

A PUBLICATION OF GUNDERSEN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

# PATHFINDERS

Where generosity changes lives





Each issue of Pathfinders is rich with examples that illustrate the impact of your generosity.

With these stories, we hope to highlight how your gifts to Gundersen Medical Foundation change lives through investments in medical education, medical research, community outreach and the philanthropic support of Gundersen Health System. Yet, there are never enough pages to adequately capture just how many lives are touched.

This is especially true when it comes to displaying the effects of your gifts on the patients and professionals of Gundersen. Going forward, we hope to shine a brighter spotlight on that impact by including a grant report in each issue.

Our goal is to provide a fuller picture of how your gifts impact our entire health system. Gundersen could not provide the level of care that it does without your support—and we are so grateful.

That gratitude was on full display at our recent donor recognition event called Gratefully, Gundersen. In addition to celebrating all of our donors, we recognized Gundersen Partners, Herb and Barbara Heili, and Jeannie Gordon, who received the first-ever Chairman's Award. It was truly a night to remember.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Pathfinders and see it as an opportunity to celebrate the difference you make. Thank you for being our partner in philanthropy.



All the best,

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

Gundersen Medical Foundation

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## PATHFINDERS

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To learn more about the Foundation's medical education, research and community health outreach programs, or to inquire about making a charitable gift, please visit us at [gundersenhealth.org/foundation](http://gundersenhealth.org/foundation) or call the Foundation office at (608) 775-6600.

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**On the cover:** (L-R) Charlene Elderkin, CMP, Jennifer Vogel, LMT, and Tracy Mangold, CMP, provide compassionate care to Gundersen patients who are receiving hospice care.

# There's no greater gift than changing lives.

As we reflect on this past year, we are forever grateful for the impact your generosity continues to make. Your gifts make a difference in the lives of our patients, staff and community now and for years to come. Please consider joining us in increasing that impact with a year-end gift today.

"Thank you for supporting the important work we do and the care that we give our patients. Much of the research we do and the care we provide would not be possible without your support."

*Jia Jian Tin, PhD*

*Gundersen Health System provider,  
dedicated researcher and  
grateful donor*

With a year-end gift to Gundersen Medical Foundation, you're investing in a lifetime of health for you and your community. Your generosity will change lives.

- **USE THE QR CODE** or visit [www.bit.ly/gmfyear](http://www.bit.ly/gmfyear) to donate online
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# DR. LORI J. ROSENSTEIN

## Training the next generation of medical professionals



### CURRICULUM VITAE

#### **Board service**

- Three years

#### **Expertise**

- Hematology/Oncology
- Medical Education
- Medical Research

#### **Professional role:**

- Program director, Hematology and Medical Oncology Fellowship, Gundersen Medical Foundation

Like many of the learners she supports today, Lori J. Rosenstein, MD, was first introduced to Gundersen Health System as a student. While she was enrolled in the University of Wisconsin–Madison Medical School, Dr. Rosenstein completed a rotation at Gundersen where she recalls being “impressed by the people and the atmosphere.”

Dr. Rosenstein went on to complete her residency and a fellowship at the University of Iowa, where she was then hired as an assistant professor in the division of hematology. As a Wisconsin native, Dr. Rosenstein eventually felt the urge to return to her home state where she (along with her husband and two children) would be closer to family. Remembering how much she had enjoyed her time at Gundersen, Dr. Rosenstein sought out a position in Gundersen’s Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology, where she was hired in 2014.

Today, Dr. Rosenstein also serves within Gundersen Medical Foundation’s Medical Education division as the program director for the hematology and medical oncology fellowship. In this role, she oversees six trainees who will become cancer/blood disorder doctors. In 2020, she joined the Foundation’s board of directors, where she is able to share her own experiences and expertise to advocate for Medical Education.

“Medical Education has such an impact on the quality of care at Gundersen,” she explains. “The physicians are teachers, which means they stay current in their field and act as good role models. The teachers and students also work together to conduct, publish and present research on a variety of important topics. These factors create the kind of rich environment that leads to better healthcare for everyone.”

In addition to improving patient care, Dr. Rosenstein believes the Medical Education programs at Gundersen are essential to protecting access to care. “We provide high-quality training to the next generation of medical professionals, ensuring they will be well-prepared to care for patients wherever they end up,” she says. “We also know that if we do our job well, a good number of our graduates will want to stay at Gundersen—or return to Gundersen at some later point in their career. Considering the predicted shortage of physicians, retaining those we train will positively impact our community.”

Since joining the Foundation’s board, Dr. Rosenstein has enjoyed interacting with other board members and learning about the myriad of Foundation funds, programs and health initiatives that benefit our community. She also finds value in seeing her work through the lens of other community members. “I enjoy learning how our work is viewed and valued by the community we serve,” she says. +





# A leader in Lyme disease research

Lyme disease has been a concern for residents of the Coulee region for decades. In fact, Wisconsin and Minnesota are among the states that regularly report the highest number of cases in the country because the habitat is well-suited to the blacklegged tick (also called the deer tick) responsible for transmitting the bacteria to humans.





“Decades of researching Lyme disease means that Gundersen’s providers have participated first-hand in the science.” –Arick Sabin, DO



Yet concerns about Lyme disease have increased in recent years as the number of people being diagnosed with the bacterial infection continues to rise. In 2022, for example, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services recorded 5,327 cases, which is about twice the number of cases reported just 15 years earlier.\* Although the numbers fluctuate from year to year, there is no doubt that the overall number of Lyme disease cases in Wisconsin is trending upward.

Unfortunately, despite the growing number of cases, funding availability for Lyme disease research is limited. The disease is not equally prevalent everywhere, and far fewer scientists work on Lyme disease research than some other “higher profile” diseases. These factors make the research being conducted locally even more important.

“The research made possible by our community’s support for Gundersen Medical Foundation is critical to advancing vaccine testing and efficacy,” says Stephen Shapiro, MD, Chair of Gundersen Medical Foundation. “The people and families we serve deserve to feel safe and comfortable enjoying the outdoor activities this region has to offer, so we are committed to advancing the science surrounding an issue that has a direct impact on our community.”

## IMPACTING PATIENT CARE

Gundersen’s dedicated team of researchers is led by Arick Sabin, DO, an infectious disease physician who joined Gundersen in 2018. In 2022, he became the director of the Foundation’s Clinical Microbiology Lab. “It is extremely enjoyable to work on problems from a clinical perspective (on the patient side, one at a time), as well as on the scientific/technical side (by generating the data and knowledge that allows us to make clinical judgments),” shares Dr. Sabin.

This approach means the research being conducted at Gundersen advances the global understanding of Lyme disease and also ensures local patients receive the best care possible. “Decades of researching Lyme disease means that Gundersen’s providers have participated first-hand in the science,” shares Dr. Sabin. “They are, therefore, well-informed and equipped to treat and counsel patients, helping them avoid the misinformation that can complicate an already complex issue.”

According to Dr. Sabin, the team has three research goals:

- **Develop better testing for Lyme disease**
- **Understand the immunology of how the disease works in humans**
- **Generate a human vaccine**





Dr. Sabin and researchers from Gundersen's Microbiology Lab conducting field research in October 2023

One reason the research is so difficult is because the bacterium that produces Lyme disease is hard to grow and study in a lab, which means scientists must rely on a more “indirect method” and, instead, study the bacterium within patients. Since the disease is difficult to accurately diagnose—and each patient reacts to the disease differently—the process is challenging.

Currently, there is no test that can diagnose Lyme disease with complete certainty, so improving the testing is an important goal. For decades, most Lyme disease tests have used serology, an immunological process that relies on antibody production as the signal for the human immune system's recognition of a recent or past infection.

Unfortunately, the serological signals produced by Lyme disease are not always clear or indicative of a current infection. “The testing we use relies on finicky pieces of the immune system that don't always behave the way we want them to. As such, it's difficult at times to get a ‘straight answer’ out of the immune system. And, since Lyme disease can act like many other diseases (and produce a very broad array of symptoms), there's a large cast of characters that can be confused for it,” explains Dr. Sabin.

### SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The Microbiology Research Lab was founded in 1988, allowing Gundersen to conduct several research projects related to Lyme disease. This research has resulted in more than 100 scientific publications, along with several patents. As a result, Gundersen has become a recognized leader in the field of Lyme disease research.

One of the most successful research outcomes occurred in the late 1990s when the former director of the microbiology research lab, Steve Callister, PhD, and his staff helped develop the first Lyme disease vaccine for canines. This early version of the vaccine was approximately 60 to 80 percent effective, and through a partnership with Schering-Plough, Dr. Callister and his team helped to improve the vaccine. The updated version, available since 2009, is closer to 100 percent effective.

