



NORA'S HOME
for transplant patients and
their families

WINTER 2021

VOL.1
ISSUE 1



NORA'S NEWS

Mission Statement

Nora's Home offers transplant patients and their families an affordable place to stay where they can find support and share experiences with others, in the comfort of a home-like environment.



|| We enter this new year filled with hope. We are amazed by the generosity of our supporters... ||

PICTURED ARE SOME OF OUR IN HOUSE GUESTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

P.S. MAKE SURE YOU SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR HOMECOMING GALA ON THURSDAY, APRIL 22!

LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

DEAR FRIENDS OF NORA'S HOME,

Happy New Year! And welcome to the first edition of Nora's News—we're excited to bring you this new way to keep in touch with our mission and the people who make it possible.

We enter this new year filled with **hope**. We are amazed by the generosity of our supporters—as you'll read in this newsletter, the Nora's Home family answered our call at the end of 2020. **Did you know in 2021 we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary of the Nora's Home annual gala?** Wow, what an incredible milestone to be able to honor the many chairs and supporters over the years! You've not only helped us to build Nora's Home as it is today but helped to secure the future of the home for generations of transplant patients to come.

You have my firm promise that we will continue to keep the health and safety of our guests and staff foremost in every thought and action that we take at Nora's Home. While we all begin to sense a light at the end of the tunnel, we will remain vigilant and continue to implement the best practices and advice of our hospital partners and Board.



With Appreciation,

Natalie Lencioni

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HOME HAPPENINGS

Statistics

2013 – December 31, 2020

Families Served

1,331



Nights of
Accommodation

36,843



Meals Served

8,875



2020*

Year in Review

Families Served

93

Nights of
Accommodation

4,266

Meals Served

1,945



1,295

meals

were Virtual

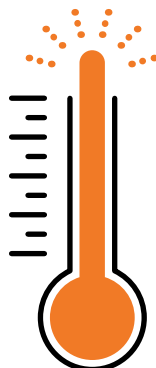
Chef of
the Day

*Due to COVID-19, Nora's Home had to temporarily stop accepting new reservations on March 27, 2020 and reopened on Jun 1, 2020 with new admissions protocols, including limited maximum capacity.

CONQUER COVID APPEAL

\$215,249

\$180,000



**CONQUER
COVID**
NORA'S HOME
for transplant patients and their families

Fundraising Update

We are thrilled to report that, with your help, we have reached and exceeded our end of year Conquer Covid campaign goal! Thank you, thank you to all of our wonderful donors!

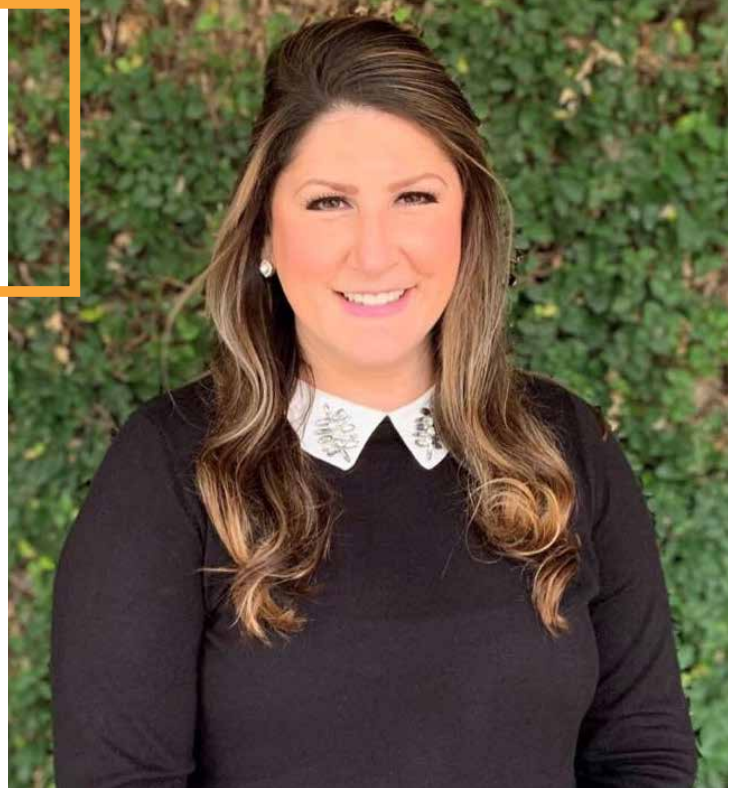
Your generosity will make a truly meaningful difference in the lives of our current guests, who remain uniquely imperiled by the pandemic. It has also helped to secure the future of Nora's Home, providing generations of transplant patients with the warmth, tranquility, strength and community that makes our home so special.

