

Advancing Health...

# Caring for People

Winter 2020

*Thank You!*

## Nancy's Story Receiving Cancer Treatment Far From Home

Nancy, an energetic young grandmother with three sons, two grandchildren and parents who live with her at her home in Bellechester, Minnesota, loves being on the road traveling across the United States working as a truck driver for River Valley Express. It was November 8 when Nancy, just 51, learned she had stage 2 pancreatic cancer.

She decided to come to Wausau to receive care at the Aspirus Cancer Center rather than a large complex; and she didn't want her 9 year old granddaughter to see her sick. It was February when Nancy started her cancer treatment far from home and first stayed at the Family House, just as it opened.

Nancy was not able to work during her treatment. To help her get through the first six rounds of chemotherapy, Nancy put together a "Cooking for a Cure: Help Me Find Mine" recipe book dedicated to those still fighting and those we have lost, compiled with recipes from family and friends.

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*Nancy was grateful to have a recliner chair during her stay at the Aspirus Family House.*

*"By decreasing the financial burden, I was able to focus on my physical and emotional healing."*

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“With staying at the Family House, I had less stress because I was not required to pay at check-in. By decreasing the financial burden, I was able to focus on my physical and emotional healing,” she shared. “I would like to thank the staff for everything they do to make this feel like a home. I come on my own and stay three nights a week. They have been a family for me.”

“A cancer diagnosis is devastating to a family for so many reasons,” explained Tasha Stencil, Family House Manager, “Our goal is to help patients and their families focus on getting better, not worrying about how to pay for lodging during treatment. The Family House helps provide patients and families across the region, across the nation really, a comfortable, safe place to stay while they or their loved one is receiving care at Aspirus.”

Nancy’s last day at the Family House was Friday August 7. After 7 months of treatment in Central Wisconsin, Nancy was extremely excited to get back to work and out on the road.

The Aspirus Family House is committed to supporting patients and families with housing during a difficult time in their lives; and continue to serve guests during the pandemic. They have new safeguards and protocols in place to protect our guests, based on recommendations from the CDC.

“Unfortunately, cancer and other serious illnesses don’t cease because of the pandemic. In the first six months, we have served 135 guests, and reached capacity several days in July” shared Tasha. “When we welcome guests at the door, we know they have been referred because of lack of personal resources. We thank you for your continued support.”

Donations like yours, are a major reason why the Family House can keep the lights on and doors open for guests, like Nancy, who need a place to stay when traveling for specialty care.

## Helping Stock the Family House

Aspirus Family House uses many items on an ongoing basis to keep our House running smoothly. We rely on donations to maintain the supplies that help make our families comfortable in their home away from home.

We kindly accept new, unused, recently purchased and unexpired items and greatly appreciate environmentally-friendly products. On your next shopping trip, please consider picking up an item or two from our wish list or send us a gift card. Items can be dropped off at the Aspirus Family House Monday through Friday from 8am-8pm.

### Needs

See the full list at [aspirus.org/familyhouse](https://aspirus.org/familyhouse)

- Individual hand soap
- Lysol wipes
- Febreze
- Variety of sizes of Glad Ware
- Decaf coffee
- Individual snack items (fruit cups, applesauce, etc.)



*The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center ACTION Team hosted a “Season of Giving” donation drive. Basic household items are continuously needed at the Aspirus Family House, so they collected items to show their thanks and appreciation. In the photo, members of the ACTION Team presented the collected items to the Aspirus Family House. Thank you for helping stock the Family House!*

# Your gifts help kids be safe during these challenging times

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death in children. While COVID has forced many changes, it has not stopped Safe Kids Marathon County from working to protect all kids from preventable injuries. Your donation helps to protect kids by providing parents with the tips and tools they need to prevent injuries.

This year Safe Kids Marathon County had to find a new safe and effective way to distribute car seats, bike helmets and life vests. Since March, Amanda Tabin, Safe Kids Coordinator at Aspirus, has offered car seat curbside pickup by appointment to get car seats to families who cannot afford one through the reduced-price car seat referral program. At her first appointment, Amanda did a demo and handed out the seat and educational materials. She shared, “The mom grabbed her purse from the car and said, ‘my case worker said it’d be \$20. Is that right?’ I told her that is usually the case but to keep it, that we’re not asking for anything right now because of the extremely challenging times facing everyone. She teared up, told me her workplace closed as of yesterday, and thanked me at least five times.”

Safe Kids also partnered with the Boys and Girls Club and offered two curbside bike helmet distribution days. Amanda shared, “We distributed nearly 350 bike helmets thanks to support from Aspirus Wausau Hospital Volunteers. And in June, children in need were able to get a properly fitted life jacket at the Marathon County Parks Department thanks to a special gift from Emmerich Properties Charitable Trust.”

Thank you to our donors for helping promote car, bike and water safety. Your support is changing and saving lives.



# Gifts Support Patients During COVID

Thanks to the generosity of donors and the rapid response of a team of Aspirus staff, patients with COVID-19 and other respiratory conditions will now be able to monitor their health in the comfort of their own home, rather than spending days in a hospital bed. Keeping these patients home and out of the hospital is important—not only to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, but also to preserve critically-needed hospital resources.

While many COVID-19 patients report shortness of breath and other respiratory distress that is understandably alarming, not all of these patients

can do well at home if supported with the appropriate resources, such as home oxygen, home health nursing resources, and pulse oximetry monitoring. Pulse oximetry monitoring can be for both patients with mild symptoms (who don't require hospitalization) or those with moderate symptoms (who, with the proper resources, can be managed safely in their own home). Most do really well at home, so this approach is working."

The use of pulse oximeters is one of these best practices that have shown promising results. This device safely and painlessly measures a person's blood oxygen level. In the comfort of their own home, the patient can then easily monitor their oxygen levels over several days, calling in updates for necessary next steps.

*"We realized that some patients can do well at home if supported with the appropriate resources."*

This is just one example of the ways that our providers and staff are finding creative solutions to address this global pandemic here at home. Aspirus Health Foundation is supporting efforts such as these.

According to Tara Draeger, System Director of Community Health Improvement and Interim Executive Director, Aspirus Health Foundation, "We are so grateful to generous donors to the Health Foundation which allowed us to help patients in our community affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. With their support, we were able to provide the staff with tools they need to monitor and support our patients during this time."

Your gifts make an impact in the lives of patients to support the emerging needs at Aspirus to help ensure our healthcare team can quickly respond to patient and clinical needs in this time of crisis.



*Your gifts provide pulse oximeters for patients in need.*

need to be admitted to the hospital. The Aspirus Emergency Department team identified the use of pulse oximeters as a way to manage patients experiencing mild to moderate symptoms from the comfort of their own home. Funds from the Aspirus Health Foundation supported the purchase of these devices.

Robin Rudie, Director, Aspirus Wausau Hospital Emergency Department said, "COVID hospital bed capacity constraints have required us to be creative with all our resources. We realized that some patients

# Fourth Class of Aspirus Scholars Named to Tackle Physician Shortage

The Aspirus Health Foundation's Scholars Program provides generous scholarships for tuition to medical students studying at the Medical College of Wisconsin-Central Wisconsin Campus and connects them to Aspirus and the communities served by Aspirus during their training. In return, students commit to employment at Aspirus in the areas of primary care, psychiatry or general surgery.

In early 2020, four Aspirus Scholars recipients accepted scholarships in return for future employment with Aspirus:

- Aleksander Downs, 2nd Year Medical Student (*Hometown: Terre Haute, IN*)
- Satchel Beranek, 1st Year Medical Student (*Hometown: Marathon, WI*)
- Mercedes Miller, 1st Year Medical Student (*Hometown: Arcadia, WI*)
- Sarah Steffen, 1st Year Medical Student (*Hometown: New Richmond, WI*)

The Aspirus Scholars Program is a forward-looking approach that could bring as many as 62 new primary care, psychiatry or general surgery providers to communities in north central Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan by the year 2030. It leverages the unique opportunity to collaborate with a college partner whose program is specifically designed to attract students interested in learning and working in our community and rural settings.