Today, the researchers at Gundersen are helping to improve Lyme disease testing. Recognizing the limitations of the serologic standard two-tiered testing (STTT) that has been in use for decades, the scientific community is moving toward using a modified two-tiered testing (MTTT) algorithm. Research in this area conducted at Gundersen

by Drs. Sabin, Scholze, Lovrich and Callister was published in the respected journal *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease*.

The team's paper, “Clinical Evaluation of a *Borrelia* Modified Two-tiered Testing (MTTT) Shows Increased Early Sensitivity for *Borrelia burgdorferi* but Not Other Endemic *Borrelia* Species in a High Incidence Region for Lyme Disease in Wisconsin,” was published in October 2022 and examined the accuracy of a modified two-tier test that had been recently approved by the FDA.

The study ultimately found that the MTTT performed as well as the previous tests available for Lyme disease, underscoring the effectiveness of the shift away from serology tests and towards a newer paradigm. In fact, Gundersen's study “showed that the MTTT may actually perform a bit better in early detection of Lyme disease (per our study population),” says Dr. Sabin. “Unfortunately, the study also showed that MTTT cannot detect some of the other non-Lyme *Borrelia* in our area so well, which means we have more work to do here.”

### THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Looking ahead, Lyme disease research is only likely to grow in importance. More cases (in both adults and children) are being reported in regions where Lyme disease has existed for years, and new regions are becoming impacted. In 2021, for example, researchers confirmed that for the first time, ticks infected with the



bacteria that causes Lyme disease were found in Nebraska.

Some scientists attribute the spread to factors related to climate change, which is impacting temperatures and causing shifts in the movement of animals (such as the white-tailed deer and white-footed mice that carry deer ticks). Because the impacts of climate change are expected to grow, it is reasonable to expect that Lyme disease may also spread. "These factors are concerning because not only could more people and families be directly impacted, but Lyme is also a passenger. So, where Lyme goes, so do other serious diseases," says Dr. Sabin.

The growing prevalence of Lyme disease in our region and beyond only serves to underscore the importance of investments in medical research. "Throughout our history, Gundersen has consistently valued medical research because of the immediate and long-term impact," says Stephen Shapiro, MD, Chair of Gundersen Medical Foundation. "Our continued study of Lyme disease will help us provide the highest quality of care to our patients, while also contributing to the larger medical and scientific communities." +

**To learn more about how you can support Lyme disease research, please contact Gundersen Medical Foundation at (608) 775-6600.**

*\*Source: United States Centers for Disease Control. "Understanding Lyme and Other Tickborne Diseases." May 2022.*

"Throughout our history, Gundersen has consistently valued medical research because of the immediate and long-term impact. Our continued study of Lyme disease will help us provide the highest quality of care to our patients, while also contributing to the larger medical and scientific communities."

–Stephen Shapiro, MD  
Chair of Gundersen Medical Foundation



## GUNDERSEN MILESTONES IN LYME DISEASE RESEARCH

For decades, Gundersen has been devoted to researching Lyme disease because of the significant impact on the people in this region. Funding provided by Gundersen Medical Foundation has led to these important milestones:

- **Development of the Borreliacidal Assay, a test method serving as the foundation of Lyme research and development for many decades now**
- **Improvements in diagnostic capabilities for zoonotic disease in our region, over time**
- **Development of effective canine Lyme disease vaccines currently under patent/license**
- **Collaboration with many novel diagnostic technologies over time (e.g. T2, ChromaCode, etc.)**
- **Ongoing development of next-generation Lyme disease diagnostic testing in the era of Modified Two-Tier Testing (MTTT) per recent updates by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**



# Grateful patients and visionary benefactors

Having spent most of their lives working directly or indirectly in the healthcare industry, Herb and Barbara Heili have always recognized Gundersen Health System as something special.

Herb first learned about Gundersen through his career in the pharmaceutical industry and, later, spent five years in a leadership role within the organization. Then, when Herb suffered a life-threatening medical emergency in 2000, he and Barbara experienced Gundersen's brand of high-quality, compassionate care firsthand, and their appreciation for the organization deepened.

"The care patients receive at Gundersen is outstanding," shares Herb, "and that is due in large part to the Foundation's ongoing commitment to medical education and research."

This unique combination of personal and professional experiences inspired Herb and Barbara to give generously to the Foundation for the past 28 years. Although they have made various types of gifts, the couple is passionate about medical education, especially nursing education.



**HERB AND BARBARA HEILI**

## THE ROAD TO LA CROSSE

Herb and Barbara Heili grew up in northeast Wisconsin. After high school, Herb earned a degree in biology from St. Norbert College, and Barbara earned a nursing diploma from St. Agnes School of Nursing. The couple married in 1960 and started their family, which quickly grew to include three children.

At that time, Herb was serving as an officer in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps, so the family was stationed in Fort Lewis, Washington. When his service concluded, Herb began a successful 35-year career

in the pharmaceutical industry, working with several Fortune 500 companies. His jobs took the family to Washington, Minnesota, Kansas, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois and, finally, back to Wisconsin.

Wherever the family landed, Barbara was able to continue her 37-year career as a registered nurse. She is proud to have been licensed to work in seven states, an experience that gives her a unique perspective. "Not everyone realizes how special it is to have access to the quality of care we receive at Gundersen," she



*“We are proud to invest in the Foundation and hope that our story inspires others.” – Barbara Heili*

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explains. “Without a point of comparison, it’s easy to take that care for granted.”

Herb’s career included 23 years at Lederle Laboratories, where he served in a variety of roles, including as director of sales training and management development. He also spent 12 years at G.D. Searle Pharmaceutical Corporation, retiring from his role as the executive director for the Americas in 1997. Though his intention was to ease into retirement by opening his own consulting firm, an unexpected invitation took him in a new direction.

With his industry expertise, Herb had previously served as chair of the National Advisory Council for Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation for several years. He remembers being impressed with both the organization and its leadership. So, when Dr. Mark V. Connelly and Dr. Philip J. Dahlberg invited Herb to assist with the merger between the hospital and clinic, he accepted, serving Gundersen as executive vice president of administration from 1998 to 2002.

Looking back, Herb is proud he was able to use his experience managing teams to lead Gundersen through that transitional time. “Having gone through mergers in the past, I knew that a focus on shared values and a clear vision for the future would help bring people together,” he says.

### **EXPERIENCING COMPASSIONATE CARE**

During this time, Herb and Barbara’s life took another unexpected turn. In

September of 2000, Herb suffered a cardiac arrest during the first few minutes of a board meeting on Gundersen’s main campus. The quick action of nearby medical staff saved his life; however, the scope of the cardiovascular issues meant that Herb would need several surgeries and, ultimately, a heart transplant.

While he waited for a heart to become available, Herb spent nearly three months in the Coronary Care Unit at Gundersen. Then, following a heart transplant that took place on January 1, 2002, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Medical Center, Herb returned to Gundersen for many months of follow-up care and therapy.

“At every juncture, the care we received was outstanding—and the care was outstanding because the people were outstanding,” remarks Herb, who believes that investments in medical education give medical professionals the training and tools that allow them to go “above and beyond.”

In 2016, Herb experienced kidney failure as a result of the anti-rejection medications required after his heart transplant. The extent of the damage meant Herb would have to undergo a kidney transplant—and more follow-up care. In addition to the medical teams at University of Wisconsin–Madison and at Gundersen, Barbara and Herb are forever grateful to their daughter, Cathy, who gave her father the gift of life by donating one of her kidneys.



*Herb and Barbara pictured with members of their family.*

### **A CHANCE TO GIVE BACK**

Since Herb retired from Gundersen in 2002, he and Barbara have enjoyed spending time with their three children, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild while also remaining active in the community. Several family members have also found careers at Gundersen.

In 2003, Herb was selected to be one of two transplant patients in the nation to serve on the cardiothoracic committee of the United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS), a nonprofit organization that governs the transplant system in the United States. He also spent several years at Viterbo University coordinating support from grateful benefactors for a new nursing center. In recognition of his impact, Herb received the Saint XXIII John award in 2009.

For nearly three decades, Herb and Barbara have also remained passionate supporters of Gundersen Medical Foundation. In October, the couple was recognized with the 2023 Founders Award as part of the Gratefully, Gundersen event. The Founders Award was created in 2004 to recognize outstanding medical and philanthropic contributions to Gundersen Health System.

“We are proud to invest in the Foundation and hope that our story inspires others,” says Barbara. “Every gift to the Foundation makes a remarkable impact.” +



# Changing lives and improving care for cancer patients

Patients who are diagnosed with cancer of the head and neck must not only battle a serious disease, they must also face the challenges associated with treatment. In some cases, treatment for the cancer requires the surgical removal of a patient's ear, nose, jaw or other tissue from the head or neck—a reality that can take an emotional toll. Most patients will eventually receive a prosthesis to replace the missing tissue, but the outcome is not always a perfect match.

