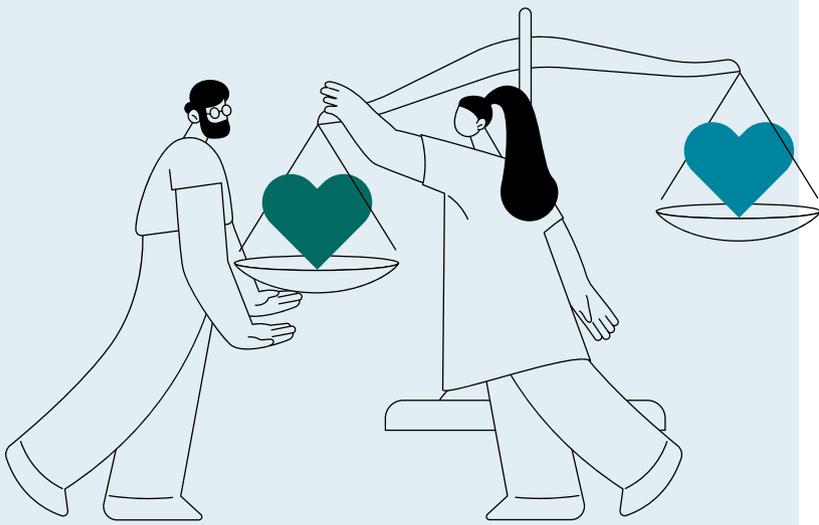
The impact of Gundersen’s ethics program can be felt at all levels of the organization:

## Caring for patients and providers

Ethics consultations are patient-directed and may be initiated by a patient or a member of the patient’s care team when there is a values conflict.

**Example 1:** A physician in the emergency room at an affiliate hospital recently had a patient who was found in distress at home, transported to the hospital by EMS, received CPR and was resuscitated. The patient did not have an advance directive or healthcare power of attorney document, so the default plan was to transfer the patient to La Crosse to receive “higher-level” care. However, the patient’s family members and friends shared their certainty that the patient would not want to be transferred to an ICU or have breathing supported by a ventilator. The physician was concerned that transferring the patient would violate the patient’s treatment preferences, so an ethics consult was requested.

**Example 2:** A middle-aged patient with a newly diagnosed eating disorder was being treated in the hospital for severe malnutrition (and resulting medical complications). Although the eating disorder was newly diagnosed, previous hospitalizations indicated the disorder was ongoing. The patient was offered a feeding tube and readily accepted, but there were concerns about the patient’s decision-making capacity. There was also worry about the patient’s discharge plan. Because there was no support network at home, the medical team and psychiatrist believed the patient needed to discharge to a specialized facility or to a care center where eating could be monitored. Our ethics consult service was asked to offer assessment and guidance on the decision to place a feeding tube, as well as on the discharge plan.



## Shaping organizational practices

As a bioethicist, Dr. Harter uses his expertise to help shape institutional policies and practices.

### These are just a few examples:

- Provided guidance for end-of-life care practices
- Assisted with the development of Gundersen's COVID vaccination protocols
- Helped develop a policy for managing situations in which parents or guardians refuse treatment recommendations for minor patients (that may be required by law)

## Delivering educational programming

While Dr. Harter presents lectures and workshops (at the local, national and international level), his work also directly impacts medical education students.

### These are just a few examples:

- Presents lectures to surgical, family medicine and internal medicine residents
- Attends the surgical residents' Morbidity and Mortality conferences
- Joins the care and teaching teams of the Intensive Care unit, Palliative Care and Internal Medicine units during rounds
- Publishes a variety of empirical and conceptual research
- Co-edited a textbook on medical professionalism (that will soon be published by Oxford University Press)



*Bud Hammes, PhD, was Gundersen's first bioethicist. He is pictured (center) with a group of medical students in 1988.*

## The history of Bioethics at Gundersen: In the right place at the right time with the right skillset

In the mid-1980s, Bud Hammes, PhD, served Gundersen as a volunteer member of the Ethics Committee. Soon thereafter, he began providing ethics education to residents in the Medical Education and Surgical Residency programs. Over time, the requests by clinicians for ethics consultations grew, so the hospital contacted the Foundation about providing funding for a full-time position. The presentation to the Foundation board was so convincing, one member of the board, John Mooney, immediately made a donation to fund the position for the first two years.

