



Restoring *Hope* Transplant House

Lions Club Council of Governors Report

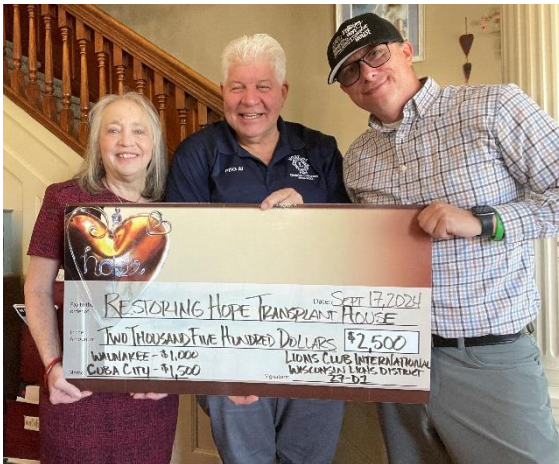
January 2025

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Dear Lions Council of Governors Friends,

Here are some of our Restoring Hope Transplant House updates that we wanted to share with you all. Wishing you all a great upcoming meeting!

- Wishing you all a very happy and healthy 2025 with so much gratitude for our loyal Wisconsin Lions who have blessed this house through generous donations,



volunteer projects, spreading the word about our work and the friendship and encouragement that is so often the wind in our sails. I hope that you all find the heartwarming stories of our families to be your greatest reward for your years of support. This is such a special place and you all deserve much of the credit for helping to create this life-changing atmosphere to call home when people need it most.

- This past year, we seem to see a more intense house than ever before with major health challenges, the impact of life challenges on mental health throughout a family, crippling expenses, lack of self-care, exhaustion and the hurdles of being a sole caregiver in many cases during the most difficult times of ones life. For us to watch that is painful and concerning. Thankfully, the house is at its best in it's ability to bring total strangers together to form life-long friendships and unmatched real life support groups. There are few things more rewarding than watching those people in particular emerge at the end of a stay and to realize that they may not have been able to get through this without the people they shared this house with.

- If you have taken a vacation lately, you know that hotel rates have never been higher throughout the country and even around the world. It is critically important for us to continue to raise funding that helps keep our nightly rates as low as possible. Our families quite simply cannot afford the current rates of hotels while going through the medical journeys they are going through. The financial hardships through it all are absolutely crippling. Funds raised through our Wisconsin Lions helps us keep these rates the lowest you will find for our families.



- A great group of Lions stopped by this winter to do some end of year projects outside the house. What an amazing group that got so many things done for us. One of the volunteers was an Illinois Lion...Steve...who stayed here several years ago for his heart transplant. Steve was just in Madison this past week for his 10 year heart appointment. Congrats on 10 great years of life, Lion Steve, we are all so happy for you and Kelly. It's fun to see how this Gift of Life has totally changed your life.

- In the days leading up to Christmas, Lion Gwen stopped by with an incredible assortment of wonderful food to help us provide Christmas dinner to our families who were away from home and loved-ones. It was particularly meaningful this year, because one of our 2017 transplant families has been hospitalized with cancer. It was our Christmas goal to give them a home cooked meal delivered to their hospital room as nobody from their family was able to be there for Christmas. What a moment that was to treat them to a great feast. Thanks for making this such a memorable Christmas Gwen!



- How wonderful it was to have Lion Brad stop by from Wausau this winter while we had a long-term heart transplant family from Wausau staying at the house. Brad came to deliver bacon for us to share at breakfast and also some of his Lions deer hide gloves for us to use for volunteer days. When Brad met our Wausau family, he even gave a pair to Scott and Sandy. Scott has been here on a weekly basis ever since for heart biopsies...he is always wearing his Lions gloves with pride.



- Lions Dave and Lynn have made it a Thanksgiving Tradition of sorts to stop by with a contribution, sharable food and gifts for us to spread some holiday cheer over the holidays. We are so grateful for the kind gestures of Lions who always go to such great lengths to brighten the holidays for so many of our families.

- Our friend Laure from Milwaukee ended up spending her birthday, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas here at RHTH in 2024. It is long-



term families like hers that this house is truly meant for. Laure had so many long, emotional, frustrating and then celebratory moments. To be here in community amongst people who have become her dear friends really helped Laure get through some very challenging times. One of her handwritten notes recently simply said: **“Eric and Cindy...the most kind, thoughtful, wonderful and truly amazing people in life. You do not know the real impact you have on the lives of others. Thank you for being you!”**



- When Melina was here this fall for her kidney autotransplant, she feared that her condition would mean never being able to skate competitively again. While living in Colorado, Melina was born in Guatemala and she has long dreamed of being the first person to represent her birth country in competitive skating. An early setback, meant Melina and her Mom had to drive all the way back to Madison to address some issues, but things have steadily improved to the point that Melina just got back out onto the ice recently for the first time. We look forward to following her progress!

- We were very proud to be able to once again make hospital visits to see our families multiple times during every single month in 2024. That’s an extremely important part of the work we do and the relationship building that is required to make this more than just a place to stay. It is also critical in building friendships with the hospital teams and to show them



just how much we care for their patients and appreciate the life-changing work they do on the transplant floors. We have sat with families during transplants, met with surgeons after transplant, eaten lunches with our favorite nurses, done puzzles on the floor with caregivers and watched ballgames in hospital rooms. Those are

special moments that are uniquely found here through this house.

- Cindy has also had the chance to meet with UW Health leadership teams for collaboration beyond emotional support. Great business practices that generate

funding, word of mouth and helping to share RHTH throughout the hospital to staff and ultimately from the staff to patient families.

- We continue to rework floor plans as we better learn the heartbeat of the house and the needs of our families. It helps to cut costs, but also addresses critical needs, adds more comfort, promotes community and conversation and is helpful with cleaning and maintenance as well.
- We need to add staff. Eric and Cindy need help with cleaning and covering hours. We have a paid accountant and book people as well as the best volunteer ever, but the physical and mental challenges of this job can be difficult to manage 7 days a week. Additional funding would help us tremendously in this area.
- We are going to be more intentional in inviting larger donors like kidney transplant recipient Pleasant Rowland to visit. When other hospital VIPs come, we always hear how we never thought it was this nice and this healing and how your efforts to make this happen have such a big impact. One of our recent transplant recipients recently shared a picture from her youth of her with her first American Girl Doll, which Pleasant Rowland started. She and the doll both had the same matching outfits. We wrote Pleasant and shared this story and a few of the photos and look forward to chatting with her about this more just to show her the impact her generosity has had on our transplant community.
- We are looking at a new builder out of Appleton. Not the one we talked about before. The main guy from the other company has moved on to a better fit giving us more flexibility. We need more sustainable building and more home-like while still building to always keep operating and properly maintained. The wearing of operating in an old building can be more functional when improvements are made.