Nicole Fultz, clinical manager of Gundersen's Dental Specialties Prosthodontic Department, has seen firsthand the struggles these patients face, which is why she turned to Gundersen Medical Foundation. By working with generous private donors, the Foundation was able to coordinate the purchase of a Trios 5 intraoral scanner.

The Trios 5 is a piece of state-of-the-art equipment that will create more natural prosthetics in a shorter timeframe, ensuring that Gundersen Health System's patients can return to their everyday lives feeling more confident and more like themselves following surgery.

## **BRINGING BACK A TALENTED SPECIALIST**

Gundersen's Dental Specialties Department had been without a prosthodontist since 2020, but the opportunity to work with head and neck cancer patients was one reason Donna Hecker, DDS, MS, decided to return to Gundersen, the place where her career began. However, the necessary state-of-the-art equipment for restoring patients with facial anomalies, such as the Trios 5 intraoral scanner, was not present in the clinic.

Dr. Hecker worked at Gundersen from 1995 to 1998 before accepting a position at the University of Minnesota. She served as the director of the maxillofacial prosthetic clinic for about six years before moving into private practice. In 2022,





*The Trios 5 intraoral scanner is a piece of state-of-the-art equipment that allows for a scan of a patient's tissue before surgery. A 3D printer is then used to create a temporary plastic covering until the wound is healed and a permanent prosthesis can be created, as seen here.*

“At Gundersen, we believe that care is not limited to focusing on a patient’s clinical experience. It’s about offering complete and compassionate care that changes lives, and that is the level of care made possible through gifts made to Gundersen Medical Foundation.”

—Nicole Fultz, clinical manager



*Pictured opposite: Dr. Hecker (holding the intraoral scanner) is pictured with dental assistants (L–R) Domingo Lilon, Eticia Brickman and Ann McClurg*

she was recruited back to Gundersen and rejoined the organization full time in October.

In addition to her work as a dental specialist (helping patients who need dentures, crowns, implants, etc.), Dr. Hecker uses her training as a prosthodontist with a subspecialty in maxillofacial prosthetics. This subspecialty means she treats patients who experience developmental conditions (such as cleft lip and palate) as well as abnormalities of the head and neck caused by cancer or trauma.

According to Dr. Hecker, this kind of work is her “true love” because of the genuine impact and connection she makes with patients during a vulnerable period in their lives. “Historically, head and neck cancer has been an isolating, heartbreaking disease because the impact of the cancer is visible to the world,” she says. “This work allows me the opportunity to get to know the real person—to see their soul—and to

help them through the healing process by preserving their dignity and sense of identity.”

### **TECHNOLOGY THAT CHANGES LIVES**

According to Dr. Hecker, the Trios 5 intraoral scanner will significantly improve the quality of patient care at Gundersen in several ways.

To begin, the healing time for a patient undergoing surgery to remove a nose or an ear due to cancer is typically about four months (or longer). During this time, a patient may choose to cover the affected part of their face or neck with a mask, but even that option is not always possible. With the Trios 5 intraoral scanner, Dr. Hecker will be able to scan the tissue before surgery and use a 3D printer to create a temporary plastic covering that provides some level of comfort until the wound is healed and a permanent prosthesis can be created.

In the past, some prosthetics were shaped by making an impression of the affected

area; however, a good portion of the final work was done by hand. Even the most talented prosthodontist was rarely able to create a “perfect” match. According to Dr. Hecker, though, while there is still a good amount of detailed work to be done, the precision of the Trio 5 will help create a prosthesis that looks better, fits better and is ready in less time. “I am so grateful for the generosity of the donors who made the purchase of this incredible technology possible,” she says.

The Trio 5 intraoral scanner provides a powerful example of the impact of philanthropy on our entire community. “While this equipment is not lifesaving, it is absolutely life-changing—and that is how we set ourselves apart from other healthcare organizations,” says Fultz. “At Gundersen, we believe that care is not limited to focusing on a patient’s clinical experience. It’s about offering complete and compassionate care that changes lives, and that is the level of care made possible through gifts to Gundersen Medical Foundation.” +



# National recognition for excellence in patient care

Gundersen Health System's 45-bed Emergency Services Department serves approximately 65,000 patients annually, with an average of 180 to 220 patients each day. The fast-paced, unpredictable nature of emergency medicine means the work is consistently demanding, and it reached unprecedented levels during the pandemic.

Despite the challenging nature of emergency work, however, the Emergency Services Department at Gundersen consistently earns patient experience scores that place them in the 90th percentile nationwide. This benchmark underscores the team's commitment to providing high-quality, timely and appropriate patient care—and is just one of the reasons the department

was recently recognized by the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) with the 2023 Lantern Award.

According to the ENA, "The Lantern Award is a recognition award given to emergency departments that exemplify exceptional practice and innovative performance in the core areas of leadership, practice, education, advocacy and research." Awardees are encouraged to share their designation as a Lantern Award recipient to demonstrate to patients that "exceptional care is provided" and that "excellence is valued."

Kara Bayer, MBA, BSN, RN, clinical manager of Emergency Services and Miranda Schmidt, BSN, RN, supervisor of Clinical Emergency Services submitted the application in March 2023, and they were thrilled to learn in July 2023 that their team had been selected to receive the honor. "We have a robust, creative team that looks at problems and thinks critically about how to best solve them," says Bayer.

"It is because of the dedication, expertise, innovation and compassion of our team that we received the Lantern Award."

## A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

The 70+ page application included several examples highlighting the evidence-based practices and innovative strategies that allowed Gundersen's Emergency Services Department to weather the pandemic and to overcome nationwide staffing challenges—while, at the same time, improving patient care metrics, improving emergency after care and developing strategies to address high emergency room utilization. "Our application pointed out not only our successes, but also our failures and how we worked to overcome them," shares Schmidt.

According to Bayer, one quality that sets Gundersen apart is the training of the medical professionals who make up the Emergency Services Department, including emergency medical technicians (EMTs), paramedics, doctors and nurses.



Gundersen nurses, for example, are required to complete 53 hours of ongoing education per year. This commitment to medical education, frequently supported by Gundersen Medical Foundation, has a significant impact on the quality of patient care.

Another distinguishing feature is the team's inclusive approach to patient care. "The dedication to patient care is demonstrated by all members of our diverse team, regardless of their role," says Bayer. "Everyone—our medical teams, social workers, administrative staff and environmental assistants—is committed to providing the highest quality of care because the people in our community matter to us. That level of commitment is just part of our culture, but it doesn't exist everywhere."

### A SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION

In addition to highlighting the department's excellence, the Lantern Award application provided an opportunity for Bayer and Schmidt to shine a spotlight on some of the team's innovative strategies. In 2019, for example, the Emergency Services Department added a clinician to help triage patients and keep processes moving efficiently even during the busiest times.

Additionally, the Emergency Services Department has partnered with Gundersen's Department of Population Health to add two dedicated community health workers from St. Clare Health Mission to the team. They serve to connect patients with resources such as access to food, transportation, safe housing or economic assistance as needed.

Finally, the Emergency Services Department uses a Complex Care Committee to review the factors contributing to high utilization. The goal is to create a plan that may include coordination between hospital departments, social services and community resources to help the patient, while preventing multiple or unnecessary ER visits.

"These examples draw attention to the evidence-based and innovative practices that set our team apart from others," says Schmidt.

### SUPPORTING AN AWARD-WINNING TEAM

In September, Gundersen Medical Foundation was proud to provide funding so that 10 members of the Emergency Services Department could travel to

San Diego to attend the ENA's annual conference. In addition to accepting their award, the attendees were able to participate in workshops presented by emergency departments from throughout the country.

"Healthcare has always been ever-changing, but post-pandemic, it made a major pivot," says Bayer. "Thanks to support from the Foundation, our staff was able to gain insights that will allow us to continue developing creative solutions and providing transformational care to our community."

Today, the Lantern Award is proudly displayed in the Emergency Services Department where it serves as a symbol of the team's commitment to quality, safety and a healthy work environment. +



*(Left) Clinical Manager, Kara Bayer, RN, BSN, MBA, with Anita Knutson, EMT, in front of a sign celebrating the team's Lantern Award*

*(Right) Members of Gundersen's Emergency Services Department at the ENA Conference*



A person in a white shirt and dark pants stands in a dark space, holding a glowing lantern. The lantern emits a bright light, and a stream of glowing particles falls from the top of the frame. The background is a mix of dark blue and purple, with a large, textured, reddish-orange shape on the right side.