Dr. Hammes was Gundersen's clinical ethicist for 30 years, and under his leadership, Gundersen's Advanced Care Planning Program was developed. By 2011, Bud was dividing his time between providing ethics consultations, supporting the Medical Education programs and advanced care work. In 2012, Thomas Harter, PhD, joined the team, and the program continued to grow until Bud retired in 2016.

Since Bud's retirement, Dr. Harter has led the Department of Bioethics and Humanities, which is housed within the Foundation. +



**Mandy L. Richardson,  
MPH, CFRE**  
*Director of Philanthropy*



**Todd A. Mahr, MD**  
*Medical director of Philanthropy*

## Aligning passion with intent to create a legacy

Not many people know that the word “philanthropy” originates from the combination of two Greek words: the word “philein” means “to love,” while “anthropos” translates to “humankind.” Therefore, the term philanthropy refers to the “love of humanity.”

Even if they do not know the history of the word, many of our donors are driven by that goal—to love and support their fellow humans. This includes the members of our Legacy Society.

Legacy Society members are those who include Gundersen Medical Foundation in their estate plans and have taken time to document where their gifts should be directed at the end of their lives. This intention ensures their bequests will be used in ways that align with causes that are close to their hearts.

Recently, we were inspired by the forethought and intention of Frank E. Johnson, an educator who lived in Trempealeau, Wis. In addition to devoting his career to kids, Frank was also a quiet-yet-generous supporter of Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals® and other organizations that help children with special medical needs.

Some time ago, Frank notified the Foundation that his estate plan was in place and that CMN Hospitals was included in his will. However, it was not until Frank passed away in 2023 at age 87 that we learned his gift would be nearly \$1 million.

A bequest of that size is truly transformational, but it is also Frank’s intention—his plan to positively impact humankind—that is worthy of admiration. Because Frank took the time to record his intent, his passion for helping children will

be fulfilled, and the positive impact he will make on local families will become part of his legacy.

Two of our most recent Legacy Society members, Carl and Joan Bethke, are also guided by the goal of helping others. Their story (on page 8) shares how gratitude for the care of their son, Steve, led them to include the Foundation in their estate plan. They are passionate about ensuring the next generation has the same local access to compassionate care that Steve had.

Today, we invite you to become a member of the Foundation’s Legacy Society and document your wishes for a gift to be used beyond your lifetime. By considering your passion and being intentional about your estate plan, you will not only create your own personal legacy, you will also be part of the legacy of Love + Medicine. +

Gundersen Medical  
Foundation thanks  
our many friends for  
their generous gifts.

Oct. 1, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024

# Commemorative gifts

Charitable gifts to Gundersen Medical Foundation are a thoughtful way to celebrate a specific individual on special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries or holidays, or to remember friends or loved ones who are no longer here to carry on their own legacy of caring. Our donors also find this method of giving is a meaningful way to express appreciation to Gundersen care providers or entire departments for exceptional care received, while also advancing healthcare quality for the future.

In response to your gift, we send a note of acknowledgment to the honored individual or, in the case of a memorial, to the family. You will be notified that your gift has been received and designated according to your wishes. The names of those recognized by tribute gifts are listed below.

*Commemorative gifts made after February 29, 2024, will appear in the next issue of Pathfinders.*



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Oct. 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024

# Foundation mid-year grants report

In the first six months of fiscal year 2024, we have successfully matched the intent of over \$2 million in donor-designated gifts with the needs of various Gundersen departments through our competitive grant program.

The Foundation is dedicated to aligning philanthropic gifts to the most pressing needs of the health system, and we are grateful to the many generous donors who make this process possible.

From October through March, the Foundation received and reviewed more than 500 grant requests and awarded \$2,127,602 to support the needs of more than 65 departments. We are pleased to share with you the full list of grants awarded during this time, as well as short impact stories that highlight some examples of the work we're able to accomplish together.

Your gifts at work...

## GUNDERSEN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

FOCUS AREA	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Clinical Research	\$30,000	Hematology/Oncology research
Clinical Research	\$26,415	Pediatric oncology research associates
Research Institute	\$50,000	Kabara Cancer Research Institute support
Research Institute	\$30,052	Norman Gillette, Sr. Memorial Endowment Fund distribution
Research Institute	\$22,221	Center for Breast Care outcome research support
Research Institute	\$41,000	Breast cancer research
Research Institute	\$9,292	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - Cancer
Research Institute	\$9,292	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - Heart Surgery
Research Institute	\$9,292	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - Arthritis
Research Institute	\$9,220	Nancy Lee Edwards-McNamara, MD Memorial Endowment Fund distribution
Research Institute	\$4,943	R. James Trane Surgical Research and Data Center Endowment Fund distribution
Research Navigation	\$6,453	Gender Clinic Feedback and Experience study
Research Navigation	\$650	"Current Problems in Cancer: Case Report" publication fee
Translational Research	\$92,512	Kabara Cancer Research Institute Endowment distribution
Translational Research	\$66,593	Norman Gillette Jr. Research Fellowship Endowment Fund distribution
Translational Research	\$13,250	Microbiology research
Translational Research	\$3,295	"Frontiers in Oncology: Gynecological Oncology" publication fee
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$424,480</b>	



