



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

SUMMER 2021

**VOL.1**  
ISSUE 3



NORA'S HOME LIGHTS UP FOR BLUE AND GREEN DAY ON APRIL 16

# NORA'S NEWS

## Mission Statement

Nora's Home provides affordable lodging for organ transplant patients and their families in the comfort of a warm, home-like environment.



## Dear Friends,

With summer in full gear, we hope you and yours are enjoying time reuniting with loved ones, taking time to disconnect, and perhaps hosting an outdoor BBQ or two! Much like you, our guests are finding creative and fun ways to gather with care and yes, there has been BBQ aplenty!

In this edition of Nora's News, we offer our supporters a mid-year impact report which highlights our accomplishments so far in 2021. The challenges and uncertainties of COVID-19 still linger, and our primary focus continues to be providing a safe haven for transplant families. Our doors remain open for the hundreds of families served because our community has continued to believe in our mission. We are pleased to share how your critical dollars are being put to good use. For this and more, we wish to say **thank you**, sincerely.

Enjoy!

**Natalie Lencioni**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# HOME HAPPENINGS



## Fundraising Update

Nora's Home had a great response to the 10th annual gala, **Homecoming: Celebrating from Our Home to Yours**. The virtual pep rally honored the past 10 years of gala chairs and their commitment to the home with our Master of Ceremonies, Lisa Malosky, taking us on a virtual tour of the home.

The event raised more than \$330,000 for the Adopt-A-Family program and we are grateful to all our sponsors. This program provides financial support for families who are unable to pay the minimal nightly fee. No one is ever turned away due to inability to pay.

The virtual format allowed Nora's Home to reach a broader viewership. We were excited to invite new faces to our community and share our story!

## SIGN UP FOR The Sunflower Scoop!

Make sure to sign up for our blossoming monthly e-blast, the **Sunflower Scoop**! Sign up today so you can get to the root of upcoming events, special shout-outs, and highlights of our amazing guests! We are excited to grow this newsletter and the way we share information with our Nora's Home family.

Sign up on our website, [norashome.org](http://norashome.org)!



## Home Feature: Community Kitchen

### COMMUNITY KITCHEN AMENITIES

- Community Pantry
- Assigned Guest Cupboards & Refrigerator / Freezer Shelves
- Dishwasher
- Coffee Maker
- Microwave
- Toaster
- Blender
- Mixer
- Kitchenware & Dishes
- Cleaning Supplies







# Mid-Year Home Report

Nora's Home is pleased to present a mid-year report to our community. While it has been another trying year with the COVID-19 pandemic, Nora's Home has remained open, with limited capacity following safety protocols, and continues to serve guests on their transplant journey.

This mid-year report captures a snapshot of the guests we have had the pleasure of serving from January 1 to June 30, 2021. We have also included year-to-date statistics that we are very proud of. We are nearing 40,000 nights stayed and have a lot to celebrate in this eighth year of Nora's legacy at the home.

Nora's Home has had the honor of serving patients who have had transplants due to COVID-19. We have had five guests stay with us since the beginning of the year from two years old to 60 years old. Many of them have utilized the Lung Wing, a separate wing for lung patients that features four guest suites and private lounge with specialized positive pressure airflow that provides enhanced air quality to assist with post-transplant recovery.