# Bringing love and attention to the final stages of life

**W**hen Winifred Rudd, age 98, began receiving hospice care from Gundersen's Hospice and Palliative Care Program in February 2023, her daughter, Linda Schmitz, was unsure what to expect. Linda hoped her mother would find some physical relief from the back pain that seemed to be getting progressively worse, but she was concerned about Winifred's emotional well-being, too.





## Gundersen’s Hospice & Palliative Care Program has offered therapeutic music and massage therapy to patients receiving hospice care since 2022.

*(L–R) Certified music practitioners Charlene Elderkin and Tracy Mangold with licensed massage therapist Jennifer Vogel*

Later that month, Winifred was visited by Tracy Mangold, a certified music practitioner (CMP), and some of Linda’s worry was eased. “It was easy to see the joy in mom’s eyes as she clapped and sang along with the music,” remembers Linda. “Seeing that spark—knowing mom could still have moments of joy even in such a hard time—brought such comfort.”

Thanks in part to support from Gundersen Medical Foundation, Gundersen’s Hospice & Palliative Care Program has been able to offer therapeutic music to patients receiving hospice care like Winifred since 2022. These programs speak to Gundersen’s commitment to providing high-quality, compassionate care through the final phase of life.

“Gifts from our donors make it possible for the Foundation to support care initiatives at Gundersen that go above and beyond

what most healthcare organizations offer,” explains Mandy Richardson, MPH, CFRE, director of Philanthropy in the Foundation. “Being able to add an extra level of compassion to the care already provided to hospice patients and their families is a perfect example of what Gundersen calls Love + Medicine.”

### **PROVIDING LOVE THROUGH MUSIC**

Tracy Mangold and Charlene Elderkin became certified music practitioners in 2018 after completing the same Music for Healing and Transition Program. Charlene came from a musical family and has played instruments since she was 10 years old. When she decided to become a therapeutic musician, she also learned to play the harp. In addition to playing the harp, she is a certified vocalist. Tracy, who also came from a musical family and considers music an important part of her life, is certified as a vocalist and guitarist.

Regardless of their choice of musical instruments, both Tracy and Charlene are dedicated to adapting each session to meet each patient’s needs. Once a hospice nurse or doctor recognizes that a patient may benefit from therapeutic music, a referral is made. Then, one of the music practitioners will meet with the patient wherever the patient is receiving care—either in-home or at a care facility—to determine the patient’s interest and needs.

The sessions are patient-driven and completely individualized, which means the benefits can also vary. Some patients, like Winifred, find joy in music that can bring back memories and uplift their spirits. In some cases, family members who are present may be invited to join in, and the session can become a mixture of music and conversation with patients enjoying an opportunity to reflect or





reminisce. In other sessions, Tracy or Charlene work one-on-one with patients, using music to promote relaxation and deep breathing.

“We come to each session with a plan, but we are constantly assessing and adjusting,” explains Tracy. “We watch closely to see how each patient responds, adapting elements like tempo or volume, to give each person what they need on any given day.”

While the physical, mental and emotional benefits of therapeutic music are well-established, Tracy and Charlene share that their visits often have a simpler, more profound impact. “It’s easy for a patient receiving end-of-life care to feel consumed by their medical situation,” explains Charlene. “But when we visit, they don’t have to talk about their condition or disease. They are just a person—a human who is worthy of love and attention. Our goal is to increase their quality of life, to give them love through music.”

### **THE HEALING POWER OF TOUCH**

Soon after Gundersen added therapeutic music services, the option for massage therapy was added as well. Jennifer Vogel, licensed massage therapist (LMT), has been providing compassionate care to Gundersen patients receiving hospice care since March 2023.

In 2015, Jennifer attended an end-of-life doula training in Colorado; this experience helped her realize she wanted to support patients who were transitioning, so she earned a degree in massage therapy from Minnesota State College Southeast in Winona, Minn., and also received training in “healing touch,” a form of energy therapy.

“The end-of-life journey can be tumultuous,” says Jennifer, “but a calming presence with a soothing touch can make a profound impact on a patient’s physical and mental well-being, which also brings comfort to the patient’s family members.”

Just like therapeutic music, Jennifer’s relationship with a patient usually begins when a member of a patient’s hospice team sees a potential benefit and makes a referral. Jennifer meets with each patient to learn about their preferences and needs, so a relationship and a personalized plan can be developed.

Chelsea Rehman, RN, Hospice care coordinator, has made many such referrals because she has seen the value for patients. “Touch makes a world of difference to our patients, and to have someone with skilled hands who can help patients relax is so powerful,” she says.

According to Jennifer, some patients will benefit from a soft or moderate level of massage, which can ease muscle tension, contribute to pain relief or improve joint stiffness and mobility. Other patients experience a boost to their mental health through massage or healing touch, which can ease anxiety and promote better sleep. “Whatever the session looks like,

there is something simple and beautiful about being able to connect so deeply with someone during such a fragile time,” explains Jennifer, “and I am proud to work for an organization that cares about their patients’ quality of life, even as they transition.”

Larry Skendzel, MD, works in the Hospice & Palliative Care Department at Gundersen’s La Crosse campus and has also observed the positive impact of massage therapy on patients. “Massage therapy brings a new dimension to our hospice care that decreases the need for pain medications, helps decrease anxiety in the patient and their family and provides space for new possibilities during an important time in life,” he explains. “Our patients consistently view healing touch as something to look forward to during a challenging time.”

While the therapeutic music and massage therapy programs for patients are still new, the feedback from patients and families—as well as the medical professionals who make the referrals—is overwhelmingly positive.

Winifred, who later moved to an assisted living facility, continued to benefit from both therapeutic music and massage therapy sessions until she passed away in October 2023. Because she was dealing with a significant amount of pain that medication could not always resolve, the sessions were quieter and designed primarily to promote relaxation and rest. “Preparing to say goodbye was hard,” shares Linda, “but knowing mom was surrounded by attentive people who cared about her made a difference.” +





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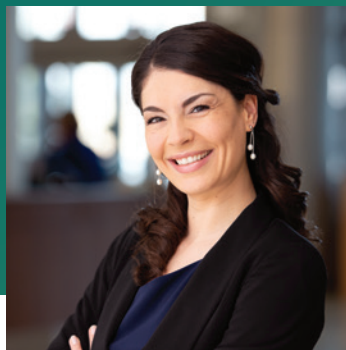
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*Director of Philanthropy*



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*Medical Director of Philanthropy*

# Investing in compassionate care

As leaders of Gundersen Health System and Gundersen Medical Foundation, we are blessed to hear stories from many grateful patients throughout each year.

Our patients (like Herb and Barbara Heili, featured on pages 8–9) often show their gratitude for outstanding care by giving back to Gundersen. In turn, these gifts are re-invested by the Foundation into medical education, research and community outreach programs that impact future patients and entire communities. Simply put, your gifts make it possible for Gundersen to provide a higher level of care—more compassionate care—than may otherwise be possible.

Recently we had a conversation with 88-year-old farmer Arnie Marx. He and his wife have been longtime supporters

of the Foundation, making faithful gifts twice per year for over 20 years. When we asked Arnie why they give, he shared that he survived cancer 20 years ago thanks to Gundersen.

“When I was going through treatment, I promised myself that I would help someone else. I am here because a lady donated that machine,” he said, referring to the linear accelerator, what was then a piece of state-of-the-art equipment acquired by Gundersen because of a transformational gift by Mrs. Marjorie Reinhart in 2005.

This story touched and inspired us because it illustrates the power of philanthropy.

Your generosity is part of this story as well. Whether it’s the most advanced treatment option available because of research, or compassionate care by a physician trained

in one of our residency programs, or state-of-the-art equipment like the linear accelerator, your gifts have a powerful cumulative impact on the people and families of our region.

In October, the Foundation hosted our donor recognition event called Gratefully, Gundersen where we provided additional examples of the lives touched by your generosity. We hope you will join us for another opportunity to gather and socialize at our holiday social Thursday, Dec. 7 at our downtown offices.