### Support for research publications

Funds supported a publication by Karen Cowden Dahl, PhD, Translational Research, "Gemcitabine Combination Therapies Induce Apoptosis in Uterine Carcinosarcoma Patient Derived Organoids," which was accepted for publication in the *Frontiers in Oncology-Gynecological Oncology journal*. This study was conducted by a multidisciplinary team that included members from Gundersen's Pathology, Oncology and Translational Sciences teams.



### Primary Care Winter Refresher

The Janis Memorial Fund supported the 2024 Primary Care Winter Refresher Program, which welcomed 156 physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, residents, medical students, advanced nursing students and others with an interest in Primary Care. This year’s topics included the effect of the pandemic on routine child and adolescent vaccination rates, evidence supporting lifestyle medicine, most common causes of chronic hip and knee pain, common misconceptions surrounding thyroid disorders and more.

## MEDICAL EDUCATION

PROGRAM AREA	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Continuing Medical Education	\$650	“Primary Care Winter Refresher” conference
Continuing Medical Education	\$500	“Trends in Emergency Care” conference
Continuing Medical Education	\$400	Cancer Center Grand Rounds speakers
Continuing Medical Education	\$300	Pediatric education visiting speaker
Family Medicine	\$7,350	Chronic and Preventive Care Block director support
Family Medicine	\$100	Family Medicine residency wellness activity
General	\$37,058	Edwin L. Overholt, MD, Chair of Medical Education Endowment Fund distribution
General	\$27,052	General gifts to Medical Education
General	\$33,377	Coordination of medical student Pediatric rotations
General	\$1,136	Resident wellness activity
General	\$400	“Vital Talks” training for Hematology/Medical Oncology fellows
General	\$100	Sports Physical Therapy resident participation in “Mentoring the Mentor” course
Internal Medicine	\$62,960	Edward Winga, MD, Director of Internal Medicine Endowment Fund distribution
Internal Medicine	\$1,313	Internal Medicine residents wellness activity
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	\$923	Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery residency recruitment
Pediatrics	\$10,297	Pediatric Medical Student Clerkship Endowment Fund distribution
Surgery	\$38,319	William Kisen, MD, and Thomas Cogbill, MD, Director of General Surgery Residency Endowment Fund distribution
Surgery	\$7,634	Susan F. Behrens, MD, FACS Surgical Skills Director Endowment Fund distribution
Surgery	\$2,931	Gunderbration event to gather surgical residency alumni, faculty and friends
Surgery	\$2,808	Research presentation at “Society of Critical Care Medicine”
Surgery	\$2,500	“Fundamentals of Endoscopic Surgery” training for General Surgery residents
Surgery	\$2,500	Surgery Grand Rounds visiting speaker
Surgery	\$2,472	Wisconsin Surgical Society presentations
Surgery	\$1,710	General Surgery residency – Alaska rotation
Surgery	\$1,575	Mission trip to Guatemala
Surgery	\$1,040	Wisconsin Surgical Club fall meeting
Surgery	\$715	“Surgeons as Educators” course
Surgery	\$633	General Surgery resident conference attendance
Surgery	\$461	Surgery resident research presentation
Surgery	\$369	Resident surgical mission travel to Nepal
Surgery	\$345	General Surgery residency recruitment
Transitional	\$54,356	James Webster, MD, and Lucian Griffith, MD, Director of Transitional Year Residency Endowment Fund distribution
WARM	\$12,250	Wisconsin Academy of Rural Medicine (WARM) Pediatrics director support
WARM	\$491	Medical student welcome event and orientation
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$310,363</b>	



**Durable medical equipment for patients**  
 Thanks to ongoing support for the Hospice Fund, Hospice is able to provide compassionate patient care through the final phase of life at the very place each patient feels most comfortable and secure: wherever they call home. Staff provide services that match a person’s goals and values, with an emphasis on improving quality of life and symptoms, while also supporting the entire family. Personalized care is given in many ways, such as providing durable medical equipment for patient independence and protection from falls.