## Year to Date



(LEFT TO RIGHT) BOBBY AND MADISON, LADY LIONS EASTER DROP-OFF, BARBARA CHANNELL

Adopt-A-Family  
Funds Awarded **\$226,005**

Families Served **138**

COVID Patients  
Served **5**

Number of  
Transplants Received **8 transplants**  
**1 LVAD**

## Total

Adopt-A-Family  
Funds Awarded **\$1,976,307**

Nights Stayed **39,171**

Total Families Served **2,694**

Meals  
Served **9,835**

## Patient Statistics



Gender

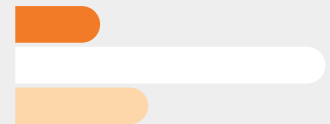
● Female 55%  
● Male 45%



Where Our  
Guests  
Travel From

**38** states

**4** countries



Age

● 0-17: 10% ● 25-60: 63%  
● 18-24: 0% ● 61+ yrs.: 27%



Ethnicity

● Black: 14% ● White: 45%  
● Hispanic: 41% ● Other: 0%

## Transplant Centers Served

Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center  
Houston Methodist  
Memorial Hermann  
Texas Children's Hospital  
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## Morgan Fuhriman

Outreach Coordinator

**Q: How did you first learn about Nora's Home? What attracted you to our mission?**

**A:** My little sister started volunteering at Nora's Home while she was serving a volunteer mission in Houston for our church. She had loved working at the home so much, she encouraged me to check out Nora's Home when I moved from Utah out to Houston with my husband for med school.

I have volunteered with various nonprofits my entire life and I love living in a community that shares that love of philanthropic interests. I never thought I would be employed in this arena, but I have enjoyed my work at Nora's Home. Nora's Home is a beautiful place and it's amazing how it really does feel like a home — my co-workers and the guests here have become like family to me.

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

**A:** Currently, I do a lot to help with online marketing, volunteer coordination, event planning, and data management. I love people and I love solving problems, so I feel like the unique diversity of my job has allowed me to enjoy both and make a difference in the short time I have worked here. All of that makes my work very fulfilling.

**Q: Do you have any favorite hobbies?**

**A:** Currently my favorite hobbies include finding fun ways to make my baby boy laugh and soaking in all the snuggles before he gets too old for those shenanigans, along with visiting Brazos Bend, NASA, and the beach, and playing yard games with friends. But prior to coming to Houston, I was an avid rock climber and hiker. Really anything outdoors is where my heart is, but Houston heat is teaching me a love of indoor activities.



**Q: Do you like to cook? What is your favorite Houston restaurant?**

**A:** I do enjoy cooking—one of my favorite easy recipes I love to make is the NYT Mississippi Beef and then I put it on a hoagie with veggies. When we do manage to venture out to grab a bite, my husband and I are big fans of the Burger Joint on Montrose.

**Q: What is a fun fact about yourself?**

**A:** My grandfather, uncle, and father (for a few years) were all morticians, so my entire family has a quirky sense of humor and love of practical jokes. From Jello-juice and mashed-potato frosted meatloaf "cupcakes" for April Fools dinner, to 4am fire drills and playing hide-and-seek among the empty caskets, there was never a dull moment in my childhood. We all were taught to keep on our toes and to let things roll off our backs quickly.

**Q: What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?**

**A:** Never delegate a job you're not willing to do yourself.

## A Heart at the Heart of the Home

By Laurel Keller

**H**ave you ever met someone and realized you are connected through the people you have in common? Now have you ever met someone and realized you were connected by an organ? It is amazing how lives can intertwine. This was the case for Luis Lopez and Dina Tamez, guests of Nora's Home, and their families. Luis and Dina needed heart transplants and were placed on the waiting list in the Texas Medical Center. Little did they know their family already knew of each other, hoping to introduce them, but they met years later with a heart transplant at the heart of it.

Luis and his wife Lety had been staying off and on at Nora's Home since 2017. He became very ill several years ago and was told he'd need a Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD), and eventually would need a heart transplant. They flew from Brownsville, TX to Houston for the procedure and knew Houston would be their home for some time, going back and forth, as he was placed on the list for a heart in 2018. Luis would come to know life wearing a vest that held the mechanical pump that would help his heart properly pump blood.