As we reflect on the stories in this issue and others we have shared throughout the year, one thing is certain. Your gifts lead directly to a higher quality of care at Gundersen, and we are all better because you have chosen generosity and gratitude. +



# March 1–Sept. 30, 2023 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 September 30, 2023, will appear in the next issue of Pathfinders.*

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 Venki Paramesh, MD  
 Benjamin M. Parsons, DO  
 Michelle R. Peterson, APNP  
 Krista L. Pfaff, RN  
 Joshua D. Pfeiffer, MD  
 John C. Porter, DO  
 Joshua J. Potaracke, DC  
 Gregory D. Prichett, PsyD  
 Premnauth Rabindranauth, MD  
 Emily D. Rae, MD  
 Melissa R. Revels, RN, NP  
 Mark J. Ringstrom, MD  
 Delbert W. Rogers, MD  
 Lori J. Rosenstein, MD  
 Chad A. Rudie, PA  
 Barbara M. Rugen-Rendler, RN, NP  
 Janet S. Ryan, MD  
 Sherri 'Kristy' Schilling, MD  
 Hailey A. Schneider, RN, NP  
 Janice L. Schroeder, RN, NP  
 Matthew T. Sdano, MD  
 Syed M. Shah, MD  
 Stephen B. Shapiro, MD  
 Daniel K. Short, MD

Sumaiya W. Siddiqi, MD  
 Devin C. Simonson, DPM  
 Michael D. Smith, PsyD  
 Melanie M. Solum, MD  
 Victoria A. Sparks, MD  
 Jessica L. Spindler, PA  
 Karla K. Sprague, RN  
 Balaji Srinivasan, MD  
 Rachel M. Steele, DDS  
 Amy L. Strain, MD  
 Peter H. Strauss, DC  
 Kurt A. Swanson, DO  
 Ryan P. Swetkovich, PT  
 San Thida, MD  
 Jordan M. Thompson, MD  
 Nicholas Thompson, DPM  
 John L. Thorsness, DDS\*  
 Chad M. Thurman, MD  
 Renato Travelli, MD\*  
 Leroy J. Trombetta, MD  
 Duane K. Undeland, MD  
 Courtney M. Van Auken, NP  
 Brea C. Veldboom, RN, NP  
 Todd A. Verdon, OD  
 Christopher D. Walden, MD  
 Janel L. Ward, MD  
 Kasmier L. Wawrzaszek, PA  
 Amy L. Wentland, MD  
 Christopher J. Whalen, MD  
 Douglas W. White, MD  
 Savannah M. Whitemarsh, PsyD  
 Eileen Williams, PA  
 Jon M. Williamson, OD  
 Catherine E. Wilson, RN, NP  
 Justin O. Wilson, AuD  
 James L. Wise, PA  
 Stephen C. Wissink, MD  
 Michael A. Wittcik, MD  
 Travis G. Wright, DO  
 Yongxue 'David' Yao, MD  
 Siegfried W. Yu, MD  
 Michael A. Zimmer, MD  
 Jonathan A. Zlabek, MD

\*Deceased

2023

# Foundation Grants Report

Because of your generosity Gundersen Medical Foundation is able to award grants annually to Gundersen departments in our service area through a competitive grant program overseen by the Foundation’s board of directors.

Some departments request dollars to support patients and community members with programs like Paula’s Purse for cancer patients, Carlee for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and Thunder Ride for adolescent patients with Type 1 diabetes. Others request support to attend conferences and trainings, to acquire the most innovative equipment for patient care or to sponsor programming for patients like stroke support groups. To celebrate your impact, we will share in each issue of Pathfinders some details of the grants awarded in each fiscal period.

In 2023, the fiscal year was shortened to 10 months (from December to September) to account for a system-wide adjustment. During that time, the Foundation received nearly 1,000 grant requests and awarded \$3,536,383, benefitting 90 Gundersen departments.

Please find the full list of grants awarded below, separated by our 10 primary program areas. In addition to the list of all grants funded by the Foundation during the past fiscal year, we are pleased to share short stories that highlight the impactful work made possible thanks to supporters like you.

## GUNDERSEN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

FOCUS AREA	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cancer Research	\$150,000	Kabara Cancer Research Institute Endowment distribution
Cancer Research	\$145,537	Cancer research
Cancer Research	\$90,000	Hematology and oncology research
Cancer Research	\$62,562	Norman Gillette Jr. Research Fellowship Endowment distribution
Cancer Research	\$61,500	Dr. Parson’s breast cancer research
Cancer Research	\$43,387	Allyn O. & Fern E. Knaak Endowment distribution
Cancer Research	\$38,101	Pediatric oncology research associates
Cancer Research	\$34,270	Center for Breast Care research
Cancer Research	\$4,760	Ovarian cancer research
Cancer Research	\$3,483	Adult cancer education
Cancer Research	\$2,160	Sequencing of four lines of breast cancer cells
Cancer Research	\$1,676	Pediatric cancer education
Cancer Research	\$3,750	Glioblastoma research
General	\$49,358	Norman Gillette Sr. Medical Research Memorial Endowment distribution
General	\$44,091	Qiagen E22 equipment
Dementia	\$20,913	Medical Specialty unit dementia research
General	\$15,133	Nancy Lee Edwards-McNamara, MD Memorial Endowment distribution
General	\$8,186	RJ Trane Surgical Research Endowment distribution
Dental	\$4,001	Dental scholarship
Microbiology & Infectious Disease	\$1,500	Research study on Lyme Disease
Nursing	\$1,000	Nursing Research on the Green support
Navigational	\$60,214	A.C.V. Elston III, MD, Summer Research fellowship program
Microbiology & Infectious Disease	\$12,506	William A. Agger, MD, Research Laboratory internship
Navigational	\$5,900	Kang student researcher
Rheumatology	\$1,275	Rheumatology research
Sports Medicine	\$8,502	LIMS research
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$873,765</b>	

### MEDICAL RESEARCH

#### LIMS Lab

The Foundation awarded a two-year \$17,000 grant—thanks to a generous gift from Ron and Jane Rada—to support a collaborative research project, LIMS Lab, with UW-La Crosse. Research in the LIMS Lab focuses primarily on the legs of athletes, from stride symmetry to reducing Achilles tendon loading.

*Pictured: Ron and Jane Rada receive a tour of the LIMS Lab*





## MEDICAL EDUCATION

PROGRAM AREA	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Continuing Medical Education	\$4,000	DEI training and education
Continuing Medical Education	\$1,623	Academic Day speaker
Continuing Medical Education	\$1,200	Application to WNA for educational session nursing credits
Continuing Medical Education	\$750	Cancer Center grand rounds speaker
Continuing Medical Education	\$534	Pediatric Boot Camp training equipment
Continuing Medical Education	\$500	Dental conference
Continuing Medical Education	\$329	Primary Care conference
Continuing Medical Education	\$277	Cancer Center grand rounds speaker
Family Medicine Residency	\$12,538	Equipment for the Family Medicine Residency Clinic at Hamilton
Family Medicine Residency	\$5,378	Resident wellness events
Family Medicine Residency	\$1,000	Family Medicine mentoring and education
Family Medicine Residency	\$38,213	Family Medicine resident pediatric rotations
Medical Education (general)	\$59,502	Edwin L. Overholt, MD, Chair of Medical Education Endowment distribution
Medical Education (general)	\$35,971	General support for Medical Education
Medical Education (general)	\$434	Medical student orientations
Internal Medicine Residency	\$103,297	Edward Winga, MD, Director of Internal Medicine Endowment distribution
Pediatrics	\$28,368	Coordinate med student pediatric rotations
Pediatrics	\$18,814	WARM Pediatrics Director
Pediatrics	\$16,899	Pediatric Medical Student Clerkship Endowment distribution
Pediatrics	\$11,256	Medical Staff Family Practice - PCC Director
Surgical Residency	\$50,375	William Kisken, MD, & Thomas Cogbill, MD, Director of General Surgery Residency Endowment dist.
Surgical Residency	\$14,011	Surgery resident rotation to Alaska
Surgical Residency	\$4,500	Fundamentals of Laparoscopic Surgery test
Surgical Residency	\$3,077	Score curriculum for surgical residents
Surgical Residency	\$2,590	Fundamentals of Endoscopic Surgery training
Surgical Residency	\$1,500	Surgeon as educator training
Surgical Residency	\$1,331	Surgery resident mission trip to Guatemala
Surgical Residency	\$610	Journal club visiting speaker
Surgical Residency	\$212	Textbooks for the general surgical residents
Surgical Residency	\$180	General Surgery grand rounds
Surgical Residency	\$7,485	Susan F. Behrens, MD, FACS, Surgical Skills Directorship distribution
Transitional Year Residency	\$89,325	James Webster, MD, & Lucian Griffith, MD, Director of Transitional Year Residency Endowment dist.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$516,079</b>	

## MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$41,116	Update to audio system for patient music
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$30,349	Updates to gym space for patients
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$17,500	EmPATH Unit consultation
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$1,200	Patient essential needs and self-care items
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$900	Warm sweatshirts for patients
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$700	Garden supplies for patients
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$500	Gas cards for patient families
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$15,000	Chair upgrade for patients in partial hospitalization program
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$6,000	Adult ADHD testing material pilot program
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$2,000	Contingency management reward program
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$1,912	Recreational equipment for Unity Residential Treatment facilities
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$500	Gas cards for patients
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$400	AA Big Book patient education
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$200	Medication lockboxes
Crime Victim Services	\$480	Gas cards for victims of crime to establish safety
Information and Referral	\$2,000	Annual Suicide Prevention Summit
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$120,757</b>	

### MEDICAL EDUCATION

#### Hematology/Oncology Fellowship

The Foundation's Medical Education program trains thousands of learners annually. This past summer, 42 residents and fellows graduated from the program, including eight hired to work at Gundersen Bellin Health System.

