



**NEWSLETTER** SPRING 2023

# Community & Connection

Serving the patients and caregiver families who stay with Family House is the core of our mission, and central to our efforts each day. We strive to create community and connection for those staying at their “home away from home,” and, as such, offer a variety of programs and services to the families Family House serves.

As we approach the first year of consolidated operations under one roof, we have had the opportunity to create new guest programming that allows us to further strengthen the Family House community. The increased space, and unification of all guests into one location, has allowed for new types of programs, celebrations, events, and offerings.

“No one gets it like the guests do. This is what can make the Family House experience so powerful. These are not superficial experiences they are navigating,” explains Laurie. She sees on a daily basis the importance of the programming Family House offers.



Integral to these expanded offerings is Family House’s newest position, Guest Experience Specialist. Laurie Checkley, who has been with Family House for 14 years, has served in this role since the new location opened in July 2022. Along with a dedicated volunteer committee, the group has worked to pilot new guest activities, including creating a walking tour of Shadyside, offering puzzle sessions, and scheduling game nights.

“**No one gets it like the guests do. This is what can make the Family House experience so powerful.**”

“What some of these patients and caregivers are going through is pretty extreme. That common ground can create an exceedingly supportive environment.”

Some favorite activities from the previous houses continue today, like visits from therapy dogs Polli, Tigger, and Blue Suede Shoes. Others are new, like weekly yoga classes and support groups tailored to the health conditions of guests in the house continue to be offered on a regular basis. Several wellness initiatives also were spearheaded over the winter. To commemorate March as “Nutrition Month,” an educational series featuring healthy ingredients and recipes was introduced, as was the Step Challenge,

which encouraged guests to increase their mobility and walk around the facility each day. Thanks to generous funding from FedEx Ground, Family House is continuing to innovate and grow these types of offerings.

Laurie plans to retire in the near future, and is working closely with her successor Ada Mezzich, a social worker, to continue taking our guest services to a new level.

The impact of this programming is clear. Dawn Baker, a recent guest, had only positive things to say about her experience at Family House. “We cannot say enough fabulous things about Family House,” she said. “This is an outstanding place that facilitates sharing stories and healing. We are beyond thankful for staying here. We especially enjoyed the dogs, kitchen and yoga class, plus all the people we met.” ●

Do you have an idea for guest programming? Please email us at [lcheckley@familyhouse.org](mailto:lcheckley@familyhouse.org).



No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens the burden of another.

*Joseph Addison*



When I first read this quote, my thoughts immediately turned to Family House volunteers—a vast and diverse collective of smart, talented, selfless individuals. From the concerned clinicians and community leaders whose compassion and vision launched this “home away from home” 40 years ago, to the

countless individuals who have since continued to fulfill the organization’s mission, Family House volunteers always have been and remain focused on lightening the burdens of others.

April is nationally recognized as “Volunteer Appreciation Month.” At Family House, however, be assured that we cherish our volunteers every hour of every day!

Volunteers are the foundation and the lifeblood of this organization.

Whether welcoming first-time guests and orienting them to our beautiful new location, or preparing and serving a home-cooked meal, day after day, week after week, Family House volunteers alleviate the inevitable stresses that coincide with a health situation requiring medical treatment in an unfamiliar city. This is the experience of the thousands of patients and caregivers we welcome through our doors.

In this newsletter, I introduce you to several of Family House’s dedicated volunteers and you’ll learn a bit about their personal commitment to our mission. At right you can see photos from our recent Volunteer Appreciation Event at The Oaklander Hotel, where we celebrated dozens of volunteers and awarded the 2023 Arleen Lhormer Volunteer Recognition Award to MSA, The Safety Company (pictured) for their deep commitment and continued partnership.



When Family House kicks off its 40th anniversary year-long celebration at the annual Family House Polo Match on September 9, we will share more stories about the history of Family House and celebrate the visionary volunteers who were instrumental in Family House’s founding.

Over the course of this milestone year, we will also invite you to join us in celebrating the past, present, and future of Family House.

Are you or someone you know interested in volunteering at Family House? Please visit [familyhouse.org/volunteer](https://familyhouse.org/volunteer) to see how you can help lighten the burdens of others.

Best wishes and thanks for all you do for Family House.

Jennifer N. March, Executive Director

## Family House is grateful to all who supported this year’s “Spring Soiree” Gala fundraiser!

The Family House Spring Gala, presented by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, welcomed 239 guests to the Duquesne Club on March 18. A.J. and Jackie Poole chaired the event, which raised over \$170,000 to support Family House’s affordable lodging for patients and caregivers. The evening’s featured speaker was Jacquelyn Barker, a former Family House guest who generously shared her personal experience with event attendees.

The Family House Spring Soiree Gala was made possible UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, Lamar Advertising, Baird, Ladies Hospital Aid Society, MSA The Safety Company, PJ Dick - Trumbull - Lindy Group, Faye Sampson and Dennis Huber, and our many generous sponsors and supporters ●





The hundreds of volunteers who spend time at Family House each year make all the difference for our guests. Read on for what a few volunteers share when asked about their relationship with Family House.