Their daughter, Samantha, was working at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley during this time and had kept her co-workers up to date on her father's health. She shared about his LVAD procedure and his getting back to some normalcy as he awaited a new heart. Her co-worker, Norma, had a cousin named Dina who was having heart complications and recalled Samantha's conversation. The timing seemed serendipitous as Dina's doctors had suggested she get an LVAD. Norma wanted to introduce them so they could talk about the procedure. Dina was interested in talking, but admitted she was in denial about getting it, so they never met. Once she came around too much time had passed, and her medical team said she was no longer a candidate.

Meet Dina. She and her husband Efraín, hail from McAllen, TX and became familiar with Nora's Home when she was sent to Houston for testing after years of unsuccessful procedures



DINA AND LUIS WITH NORA GABER

**|| Meet Dina. She and her husband Efraín, hail from McAllen, TX and became familiar with Nora's Home when she was sent to Houston for testing after years of unsuccessful procedures for atrial fibrillation that she was diagnosed with in 2014. ||**



# FEATURED GUEST STORY



LETY AND LUIS LOPEZ

for atrial fibrillation that she was diagnosed with in 2014. With encouragement from her family, as her health continued to decline, she accepted that it was time for a heart transplant in 2019. News of her first grandbaby on the way also helped her opt for the transplant. By then her liver had also started to fail so she was placed on the list for a dual transplant, while connected to an Intra-Aortic Balloon Pump for almost nine months.

When Dina was admitted to the hospital in January 2020, Efraín was by her side until March. A widespread pandemic had hit, and safety measures were being taken, so he began to stay at Nora's Home. While there he met a nice couple, Luis and Lety Lopez, and once they got to talking soon realized the connection they shared. This was the couple Norma wanted Dina to meet—these were Samantha's parents! What a coincidence they were at Nora's Home at the exact same time and were meeting in Houston rather than their neighboring hometowns. Efraín was thankful to not only be in a familiar place during this time, but to also connect with the Lopez's, becoming fast friends and having a support system through common experiences. After five long months, he was finally able to see Dina after she made a special request.

Fast forward to Fall 2020, and the world is in the thick of COVID-19. Times have changed. People are in masks. There is a limit on how many people can be at a patient's side, but life-saving transplants are continuing. Luis receives a call that he is on the short list for a heart. While waiting he learns that it will go to another patient. A few months later he receives another call and is told he's second on the list; so Lety brings him to the hospital. He's taken back and fully prepped for surgery and she heads back to Nora's Home to patiently wait. She gets a call that he's ready to be picked up – he didn't get the transplant. Luis,

**“ Dina and Luis finally met when they both came to Nora's Home to recover. They spent months at what they call their “home away from home”... ”**



# FEATURED GUEST STORY



DINA AND EFRAIN TAMEZ



LUIS AND DINA RINGING THE NORA'S HOME BELL AFTER BEING RELEASED

being the positive man he is, shares "it wasn't the heart for me. It belonged to someone else and I am praying for that person."

Unbeknownst to the Lopez's, that same day Dina is prepped and taken for surgery. A patient had been admitted that matches her high antibody levels. In Dina's case the liver and heart needed to come from the same donor; people can wait years for both organs. She receives her two miracles and her life was regained on September 10, 2020. With Efraín by her side as she recovers, she shares, "it's a true miracle that my hero saved me that day."

Back at Nora's Home, Luis and Lety decide to head back to Brownsville to refuel and recharge, hoping that 2021 might bring a better year and a new heart. The pandemic has been stressful, and they've called Nora's Home their home away from home for well over a year. Three days later while visiting with family and friends, he receives a call that a heart is waiting, and they need to get back to Houston as soon as possible. This time they know it is his heart. They arrive in Houston heading straight to the hospital and he received his new heart; his birthday is now celebrated on November 10, 2020.

The two patients are now recovering from their transplants, with their spouses by their side, but neither patient, nor spouse

know the other has received a transplant. Meanwhile, Samantha and Norma were sharing that their loved ones had received their hearts. They were grateful to tell of their family's news and their new birthdays. Samantha mentioned that her father had received two calls prior to his transplant but they weren't the hearts for him. They soon realized that when Luis was called in on September 10, that this was the date Dina got her heart and liver. Turns out the heart that Luis thought might be for him was meant for Dina! He had been praying for her this entire time.