The Conquer Covid campaign raised a total of \$215,249! We are thankful for the 134 generous donors who participated from former guests to board members, to staff and to our committed donors, as well as the many new donors we welcomed into the Nora's Home family!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Laurel Keller

Director of Development



Q: What inspired you to pursue your career path?

A: Working in the non-profit world is truly a vocation. I had only imagined working in corporate America while in college and fundraising as a career path wasn't a blip on my radar. A friend and mentor introduced me to this world and my first job, and I wouldn't trade it for anything! It is an incredibly humbling feeling to see the people you are truly working for everyday and hearing their stories. It is tough work at times but what I love is being able to share these stories and let people know how they can be a part and make a difference!

Q: Where did you work before Nora's Home? How has your experience there translated to your role with Nora's Home?

A: Prior to Nora's Home, I was raising funds and awareness for Inner City Catholic Schools and programs at the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. All nonprofit organizations have a mission and you must fully understand the work and the story to be shared with the community. In my 16 years of fundraising that has always been the key!

Q: What about your job do you look forward to most on a daily basis?

A: I am so happy to be a part of the Nora's Home family. This is such a special place and truly a gem in Houston and the Texas Medical Center. I was quickly welcomed in by the staff and guests alike and keep pinching myself that I am lucky to be a part of the good work, amazing stories, wonderful staff, engaged volunteers, generous donors and transplant centers. I'm excited to help us plan for the future and make sure we always have our doors open to serve those on their transplant journey!

It is an incredibly humbling feeling to see the people you are truly working for everyday and hearing their stories.

Q: Do you have any favorite hobbies?

A: I have recently taken up gardening as I bought my first home last year. I'm taking advantage of having an outdoor space! It's very relaxing and fun to see what will last in the Houston weather! Right now, my yellow mums are in full bloom!

Q: What are some of your favorite television programs/bands?

A: This is Us is one of the best written shows with a great storyline. It gets me every time! I also enjoy seeing the shows Netflix has to offer from TV series to documentaries. Music is greatly appreciated during my commutes to and from Nora's Home and while doing work around the house. Anything from the 70's is my favorite thanks to my parents. I've seen many concerts with them from Chicago to the Doobie Brothers, to Tom Petty to Journey to Queen, to Earth, Wind and Fire.

The Gift of Life: One Woman's 5th Kidney Transplant During a Global Pandemic

By: Aly Yingst



A Lifesaving Offer

In the fall of 2018, Brooke Tannen French called her late mother's friend, Marilyn Lee, out of the blue. Marilyn didn't have a whole lot of good news to share. Two of her three daughters were extremely sick - one with stage four lung and brain cancer and the other with stage four chronic kidney disease.

Immediately upon hearing the news, Brooke offered to give Marilyn's daughter, Debbie, a kidney. "It was just a natural reaction for me. I don't know why," said Brooke. It was almost too good to be true that a distant family friend would offer up an organ to someone she had never even met before.

The two first met in early 2019, which is where I come in. Debbie - my mom - was in the hospital for almost three months after suffering complications from a blood clot that went to her lungs. Brooke came to visit us in the hospital, and the connection between the two was instantaneous.

When Debbie became cleared for surgery in late 2019, we all flew to Houston to undergo testing through the Houston Methodist J.C. Walter Jr. Transplant Center. The test results came back with flying colors, and Brooke was healthy enough to donate a kidney. However, with a different blood type, she was not a match for Debbie.

Instead, she opted to participate in the Kidney Exchange Program, where she would be matched with someone who shared her blood type without any antibodies to her. Then, a swap would happen, where multiple donors and recipient pairs around the country would be matched with other pairs based on compatibility.

Unexpected Challenges

Then COVID-19 happened.

Dialysis could not stop during the pandemic. Three days a week, Debbie had to go to the hospital to be dialyzed. The transplant program was put on a brief hold, and when it eventually reopened, no match could be found for Debbie due to the high number of antibodies in her body from her four previous kidney transplants.

"Four?!"

That's what most people say when we tell them how many transplants Debbie has had. Diagnosed with kidney disease in her late teens, Debbie has undergone four previous transplants, all with kidneys donated by family members - her sisters, Leslie and Martha, and her father, Harold. Her last kidney, which lasted almost 20 years, was given to her by her husband and my dad, Gerald Yingst.

Unfortunately, like the kidneys before it, my dad's kidney was rejected by Debbie's body. And dialysis was now causing all sorts of health issues in Debbie. She needed a kidney now, but COVID-19 added another layer of difficulty onto everything.

Brooke's life, on top of the global pandemic, was not going as planned, either. In the last year and a half, Brooke went through a divorce and then struggled through the death of her ex-husband a year later.

"I needed something to look forward to that would make me happy," Brooke said.

In May of 2020, Debbie and I flew to Houston. Debbie had received a call that a potential kidney from a deceased kidney had come in. Although a living donor kidney would statistically be less likely to fail, Debbie would take any chance she could get for the organ that would save her life. However, this kidney did not come through for her, and we returned home to continue with dialysis.

Finally, in September, Brooke got the call. A match had been found for both Brooke and Debbie, and in less than a month, everyone would fly to Houston.

Brooke's family was not onboard at first, especially with the added threat of COVID. But then Debbie and I video chatted with Brooke's family, and afterwards, her family finally understood the connection between Debbie and Brooke.

Both Debbie's and Brooke's surgeries went well, thankfully, one life saved by the generosity of the other. We are immensely grateful to the woman who donated her kidney to Debbie, as well. The number of lives saved by this one switch is incredible.

"I don't have this big legacy to leave in the world," said Brooke. To Brooke, this transplant was her way to be remembered in the world, and it is certainly something I'll never forget.

Home Away From Home

Four of Debbie's kidney transplants have been done by Dr. Osama Gaber, Chair of Houston Methodist's Department of Surgery. Without his surgical expertise, Debbie would not be here today.

She would not be here today without the support of Dr. Gaber

in another way, too. Since 2013, when Dr. Gaber and his wife, Lillian, began Nora's Home. It was a place for transplant patients and their families to stay while visiting the Houston Medical Center. With furnished bedrooms, spacious kitchens, and peaceful sitting rooms, Nora's Home was the perfect place to heal physically.

But it was also a space to heal both the mind and the soul, too.

Although Debbie and I have stayed at Nora's Home many times in the past, this was the first stay for Brooke and her sister Robin. They soon discovered why we kept returning to Nora's Home. "The one thing that I didn't expect was the comradery of people in Nora's Home," said Brooke. It surprised her that people who were so sick could still give so much of themselves to others.

The community of people that forms at Nora's Home is beautiful. When my mom was in the hospital and I was feeling lonely and scared, the other people at Nora's Home took care of me. Returning home from the hospital late at night, self-care activities, as simple as eating dinner, were always the last thing on my mind. But the people at Nora's Home made sure there was always a meal left for me, and there was always someone checking in to see if I needed anything at all.

Debbie's history with Nora's Home actually goes even further back. Her sister, Martha, helped to start the very first Nora's Home in Memphis, Tennessee, where Dr. Gaber did Debbie's other transplants. Martha passed away from lung/brain cancer, but her legacy lives on through Debbie, Dr. Gaber, and Nora's Home.

|| The community of people that forms at Nora's Home is beautiful. ||



BROOKE AND DEBBIE IN THEIR KIDNEY MASKS

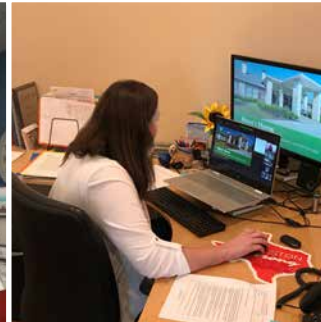
Nora, the daughter of the Gabers, tragically died in an automobile accident in 1998. Her donated organs saved many children's lives, which is exactly what Nora would have wanted. Nora's spirit of helping people is the foundation on which Nora's Home is built, and it has helped people through some of the toughest times of their lives.

Now, it is the beginning of 2021, and Debbie's new kidney has successfully lived inside of her for over three months. 2020 was a difficult year for so many reasons. But my mom and some of my new family members at Nora's Home received the gift of life last year, and I will always remember the life changing actions and help of many people, especially Brooke, Dr. Gaber, and those staying at Nora's Home.

OUR TRANSPLANT CENTERS

Recap of Appreciation Opportunities

The Nora's Home team had the opportunity to provide lunch, treats, and encouragement to our hospital partners. We continue to be awed by the relentless, dauntless spirit of the teams at Baylor St. Luke's in the Medical Center, Memorial Hermann, Houston Methodist and Texas Children's Hospital. Our healthcare heroes have our respect and gratitude each and every day. THANK YOU!



VOLUNTEER CORNER

THANK YOU



Thank you to those who have recently supported the home! Your gifts of time and talent continue to provide for the families at Nora's Home!



Nora's Home is fortunate to have a committed Board of Directors that work to further our mission. In each issue of our newsletter, you'll get to know one of our lead volunteers.

Dr. Gabriel Loor

Surgical Director, Lung Transplant Program
Co-Chief, Section of Adult Cardiac Surgery
Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center

Q: How you first were introduced to Nora's Home?

A: I had heard of Nora's Home when I started at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center (BSLMC) in March of 2017. I saw patients for transplants that had stayed there, and I learned about patients being discharged to Nora's Home. I had never seen a resource like this before neither in Minnesota nor in Cleveland, where I'd been previously. I was able to take a deeper dive when Dr. Gaber invited me to be the lung transplant representative on the Board. I was thrilled, honored and excited. I've learned much more about the home since then. I've gone to tour it, I've helped cater meals and my daughter has volunteered with art projects.

Q: What does serving on the Board mean to you?

A: It's an amazing experience to be surrounded by so many incredibly experienced and talented leaders from the Houston community. I learn so much by listening to their thoughts and their ideas. They run the show. I provide some insight from the surgical perspective, but the talent in the board is really deep.

|| It's an amazing experience to be surrounded by so many incredibly experienced and talented leaders from the Houston community. ||



DR. LOOR PLAYING THE GUITAR AT THE 2020 NORA'S HOME GALA

Q: Share any hidden talents you may have!

A: Well, I love music and I have played guitar since I was a kid. I played in a rock 'n' roll band in college and I love blues. Playing music now is a gift that gives me clarity and perspective.

Q: Describe how the home has benefitted your patients at BSLMC.