*Medical Students Satchel Beranek, Sarah Steffen,  
Mercedes Miller and Aleksander Downs*

*Thank you to our community partners whose generosity makes this important program possible.*

# KPR Brokers donates to breast health program to help people locally

About one in eight women will face a diagnosis of breast cancer in her lifetime. Despite the numbers, there's good news. Mammograms remain the best way to detect breast cancer in its earliest stages, when it's most treatable—and Aspirus is dedicated to ensuring all women have access to this lifesaving screening.

For those without insurance, who are underinsured or who have high deductibles, the Breast Health Assistance Fund helps cover the cost and removes the financial barriers that may deter women from seeking vital breast health services. Mark Kitowski, owner of KPR Brokers, is dedicated to helping those in need locally and presented a gift to the Aspirus Health Foundation for that very reason.

Here's what Mark shared:

*KPR Brokers is proud to have donated a total of \$11,715.10 to the Breast Health Assistance Fund at the Aspirus Health Foundation. This donation is a culmination of the money raised through our 2019 Breast Cancer Campaign.*

*Each October, the KPR team dedicates the month to raising money to donate to a local organization fighting and treating breast cancer. Each KPR real estate professional participates by donating 10% of proceeds from any homes they list during the month, and from any buyer accepted offers. In addition, KPR partners with local bakeries to sell breast cancer awareness ribbon cookies and to donate \$1 per cookie purchased. This campaign is important to us because we know that many people are affected by breast*

*cancer, including several of our team members, and the impact is significant on each life it touches. We are committed to doing what we can to give back to our community by raising awareness and money to make a difference locally.*

*We're thankful for the work the Aspirus Health Foundation does each day to make a difference in the lives of those affected by breast cancer, and we are humbled to be able to support this crucial work through our donation.*

Thanks to gifts like these, Aspirus continues to enhance its breast health program and cares for each patients' full spectrum of needs from diagnostics to cancer treatments; and specifically with this gift, offers free mammograms and breast-related diagnostic services for women and men with cost concerns who qualify.

*We know that many people are affected by breast cancer, including several of our team members.*



KPR Brokers presents a check to the Aspirus Women's Health Team.

# Discharge with Dignity

The last thing that Kathy wanted was to go to the Emergency Department in April during COVID-19. She took an unexpected fall down a flight of stairs at her home. Thanks to Kathy's Lifeline and her son being home with her, she was able to get the help she needed to get to the hospital. She was like other trauma patients who had to have her shirt cut off in the emergency room.

*Kathy is grateful for the shirt she was given after hers was cutoff.*

Thanks to your generosity, when it was time for Kathy to leave, she was given a new shirt to wear to transfer to rehab and heal. With health regulations on infection prevention, used clothes are not an option for discharged patients. A recent donation this spring from the Aspirus Volunteers helped stock the Compassion Clothing Closet with new items. The highest usage is in the winter with the cold weather and need for warmer clothes as people leave in the frigid temperatures. Mittens, hats, sweatshirts, pants and socks are in greatest demand.



## Join Us Online

Please visit our web site to learn more about the programs and people your donations are supporting. Connect with us and other partners on our Facebook page. Thank you for making a difference!

*Thank You!*



Like us on Facebook!

[aspirus.org/foundation](https://www.aspirus.org/foundation)  
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**HEALTH FOUNDATION**

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*The incredible moment when*

*A husband overcoming loss finds laughter.  
A child struggling with fitting-in finds a friend.  
A new mother fighting cancer finds hope.*

You have the power to change worlds. Supporting the **Aspirus Health Foundation** makes a direct impact on the well-being of our local families and communities.

Get involved at [aspirus.org/foundation](http://aspirus.org/foundation)