Dina and Luis finally met when they both came to Nora's Home to recover. They spent months at what they call their "home away from home" regaining their strength physically, emotionally, and spiritually before they each returned home to South Texas in mid-2021. They called themselves "transplant buddies" as they recovered side by side, with transplants two months apart. They still call Nora's Home their home when they come back for their clinical appointments and testing. As Dina says, "Nora's Home is familia" and they truly forged a special family connection while here. Who knew that a heart would bring two families together and be the center of their friendship.



# OUR TRANSPLANT CENTERS



**Nora's Home is grateful to have some pretty fantastic hospital partners as a part of our community. The staff at the transplant centers care for their patients day in and day out. The patients then become our guests when they leave the hospital and stay at the home.**

Recently the Memorial Hermann Center for Advanced Heart Failure and the Heart ICU Nurse Team took up a Pantry Drive to benefit Nora's Home. They collected snacks and food items, household cleaning products, toys for children and toiletry items. While here, they got a firsthand tour of the home as it was the first time here for many. They were able to see where their patients rest and recover post-transplant.



## Rice University MBA Students Partner with Nora's Home

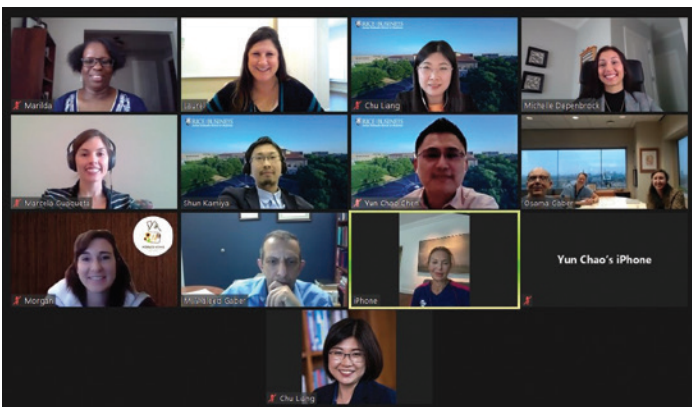
Earlier this year, Nora's Home was chosen to be the focus of a Capstone project for MBA students attending Rice University.

This project would focus on recommendations for a marketing strategy and plan with the students sharing their experience in project management, consulting and various industries. The plan concentrated on the home's work partnering with the transplant centers in the TMC and their social workers, the accessibility of the home's search engine optimization, social media efforts and access to guest information on the website.

For months the students met weekly with the Nora's Home team via Zoom to share updates and project progress, ask questions, flesh out facts found and discuss tactics. Everyone took time from their lunch hour to attend and sometimes snacked through the calls! The students were able to tour the home in a safe manner at the beginning of the partnership to see the mission in action, so they had a good idea of the work done each day. They even met some wonderful guests along the way.

When the project concluded in May and the students had graduated, the success needed to be celebrated! Nora's Home invited the students to serve as Chef of the Day. They prepared a special meal on the outdoor grill and it just so happened to be National Donut Day. Donuts were a special part of the meal too!

**We are grateful for Chu, Henry, Marcela, Michelle and team leader Shun for sharing their time and talent with 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.

## Cathy Cooney

Executive Leadership Coach



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

**A:** I was introduced through Kayla Lehmann when she was Executive Director, they were just starting to build Nora's Home in Houston. I was a volunteer who helped with hiring, grant writing, budgets, gala and whatever needed to be done. We worked out of one of the bedrooms at Kayla's house.

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

**A:** I have seen the amazing work and progress Nora's Home has achieved in the last 12 years. The difference Nora's Home can make in the life of a transplant patient and their families has always inspired me. Being on the Board allows me to hopefully contribute to the longer-term success of Nora's Home and with its strategic direction. I get a lot of personal satisfaction from being part of the Board and hope that I contribute as well.

