

SPRING 2025

A PUBLICATION OF GUNDERSEN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

# PATHFINDERS

Where generosity changes lives



Ensuring every community member has access to the care they need, right where they live, has always been part of the mission of Gundersen Medical Foundation. Even as the healthcare system—and its name, Emplify Health by Gundersen—evolves, the work we do, together, remains rooted in that legacy.

Our passion for community is shared with you, our benefactors, and illustrated throughout this issue of Pathfinders. For example, you will read that support from friends like Rev. Cathleen Morris, PhD, and others has allowed us to launch an EmPATH Unit, an innovative model that will expand options for treating behavioral health patients in crisis.



You will also read about how our Street Medicine Program, in combination with key community partnerships, is allowing us to move care “upstream” before an emergency arises. Initiatives like these are powerful because they lead to high-quality care, better health outcomes and balanced use of emergency services and other resources.

We are grateful for the trust you have placed in us, and we remain steadfast in our mission to invest in medical education, research and access to patient care. With your support, we will build on our legacy of ensuring exceptional care and supporting innovative programs that are rooted in community vibrancy.

With gratitude for your partnership,

Dr. Stephen Shapiro  
Chief Medical Foundation Officer  
Chair, Gundersen Medical Foundation

## PATHFINDERS

Pathfinders is published by Gundersen Medical Foundation for friends and benefactors of the Foundation. We welcome comments or suggestions from our readers for future stories.

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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Gundersen Medical  
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# PATHFINDERS

3

Meet Our Board

*Andy Ferguson*

4

Leading the Way in  
Maternal Care

*Supporting the Health of Mothers*

7

Donor Profile

*Reverend Cathleen Morris, PhD*

10

Empowering Patients to  
Navigate Healthcare Beyond  
the ER

*Preserving ER Access and Improving Community Health*

13

Caretaking a Legacy

*A Q&A With Gundersen Archivist Eileen Severson, MLIS*

16

Funding Cuts Put Vulnerable  
Community Members at Risk

*Crime Victim Services at Emplify Health by Gundersen*

18

The Gift of a Full-Circle  
Moment

*A Message from Mandy Richardson, MPH, CFRE, Director  
of Philanthropy*

19

Donor Gifts & Grants Report

*Commemorative Tributes and Your Gifts at Work*

29

The Miracle Connection

*Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®*

33

Happenings

*Foundation News*

**On the cover:** Reverend Cathleen Morris, PhD,  
recently made a significant gift in support of a new  
EmPATH Unit.



# You make a difference.

When Karl Goldbeck faced a life-changing illness, he found hope in the compassion and expertise of his dedicated team. Today, Karl and his wife, Pam, are proud to support their team and other patients through gifts to Gundersen Medical Foundation.



Join the Goldbecks in  
making a difference today.

- **USE THE QR CODE** or visit [gundersenhealth.org/spring](https://gundersenhealth.org/spring) to donate online
- **RETURN** the enclosed gift envelope
- **CALL** (608) 775-6600 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 56600





# ANDY FERGUSON

Cultivating leadership and healthier communities



Andy Ferguson grew up in Galesville, Wis., where he learned a passion for agriculture and entrepreneurship from his parents in their family business—Ferguson's Orchards.

While Andy and his wife, Ashley, now live in Eau Claire, Wis., with their two daughters, Andy remains deeply connected to the greater La Crosse area. He also feels a kinship with organizations that make communities stronger and healthier, which is why Andy recently joined Gundersen Medical Foundation's Board of Directors.

## FARMING IS A FAMILY TRADITION

After graduating from Holmen High School (2004), Andy went on to earn a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota (2008) and a Juris Doctor (law) degree from the University of Wisconsin (2012). Following graduation, his passion for farming inspired him to return to grow the family business.

Today, Ferguson's Orchards has expanded to six orchards across Wisconsin and Minnesota, welcoming more than 300,000 visitors last fall. While his parents have retired, Ferguson's remains a true family business, with Andy (co-owner) leading the retail operations and business

development, his brother, Joe, (co-owner) overseeing the farming and Ashley managing the retail stores—all alongside their 400 peak-season employees. The family takes pride in growing safe, healthy fruit, while welcoming the community to meet their farmers and see where their food is grown. "The gap between consumers and agriculture is widening," explains Andy, "so we try to connect the two by inviting the community to see where their food comes from while making lasting family memories. It's very rewarding."

## CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY

In September 2024, Andy joined the Foundation's board because he felt an alignment with the organization's values and the opportunity to stay connected to his "hometown" community. Though he feels like he is still learning, the process has been fulfilling.

"I have a lot to learn about the scope of the Foundation's work," says Andy, "but the dedication to thoughtful stewardship is clear and impressive. The entire board and the staff are deeply committed to improving lives, both through support for the healthcare system and through investments in community programming, medical education and medical research. The impact is expansive." +

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Profession

- Co-owner, Ferguson's Orchards

### Board length of service

- Since Sept. 2024

### Expertise

- Business
- Leadership



*Jerome Gundersen, MD, with a group of certified nurse midwives*

# Leading the way in maternal care

For decades, Emplify Health by Gundersen has stood at the forefront of maternal care. After all, supporting the health of mothers means supporting the health of entire families—and their communities.

This commitment to excellence in maternal care is demonstrated in many ways throughout the system, including a new Medical Education program that will improve maternal care in rural areas and our pioneering midwifery program.

## **CARING FOR MOMS CLOSE TO HOME**

Obtaining access to obstetric care in rural and underserved areas can be challenging for patients due to the lack of qualified providers or lack of hospitals with labor and delivery units. This can lead to patients traveling long distances to receive their obstetric care or, unfortunately, being unable to receive obstetric care due to the travel barrier.

However, Gundersen Medical Foundation's new Family Medicine – Obstetrics (OB) Fellowship will help ensure moms can get care close to home. This Medical Education program offers a newly-



*According  
to Family  
Medicine –*

*OB Fellowship  
program director*

***Shannan Stephens, MD,***  
*OB/GYN, the Medical  
Education program will  
produce Family Medicine  
physicians with the kind  
of advanced obstetric skills  
that will help moms rest  
easy, knowing they can  
receive high-quality care  
close to home, even in an  
emergency.*



graduated Family Medicine resident or a practicing physician who plans to serve in a rural or an underserved community the opportunity to receive advanced training in obstetrics.

Graduates of the one-year fellowship receive clinical and surgical training that is not typically part of Family Medicine Residency training. This includes additional experience managing low- and high-risk pregnancies and performing deliveries, including cesarean sections. The fellow also spends time caring for patients in rural areas during the training.

### **A MILESTONE IN MATERNAL CARE**

While the fellowship is still in its first year, 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the →

## Safeguarding the health of women and families

In February 2025, the newly-renovated Obstetrics & Gynecology Unit located on Level 5 of Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital was unveiled during a special celebration. As part of this event, Ted Peck, MD, OB/GYN, was honored for his exceptional contributions to maternal-fetal medicine and obstetrical ultrasound.

From 1977 to 2016, Dr. Peck served as a perinatologist specializing in high-risk pregnancies. During those 37 years, he worked with both local and regional medical professionals to care for expectant mothers and their babies, improving the health and well-being of countless women and families.

In recognition of his extraordinary service, Gundersen Medical Foundation dedicated the Dr. Ted Peck Ultrasound Suite as a tribute that will serve as a lasting reminder of his dedication and the profound impact he has made in the field of women's health and obstetrics.