“Preparing to say goodbye was hard, but knowing Mom was surrounded by attentive people who cared about her made a difference.”  
 –Linda, Grateful patient

**Unity House laptops to support recovery**  
 The Elvira Hebell Addiction Support Fund was used to purchase laptops for patient use at Gundersen’s Unity Houses. When patients discharge from residential treatment for substance abuse disorder, they face many challenges, including finding and applying for sober housing, employment, school and more. If these resources aren’t obtained and in place at the time of discharge, the patient’s likelihood for success is reduced. Having five laptops at each house for patients to use during programming will improve patient outcomes by increasing their opportunities to arrange for these resources prior to discharge, and it makes it possible for them to attend virtual appointments.

**HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$50,000	Durable medical equipment needed to support Hospice patients
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$40,000	Therapeutic music program for Hospice patients
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$25,000	Unexpected transportation needs of Hospice patients
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$20,000	Massage therapy program for Hospice patients
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$5,000	“Don’t Take My Grief Away” books given to patients and families
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$2,500	“When the Time Comes” booklet given to patients and families
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$1,000	Books for teens experiencing loss
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$500	Hospice volunteer training and supplies
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$144,000</b>	



**MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Behavioral Health - Unity House	\$3,600	Laptops for patient use to apply for sober housing and employment
Behavioral Health - Unity House	\$1,500	Programming resources for patient education and care
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$3,250	Patient need items such as gas cards, educational books, hygiene supplies, clothing and sensory items
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$30,000	Collaboration on mental health initiatives with the YMCA
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$3,849	Patient education materials and evidence-based curriculum
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$3,000	Therapy supplies for child/adolescent patients
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$2,000	Patient engagement materials for contingency management
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$1,500	Library for Partial Hospitalization Program patients
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$1,493	Smart TV to use in Mental Health Day Treatment Program
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$1,000	Sensory tool for Partial Hospitalization Program patients
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$750	Gas cards to help patients with transportation barriers attend treatment
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$714	“Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts” book for women experiencing mood changes and intrusive thoughts
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$500	Basic necessities for unsheltered patients
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$53,156</b>	

## PATIENT SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Crime Victim Services	\$40,000	Carilee Program annual funding to support victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault
Crime Victim Services	\$400	Gas cards to help victims of crime establish safety and receive services
Critical Care	\$2,930	A cadaver for continued Intensive Care staff training on lines, airways and anatomy
Family Medicine - Iowa Hub	\$1,061	Pill boxes for patients with multiple medications and financial hardships
Gundersen Palmer Lutheran Hospital & Clinics	\$1,500	Abbott Test Cassette for Cholestech LDX System for community wellness checks
Information & Referral	\$1,487	Outreach event equipment for safe outdoor use
Integrated Center for Education	\$2,009	3B upper arm injection trainers
Integrated Center for Education	\$576	Blood backpack battery
Medical Specialty	\$2,470	Support for the spiritual and emotional care of staff on Medical Specialties unit
Neurology	\$5,000	Educational classes for patients with mild cognitive impairment or dementia and their care partners
Office of Population Health	\$6,000	"Healthy Aging" conference for patients and their care providers
Office of Population Health	\$4,000	"Minutes in Motion" community physical activity challenge
Office of Population Health	\$2,300	Hmong community health event that includes education, screening and preventive care
Office of Population Health	\$300	Diabetes support group supplies and education
Office of Population Health - Community Paramedics	\$2,600	Vehicle storage system for medical equipment used during home visits
Patient Experience	\$1,500	Holiday experience for Gundersen personnel and community
Patient Experience	\$200	Healthcare Week and Patient Experience Week events
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$800	Therapy activities and equipment for movement disorders and Parkinson's patients
Renal Dialysis	\$50,000	La Crosse dialysis machine for patient care
Social Services	\$8,494	Chili Cook-Off event proceeds to support Social Services patient needs
Social Services	\$6,000	Emergency financial assistance for hospitalized patients
Social Services	\$1,882	Pawsitively For Pets program for boarding patients pets during hospitalization
Spiritual Care	\$2,000	Tea for the Soul program for staff support from Spiritual Care
Spiritual Care	\$1,750	Clinical Pastoral Education library for cutting-edge resources
Spiritual Care	\$1,500	Clinical Pastoral Education celebrations with students and staff
Spiritual Care	\$750	"Don't Take My Grief Away" books for staff experiencing a loss
Spiritual Care	\$750	Grief support group supplies
Trauma Services	\$4,845	"Teen Car Control Clinic" support to teach new drivers important skills
Trauma Services	\$510	"Advanced Trauma Life Support" course for employees
Trauma Services	\$2,800	Annual "Trauma Symposium" support for hands-on training for community first responders
Volunteer Services	\$1,200	Volunteer vests to easily identify individuals helping at Gundersen
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$157,614</b>	

## EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Emergency Services	\$4,000	Respite room for Emergency Services staff
Medical Oncology Unit	\$300	Grateful patient donation for a staff lunch
Office of Population Health	\$5,000	La Crosse MyHealth Room equipment
Office of Population Health	\$700	Onalaska SSB GunderZen room
Operations	\$290	Beverage cart to share with staff during rounding
Organizational Development	\$1,100	Employee Veterans Day event
Philanthropy	\$31,968	Employees Helping Employees Emergency fund
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$43,358</b>	



### Home Health vehicle equipment

A grant of \$2,600 was awarded to Community Paramedic Services to help retrofit vehicles used for home visits to support safer, more efficient handling of equipment and supplies. The upgrade will help improve overall efficiency during patient visits. A community paramedic shared, "We recently had a patient's outcome improved (saved her life) due to the ability to carry oxygen cylinders and have storage for medical CPAP devices. This was not safe or possible prior to this project and grant funding!"

### Employees Helping Employees

The Employees Helping Employees (EHE) Program was created by the Foundation to support Gundersen employees experiencing emergent financial situations. In this report period, more than \$31,000 was awarded from funds donated by employees to help employees overcome a time of significant hardship.

"I am full of gratitude for the help that the Employees Helping Employees Program gave to me. I really didn't know what to do to pay rent. One cannot plan for an acute health problem. Your generosity and that of all donors truly came to my rescue and I can hope to be able to pay it forward."  
-Grateful employee and EHE recipient



**Pediatrics PT/OT supplies**

There continues to be a significantly high need for pediatric therapies within our community and outreach locations. We are offering more services at more locations within our area. The goal of this project is to purchase the necessary equipment and therapy toys required to provide the best client-centered care possible for pediatric patients. These supplies will help us meet patients’ developmental needs and interests, thereby facilitating the greatest participation and progress toward our therapy goals. The equipment that is part of this grant will assist in meeting children’s sensory, self-regulation/behavior, cognitive and motor needs.

**PEDIATRICS**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cancer Center	\$13,000	Pediatric psychosocial programming for young patients and their families
Cancer Center	\$3,400	Spiritual Care support for Pediatric Hematology and Oncology patients and their families
Elroy Clinic	\$6,689	Kidzpace interactive unit for the lobby area
Family Medicine	\$3,025	Reach Out and Read books
Family Medicine - Decorah	\$3,624	Butterfly IQ ultrasound to monitoring fetal positioning and heartbeat
Family Medicine - Harmony	\$220	Reach Out and Read books
Family Medicine - Houston	\$400	Reach Out and Read books
Family Medicine - Iowa Hub	\$700	Reach Out and Read books
Family Medicine - Iowa Hub	\$660	“Find It” educational game to create kid-friendly exam rooms
Gundersen Children’s	\$162,519	Children’s health mobile unit to provide primary and acute care throughout our region
Gundersen Children’s	\$10,000	Plush animals provided to children admitted for surgery to ease anxiety and increase compliance
Gundersen Children’s	\$7,500	Child life supplies to help patients cope with healthcare experiences
NICU/PICU	\$420	Items to encourage skin-to-skin activities between parents and infants
OB/GYN	\$750	Puberty educational class for young women
Otolaryngology	\$8,585	Pediatric activities for the lobby area
Pediatric PT/OT	\$9,988	Therapy supplies and new curriculum to treat pediatric patients
Pediatric PT/OT	\$6,008	“Safe and Sound” training program and education for therapists
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,713	“Feeding Course” training and education for therapists
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,533	Prism glasses to be used with pediatric patients during therapy
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,200	Sensory toys and supplies to use during therapy
Pediatric Specialties	\$794	Water bottles for patients with syncope and other related disorders
Pediatrics	\$2,915	Reach Out and Read books
Pediatrics - La Crosse	\$12,000	Reach Out and Read books
Pediatrics - Onalaska	\$11,000	Reach Out and Read books
Philanthropy	\$176,189	CMN Hospitals patient-specific funding for kids and families in the service area
Social Services	\$67,416	Social Services assistance with Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$512,248</b>	



**3D Mobile Mammo Unit**

A grant of \$100,000 helped upgrade a mammography unit from 2D to 3D in Prairie du Chien. This will improve access to state-of-the-art care for patients in rural areas.