*Pictured: Hematology/Oncology Fellow Aquino Williams, MD, practices his skills in the SIM Lab*



### MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

#### Adolescent Sensory Room

Inpatient Behavioral Health received a \$30,000 grant from the Kaitlin's Table Fund to build a sensory room in its adolescent unit. Sensory rooms are used to facilitate relaxation, provide enjoyment and most importantly, teach patients to identify their sensory needs and find tools to help with regulating their emotions and symptoms.

*Pictured: Inpatient Behavioral Health adolescent sensory room*

**EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**Employee Zen Room**

Thanks to a \$2,500 Foundation grant, Gundersen employees working in the Support Services Building in Onalaska will have a new, quiet space to use during breaks on stressful days. The “GunderZen” room will be modeled after one on the La Crosse campus (pictured above), including a massage chair.

*Pictured: The “GunderZen” room in La Crosse will serve as a model for the Onalaska space*



**EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Foundation	\$40,850	Employees Helping Employees Emergency Fund program
Medical Specialty Unit	\$750	Support staff wellbeing on Medical Specialty Unit
Office of Population Health	\$3,000	Equipment for MyHealth Rooms
Office of Population Health	\$2,500	Create a GunderZen Room in Onalaska
Office of Population Health	\$1,000	MyHealth Reward employee wellness program
Office of Population Health	\$500	Employee wellness challenges
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,600</b>	

**STAFF EDUCATION**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT
Spiritual Care	\$81,268	Patient Coordination Hub	\$1,825
Department of Nursing	\$19,666	Integrated Center for Education	\$1,690
Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Sports Medicine	\$14,649	Orthopaedics	\$1,100
Critical Care	\$11,000	Pediatric Specialties	\$1,000
Behavioral Health	\$6,839	Respiratory Care	\$1,000
Labor and Delivery	\$6,594	Center for Breast Care	\$980
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$5,772	Endocrinology	\$910
Trauma Services	\$5,588	Emergency Services	\$800
NICU, PICU, Pediatrics	\$5,300	TriCounty Rehabilitation Services	\$798
Office of Population Health	\$5,258	Neurology	\$700
Social Services	\$5,050	Infection Control	\$699
Cardiopulmonary Unit	\$4,932	Infusion Services	\$671
Gundersen Children’s	\$3,704	Urology	\$540
Residency Clinic	\$3,500	Obstetrics & Nursery	\$500
Renal Dialysis	\$3,240	Optometry	\$455
Gastroenterology	\$3,128	Rehabilitation	\$375
Lab Admin and Support	\$3,000	Community Paramedics	\$265
Medical Oncology	\$2,949	La Crescent Family Medicine	\$220
Cardiac Testing and Rehab	\$2,738	Nutrition Therapy	\$219
Radiation Oncology	\$2,658	Nephrology	\$210
Crime Victim Services	\$2,500	General Medical	\$140
IV Therapy	\$2,335	Advance Care Planning	\$100
Nuclear Medicine	\$2,300	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$219,165</b>



**STAFF EDUCATION**

**Hospice**

The Foundation awarded \$5,772 to support the continuing education and training of hospice and palliative care staff.

*Pictured: Jennifer Thomas, Hospice nurse*

**ONCOLOGY**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cancer Center	\$35,000	Snacks and meals for patients receiving infusion treatments
Cancer Center	\$10,000	Comfort bags for new treatment patients
Cancer Center	\$8,125	Radiant Wraps for radiation treatment patients
Cancer Center	\$6,460	Spiritual care services for Cancer Center staff
Cancer Center	\$5,000	Head covering options for patients undergoing chemotherapy
Cancer Center	\$2,500	Cancer Center support group
Cancer Center	\$1,000	Cancer Center United staff wellness program
Cancer Center	\$1,000	Cancer Center grand rounds speaker
Cancer Center	\$600	Tomah Cancer Center meal voucher program
Cancer Center - Tomah	\$25,000	Boutique to fit patients with head coverings in Tomah Cancer Center
Cancer Center - Tomah	\$3,250	Radiant Wraps for radiation treatment patients in Tomah
Center for Breast Care	\$419,650	New 3D mammography unit - La Crosse
Dental & Oral Surgery	\$20,000	Intraoral scanner to treat head and neck cancer patients
Family Medicine - Winona	\$185,150	New 3D mammography unit - Winona
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$722,735</b>	



**ONCOLOGY**

**Radiant Wraps**

The Gundersen Cancer Centers in La Crosse and Tomah received grants totaling \$11,375 to purchase Radiant Wraps for patients undergoing radiation treatment. The wraps, created by a breast cancer survivor, come in a variety of patterns to make patients look and feel better during treatment and beyond.

*Pictured: A patient models her Radiant Wrap*



## PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$42,870	Bioness BITS Balance device
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$26,196	XCITE2 FES device for therapy
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$19,405	Two infrared wired goggles for diagnosing vestibular disorders
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$9,035	Sanet Vision Integrator
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$8,598	Infrared wireless goggles for diagnosing vestibular disorders
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$11,550	Two Delfi personalized tourniquet systems
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$2,835	Three, 6-channel e-stims units for treatment of functional dry needling
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$250	Inner ear vestibular model for patient education
Sports Medicine	\$300	Healthy Living Center physical therapy equipment
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$121,039</b>	



### PATIENT SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH

#### Hmong Women 50+ Health Event

The Office of Population Health received a \$2,909 grant from the Foundation to support the cost of a Hmong Women 50+ Event at the Hmong Cultural and Community Center in La Crosse. The goal of the event was to reduce barriers to care and increase understanding of preventative care with a focus on breast health. Gundersen's mobile mammogram unit was on site to provide screening mammograms, and Hmong-speaking nurses presented educational sessions.

*Pictured: Gundersen staff prepare to welcome women to the Hmong Women 50+ Event*

## PATIENT SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Medical Specialty Unit	\$13,000	Day room for patients with dementia and mental health needs
Medical Specialty Unit	\$10,000	Safety, sensory and recreation items for patients with dementia
Office of Population Health	\$8,500	Healthy Aging Conference
Hospice & Palliative Care	\$400	Professional actors for VitalTalk education and training
Palliative Care	\$1,000	Palliative Care staff retreat
Critical Care	\$600	Care journals for families of critically ill patients
Critical Care	\$300	Organ and Tissue Donation Garden Flags for families of donors
Integrated Center for Education	\$1,110	TruIV blocks for staff training
Integrated Center for Education	\$500	Staff injection training
Hemophilia	\$2,500	Amish Clinic day with Hemophilia Treatment Center
Marketing	\$2,104	Bereavement room updates
Pulmonary	\$3,000	Aerobika airway clearance device
Rehab	\$1,000	Rehab support groups
Spiritual Care	\$2,500	Tea for the Soul staff support program
Spiritual Care	\$1,750	CPE Library educational resources
Spiritual Care	\$1,500	CPE Celebrations for new students and staff
Career Development Center	\$1,500	Transportation for high school students to attend healthcare career event
Envision	\$25,000	Develop a hospital-based microfarm
Fleet	\$1,995	Support for Pine Ridge, S.D. medical outreach
Global and Community Partners	\$6,000	Global and Community Partners At Home program
Nutrition Therapy	\$750	Cooking classes for Low Sodium Nutrition Therapy Class and Livestrong program
Office of Population Health	\$4,000	Minutes in Motion
Office of Population Health	\$1,598	Hmong women 50+ health event
Speech Pathology	\$1,000	LOUD Crowd Celebration for patients with Parkinson's disease
Care Coordination	\$1,903	Lois's Loose Change program
Social Services	\$8,000	Emergency funding to assist adult patients ready for discharge
Social Services	\$5,317	Assist with patient barriers to safely discharge
Social Services	\$1,000	Help patients board their pets temporarily while hospitalized
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$107,828</b>	



### PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

#### Feeding Therapy

Pediatric Physical and Occupational Therapy received a \$2,400 grant from Children's Miracle Network Hospitals® to purchase a variety of nutritious foods to be used during therapy sessions for children with significant feeding difficulties and highly restricted diets. This grant helped cover the cost of supplies for this type of therapy, thereby avoiding the need to increase the charge for patients.

*Pictured: A young patient and her provider try out different foods*



**PEDIATRICS**

**AvBirth Simulator**

The Integrated Center for Education received a \$64,100 grant from Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals® to purchase an AvBirth simulator—a wearable birthing simulator—to enhance obstetrics education at Gundersen. Learners can use it to practice coaching a patient through all phases of childbirth, including birthing complications.