Gundersen Medical Foundation also announced the establishment of the Obstetrics & Gynecology Endowment Fund. This fund will be used to enhance services, invest in new technology and provide educational opportunities for staff. In honor of Dr. Peck, special priority will be given to supporting ultrasound technology, continuing his legacy of transforming care and advancing ultrasound services. +



*Retired perinatologist Ted Peck, MD, was honored during the re-opening of the newly-renovated Obstetrics & Gynecology Department*



*Amy Belling, CNM, with Sasha Rask and her child, Hudson*

midwifery program at Emplify Health, a program that has been a cornerstone in providing compassionate, personalized care for expectant mothers.

The midwifery program was initiated by Jerome Gundersen, MD, in 1975. In that year, Cynthia DeLano, the first certified midwife, delivered 12 babies. Fast forwarding to 2024, there were a total of 1,818 deliveries at the La Crosse hospital, and the 11-person team of certified nursing midwives delivered 767 (42%) of them.

“Our midwifery program is the first and longest-running midwifery program in Wisconsin, and it continues to be very successful,” says midwife Carleen Poellinger, MS, CNM. “We proudly celebrate this milestone as a testament to the dedication and expertise of our

physicians and midwives who collaborate tirelessly to provide the highest quality care to our patients.”

Carleen and the other midwives consistently excel at helping women achieve a low-intervention pregnancy and birth. In 2024, for example, Emplify Health boasted a primary cesarean rate of 11%—just under three times lower than the national average of 32.3% (last reported by March of Dimes in 2023).

While these numbers are impressive, they do not capture the total impact. “One aspect of our midwifery team that defies measurement is their special nature,” says Amy Frauenkron, MS, RN, clinical operations director for Obstetrics & Gynecology. “They are not only personable but also shine at fostering meaningful relationships with patients

throughout their pregnancy journey. Their ability to connect personally with patients is truly next level.”

In addition to the 11 midwives at the La Crosse hospital, there are also midwives at regional locations in Tomah (2), Viroqua (2) and West Union (1), providing high-quality, compassionate care to patients in those rural communities.

Together, the midwifery program and new fellowship program underscore our organization’s ongoing commitment to nurturing families and communities. In fact, because both programs were the first of their kind in Wisconsin, they also demonstrate our dedication to being leaders in maternal care, illustrating our belief that every mother deserves exceptional care close to home. +



# A gift that will save lives

**At** its core, a philanthropic gift is an act of kindness. For many, a charitable donation is also a deeply personal expression of their values and beliefs, sometimes sparked by a profound life experience.

Such is the case for Reverend Cathleen Morris, PhD, who experienced the unexpected and tragic loss of a close family member. This significant loss not only influenced Cathleen's education and career paths but also ignited within her a passion for helping others, especially young people and those impacted by mental health challenges.

With a goal of contributing to lasting change, Cathleen recently made a significant gift to Gundersen Medical Foundation to support an EmPATH Unit at Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital. EmPATH stands for Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment and Healing, and could be compared to Urgent Care specifically for individuals experiencing mental health crises.

"Cathleen's gift is both personal and powerful," says Mandy Richardson, CFRE, MPH, director of Philanthropy at Gundersen Medical Foundation. "The choice to invest in behavioral healthcare honors her loved one, while offering hope to those who may feel that all hope is lost. Simply put, this gift will save lives." →



*Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital campus, featuring its Inpatient Behavioral Health building (lower left), where construction is currently underway for Wisconsin's first-ever EmPATH Unit (illustrated at lower right)*



"I believe that everyone has worth and deserves compassionate care, particularly when they are at their most vulnerable."

**Rev. Cathleen Morris, PhD**

### INSPIRED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Cathleen and her brothers—Leslie, Robert and Richard—grew up in Waukesha, Wis., with their parents, John and Eloise, who modeled the importance of faith, lifelong learning and connecting with community. After high school, Cathleen enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL), where she earned a bachelor's degree in physical education with a minor in music. As a college student, she enjoyed living near her aunt and uncle, Sacia and David Morris, MD, ABAI, ABFM, who founded Allergy Associates of La Crosse in 1970.

By 1980, Cathleen had graduated from college and was teaching (grades 1-8) at a school in Beloit, Wis., when the unthinkable happened. Richard, her younger brother by about 16 months, died by suicide shortly before his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The loss was devastating to the entire family, along with their close-knit community in Waukesha.

Shortly thereafter, Cathleen, who had been thinking about continuing her education, enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. By 1983, she had earned a second bachelor's degree, which would allow her to be a fully-licensed music teacher. "Looking back, I realize that focusing on schoolwork gave me the time to process the loss of my brother and cope with the grief," says Cathleen.

During the grieving process, Cathleen recognized a growing desire to work with young adults who, like her brother, were at a transitional time in their lives. Subsequently, Cathleen returned to UWL

where, in 1984, she completed a master's degree in College Student Personnel. With this degree, Cathleen went on to find work as a residence hall director at Buena Vista College in Iowa and then as assistant director of student activities/leadership at Ashland College in Ohio.

"The empathy I felt for my brother's condition led me to want to work with and support young people transitioning into adulthood, which can be a vulnerable time," shares Cathleen. "I wanted to help ensure other families would not have to suffer the kind of loss that my family experienced."

Cathleen went on to earn a PhD in Higher Education from Kent State University in Ohio before returning to Waukesha to complete a doctoral internship at Carroll University. Subsequently, Cathleen served in various leadership roles at Carroll and Marquette University in the offices of student development/student life. In her final role at Carroll, Cathleen served as the



director of community outreach programs from 1999-2013.

### GUIDED BY FAITH AND FAMILY

Altogether, Cathleen spent more than 30 years supporting students and communities through a variety of roles in higher education. Her career in education might have been even longer, but Cathleen received a call to ministry and started seminary in 2013.

As part of what she calls her “second career,” Cathleen received a Master of Divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary, a Certificate of Lutheran Learning and Formation from Wartburg Theological Seminary and was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), where she subsequently served as a rostered minister before retiring in 2024. Cathleen continues to serve in the La Crosse Area Synod, even in retirement.

Though Cathleen is from Waukesha, she has an affinity for the La Crosse area because of her time as a student at UWL. Additionally, she has always been close to extended family from the area, including her cousin, Mary Morris, MD, ABIM, and Mary’s husband, Jim Killoran. In fact, Cathleen first learned about the EmPATH project from Mary and Jim, who have a longstanding commitment to the local community.

In 2013, Mary’s parents, Dr. David and Sacia Morris, made a \$1 million gift to Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation’s Campus Renewal Campaign in support of the Adolescent Behavioral Health Unit that still bears their name. At the time, this gift helped expand the hospital’s capacity for treating teenagers in the Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit.

Today, gifts from Cathleen and others will support the EmPATH initiative, offering an

important level of behavioral healthcare that did not previously exist. According to Behavioral Health clinical operations director Josh Court, MSW, MBA, 75% or more of severe psychiatric emergencies can be stabilized within 24 hours, meaning an inpatient admission is not always needed.

With this new model, Behavioral Health patients who are medically cleared in the Emergency Department can be transitioned to the EmPATH Unit where they will be evaluated and treated by psychiatrists in a calmer, more comfortable setting. Each patient will have their own recliner in which to relax while they remain under constant observation and are continually re-evaluated for up to 23 hours. At that point, many patients will be prepared to leave with a clearly-defined care plan that includes follow-up resources and outpatient programs.