A: The home provides hope to our patients. They come from far and wide around Texas and beyond. Nora's Home provides them with some peace of mind that their basic essentials will be cared for while they wait or recover from transplant. Sure, some patients are able to make other plans, but if it was me I would 100% plan to stay at Nora's Home. The benefit is tremendous. The sense of community is great. They learn from each other. They support each other. They see the challenges that some patients go through, so they know they are not alone. But even more important they see the incredibly positive outlook that many develop. It's contagious. Whenever I go to Nora's Home, I see joy and smiles on the faces of everyone there! Natalie and the staff are top notch. The home wouldn't be what it is without them.

SAVE *the* DATE!



HOMECOMING

*Nora's Home
and YOU...
Our Winning Team*

CELEBRATING *from* OUR HOME *to* YOURS

Virtual Homecoming • April 22, 2021 • 7:00 pm

Honoring Gala Chair Alumni

2011 Pat & Ben Bono • 2013 Caroline & Dr. Salim Dabaghi

2014 Anne Whitlock & Michael Skelly | Kathleen & Pat Wood

2015 Lisa & Rudy Beeching | Anita & the late Tom Richards

2016 Brigitte & Bashar Kalai • 2017 Dr. Sippi & Ajay Khurana

2018 Paige & Todd Johnson | Ashley & Curt Langley | Ann & John Smither

2019 Nick & Vicki Massad • 2020 Susie Cunningham | Chelsea Cunningham McDermott



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For more information contact
Laurel Keller, Director of Development
832.962.8065 or laurel@norashome.org

NORA'S HOME



Be A Virtual Chef of the Day

There is nothing like coming home to a delicious, hot meal! We are seeking individuals or groups to sign up to be a Chef of the Day by providing or catering a meal to the families staying at Nora's Home. Due to COVID-19, we're not able to have volunteers in the home but the guests still appreciate the gesture. For more information please contact Morgan Fuhrman, Outreach Coordinator, at morgan@norashome.org.



Community Pantry Wish List

The guests at Nora's Home are always appreciative of our community pantry being filled with items they can use for meals and snacks. Here are our wish list items. For more information please contact Marilda Daniels, Operations Manager, at marilda@norashome.org or 832-831-3720.

FOOD ITEMS

- Pasta (boxed)
- Jarred Sauces (marinara, alfredo, etc.)
- Boxed Desserts (cookies, cakes, brownies)
- Protein shakes
- Cooking oil spray (Pam)
- Coffee K-cups
- Sugar, cream, sweet-n-low, coffee stirrers, 16 cup filters
- Breakfast foods (individual packets): bars, cereal, pop tarts, grits, oatmeal

- Canned Goods: soup, meats, fruit, beans, vegetables
- Snacks (individual bags): cookies, nuts, crackers, chips, granola bars, pudding, brownies, chex mix, goldfish

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Dishwashing liquid
- Dishwasher tabs
- Laundry detergent (pods)
- Disinfectant wipes and spray

- Dryer sheets
- Garbage bags (tall kitchen)
- Cleaning Products: toilet bowl cleaner, all-purpose cleaner, window cleaner, furniture polish, bathroom cleaner
- Paper Goods: plates, bowls, table napkins, toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, cups (8oz.) & (16oz.)
- Silverware (individually wrapped)

- Ziploc bags: 1 gallon, quart, and sandwich size

WISH LIST

- Hand mixer
- Strainer
- Frying pans
- Wooden or Silicon cooking utensils
- Rolling pins
- Dish towels
- Dish cloths

NORA'S GIFT FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

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Lillian Gaber, M.D.
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DR. LILLIAN GABER MAKING LUNCH FOR THE GUESTS

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UPCOMING EVENTS



**Make plans to join the Nora's Home team and participate in the
World Transplant Games—5K Anyway, you can register at:**

runsignup.com/RaceGroups/93112/Groups/814470

What's a 5K AnyWay?

Think about racing 3.1 miles or 5 km anyway you choose between May 28 and June 4, 2021. Walking. Running. Swimming. Rowing. Dribbling a basketball. Playing a round of golf. Throw a cricket ball 140-or-so times. Score 200 soccer goals from the 25-meter line. You get the picture.