*Pictured: Students practice coaching a Gundersen actor through childbirth using the AvBirth simulator*



**CARDIOLOGY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Tri-State Ambulance AEDs**

Tri-State Ambulance received a \$60,000 grant to distribute 40 AEDs for EMS staff to carry with them wherever they go, and to upgrade the PulsePoint® app so it alerts the off-duty EMS staff to the site of a cardiac arrest, whether in public or at private residence.

*Pictured: Tri-State EMS staff pose with new AEDs*

**PEDIATRICS**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Emergency Services - Boscobel	\$12,985	Panda iRes Infant Warmer for Gundersen Boscobel
Family Medicine - La Crosse	\$1,200	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Holmen	\$500	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Houston	\$350	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - La Crescent	\$773	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Residency Clinic	\$1,500	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Spring Grove	\$200	Summer reading program with local library
Family Medicine - St. Joseph	\$1,500	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Tomah	\$3,025	Reach Out and Read program
Family Medicine - Waukon/Calmar/Lansing	\$1,405	Screening audiometer
Family Medicine - Waukon/Calmar/Lansing	\$700	Reach Out and Read program
Gundersen Medical Foundation	\$383,256	CMN Hospitals patient support grants
Gundersen Medical Foundation	\$26,823	Thunder Ride patient support grants
Gundersen Air	\$11,000	Tecotherm mounting system for patient cooling during transport
Gundersen Children’s	\$37,054	Children’s Hospital Association membership
Gundersen Children’s	\$10,000	Child Life supplies
Gundersen Children’s	\$5,244	Plush animals for children undergoing surgery
Gundersen Children’s	\$250	Teen patient incentives for medical tasks
Integrated Center for Education	\$64,100	AvBirth simulator to enhance OB education
Integrated Center for Education	\$10,290	Monivent Neo Training System
Integrated Center for Education	\$1,580	Simulation lab infant lumbar puncture trainer
Labor & Delivery	\$1,653	Mementos for parents and siblings following fetal or neonatal loss
NICU/PICU	\$10,000	Updates to NICU family and parent lounge
Orthotics	\$400	iPad for patient distraction during cranial molding fitting
Pediatric Dentistry	\$24,530	Pediatric dentistry equipment to expand Winona services
Pediatric Orthopedics	\$600	iPad for patient distraction and education during appointment
Pediatric PT/OT	\$10,933	Wheelchair loaner program
Pediatric PT/OT	\$7,600	Galileo Vibration Plate
Pediatric PT/OT	\$4,370	Treatment and testing items for pediatric therapy patients
Pediatric PT/OT	\$3,728	New evaluation testing kits for pediatric patients
Pediatric PT/OT	\$2,400	Food to use during patient care treatment sessions
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,759	Adaptive Switch Toys for Pediatrics
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,499	Q-pads Innovative Balance Training System
Pediatric PT/OT	\$1,180	T.O.T collars to be used by pediatric physical therapy patients
Pediatric PT/OT	\$567	Therapeutic toys for pediatric space
Pediatric Specialties	\$1,185	Pediatric diabetes patient and family community picnic
Pediatric Speech Therapy	\$3,839	Pediatric speech low-tech AAC systems and toys to use during therapy
Pediatrics	\$9,108	Pediatric Gender Clinic learning and education materials
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	\$880	Specialized hats for NICU infant head shaping
Project SEARCH	\$15,050	Project SEARCH educational and social training
Social Services	\$56,138	Social services work with CMN Hospitals
Speech Pathology	\$4,401	Office treatment and testing items for Speech-Language patients
Trauma Services	\$1,836	Free community car seat safety check event
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$737,390</b>	

**CARDIOLOGY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cardiology	\$46,800	Echo probes for regional locations
Emergency Services	\$6,240	Send Emergency Services staff to ENA conference and accept Lantern Award
Integrated Center for Education	\$9,000	AED trainers for staff certification
Trauma Services	\$4,985	Teen Car Control Clinic
Trauma Services	\$2,000	Cadaver for use during Trauma Symposium
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$69,025</b>	



Gundersen Medical Foundation  
Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®

# THE *Miracle* CONNECTION



**Give today.** [gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals](https://gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals)



## Safe transport for the tiniest patients

Gundersen Health System's ground transport service team is dedicated to providing high-quality, expedient care for all patients, including neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) patients who require specialized equipment for safe transport.

Each year, the team transports about 50 infants to or from Gundersen, and access to dependable medical equipment is crucial. That is why CMN Hospitals at Gundersen recently funded the purchase of a new

specialized neonatal ground transport isolette when the previous model became unreliable.

Not only does the new isolette provide a double outer wall system for keeping infants warm in the winter and cool in the summer, but it also allows for the monitoring of an infant's clinical measurements. Members of the transport team can track oxygen saturation, blood pressure, vital signs, and heart rhythm during transport with a touchscreen monitor. The

new model is also more user-friendly and easier for medical staff to move and operate.

"Our goal is to provide the best care possible to our tiniest patients, and in order to do that, we need to have reliable, user-friendly equipment," says Kelley Zhovtis, NNP. "We are incredibly grateful to CMN Hospitals and their donors for this grant, which has positively impacted our patients and our staff."

*Pictured: Members of Gundersen Health System's ground transport team with the new specialized neonatal ground transport isolette*

# A Celebration of Miracles

**The Miracle Gala returned in spring 2023 and was a huge success! More than \$102,000 was raised, which will help thousands of kids and their families throughout our region.**

The evening included stories from our Heroes, as well as a child art auction, dessert auction and fund-a-miracle auction. New this year was the Diamond Dash, where attendees purchased cubic zirconia earrings and were entered into a drawing to win a pair of genuine diamond earrings.

We are so appreciative of our attendees and our sponsors for their generosity.



**save the date**

*Miracle*  
**Gala**

Join us on **April 12, 2024**,  
in the Cargill Room at the  
**Waterfront Restaurant & Tavern** and learn how your  
support makes miracles  
happen for local kids.



## 2023 Miracle Gala Sponsors

### Miracle

Morrie's Volkswagen & Audi

### Dessert Auction

LTC

### Fund a Miracle

J.F. Brennan Company

### Diamond Dash

Rose Jewelers

### Champion

All of Us Research Program  
Wichelt Imports  
E. Stanek Electric

### Hero

Trust Point, Inc.

### Printing

DigiCopy

### Signature Drink

Dr. Todd, Deb & Sam Mahr

### Décor

Details Matter by Amber

### Change Maker

Sam's Club of Onalaska  
Walmart of Chippewa Falls  
Walmart of Richland Center  
Walmart of Eau Claire  
Dairyland Power Cooperative  
Gundersen Credit Union  
Midwest Electro Tech Corp.

### Cookie

Linda's Bakery

### Emcee

Charlotte's Bridal & Formal Wear

### Lighting

Outback Entertainment

### Hero Hair & Makeup

Sue Kolve's Salon & Day Spa

### Hero Flowers

Bittersweet Flower Market

### Auctioneer

Garrick Olerud of Olerud Auctions in Westby, Wis.



# Making spirits bright

Show your care for kids this holiday season by purchasing cards that feature the heartwarming artwork of our 2023 CMN Heroes. As always, 100 percent of sales will benefit kids and families in our region.

Purchases may be made at these locations:

### Gundersen Medical Foundation

201 3rd Street North, La Crosse

### Gundersen Gift Shop

Gundersen Health System's Main Campus

### Gundersen Pharmacies

Onalaska Clinic on Gundersen Drive; Onalaska Clinic on Sand Lake Drive; Cass Street in La Crosse; Village Shopping Center in La Crosse; Holmen Pharmacy on Hale Drive; Winona Campus in Winona, Minn.; and St. Elizabeth's in Wabasha, Minn.

**Email:** [cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org)

For pickup at the Foundation office (or shipped for an additional \$5)

*This project is made possible with support from Empire Screen Printing, a true miracle maker! The company has printed our holiday cards for 36 years, generously donating the materials and labor so all proceeds benefit kids.*

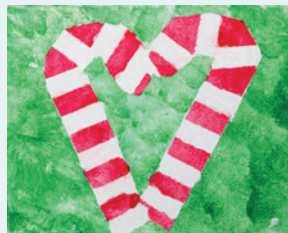
**\$10**  
PER PACK OF 20  
cards, envelopes  
& seals



Amanda



Eduardo



Brynleigh



Trey



Charlie

*Inside message:  
May the peace, love  
and joy of the holiday  
season carry through to  
the new year.*



## A gift from the heart

This holiday season is the perfect time to honor friends or family members with a gift (in their name) to Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®.