**ONCOLOGY**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cancer Center	\$184,434	New infusion chairs and beds for patients
Cancer Center	\$100,000	Paula’s Purse annual funding to support cancer patients experiencing a financial burden
Cancer Center	\$30,000	Snacks and sandwiches for patients receiving infusion treatments
Cancer Center	\$13,549	Cancer Center lodging program to provide emergency hotel stays to patients receiving treatment
Cancer Center	\$12,000	Cancer Center and Infusion Services programs and events for adult patients
Cancer Center	\$11,290	Ultrasound-guided peripheral IV starts in Onalaska and Winona
Cancer Center	\$10,000	Reconstruct the La Crosse wig and head covering space into a boutique for cancer patients
Cancer Center	\$7,000	Radiant Wraps and robes for radiation treatment patients
Cancer Center	\$6,100	Provide spiritual care to Cancer Center staff to help build resiliency
Cancer Center	\$4,000	Provide food, supplies, speakers and activities for the Cancer Center Support Group
Cancer Center	\$3,000	Provide spiritual care for adult cancer patients
Cancer Center	\$1,010	Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders clinician retreat
Prairie Du Chien Imaging Services	\$100,000	New 3D mammography unit for the Prairie du Chien Family Medicine Clinic
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$482,383</b>	

# THE *Miracle* CONNECTION



**Give today.** [gundersenhealth.org/cmn-hospitals](http://gundersenhealth.org/cmn-hospitals)

## Meet our 2024 Heroes

Your gifts to Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals help hundreds of local kids and their families each year, assisting with everything from medical care and research to new therapies and adaptive equipment. Each year, our local CMN Hospitals program chooses five children to become ambassadors—called Heroes—for a year. We are proud to introduce these 2024 CMN Hospitals Heroes:

Thank you to our Hero program sponsors:



**Andrew**

Age 14, Onalaska, Wis.

Andrew enjoys school, and his favorite subject is history. He thrives off learning and sharing what he's studying, especially space, history and geography. Andrew is a person with autism.

**CMN Hospitals Support:** Helped with Andrew's Arena Assessment as a toddler



**Charlie**

Age 5, Rushford, Minn.

Charlie loves Minnesota sports teams, playing any kind of ball and swimming. Jimmy Buffett songs are his favorite. Charlie was diagnosed with bilateral choanal atresia and apraxia.

**CMN Hospitals Support:** Gas cards, oxygen tank rental (and later, purchase) and iPad to supplement speech therapy



**Liliana**

Age 15, Sparta, Wis.

Liliana's goal is to be a nurse. She also loves animals, scientific facts and reading. Liliana was diagnosed with leukemia.

**CMN Hospitals Support:** Meal vouchers, gas cards, items from child life specialists



**Luther**

Age 5, Ettrick, Wis.

Luther loves swimming, playing with friends and farming with his dad and grandpa. He wants to be a rancher when he grows up. Luther was diagnosed with congenital cytomegalovirus.

**CMN Hospitals Support:** Meal vouchers, gas cards, medical expenses not covered by insurance



**Zari**

Age 13, Onalaska, Wis.

Zari loves volunteering at a local animal shelter where she helps with socializing cats. She also enjoys music with loud beats and running errands. Zari was diagnosed with several medical complexities after being born prematurely.

**CMN Hospitals Support:** Two ramps and a lift that help Zari safely visit her family





## Pledging support for local kids

**Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals at Gundersen Health System set a new fundraising record at Radiothon in 2023 when more than \$127,000 was raised to help families across the Coulee Region.**

From 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on October 12–13, Radiothon partner Mid-West Family La Crosse shared stories from CMN Hospitals’ families across three of their stations: Z93, KQ98 and 95.7 the Rock. The broadcast also featured Gundersen staff and representatives from local organizations that receive support from CMN Hospitals.

As the stories aired, Miracle Teams comprised of members from area businesses and organizations staffed a phone bank, recording incoming

donations from listeners and making outgoing fundraising calls of their own.

“It takes a tremendous amount of volunteer support to make Radiothon a success,” said former CMN Hospitals specialist Beth Noffsinger. “Mid-West Family is a phenomenal partner—and we are also so grateful to the families who share their children’s medical journeys, to the Miracle Teams who donate their time and to our generous sponsors. These groups all play a part in making miracles happen.”

