Our Mission: A Place for Healing

When Mike and Sharon arrived at Family House in 2015, they didn’t know what to expect.

They had traveled to Pittsburgh so Mike, a Marine veteran from the Vietnam War, could participate in the Program for Intensive Residential Aphasia Treatment and Education (PIRATE), a 30-day intensive speech-language rehabilitation program at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare Center. Mike suffered a stroke in 2008 and had lost the ability to speak and write. PIRATE is immersive, intense, and often more effective than traditional speech therapy classes.

So Mike, much like the 2,000 other vets that Family House has hosted since the PIRATE partnership began in 2013, rolled in the door of Family House hoping to roll out with an improved ability to communicate his thoughts.

“Family House is a critical resource and key component of the rehabilitation process for veterans living with aphasia,” said Patrick Doyle, Ph.D., Director of Audiology & Speech Pathology Services at VA Pittsburgh. “It not only permits access to services that are unavailable to many veterans in their local communities, it also provides an opportunity for veterans, frequently isolated by their communication difficulties, to form important interpersonal and social relationships and support each other as they work to improve their functional independence and sense of well-being.”

“It is being around the other guests that made staying at Family House so important to Mike and other vets,” said Mike’s wife, Sharon. Thanks to the program and social interactions with volunteers, staff and other guests, Mike’s speech improved dramatically. When Mike arrived he could say one word. After just two weeks, he was greeting guests at the door, welcoming them to Family House and asking where they were from.

Family House’s unique home-like environment provided Mike with the opportunity to build meaningful relationships over shared meals and experiences. Once Mike completed the program, Sharon shared the following: “Mike insisted on writing a thank you letter to Family House once we got home. It took a week, but he did it by himself. I am grateful every day that Family House exists and gave me back more of my husband than I’ve had in years.”

“Family House is a supportive, empowering and gentle place to be when there is trauma in your world.”

Letter written to Family House by Mike, a Vietnam War veteran
In Memoriam

In July, we said goodbye to Gayland Cook, a longtime Family House supporter. Gayland's dedication to Family House and its mission was second to none. Gayland served as Chairman of the Family House Board of Directors from 1998 to 2000 and remained on the board and highly engaged until the day he died. We deeply miss his leadership, sage advice and passion for Family House.

Dear Friends of Family House,

It has been said that the only constant is change, and this is certainly true of the healthcare industry. These changes also have brought changes to Family House. When Family House first opened its doors 33 years ago, 80% of our guests were the family of transplant patients. Today, half of our guests are patients, only 19% of whom are here due to organ transplant, and the average length of stay has dropped from months to mere days. In the face of this new reality, Family House is continuing to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of our guests, while still providing the same world-class service and “home away from home” experience we are known for. Although the changes in the healthcare industry have presented new challenges, they also have provided an opportunity to serve patients and their families in new and exciting ways, and we look forward to continuing to carry out our mission in the years to come.

Wishing you and your families the happiest of holidays,

Randy Struk
Chairman of the Family House Board of Directors

Save the Date

Family House Gifting Gala
March 25, 2017
at the Wyndham Grand

34th Annual Family House Polo Match
September 9, 2017
at Hartwood Acres

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A Letter from the Board Chair

Pet Therapy has arrived at University Place! Ajax has been hanging out with guests, and he loves spending time with our families.

Family House is gearing up for its annual Secret Santa dinner in the house! This event, featuring a catered dinner and gifts for each family, is made possible thanks to the generosity of a donor.

You can now rep Family House on the go – we’ve got FH t-shirts, blankets, and thermoses for sale at our houses!

Thanks to a generous grant from the UPMC Shadyside Hospital Foundation and the Sampson Family Foundation, we’re now serving complimentary breakfast for our guests four mornings a week.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

Family House celebrated more than 100 dedicated volunteers at its annual Volunteer Recognition Event, held on October 30th at the Le Mont. The brunch event honored the late Barry Lhormer, whose financial support funds this event each year. Longstanding volunteer Laura Hartford (pictured at left with husband Terry) received the Arleen Lhormer Award, named for Barry’s late wife, one of Family House’s founding volunteers.

Family House also presented awards to several of its volunteers reaching service milestones with the organization, including: Carol Obernauer (25 years); Linda Goldman and Karen Miller (20 years); Mary Brady, Marlene Brayer, Sandy Goldstein, Mary Goodwin, Thelma Landay, and David Mathias (15 years); Nick Armocida, Paula Engel, Karen Gallano, Natalie Guber, Sydel Trojan, Ed Workowski, Barry Werber, and Brenda Werber (10 years); and Taylor Glock, Theresa Sable, and Susan Tesarri (5 years).

How You Can Help!

- **Cook a meal in one of our houses**
- **Attend a FH fundraising event (Polo anyone?)**
- **Become a trained house volunteer**
- **Host a donation drive to refill our pantry**
- **Make a financial gift to help us keep our doors open to those who need it most**

$ Thanks to everyone who joined us for the 33rd Annual Family House Polo Match! It was a great day – more than $220,000 raised to help our families heal.

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