Just look at what your gift can do:

- \$100 will cover gas cards for a family traveling to visit a child in the hospital
- \$250 can help cover the cost of sled hockey or other adaptive recreation
- \$500 will pay for tutoring and educational support
- \$750 will help a child attend a summer camp that supports their medical diagnosis
- \$1,000 helps cover the cost of technology and educational apps

These are just a few examples of the impact your gift to CMN Hospitals can make for children and families in need.

**Give today at [gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals](http://gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals).**



*Dear CMN Hospitals,*

*When Alec was first diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, we were overwhelmed with all the health information we had to navigate and learn—and then came the bills!*

*Knowing that a grant from CMN Hospitals was available lifted much of our stress, and the straightforward application process was also a tremendous help. When our family received the wonderful news that we had been awarded a grant, I read through the email with Alec. Together, we discussed how fortunate we were to receive this opportunity.*

*Because of this grant, we don't have to worry about the monthly bill for supplies, and it even means we will be able to get him an insulin pump.*

*The generous support we have received from CMN Hospitals is so meaningful and helpful to our family. We are incredibly grateful!*

*Sincerely,  
The Hamilton Family*

## **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)



## Recognizing excellence

Gundersen Medical Foundation hosted its new annual donor recognition event called Gratefully, Gundersen at The Weber Center for the Performing Arts on Oct. 18, 2023. This event is a combination of the former Heritage and Founders Legacy celebrations and is designed to celebrate the cumulative impact of all Foundation supporters and recognize some special awardees (highlighted below).

“It was an honor to celebrate the individual and collective impact of so many philanthropists—all dedicated to improving and strengthening our community through their devotion to medical research, education and community health initiatives,” says Stephen Shapiro, MD, Chair of Gundersen Medical Foundation.



### **Outstanding Philanthropic Organization Award** **Gundersen Partners**

Gundersen Partners was established in 1950 and has given over \$1 million to the Foundation in support of Gundersen Health System. They were instrumental in initiating the hospice program and provided funding for the Angel Eye camera project in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Current work includes awarding annual scholarships to children of employees and supporting local children through school partnerships.



### **Chairman’s Award** **Jeannie Gordon**

Jeannie Gordon spent 50 years working at Gundersen, including in the clinic, the hospital and in support of the Foundation. In addition to her own generous philanthropic contributions, Jeannie has been an important Foundation friend and advocate. Her deep commitment to patient care and satisfaction has inspired many grateful patients to also support the Foundation.



### **Founders Award** **Herb and Barbara Heili**

Herb and Barbara Heili have proven themselves to be outstanding leaders in philanthropy during pivotal periods of growth for the organization. They believe strongly in the importance of medical education programs and are dedicated supporters of nursing education.

## Your gifts at work

Scan the QR code to watch a 10-minute video filled with messages of gratitude from many grant recipients who are positively impacted by your generosity.



## Please welcome Katie Berkedal

*Gundersen Medical Foundation Manager of Philanthropy – Operations*

In this role, Katie will serve alongside the operations team as they oversee the process of receiving gifts and allocating those funds to support Gundersen Health System and its patients. Katie previously served with the Foundation for approximately five years as a grant writer and fund allocation specialist. Her industry expertise and passion for community health make her an excellent addition to the Foundation team.

**Katie Berkedal** (608) 775-8405 | [katie.berkedal@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:katie.berkedal@gundersenhealth.org)



## Investing in the future of healthcare

The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that by 2024, there could be a nationwide shortage of up to 124,000 physicians, with the potential for rural areas like those served by Gundersen Health System to be especially impacted.

Though we cannot foresee the future, predictions like these only help emphasize the increasing importance of Gundersen Medical Foundation's medical education programs. Since many physicians choose to join the communities where they have trained, the Foundation's programs have a direct impact on the quality of and access to healthcare in the communities we serve—both now and into the future.

"Of the 448 graduates who completed their residency at Gundersen between 2013-2023, we hired 88, which is a retention rate of about 20 percent," shares

*Scan the QR code to see Drs. Sygulla and Klein share their story*



*A group of graduates from the Foundation's Family Medicine Residency Program in 2023*

Jennifer Lee, MBA, Gundersen's director of Medical Education. "Without the Foundation's programs, many physicians we have hired may not have heard of Gundersen or considered living and working in La Crosse or one of the other smaller communities we serve."

For example, Molly Sygulla, MD, and Will Klein, MD, are two members of the 2023 graduating class. This married couple was first introduced to Gundersen on a rotation during their time as medical students in the Wisconsin Academy of Rural Medicine (WARM) program at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"We had the opportunity to observe health systems throughout the region, so when it came time to begin our residencies, we were happy to be placed at Gundersen," says Dr. Sygulla.

Their experiences were so positive that upon completion of their residency programs, Drs. Sygulla and Klein decided to apply for positions in Gundersen's Family Medicine Department. "We saw that Gundersen was willing to invest human and monetary resources into initiatives that make the community better and healthier," explains Dr. Klein, "and that made us want to stay with the organization."

Dr. Sygulla and Dr. Klein serve as two of many examples that illustrate the value—and local impact—of investing in medical education. +

## Honoring excellence

*In remembrance, we pay tribute to the medical staff who served Gundersen Health System during their careers and who passed away between March 1–September 30, 2023. We recognize their individual dedication to patient care and their collective contribution to the field of medicine.*

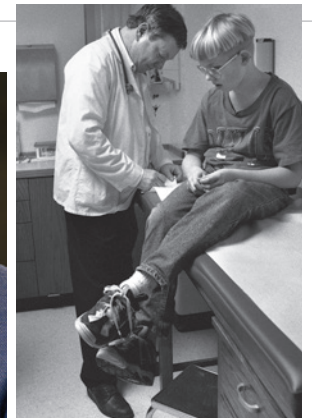
- Paul L. Felion, MD
- Timothy O. Minus, DO
- Thomas N. Roberts, MD



### Paying tribute to a physician and a leader

Gundersen Medical Foundation extends our deepest sympathy to the family of Thomas N. Roberts, MD, who passed away on March 10, 2023, at age 80.

Dr. Roberts served Gundersen Health System as a dedicated pediatrician for 40 years. His own diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes at the age of 15 inspired him to pursue a career in medicine. Along with a team of diabetic educators and dieticians, Dr. Roberts helped start the pediatric diabetes clinic at Gundersen.



Throughout his tenure, Dr. Roberts served as a member of the Board of Directors of Lutheran Hospital and was also the chair of the Pediatrics department for 12 years. He was also the longest serving president (10 years) of the Lutheran Hospital Foundation during the transition to Gundersen Medical Foundation. +



**Leadership**

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Dr. Stephen Shapiro

**Vice President**  
Lindsey Preston, MASL, RN

**Executive Assistant**  
Jean Hougom

**Philanthropy**  
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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  
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Beth Noffsinger

2023



**STEPPIN' OUT  
IN PINK**

Gundersen Medical Foundation

**\$402,500+**  
RAISED

**400+**  
VOLUNTEERS

**247**  
TEAMS

**4,000+**  
PARTICIPANTS\*

**55**  
SPONSORS

*\*INCLUDING 400 BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS*



*“Seeing survivors gather together was instant validation of why raising money for this cause is so incredibly important.”*

Heather Schimmers, RN  
President, Gundersen Health System

**Spectacular support for breast cancer research**

Steppin' Out in Pink was back with a bang as more than 4,000 participants—including 400 breast cancer survivors—brought spectacular energy to Riverside Park in September. The event raised more than \$402,500 for breast cancer research and patient support programs, and post-event donations continue to pour in.

A few recent examples of impact include the purchase of 3D mammography units in La Crosse and Winona, ongoing funding for wigs, head coverings and Radiant Wraps and the development of a boutique for cancer patients in Tomah.

Funds from this year's event will support a variety of initiatives. For example, \$50,000 will be transferred to the Paula's Purse cancer patient fund and \$100,000 to Gundersen's Kabara Cancer Research Institute.



**NEXT YEAR'S EVENT WILL BE SEPTEMBER 14, 2024.**

**Thank you to our 2023 sponsors:**

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**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](http://gundersenhealth.org/foundation)

Gundersen Medical Foundation's

# HOLIDAY SOCIAL

Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023 | 4:30–7:30 p.m.

Gundersen Medical Foundation downtown office, 201 3rd Street N., La Crosse

Join us for a holiday social that features everything to make the season merry! Enjoy refreshments and live music while you shop from a variety of local vendors.

**All of Us**  
RESEARCH PROGRAM

## What story does your DNA tell? Find out with *All of Us*.

Your DNA tells a story. It can show where your ancestors came from, why your hair is curly or straight, and even whether you like the taste of cilantro. Did you know it also contains clues to why certain health conditions might run in your family?

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**Learn about yourself and your health, at no cost.**

**[JoinAllOfUs.org/Gundersen](http://JoinAllOfUs.org/Gundersen)**

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