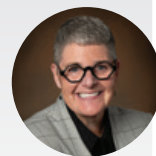
“Mental illness impacts many families, including ours,” says Cathleen. “I believe that everyone has worth and deserves compassionate care, particularly when they are at their most vulnerable. EmPATH will allow those in crisis to receive the right level of care close to home—in an environment that preserves dignity and offers hope.” +



(L-R) Nora Schmitz, construction project manager, gives Rev. Cathleen Morris, PhD, a tour of what will be the new EmPATH Unit

## Invest today for a better tomorrow

If you would like to support EmPATH, the first unit of its kind in Wisconsin, please email **Monica Herman**, manager of Philanthropy at [monica.herman@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:monica.herman@gundersenhealth.org) or call (608) 775-8427.





## EMERGENCY

A photograph of three women standing in front of a building entrance with a large 'EMERGENCY' sign. The woman on the left is wearing a black top and has a name tag that reads 'SANDY BREKKE'. The woman in the middle is wearing a white top with a blue floral pattern and has a name tag that reads 'BARBARA POLLACK'. The woman on the right is wearing a black top with a colorful floral pattern and has a name tag that reads 'KATLYN BECKER'. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera.

## Empowering patients to navigate healthcare beyond the ER

In 2024, Emplify Health by Gundersen's Trauma and Emergency Services in La Crosse, Wis., hit a remarkable milestone by serving 189,000 patients, a new annual record for the only Level II Trauma Center in the region.

*(L-R) Sandy Brekke, RN, Population Health director, with community health workers Barbara Pollack and Katlyn Becker*



The designation as a Level II Trauma Center means that Emplify Health by Gundersen provides comprehensive, life-saving care for patients following a traumatic accident or injury. The Emergency Department is staffed with highly trained surgeons and specialists who have access to state-of-the-art equipment, giving patients with life-threatening injuries the best chance for recovery.

"We are proud of this milestone because it means our community trusts us to provide care in their most critical moments," says Sandy Brekke, RN, Population Health director. "As demand continues to increase, it's important that we use innovative programs to ensure patients have continued access to the most appropriate level of care."

Data shows the number of patients being served in the Emergency Department continues to grow substantially each year, which is why Emplify Health by Gundersen—with support from Gundersen Medical Foundation—has implemented several programs designed to move care upstream to ensure that Emergency Services does not become overburdened.

## MEETING PATIENTS WHERE THEY ARE

Since its inception in 2020, the Street Medicine Program has been changing lives. Once a week, a team of medical professionals visits local shelters, parks and encampments with the goal of providing compassionate care to our community's unhoused neighbors, a population for whom access to healthcare has historically been a struggle.

The team includes Sandy Brekke, a former ICU nurse; a supervising physician; two resident doctors, and, occasionally, nursing or other medical students. The medical group is joined by a community health worker from St. Clare Health Mission, an essential program partner. The team works together using a St. Clare Health Mission mobile medicine van with two exam areas.

On most days, the team sees 12-20 patients during a four-hour shift. Patients may receive care for wounds, COPD exacerbations, substance use disorders, mental health conditions, frostbite and more. While immediate care is the priority, the team also strives to connect patients with a primary care provider for medical needs down the road, which is why the community health worker from St. Clare Health Mission is an important resource.

"Beyond better health outcomes, one of the greatest benefits of the Street Medicine Program is the ability to connect patients with people who can help them navigate the system—whether that's making appointments, securing transportation to appointments, completing housing paperwork or accessing specialty services and other community resources," says Heidi Allred, MD, program director of the Family Medicine Residency Program and co-director of the Street Medicine Team. "Connecting patients to primary care and addressing their fundamental needs helps reduce unnecessary emergency visits and may prevent the overcrowding of emergency departments that we see in other communities."

Dr. Allred also sees the program's powerful impact on the resident

physicians who participate in Street Medicine. "This program teaches the region's future doctors to understand the beauty of working collaboratively with other organizations within their communities and to think about caring for patients beyond traditional clinical settings. They're encouraged to think creatively and recognize the broader impact they can have as physicians."

## CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

The Family Medicine Residency Clinic within Hamilton Elementary School in La Crosse is another innovative program that seeks to connect community members with a primary care provider. The program began in November 2024 and is open to all Hamilton/SOTA I students (and their household family members) along with school staff.

One Tuesday morning per month, a Family Medicine resident physician is onsite at the Hamilton Clinic to see patients for wellness visits, immunizations, injuries, illness, behavioral health concerns and more.

"We're hoping to connect with families who don't have a primary care clinician because that relationship helps improve health outcomes," says Robyn Borge, MD, who is a faculty member in the Family Medicine Residency Program. "Addressing needs before they become critical enough to require a visit to Emergency Services also helps manage use of the Emergency Department."

Like the Street Medicine Program, the partnership with Hamilton Elementary School provides enriching training opportunities for residents. Dr. Allred shares that such unique educational →



*Family Medicine resident Samuel Miller, MD, in the mobile unit during a recent Street Medicine rotation*

opportunities have made an impact on the Family Medicine Residency Program. “Not only do these programs help us attract ‘the best of the best’ medical students,” she explains, “but they are also part of the reason that 50% of our Family Medicine graduates choose to stay and practice in this community. These graduates will help ensure our community’s ongoing access to high-quality medical care for the future.”

## REMOVING BARRIERS AND BRIDGING GAPS

While the Street Medicine Program and the Hamilton Clinic connect with patients

outside of the Emergency Department to help curb overutilization, an innovative partnership between Emplify Health and St. Clare Health Mission connects with patients while they are receiving emergency care.

Two community health workers employed by St. Clare Health Mission are embedded in the Emergency Department of Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital. Barbara Pollack is one of those community health workers whose job it is to work with patients who are seen in the Emergency Department four or more times per year, addressing “high-frequency utilization.”

Either on her own or through a referral from a patient care facilitator or a social worker, Barbara connects with these patients to learn more about their needs. “Most patients just need help navigating systems. I can provide that service and build a relationship along the way,” says Barbara, who is a passionate patient advocate. “I support all of my neighbors—no judgement—just smiles, help and hugs.”

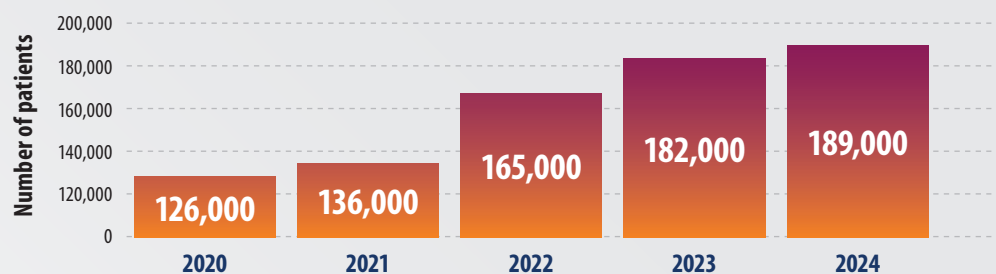
As a community health worker, Barbara’s work is not confined to inside the hospital walls, which means she is able to follow up with patients by phone or in person after they leave the Emergency Department. Barbara often meets patients for coffee or visits them at home where she can truly get to know their needs.

These needs may include obtaining insurance, exploring housing options or securing transportation for follow-up appointments. Barbara can also support patients who could benefit from entering treatment programs, building social relationships or overcoming food insecurity. In one unique situation, she even helped a patient obtain a seeing eye dog. Often, this help navigating systems is crucial in supporting patients with needs that affect their health and impact Emergency Department usage.

Initiatives like the Street Medicine Program, the onsite clinic at Hamilton Elementary School and the embedding of community health workers inside the Emergency Department are just a few examples of programs already making an impact. Recently, Emplify Health by Gundersen also announced plans to open an EmPATH Unit in La Crosse. This unit will help patients experiencing a mental health crisis who enter the Emergency Department move to a unit more suited to their needs.

These efforts underscore Emplify Health by Gundersen’s goal to lead with love by connecting hundreds of underserved community members with the level of care they need while, at the same time, preserving access to the Emergency Department for those moments when every second counts. +

The use of the Emergency Department is on the rise





# Caretaking a legacy



Nothing is more exciting for Emplify Health by Gundersen's archivist Eileen Severson, MLIS, than being on the hunt for—and uncovering—a historical treasure that provides insight or shines a light on the Gundersen legacy.

## Q&A

After joining Gundersen Health System in 2001, Eileen served as an electronic resources librarian, a lead librarian and then a library services supervisor. Since 2021, Eileen has also served as the organization's archivist, a position funded by Gundersen Medical Foundation and the Kathleen "Kay" Cimpl Wagner, MLS, Historical Preservation Fund.

Recently, we invited Eileen to share a bit about her role and the unique insights offered by her work.

### Q. WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR JOB?

**A.** I enjoy digging into our resources and providing the information that best meets the needs of our clinicians, employees, patients and visitors. I learn something new almost every day.

I also enjoy answering questions about the history of Gundersen Clinic and Lutheran Hospital and learning how things have changed over time. I can get lost in the

stories. We have many "treasures" in the archives that need to get out there for people to see.

### Q. WHAT UNIQUE INSIGHTS HAVE YOU GAINED FROM THIS WORK?

**A.** I have discovered that our emphasis on education, research and rural health have remained the same over the years. Here are some examples:

**Commitment to Education:** In 1927, La Crosse Lutheran Hospital, for the first time, offered a preceptorship to fourth-year medical students from the University of Wisconsin Medical School. Jeannette Munro, MD, one of the 1927 graduates, writes of her experiences at Lutheran Hospital with appreciation in the Wisconsin Alumni Quarterly, Winter 1978. Dr. Munro wrote, *"It was a first preceptorship—a first for the hospital and a first for us. We were there to get practical training and experience under skilled practitioners, and did we get it!"*

Today, we are the Western Academic Campus of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. We train a variety of residents and many different students rotate through our doors. The legacy of education still lives here.

**Commitment to Research:** The founder of Gundersen Clinic, Adolf Gundersen, MD, throughout his career presented cases and shared his observations at conferences in Wisconsin and beyond. He published articles on appendicitis, ileus, prostate surgery, pneumonia and spinal anesthesia. He must have influenced his children and their children, as many of the Gundersen family doctors went on to publish research on topics such as general, prostate and cardiothoracic surgery, public health and ophthalmology. Again, the legacy of research remains with the Gundersen Research Institute.

**Commitment to Rural Health:** Dr. Adolf also provided outreach to rural areas →

surrounding La Crosse as we do today with clinics in small towns and our support of the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM) Program. In an 1894 letter to his brother, Dr. Adolf wrote, *"Here I am once more, sitting and waiting for a woman to give birth, this time in the outback of Minnesota."* In 1901, he wrote, *"I have just returned from a trip to northwest Minnesota, near Fargo... a doctor wanted me to come out... I had so many patients that there was no time for hunting."*

## Q. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR WORK MAKES YOU MOST PROUD?

**A.** The emphasis on education, research and excellence in patient care began with our founder, Dr. Adolf Gundersen, and this emphasis is still strongly embedded in our culture. Our history demonstrates an ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of our community and ensuring access to high-quality healthcare close to home. +

# Honoring and preserving our history

Gundersen Medical Foundation's funding of the archivist position is made possible thanks to the Kathleen "Kay" Cimpl Wagner, MLS, Historical Preservation Fund and other donor support.

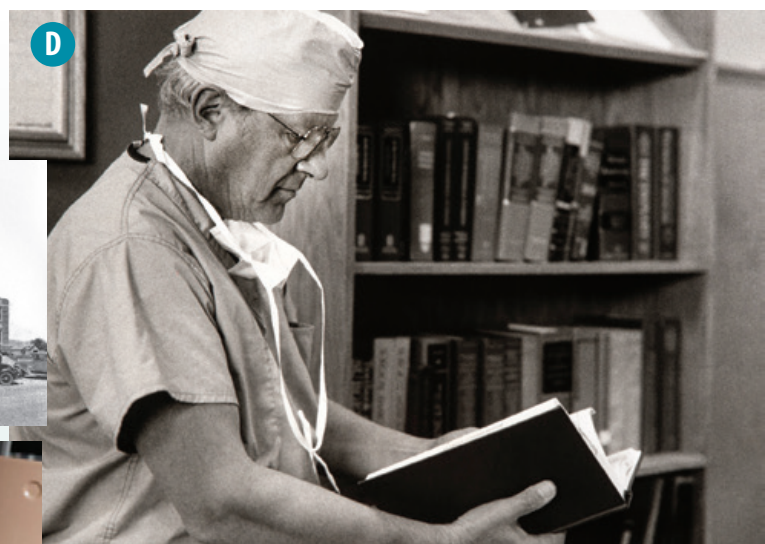
Kay served as Gundersen's medical library director from 1985-1999. Then, in 2013, she was invited to collaborate with A. Erik Gundersen, MD, on a special project. "Our project was to sort through an off-site storage facility on Muddy Flats with decades worth of accumulation. What we found was a treasure trove of Gundersen history. We spent nearly a year going through every paper, photo and object determining the historical significance to the health system. We also developed policies for proper acceptance

for donations so items no longer accumulate in a storage facility," says Kay.

The project was successful, and in 2015, the Foundation hired Kay as a part-time archivist. She continued to inventory, preserve and catalog items of historical significance to Gundersen until her retirement in 2018. At that time, Kay and her husband, Larry, worked with the Foundation to create the fund that would support future archival positions.

The Foundation, which celebrated its 80th anniversary on Dec. 22, 2024, is proud to celebrate Emplify Health by Gundersen's legacy and ongoing commitment to excellence in patient care.

## FROM THE Gundersen Medical Foundation Archives



- A. La Crosse Lutheran Hospital and Gundersen Clinic in 1930
- B. Historic medical tools on display at the La Crosse Hospital
- C. A medical bag belonging to Sigurd Gundersen, MD, the son of founder Adolf Gundersen, MD
- D. Adolf L. Gundersen, MD, grandson of founder, Adolf Gundersen, MD, in the library



# Funding cuts put vulnerable community members at risk

The impact of violence is complex and far-reaching, lasting well beyond the moment of harm to touch nearly every aspect of a victim's life. While the journey from trauma to recovery isn't without challenges, specialists from Crime Victim Services at Emplify Health by Gundersen have seen firsthand how the right support can help survivors rebuild their lives.



"The counseling I have received through the Crime Victim Services' Sexual Abuse Counseling & Support Program has been an invaluable experience...", says one survivor. "I have grown and changed into a more positive life. I honestly don't know what I would have done without the help provided by your program."

In 2024 alone, 679 survivors of violent crimes, such as domestic abuse, assault, sexual assault, robbery and fraud, were helped by Crime Victim Services with a total of 6,474 services. These services, provided to both adults and children, can include counseling, help navigating the legal system, supportive listening or referrals to other community resources (for legal services, housing, transportation,

etc.). Crime Victim Services also provides essential education to medical personnel, law enforcement agencies and other community organizations.

For decades, Crime Victim Services has been jointly funded by the healthcare system and through a number of state and federal grants. Unfortunately, deep cuts in grant funding have put the support offered by Crime Victim Services at Emplify Health by Gundersen—and at other community-based organizations across the nation—at risk.

## FUNDING CUTS IMPACT SERVICES

According to Stephanie Young, MPH, clinical manager of Outpatient Behavioral Health and Crime Victim Services, funding

for victim services in the United States has historically come from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This non-tax revenue is generated by fines, penalties and bond forfeitures from convicted federal criminals. Beginning in 2016, a decline in federal prosecutions and convictions began drastically reducing the VOCA funds available.

Each year between 2019-2024, \$44 million in VOCA funds were allocated to victim services programs in Wisconsin. From 2025-27, though, only \$13.5 million in VOCA funding will be annually distributed to Wisconsin programs. The impact of this 70% decrease in funding is that some programs are cutting services, laying off staff or closing entirely. →



*(L-R) Stephanie Young, MPH, with Janis Elder, MS, LSW, LPC, from Crime Victim Services*

“The medical model provides opportunities for early intervention, increasing the odds a survivor can establish a violence-free life.”

**Janis Elder, MS, LSW, LPC**

The End Domestic Abuse WI Coalition recently addressed funding cuts in a news release, stating, “Thousands of victims statewide will lose access to lifesaving and life-sustaining child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and other victim services. Without access to these critical services, the real-time impact will not only be felt by individuals and families but will also ripple through communities statewide.”

This year, the annual VOCA support for Crime Victim Services at Emplify Health by Gundersen was reduced by more than 75%, from \$411,486 to \$97,986, an amount that will significantly impact the department and its patients. “Our programs are possible because Gundersen believes in and supports this work,” says Stephanie. “However, the cuts in federal funding have been severe in a healthcare environment that is already financially challenging.”

As a result of the drastic cuts in federal funding, the department has had to make some adjustments. In February, the separate clinic that Crime Victim Services operated in on the main campus in La Crosse was closed, and the services

were relocated to inside the Hospital. In March, the program had to begin billing patients for individual therapy, services that had previously been provided at no cost since the program’s inception.

“Sadly, some of our patients will not be able to continue receiving therapy, either because they cannot afford it or because billing insurance or receiving a bill could create an unsafe situation at home,” explains Stephanie. “Our most vulnerable community members may be even more at risk.”

### **A MODEL WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

The National Domestic Violence Helpline identified that people in abusive relationships, on average, make seven attempts at leaving before being able to do so for good. Factors like fear of bodily harm or homicide, the threat of harm to children and lack of financial resources are only a few of the complicating factors which, with the elimination of support services, could get worse.

The End Domestic Abuse WI Coalition calls domestic violence homicide a “public health crisis,” sharing in a news release that “1 in every 6 domestic violence

homicides in the U.S. is committed in Wisconsin” and calling Wisconsin “among the worst states in the country for domestic violence.”

These statistics not only underscore the importance of victims’ services in general, but they also demonstrate that the medical model used in Crime Victim Services is a model worth preserving. While embedding services for crime victims into a healthcare setting is a common practice nationwide, the Crime Victim Services department at Emplify Health by Gundersen is only one of three such programs Wisconsin.

According to Janis Elder, MS, LSW, LPC, therapist for the Sexual Abuse Counseling and Support Program of Crime Victim Services, these models are less common because not all healthcare organizations are willing to make a financial commitment. “The support we have received from Emplify Health by Gundersen illustrates the organization’s deep care for our community and a willingness to provide funding that aligns with our mission, even when it’s difficult,” she says.



# Carilee Fund:

## *A lifeline for survivors*

Janis joined Gundersen in 1981 as a social worker and educator when there were no services available for survivors of abuse. As an early advocate, Janis was instrumental in the 1987 creation of the Sexual Abuse Counseling program. In 1997, advocacy services were added to create Crime Victim Services as it exists today. After more than 40 years of service, Janis will retire in June, leaving a lasting impact on area survivors and the victim services landscape.

Today, it's clear that the department's efforts to create "on-ramps" to services by educating medical staff and normalizing the screening of all patients for abuse make a measurable difference. "Traditional models provide abuse survivors with connections to services after abuse has already occurred, often for years," explains Janis. "The medical model provides opportunities for early intervention, increasing the odds a survivor can establish a violence-free life."

With no resolution to the federal funding issue on the horizon, Crime Victim Services at Emplify Health by Gundersen is seeking community support. If you are interested in offering financial support, you may use the gift envelope in this issue of Pathfinders to make a gift. Simply write "Crime Victim Services" on the line to designate support for this area. Or, if you are interested in volunteering as a victim advocate, please contact Volunteer Services at (608) 775-3697. +

In 2005, Gundersen Medical Foundation partnered with a generous group of donors to establish the Carilee Fund, a fund that provides emergency financial assistance to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Funds from this program have been used to help with the first month's rent for a new home, a bus ticket to a safe destination, legal fees, childcare expenses or even a new front door lock or Ring doorbell camera.

In 2024, the Carilee Fund provided \$33,338 to help 70 survivors of violence take their first step toward safety. The Carilee Fund is one of very few—if not the only—financial resource available to area survivors.

Kim Salwolke is the daughter of the fund's namesake, Carilee Salwolke, and a payroll specialist at Emplify Health by Gundersen. "Abusers often seek to control everything in the victim's life, including finances, so this fund is important," shares Kim. "Financial support can be a catalyst for hope, helping a survivor establish safety and live a violence-free life."

*Kim Salwolke holding a photograph of her mother*



**Mandy L. Richardson, MPH, CFRE**  
Director of Philanthropy

*Photo by Sarah Griggs Photography*



# The gift of a full-circle moment

Sometimes in life, we are given the gift of an experience that leads to a deeper perspective. For me, that opportunity was intertwined with another gift—the birth of my family’s second child, Bennett David Richardson.

To provide some background, I spent time in 2024 on a fundraising project initiated by Kenneth Merkitch, MD. Since the Obstetrics & Gynecology Department was undergoing a renovation, Dr. Merkitch hoped to name the ultrasound suite in honor of Ted Peck, MD, an accomplished colleague who had retired in 2016.

Through this process, I learned about Emplify Health by Gundersen’s history as a leader in maternal care. Part of that history included hiring Dr. Peck, the organization’s first maternal-fetal medicine provider. His expertise meant our health system could treat women with high-risk pregnancies and led to ultrasounds being introduced as a standard part of that care. His leadership even contributed to the establishment of Gundersen’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

The fundraising project came to fruition in February 2025 when the renovated Obstetrics & Gynecology Department opened and Dr. Peck was honored in a ceremony near the ultrasound suite

bearing his name. Because I was several months pregnant then, learning about Dr. Peck’s legacy was extra special.

At the time, I could not have imagined that my own pregnancy would become high-risk and that I would ultimately give birth to my son prematurely at just 32 weeks. From the moment I visited the ER after I noticed a reduction in movement, to the moment (nearly two weeks later) that Bennett was released from the NICU, I experienced a range of emotions.

On the one hand, every caregiver I interacted with throughout my stay made me feel like I was their only patient. They took time to make a meaningful connection with me, and I can never put into words just how impactful their compassion, humor and support was to my experience. I will never forget the reassurance I felt during delivery knowing the skilled Labor & Delivery team was caring for my needs while the NICU team was standing by to provide immediate care to my son.

I will also never forget learning to navigate the NICU or the fear I felt seeing our baby in his special isolette, covered in tubes and wires. I knew that much of this life-saving technology was made possible through support from Children’s Miracle Network

Hospitals® and Gundersen Medical Foundation.

His isolette even included one of the Angel Eye cameras we fundraised for a few years ago after passionate staff members and donors advocated for them so NICU parents could watch their babies from home at night. Suddenly, I was one of those parents.

What an honor it was to help secure funding that contributes to high-quality care for moms and babies—and to unexpectedly be on the receiving end of that care was nothing short of incredible.

Most people who give will never experience the full impact of their generosity, but as someone who was suddenly on the receiving end of these philanthropic gifts, I can only share how deeply moved I was by this experience. We are fortunate in this community, not just for the quality of care we have, but for the community who loves enough to make this work possible. +

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*P.S. Thank you to Dr. Mahr who encouraged me to take over our co-authored column to share this story with you all. We’ll be back together for the year-end edition.*



OCT. 1, 2024–FEB. 28, 2025

Gundersen Medical Foundation thanks our many friends for their generous gifts.

# 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 Emplify Health by 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. The names of those recognized by tribute gifts are listed on the following pages.

*Commemorative gifts made after Feb. 28, 2025, will appear in the next issue of Pathfinders.*



## SENTIMENTS OF GRATITUDE

*"Thank you for helping me walk again!"*

**-In honor of Kaycie M. McCracken, DPT**

*"Thank you for your expertise, help and kindness in treating me for my asthma. I appreciate all you do so I can enjoy a good quality of life."*

**-In honor of Melanie M. Solum, MD**

*"A big thank you for your kindness and your care. I am grateful to be your patient and appreciate all you do to make my health a priority. Best ever!!"*

**-In honor of Kazi Z. Rayhan, MD**

## IN HONOR OF

David F. Bleidorn, MD  
A. Erik Gundersen, MD  
Drs. Scott & Mary Rathgaber  
Philip G. & Rebecca J. Schumacher  
J. Christoper & Sara G. Battison  
A.B. Culver  
Andrew P. Evenson  
Sister Mary Ann Gschwind  
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Olivia Vogler  
Bella Walbrun  
Cynthia L. Withrow  
Ella L. Woggon  
Bruce E. & Michele Zmolek

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Joan L. Curran  
Thomas S. Jarman  
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Gertrude T. 'Tee' Fleckenstein  
Darlene V. Franklin  
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*\*Deceased*



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# YOUR GIFTS

OCT. 1, 2024–MARCH 31, 2025

## Foundation Grants Report

The first half of fiscal year 2025 was an incredibly active period for our internal grant program. From Oct. 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, we received more than 260 grant requests from 75 departments within Emplify Health by Gundersen. We are excited to share the details of the nearly \$1,901,688 in grants that were awarded during this time.

Each grant is made possible through the generous support of our community. Your contributions are vital in enhancing patient care, investing in state-of-the-art technology, advancing research initiatives and providing support to patients during some of the most challenging moments in their lives.

It is with great honor that we share these specific examples and heartfelt stories that demonstrate the profound impact of your generosity.

### MEDICAL EDUCATION OFFICE

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Continuing Medical Education	\$1,200	November Cancer Center grand rounds speaker
	\$109	Cancer Center grand rounds
Family Medicine	\$172	Family Medicine Residency wellness activity
	\$193	Family Medicine Residency recruitment activity
	\$7,604	Chronic and Preventive Care director support
	\$2,351	Pocket addiction medicine books for Family Medicine residents
General	\$271	Orientation lunch for medical students
	\$37,122	Edwin L. Overholt, MD, Chair of Medical Education Endowment Fund distribution
	\$62,447	Edward Winga, MD, Director of Internal Medicine Endowment Fund distribution
	\$23,510	General operating support for medical education
	\$1,463	Wellness event for residents and fellows
Hematology/Oncology	\$1,174	Support for Hematology and Oncology educational sessions
	\$635	Hematology and Oncology Fellowship reunion speaker honorarium
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	\$207	Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery residency recruitment activity
Pediatrics	\$10,211	Pediatric Medical Student Clerkship Endowment Fund distribution
	\$18,969	Coordination of medical student Pediatric rotations
Surgery	\$587	General Surgery residency wellness event
	\$5,181	General Surgery residency rural rotations
	\$46,150	William Kisken, MD, and Thomas Cogbill, MD, Director of General Surgery Residency Endowment Fund distribution
	\$10,094	Susan F. Behrens, MD, FACS Surgical Skills Director Endowment Fund distribution
	\$206	Wellness night for Podiatric Medicine & Surgery residents
	\$261	Wellness activity for General Surgery residents
	\$53,946	James Webster, MD, and Lucian Griffith, MD, Director of Transitional Year Residency Endowment Fund distribution
Transitional	\$53,946	James Webster, MD, and Lucian Griffith, MD, Director of Transitional Year Residency Endowment Fund distribution
WARM	\$10,618	Wisconsin Academy of Rural Medicine (WARM) Pediatrics director support
TOTAL	\$294,681	



**Gundersen Research Institute**  
Paraic Kenny, MD, and Kait Saeger with the microscope digital scanner purchased for the Gundersen Cancer Biobank with \$61,973 from the Kabara Cancer Research Institute Endowment Fund and Cancer Research Fund



## GUNDERSEN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$1,500	Exploring functional disability & pain perception in pediatric patients with ASD & joint hypermobility-related disorders
	\$200	Awareness of LGBTQ+ Acceptance in Mainline Denominations study
Clinical Research	\$4,671	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - arthritis research
	\$11,676	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - cancer research
	\$11,676	Allyn O. Knaak Endowment distribution - heart surgery research
	\$1,000	Drive for Hope disbursement for lung cancer research
	\$26,106	Pediatric oncology research associates
	\$27,177	Lung Cancer Research Endowment Fund distribution
	\$30,000	Hematology/Oncology research
Nursing	\$5,000	Support of Nursing Research on the Green 2025 scholar presentation
Research Institute	\$29,801	Norman Gillette Sr. Memorial Endowment Fund distribution
	\$9,143	Nancy Lee Edwards-McNamara, MD, Memorial Endowment Fund distribution
	\$41,000	Breast cancer research
Research Navigation	\$4,869	R. James Trane Surgical Research and Data Center Endowment Fund distribution
	\$25,186	Center for Breast Care outcome research support
Translational Research	\$61,973	Funding for multi-slide microscope digital scanner
	\$94,246	Kabara Cancer Research Institute Endowment Fund distribution
	\$69,054	Norman Gillette Jr. Research Fellowship Endowment Fund distribution
	\$50,000	Kabara Cancer Research Institute support
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$504,278</b>	



### Resident Wellness

Residents skiing at a wellness event funded by various resident wellness funds specific to the Medical Education Department

## MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Behavioral Health Inpatient	\$1,770	Registration for EmPATH Summit
Behavioral Health Outpatient	\$3,500	Gardening materials to create therapeutic courtyard spaces for our patients
	\$500	Library for Partial Hospitalization Program patients
	\$2,500	Support staff training and education
	\$1,200	Support supervision of a clinician who provides neurofeedback
	\$1,000	Sensory tools available for Partial Hospitalization Program patients
	\$1,000	Assisting with food insecurity for Partial Hospitalization Program patients
	\$2,000	Patient engagement materials for contingency management program
	\$1,500	Education materials for patients in addiction treatment programs
	\$750	Gas cards to help patients with transportation barriers attend treatment
	\$17,700	Outpatient behavioral health therapy group seating
	\$245	Gas cards and bus tokens so patients with transportation barriers can attend outpatient appointments
	\$1,050	Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare Training Conference
	\$200	Transportation assistance for patients who are unsheltered or unstably housed
	\$1,340	NatCon25 - behavioral health conference
Crime Victim Services	\$2,500	Trauma treatment modalities training for staff
	\$200	Food cards to support victims of crime
	\$500	Gas cards to help victims of crime establish safety and receive services
Unity Houses	\$13,400	Laptops for Unity House patients to use when job searching, securing sober housing and attending virtual appointments
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$52,855</b>	



### Patient Engagement

The Outpatient Behavioral Health Department received a \$2,000 grant from the Elvira Hebell Addiction Support Fund to purchase patient engagement materials for their contingency management program for patients with substance use disorders

# YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

## PATIENT SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
<b>Apheresis</b>	\$540	American Society for Apheresis 2025 Annual Meeting
<b>Care Coordination</b>	\$800	American Case Management National Conference
	\$358	Lois's Loose Change Program
<b>Crime Victim Services</b>	\$24,000	Carilee Program annual funding to support survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault
<b>Critical Care</b>	\$2,930	A cadaver for continued Intensive Care staff training on lines, airways and anatomy
Organ Donation Support	\$1,500	Organ donation family supplies—heartbeat bears
<b>Family Medicine—Residency Clinic</b>	\$10,000	Support of the Hamilton School Clinic
	\$2,500	Supplies for Science Fair Day where residents and faculty teach elementary students about the human body and healthcare careers
<b>Gundersen Employees</b>	\$15,754	Employees Helping Employees Emergency Fund distributions to support employees in financial crisis
<b>Hospice &amp; Palliative Care</b>	\$1,900	Charting New Paths: Shaping the Future of Hospice & Palliative Care course
	\$750	Growing in Values, Growing in Care course
	\$650	The End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium Summit
	\$599	Hospice Quality Certificate Program
	\$500	Hospice volunteers training and education
	\$20,000	To support hospice patients with the necessary durable medical equipment
	\$15,000	Massage therapy for hospice patients
	\$15,000	Therapeutic music for hospice patients
<b>Information &amp; Referral</b>	\$448	Technology resources to support a project to improve the reentry process from incarceration to community life
	\$500	Inform USA Annual Conference registration fee
<b>Integrated Center for Education</b>	\$368	No-scalpel vasectomy skills trainer
	\$493	Microphone headsets for simulation rooms
	\$2,103	Backboards for mannequin storage and trauma education
	\$440	Earpieces for standardized patient instruction during simulation
	\$700	TruIV block for ultrasound-guided peripheral IV insertion class
	\$8,000	Funds to support cadaver labs for residents and staff to conduct training
	\$1,621	Equipment for simulation room to enhance pre- and debriefing sessions
<b>Labor &amp; Delivery</b>	\$2,000	Labor Ambulation Circuit
<b>Moundview Memorial Healthcare Foundation</b>	\$101	Moundview Memorial Healthcare Foundation - transfer of gift received for them
<b>Nephrology</b>	\$140	Staff to attend renal conference
<b>Neurosciences</b>	\$6,404	Floor mats for every room on inpatient neuro unit for fall and injury prevention
<b>Nutrition Therapy</b>	\$1,000	Support of culinary medicine classes for the YMCA LIVESTRONG/STAYSTRONG program
<b>Obstetrics &amp; Nursery</b>	\$3,854	Certified Lactation Counselor certification
<b>Office of Population Health</b>	\$150	Self-care items for the aging population
	\$150	Support of the quarterly diabetes support group
	\$4,000	Minutes in Motion community physical activity challenge
	\$500	Books for underserved youth participating in Safe at Home class
	\$6,000	"Healthy Aging" conference for patients and their care providers
<b>Orthopedics</b>	\$2,216	Shoulder models for educating patients
<b>Palmer Memorial Foundation</b>	\$10	Palmer Memorial Foundation - transfer of gift received for them
<b>Patient Experience</b>	\$250	Staff to attend Viterbo Servant Leader Conference
	\$5,000	Adequate clothing for patients who need them at discharge
<b>Philanthropy</b>	\$9,409	St. Clare Health Mission - transfer of gifts received for them
<b>Plant Partners</b>	\$29,748	Support to continue growth of hospital-based microfarm
<b>Resolve Through Sharing®</b>	\$1,500	Sympathy cards for La Crosse Spiritual Care staff to provide to patients
<b>Spiritual Care</b>	\$750	"Don't Take My Grief Away" books
	\$750	Grief support group supplies
	\$2,000	Clinical Pastoral Education celebrations and recognition
	\$1,750	Clinical Pastoral Educational resources
	\$2,500	Tea for the Soul program for staff support
	\$3,200	Support of "Boot Camp for New Dads" workshops
<b>Trauma Services</b>	\$3,915	Support of the spring Teen Car Control Clinics
<b>Volunteer Services</b>	\$1,000	Volunteer vests to easily identify individuals helping at Gundersen
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$215,751</b>	



### Patient Care

La Crescent Clinic staff with a new bladder scanner, thanks to a \$9,438 grant from the G. Gordon Perpetual Trust Endowment Fund



## PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
<b>Inpatient PT/OT</b>	\$1,600	American Occupational Therapy Association annual conference
	\$1,600	American Physical Therapy Association annual conference
	\$1,000	International Seating Symposium Assistive Tech conference
	\$6,700	Vestibular Rehabilitation: A Competency-Based Course
<b>Neuro Vestibular PT/OT</b>	\$5,000	Bariatric Hi-Lo table for vestibular and lymphedema treatment
<b>Outpatient PT/OT</b>	\$2,500	Lumbar Spine Management course
	\$5,950	Temporomandibular joint education course
	\$8,990	Vscan Air diagnostic ultrasound imaging system
	\$9,056	Overhead lift system in the gym space
La Crosse	\$715	Level II Lymphedema course
Onalaska	\$100	"Trends in Splinting" course
	\$1,890	RT25 - Reaction Time Tester
	\$2,751	Pelvic floor education course
Winona	\$5,957	Force plate system and handheld dynamometer
	\$5,500	Support of Steady Strides, a community-based Parkinson's group exercise class
	\$850	"Wisconsin Hand Experience" course
	\$350	Professional Bike Fitting Certification course
Onalaska YMCA	\$8,950	Wireless, monocular video goggles
<b>Sports Medicine</b>	\$690	National Athletic Trainers' Association Symposium
	\$100	Management of the Overhead Athlete course
	\$465	Staff to attend Mayo Sports Symposium
	\$100	"Manual Therapy for the Persistent Pain Patient" course
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$70,814</b>	