**Save the date!**

**Radiothon will be held on Oct. 10–11, 2024, in the Clinic Lobby of the Gundersen La Crosse Main Campus. For more information about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, please email [cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org).**

## 2023 Radiothon Sponsors

### Title Sponsors

E. Stanek Electric  
Mark Jewelers  
River Valley Remodelers

### Miracle Maker

Coulee Region Implant & Oral Surgery

### Thursday Day Sponsor

Seland’s Karpetland

### Power Hours

RE/MAX Results  
Wieser Brothers General Contractor

### Miracle Room Sponsor

Altra Federal Credit Union

### Miracle Team Phone Bank

Paul’s Heating and Air Conditioning

### 15-Minute Match

Luke’s Auto Repair

### Text Sponsor

Ace of all Trades

### Meal and Snack Sponsors

Moka  
Linda’s Bakery  
Kwik Trip  
Sam’s Club  
Topper’s Pizza  
Big Boar BBQ & Catering  
Hy-Vee  
Festival Foods

### Miracle Teams

Team Philanthropy  
Gundersen Cancer Center  
RE/MAX Results  
Verve, a Credit Union  
Marine Credit Union  
Citizens State Bank  
Wieser Brothers General Contractor  
Altra Federal Credit Union  
Edward Jones – Curtis J. Bisek  
Gundersen Pharmacy  
Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations  
7 Rivers Region Chapter of Wisconsin Credit Unions  
Team Research  
IC System  
Trinity Horstman, Miss Wisconsin’s Teen  
Team Brooklyn Days  
La Crescent Rotary

# Changing lives, one child at a time

Your generosity allowed Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals at Gundersen Health System to raise \$1.3 million to help area families in the 2023 fiscal year. Of that, more than \$343,000 was awarded in grants that went directly to support children.

Kids and families are helped in so many ways through your support:



Thank you for helping to change the future by changing kids’ lives!



## Recognizing outstanding commitment

Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals is proud to share that Ace Hardware was awarded the 2024 Miracle Achievement Award at the Miracle Gala on April 12, 2024.

As a CMN Hospitals national partner, Ace Hardware has demonstrated an outstanding level of commitment to improving the lives of children in our region. Through a wide variety of fundraisers (such as Miracle Bucket Sales, allowing customers to round up, World’s Finest Chocolate Sales, brat sales, golf outings and more), Ace Hardware retail stores have achieved a lifetime giving of more than \$1.3 million since 1986, when Gundersen Health System joined forces with Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals.

“Supporting CMN Hospitals is easy,” says Pete Walsh, the owner of three local Ace Hardware locations. “Our employees and customers are motivated to help kids in need, especially kids from our own communities. These are the kids of our customers, our friends and our neighbors who are being helped.”



*(L–R) Gundersen employees Pete Haack and JJ Tin are pictured with gold medallions that signify they have each raised \$10,000 to support CMN Hospitals.*



## Gamers with big hearts

Two Gundersen Health System employees were recently recognized for taking gaming to the next level and changing the lives of local children through their support of Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals®.

Pete Haack, a creative services producer for the Medical Media Department, and JJ Tin, PhD, a psychologist in the Behavioral Health department, have been participating for years in a fundraising program called Extra Life that supports CMN Hospitals. The program allows participants to sign up online to play a game of their choice, choose a day to play and then recruit family and friends to make pledges. The funds raised are then directed to the gamer’s local CMN Hospital.

For Haack, the decision to support CMN Hospitals through a gaming fundraiser was easy. Professionally, he works with the CMN Heros and their families each year to create videos for the Miracle Gala, and, within his small La Crescent community, knows many families who have been helped by CMN Hospitals. For Haack, seeing the impact of CMN Hospitals firsthand is inspiring.

“For the past 14 years, these fundraisers have been a fun, easy way to support a cause I feel strongly about,” shares Haack, “and I am not alone. People in the gaming community have big hearts. They are looking for ways to channel their passion and make a positive impact.”

Tin, who spent several years running gaming conventions in California before moving to La Crosse, has been conducting fundraisers for CMN Hospitals through Extra Life for the past seven years. “Knowing that the funds I raise will help local kids, whether it’s for medical equipment, care or research, keeps me motivated,” he says.

Recently, Haack and Tin were both recognized by the national Extra Life organization with a gold medallion for reaching the \$10,000 fundraising level—a milestone they hope will inspire other gamers to fundraise, too. “This platform helps all of us to harness the power of community and make a bigger impact,” explains Tin.

### TOGETHER, WE HELP CHILDREN

Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals®, a service of Gundersen Medical Foundation, is dedicated to saving and improving the lives of children. We directly assist children and their families and support pediatric programs and services that help kids battle diseases and injuries of every kind. In the Gundersen service area, Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals has raised more than \$22.3 million since 1986. Each charitable donation—whether through special events, annual gifts, business partnerships, sponsorships or planned giving such as bequests—benefits children in this region and provides support for specialty medical care, research and preventive education.

#### **Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals | Gundersen Medical Foundation**

Mail to: 1900 South Avenue, Mailstop FDN-001, La Crosse, WI 54601 | Office location: 201 Third St. N., La Crosse, WI 54601  
(608) 775-4424 | [gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals](http://gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals)

### GUNDERSEN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

#### Leadership

Chair  
Dr. Stephen Shapiro

Vice President  
Lindsey Preston, MASL, RN

Executive Assistant  
Jean Hougom

Philanthropy  
Dr. Todd Mahr, medical director  
Mandy L. Richardson, MPH, CFRE, director

Medical Education  
Dr. Benjamin Jarman, medical director/  
designated institutional official  
Jennifer Lee, director

Medical Research and Grants  
Dr. Jennifer Kleven, medical director  
Carolyn Heath, director

Resolve Through Sharing®  
Dr. Randi Berg, medical director  
Mary Beth Hensel, director

#### Philanthropy Staff

Administrative Support  
Cindy Steinhoff

Data System  
Nicole Aponte  
Sarah Worman

Annual Support  
Courtney Daniels Burke  
Carly Frerichs

Major Gifts & Planned Giving  
Jon McKenzie, CFRE

Operations/Stewardship  
Katie Berkedal

Special Events  
Olivia Moths

Children's Miracle Network  
Hospitals®  
Ashley Zibrowski, MASL

save the date



**Monday,  
June 3, 2024**  
LA CROSSE COUNTRY CLUB

Proceeds benefit lung cancer research at Gundersen Medical Foundation.



**STEPPIN' OUT  
IN PINK**  
RIVERSIDE PARK, LA CROSSE



**Looking to sponsor an event?** Connect with Olivia Moths, philanthropy program coordinator, at [olmoths@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:olmoths@gundersenhealth.org) or call (608) 775-6634.

## Honoring excellence

*In remembrance, we pay tribute to the medical staff who served Gundersen Health System during their careers and who passed away between October 1, 2023 – February 29, 2024. We recognize their individual dedication to patient care and their collective contribution to the field of medicine.*

**- C. Garry O'Connor, DDS**



### Gundersen Medical Foundation congratulates Ashley Zibrowski on her new role as Children Miracle Network Hospitals® specialist

Ashley served in the role of Fund Allocation specialist from 2018–2024 (and previously worked with CMN Hospitals from 2015–2018). As the CMN Hospitals specialist, Ashley will help build relationships with local businesses and donors while providing support for CMN Hospitals' fundraising initiatives. "I am looking forward to connecting with the kids, families and Gundersen departments who benefit from CMN Hospitals, as well as the community supporters who make it possible," shares Ashley. "There is such a culture of gratitude, generosity and service within the CMN Hospitals program, and it's a wonderful feeling to be part of that culture every day."



**Ashley Zibrowski**  
(608) 775-1978  
[aezibrow@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:aezibrow@gundersenhealth.org)

### We are delighted to welcome Cindy Steinhoff to Gundersen Medical Foundation

In her role as an office assistant, Cindy will provide support to the staff in the Foundation's Philanthropy and Resolve Through Sharing® departments. Cindy brings with her 24 years of experience as a Gundersen employee, most recently working in the Medical Education office. With her new role, Cindy is the only Foundation team member to have worked with all divisions of the Foundation, including Medical Education and Medical Research. We are grateful for her expertise!



**Cindy Steinhoff**  
(608) 775-6600  
[clsteinh@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:clsteinh@gundersenhealth.org)

**GUNDERSEN  
MEDICAL FOUNDATION**

1900 South Avenue  
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

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Permit No. 119

**Our Mission**

*We improve the lives of patients and our larger community through medical education, research, outreach and the philanthropic support of Gundersen Health System.*

[gundersenhealth.org/foundation](https://gundersenhealth.org/foundation)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE!



# 2023

## FISCAL YEAR IN REVIEW