### Q: What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

**A:** My parents instilled in us the notion of generosity and giving. It was not what they ever said, but the example they showed us in being generous and giving from a place of not what is left over but is part of everything you do. It is giving of time, money, and kindness. We all can be kind, and at different points in our lives we can give more time and at others money. Whether their advice or example, it has served me well in how I try to live my life.

### Q: Share any hidden talents you may have!

**A:** Not sure I have hidden talents, but I rely on my intuition a lot. I see it as my "superpower." It has helped me in my professional and personal life and maybe has helped a few other people as well.

**|| I have seen the amazing work and progress Nora's Home has achieved in the last 12 years. ||**



## Help Us Prepare for Hurricane Season

Hurricane season is upon us here in the south! Help Nora's Home be prepared and continue to provide a safe haven through natural disaster by helping us stock our pantry. For more information please contact Marilda Daniels, Operations Manager, at [marilda@norashome.org](mailto:marilda@norashome.org) or 832-831-3720.

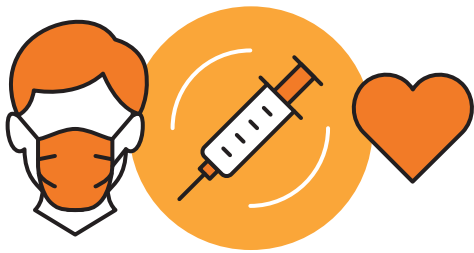
### Hurricane Preparedness | PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottled Water (Gallon jugs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Towels  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AA and C Batteries          | <input type="checkbox"/> Canned Goods (soup, meats, fruit, beans, vegetables)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlights                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Snacks (cereal bars, granola bars, pasta, nuts, cookies, crackers, chips, pudding, chex mix, goldfish) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Paper                |  |

## Updated Volunteer Guidelines

In response to vaccinations being widely available to the public, Nora's Home has updated the admissions criteria for patients, caregivers and volunteers. Please refer to the information below for our updated volunteer guidelines effective July 1, 2021.

We know many are eager to come back and volunteer and we hope to see you soon!



### ALL IN-HOUSE VOLUNTEERS MUST:

- Provide documentation of being fully vaccinated\* or provide documentation of a negative PCR swab\*\* (digital or paper format accepted)
- Wear a mask, be temperature-screened (must be below 100.3 F), and social distance
- Limit group numbers inside the Home (please refer to [norashome.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://norashome.org/get-involved/volunteer) for more information)

Virtual and outdoor volunteering opportunities are still available for those who cannot meet the above listed criteria. Please visit our website for more information.

## Be a 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 or host a Culinary Holiday by providing or catering a meal to the families staying at Nora's Home. Due to COVID-19, we have updated our volunteer guidelines and small groups are welcome back in the Home. Volunteers can still opt to be a virtual Chef of the Day if you are more comfortable dropping off items! Our guests truly appreciate the gesture of a meal, snack or treat! For more information please contact Morgan Fuhrman, Outreach Coordinator, at [morgan@norashome.org](mailto:morgan@norashome.org).

## NORA'S GIFT FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

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**Lillian Gaber, M.D.**  
FOUNDING DIRECTOR

**Ellis Tudzin**  
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**Jerry Patel**

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\*Fully vaccinated\* is defined as 14 days after the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or the second and final dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines. If within two weeks of full vaccination, guest must provide a documented negative PCR test.

\*\*All provided PCR test results must occur within 72 hours prior to check-in.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE  
THE  
DATE



8TH ANNUAL  
**NORA'S HOME**  
GOLF CLASSIC

Friday, November 5, 2021

WILDCAT GOLF CLUB

**S&P**  
SATTERFIELD & PONTIKES  
CONSTRUCTION, INC.

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW