



## Family House: Always Essential

One early morning in February, Penny and Brett Reed received a phone call at their home in New Zealand. It came from the Pittsburgh area university where their son, Connor, was interning. The caller informed them that Connor was in the intensive care unit at a Pittsburgh hospital. He was experiencing kidney failure.

The Reeds got on the next plane to Pittsburgh. They arrived in the middle of the night after 24 hours of travel. It was shortly thereafter that a hospital social worker arranged for the Reeds to stay at Family House's Neville location, which became their "home away from home" for the next three and a half weeks.

For Penny and Brett, the ability to access good, quality food was crucial throughout their stay. They spent all day in the hospital and did not want to take time away from their son to cook or go grocery shopping. As Penny explained it,

"We were conscious that we needed a routine—good food and good sleep—to help protect our health whilst under such immense stress. We felt so supported, as if we were in our own home with family and friends helping out."

Returning most evenings to Family House to a home-cooked meal provided by a group of volunteers made all the difference. Sitting at a table in the kitchen for a cup of hot tea before bed is where the Reeds met other families that were in similar situations. These bonds, formed out of shared circumstances, have been lasting. And while the Reeds' time at Family House has ended and they have returned with their son to New Zealand, they remain in touch

with those other families as well as with the staff at Family House.

"We were completely overwhelmed and humbled by our experience at Neville House," Penny wrote. "I think most people would expect to receive help from their own family, but the help we received from complete strangers at Neville House has made us better people."

On March 18, just as Pittsburgh was shutting down in an effort to curb the infection rate of COVID-19, Connor was discharged from the Pittsburgh area hospital, and the Reeds flew home to New Zealand along with a physician escort. (see photo below)



Today, Connor's health continues to improve. And Penny continues to count her blessings, among them her newly expanded family: those she met at Family House who provided a much-needed source of comfort and strength at a most challenging time. ●

## Family House and the CARES Act

As an essential partner in the Pittsburgh regional healthcare delivery system, Family House has kept the doors open throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite a significant decline in guest occupancy while its hospital partners prepare to treat coronavirus patients, Family House remains committed to providing safe, affordable, and comfortable accommodations for those patients who must travel to Pittsburgh because their medical care and treatment plans—unrelated to COVID-19—cannot be delayed.

The CARES Act also includes a number of tax-related incentives and benefits for individuals who may wish to make a gift to Family House in this critical time of need. Gift options being considered by donors in the current financial climate include those available through Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), Donor Advised Funds, Charitable Gift Annuities, and Family Charitable Lead Trusts. To learn more about these and other donor options affected by the CARES Act, Family House encourages you to contact your financial advisor.

If you are interested in learning more about the significant impact your gift will have on Family House during the current crisis or at any time, please visit [familyhouse.org](http://familyhouse.org) or schedule a meeting by emailing [development@familyhouse.org](mailto:development@familyhouse.org).

Mark Your Calendars for **#GivingTuesdayNow** on May 5 — an emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. Emails and social media updates will contain more details!





## DEAR FAMILY HOUSE FRIENDS:

As I write this message to you and all of Family House's global family of friends and supporters, I do so with mixed emotions. On the one hand, I am devastated with each report that conveys news of the horrific toll that the coronavirus is taking on our families, friends, and neighbors, in our region and around the world. The growing number of lives lost and businesses forever impacted have become an all-too-familiar part of the 24-hour daily news cycle.

At the same time, watching as our healthcare partners battle this invisible enemy with a mix of courage, creativity, passion, and selflessness has further instilled in me a sense of hope that we *will* get through this.

Here at Family House, I am both gratified and humbled by the unwavering dedication of my colleagues who remain steadfast in their commitment to fulfill Family House's mission, even in these anxious times. They recognize that many Family House guests require medical care that cannot be delayed during the COVID-19 crisis. And with additional protocols in place to further ensure the safety and comfort of our guests, Family House staff is there to greet each patient and caregiver with a warm, welcoming smile—albeit at an 'appropriate' social distance.

For our amazing partners serving on the front lines, this incredible Family House team, and all of **you** who continue to support our efforts, thank you. Be well and, please, stay safe.

Best wishes,

Jennifer N. March, Executive Director

Family House is grateful to all who supported this year's gala, "Horsing Around...After Dark."



SAVE  
THE  
DATE!



37<sup>th</sup> Annual Family  
House Polo Match

Saturday,  
September 12, 2020  
Hartwood Acres

POLO



Presented by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, the annual spring fundraising event raised nearly \$170,000 to support Family House's mission of providing safe, affordable, and comfortable accommodations for those who travel to Pittsburgh for medical care.

Fulfilling this need is even more critical now than ever before as Family House remains open to support those whose medical treatment and care must continue during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to our generous presenting sponsors, Family House is grateful for lead sponsors Lamar Outdoor Advertising, MSA Safety, Hefren-Tillotson, PJ Dick, and Walnut Capital, and all who sponsored and attended the event. ●

# Finding comfort and serenity in Family House's four-legged friend

A warm blanket, a soft bed, a tender hug, a friendly smile. All of these things can invoke a sense of comfort, relaxation, and calm—and can be found on Tuesday evenings at Family House University Place when Susan Watson visits with her therapy dog, Eli.



Eli is a Family House regular. He is one of two therapy dogs who visits once a week. Susan and Eli went through a six-week preparatory course at the local Humane Animal Rescue. There, he was taught how to focus on his trainer when subjected to various situations, like being in a room full of dogs, avoiding food stimuli, or adjusting to the moments when Susan needed to leave the room. All of this prepared Eli to take a test to become a certified therapy dog through the organization, Therapy Dogs International.

For Susan, becoming a therapy dog handler was a natural progression from her career as a Special Education teacher. The adjustment for Susan was letting Eli “speak” to those he encountered when her instinct was to initiate the conversation.

Susan and Eli became a part of the Family House family in 2018. At that time, a neighbor's mother was staying at the Shadyside house, and she suggested to Susan that Family House guests would benefit from a visit from Eli. Shortly thereafter, Susan was connected with Family House University Place, and the two have been visiting ever since.

For one couple, Eli's visits became part of their weekly routine and was even included on their calendar. This couple had been staying at Family House for many weeks, and they would always bring biscuits for Eli. He, in turn, would sit with them, bringing a sense of calm into their world.

There have been many research studies showing that human-animal interactions can lower stress and anxiety. Susan has seen this firsthand when she brings Eli to Family House. During their first visit to Family House, a young woman who had been there for nearly a year said to Susan, “You don't know how important this is to be able to touch a dog.”

Although the weekly therapy dog visits have been placed on hold during the coronavirus pandemic, everyone at Family House looks forward to the Tuesday when Eli and Susan can return.

“As much as the patients and guests miss Eli, he misses them even more,” Susan said. ●



Eli and Family House guests enjoy a visit this past December

## 2019 VOLUNTEER STATS



**115**  
House Volunteers



**218**  
Meals Served



**14,000**  
Volunteer Hours



**200+**  
Therapy Dog Hours

## WAYS TO HELP

- ✓ Cook a Meal
- ✓ Purchase Items from Our Amazon Wish List
- ✓ Order Food from Local Restaurant and Have It Delivered
- ✓ Host a Donation Drive
- ✓ Make a Monetary Donation



# FAMILY HOUSE

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## TO GIVE

- > Online at: [www.familyhouse.org](http://www.familyhouse.org)
- > By phone: 412-647-5893
- > Designate Family House through your workplace:  
United Way: #859

## TO VOLUNTEER

- > Email us at: [volunteer@familyhouse.org](mailto:volunteer@familyhouse.org)
- > By phone: 412-647-4917

## TO BOOK YOUR STAY

- > Visit us online: [www.familyhouse.org](http://www.familyhouse.org)
- > By phone: 412-647-7777

## TO CONNECT

- @FamilyHousePittsburgh
- @FamilyHousePGH



Thank you for supporting Family House!  
**YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME**

Mark Your Calendar-May 5  
is Giving Tuesday Now

**GIVING TUESDAY | NOW**

## SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER



**This spring, two local residents  
volunteered their time and efforts  
to create 100 face masks for  
Family House guests and staff.**



Volunteers throughout the community continue to reach out and support Family House and the guests who rely on our services. Thank you so much for your generosity!



## IN THIS ISSUE

### Family House: Always Essential

How one family from New Zealand needed Family House during an emergency

### Therapy Dog Program

Four-legged friends bring smiles to Family House guests

### Save the Date for Family House Polo 2020!

Saturday, September 12  
at Hartwood Acres

Visit [www.familyhouse.org](http://www.familyhouse.org) to learn more about how you can support our families.

*and more...*