**“Why do you donate your time to Family House? What is your favorite volunteer memory?”**

## Good Food, Better Mood: Breakfast Now Offered Daily

We all know that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and we are thrilled to offer this meal to our guests seven days per week. Our Daily Healthy Breakfast Program is an extension of our mission to provide a “home away from home” for patients and their loved ones who travel to Pittsburgh for medical care. Breakfast Concierge Tami Ribar carefully prepares and replenishes this meal at the Breakfast Bar each morning. Along with Family House volunteers and staff, she encourages all guests to enjoy this offering, and, time-permitting, enjoy the company of other guests in the spacious dining room.

The Daily Healthy Breakfast Program is made possible by the generous support of the Shadyside Hospital Foundation, Jack Buncher Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Hilda M. Willis Foundation, Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Trust, and Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation. ●

## Holidays at Family House

Some of the most cherished times of the year at Family House are holidays celebrated with guests. Family House staff and volunteers strive to make these days as special as possible, knowing how difficult spending holidays away from home and family may be. In addition to an abundant meal, Family House offers special activities and other festive touches that help to make the day memorable. For example, holiday gifts left at guests’ doors and holiday meals graciously served by Family House volunteers help make these difficult times easier to bear.

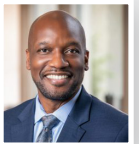
December was a particularly exciting month, with the Family House Board of Directors providing and serving its annual meal to guests and the yearly Secret Santa Dinner, which featured a catered meal, a live musical performance by members of the Pittsburgh Opera, and a visit from Santa Claus himself!



Family House is grateful to our partners at Giant Eagle for generously donating meals to Family House on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day, and to our incredible “Secret Santa” for his annual support. ●



“I believe in the mission of Family House and our ability to provide a home away from home for patients, friends, and families. I have experienced the vulnerability and worry when supporting a family member or friend who is hospitalized or ill. Family House provides affordable, welcoming, safe, and comfortable housing for individuals and families during a stressful time in their life where every bit of kindness and compassion makes a world of difference. My favorite volunteer memory is serving a holiday dinner to Family House guests with other board members.



— Kenyon Bonner, Family House Board of Directors



I am a big foodie and I love cooking for my own family. I find it rewarding to make a meal with love for folks in need of a taste of home. LINQ as an organization prioritizes giving back to the community and our group loves coming together as team to volunteer at Family House. My favorite memory is blasting polka music and dancing for our Polish-themed dinner!

— Michael Downie & LINQ

Family House is a fantastic experience, where we get to enforce the mission on a personal level. My favorite memory is of a couple from Georgia here for over two years for a lung transplant. It was bittersweet when they left because we all became close with them and it turned into a little family. They had befriended another couple also here for a transplant and ended up scheduling follow-up appointments for the same time so they could stay together in the house again.



— Jane Gilbert, House Volunteer



I love donating my time for many reasons, including that I love to cook. I also bring several teenagers

and they enjoy hearing the stories of others and why they are staying at the house, which is truly humbling. My favorite memories include having my group honored with the Muldoon Cup at the 2019 Family House Polo Match, and meeting people from all over the United States and from different backgrounds.

— Meredith Troyan & United Methodist Church





# FAMILY HOUSE

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## TO VOLUNTEER

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## TO BOOK YOUR STAY

- > Visit us online: [familyhouse.org](http://familyhouse.org)
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## TO CONNECT

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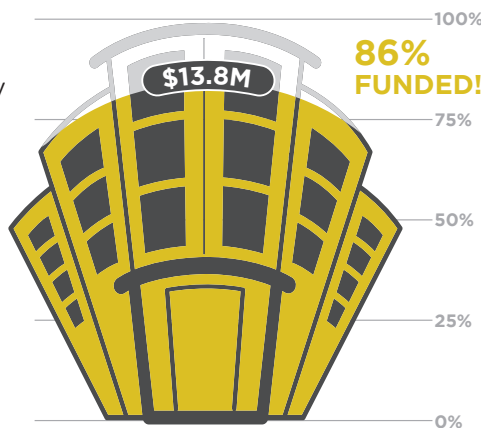
Thank you for supporting Family House!  
**YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME**

## SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

# The Campaign for Family House

It is because of the support and the countless contributions made to Family House by its larger community of family and friends that has made it possible to fulfill the organization's long-held dream: to be together in one location, under one roof.

We invite you to consider how your support of **Under One Roof: The Campaign for Family House** can help us to achieve our ambitious capital campaign goal. ●



For more information and to make a gift to *Under One Roof*, visit [familyhouse.org/oneroof](http://familyhouse.org/oneroof)

# 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Family House Polo Match

**Saturday, September 9**  
Hartwood Acres

You won't want to miss this milestone celebration! Perfect for families, clients, or friends, you can provide critical support to Family House while also enjoying a lovely day out.