### Reaction Time Tester

New equipment at the Onalaska Clinic, thanks to a \$1,890 Glasser Physical and Occupational Therapy Fund gift

## ONCOLOGY

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
<b>Cancer Center</b>	\$2,500	Support for program to help patients with cancer manage appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment
	\$90,000	Paula's Purse annual funding to support cancer patients experiencing a financial burden
	\$11,000	Support for adult Cancer Center programming and events
	\$10,000	Comfort/organizational bags for new oncology patients undergoing treatment
	\$6,000	Support of the Cancer Center support group
	\$2,000	Brian's Fund for Colon Cancer funding to support cancer patients experiencing a financial burden
<b>Center for Cancer &amp; Blood Disorders</b>		
Tomah	\$5,000	Cancer Center Boutique Tomah - additional head coverings and wigs for cancer patients
<b>Dermatology</b>	\$1,050	Mohs conference tech training
<b>Hematology/Oncology</b>	\$225	Hematology and Oncology nurse training resources
<b>Infusion Services</b>	\$250	Wall-mounted bells for patients to ring in Infusion Services at Onalaska and Winona clinics
	\$30,000	Snacks and sandwiches as nourishment to patients receiving infusion treatments
<b>Integrated Center for Education</b>	\$2,336	Breast exam model for staff training
<b>Radiation Oncology</b>	\$480	Radiation Oncology Nursing Virtual Symposium
	\$675	8th Annual Radiation Oncology Education
<b>Speech-Language Pathology</b>	\$2,992	Compression garments for treatment of patients with head and neck cancer requiring lymphedema management
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$164,508</b>	



### Cancer Center Infusion Services

Refreshments/lunches for Infusion Services patients, funded by Oncology and Breast Cancer funds

# YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

## PEDIATRICS

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
<b>Cancer Center</b>	\$370	Association of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Nurses chemotherapy/biotherapy course
	\$120	Association of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Nurses membership
	\$12,500	Pediatric oncology psychosocial programming materials
<b>Direct patient support through CMN Hospitals</b>	\$144,634	CMN Hospitals funding for kids and families
<b>Family Medicine</b>	\$1,898	Replacement of baby scale
Boscobel	\$600	Reach Out and Read books—Boscobel
Fennimore	\$350	Reach Out and Read books—Fennimore
Galesville	\$500	Reach Out and Read books—Galesville
Hillsboro	\$1,500	Reach Out and Read books—Hillsboro
Holmen	\$500	Reach out and Read books—Holmen
La Crescent	\$670	Reach Out and Read books—La Crescent
La Crosse	\$6,000	Touch2Play interactive TV for children to use in waiting area
Muscoda	\$350	Reach Out and Read books—Muscoda
Tomah	\$3,025	Reach Out and Read books—Tomah
<b>Gundersen Children's</b>	\$10,000	Child life supplies to help patients cope with healthcare experiences
	\$1,001	Pediatric bereavement supplies
<b>Inpatient OT</b>	\$460	Abdominal binders for patients in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to support the child's physical needs
<b>Inpatient Pediatrics</b>	\$10,000	Improvements to the Pediatrics/PICU hospital family room
	\$892	Vascular Doppler with portable stand
<b>NICU/PICU</b>	\$83,216	Neolight aEEG equipment
<b>Nutrition Therapy</b>	\$250	The Neonatal Nutrition Conference
<b>Obstetrics &amp; Nursery</b>	\$5,060	Antepartum inpatient comfort and activity resources
	\$4,500	Resources from Period of Purple Crying program, an evidence-based shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma prevention program
<b>Pediatric PT/OT</b>	\$785	Pediatric feeding course specific to sensory processing and oral motor difficulties
	\$945	Pediatric feeding course with emphasis on treatment of infants and toddlers
	\$250	Supporting communication of interoception in gestalt language processors course
	\$798	Early Intervention: Sensory and Developmental Milestones for Infants and Toddlers course
	\$440	Exploring Primitive Reflexes in the Developing Child course
	\$65	Educational course on the 5 steps of the 24-Hour Postural Care Pathway
	\$339	Development of a Strength-Based Approach to Support Children with Autism course
	\$55	Adaptive Equipment and Assistive Technology in Pediatrics course
	\$1,050	Ayres Sensory Integration Evaluation and Treatment course
	\$99	Effective Strategies for Providing Self-Regulation and Emotional Safety course
	\$150	Introduction to Sign Language for Healthcare Professionals course
	\$497	Educational courses for therapists treating babies with torticollis and head shape
	\$450	APTA Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy Annual Conference
	\$1,200	Support for monthly craft/sensory/toy supplies
	\$18,609	Supplies and equipment for Primary Care OT staff
<b>Pediatric Specialties</b>	\$794	Water bottles for patients with syncope and other related disorders
<b>Resolve Through Sharing®</b>	\$330	Candle lighting ceremony for pregnancy and infant loss
	\$393	Eterna cribs for annual burial
	\$5,000	Perinatal loss resources and supplies for Gundersen region staff
<b>Respiratory Care</b>	\$77,062	Transport ventilator fleet
	\$31,400	Replacement of non-invasive fleet of ventilators
<b>Sports Medicine</b>	\$345	American Physical Therapy Association annual conference
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$429,452</b>	



### Reach Out and Read Program

A provider reading to a child, thanks to the Reach Out and Read Program. The program presents children between 6 months and 5 years of age with a book at wellness visits.



## NURSING

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cancer Center	\$125	Oncology Nursing Society membership
	\$109	Oncology nurse navigator course
Department of Nursing	\$300	ANPD for Professional Development Nurses membership
Infusion Services	\$795	Oncology Nursing Society Congress registration
IV Therapy	\$255	Infusion Therapy Standards of Practice books
	\$220	Infusion Therapy Standards memberships
Medical Oncology	\$625	Oncology Nursing Society membership
Nursing	\$96	Blanket drive fund donations to purchase blankets for patients
	\$1,030	ANPD Aspire Convention
PICU	\$530	Critical Care Registered Nursing for pediatrics certification
Radiation Oncology	\$310	Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation certificate
Telephone Nurse Advisors	\$615	American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing annual conference
Wound Center	\$775	National Wound, Ostomy, Continence conference
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,785</b>	

## CARDIOLOGY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Cardiology	\$17,365	ACCAP subscription for Cardiology
Community Paramedics	\$3,000	Community Paramedics training
Critical Care	\$8,747	Vscan Ultrasound and devices needed to utilize portable ultrasound
Emergency Services	\$2,403	Strive to Thrive exercise and wellness pilot program
Exercise Physiology	\$1,625	High-level ECG course for 5 exercise physiology staff
	\$450	Wisconsin Society for Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Health & Rehabilitation State Conference
Social Services	\$5,000	Supporting cardiac patients in inpatient and ambulatory settings
Surgery	\$28,000	Replace auto-transfusion units in the main operating room
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$66,590</b>	



### Emergency Services

Staff during a disaster drill wearing vests supplied from a \$2,100 G. Gordon Perpetual Trust Earnings gift

## SOCIAL SERVICES

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF GRANT
Social Services	\$1,000	Resources to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
	\$7,566	Chili Cook-Off event proceeds to support Social Services patient needs
	\$2,000	Interpreter services educational resources
	\$3,500	Support of NetCE Program for social workers to access
	\$2,500	Ethics and boundaries course for social workers
	\$7,000	Assistance to support adult patients to overcome barriers to care needs
	\$71,500	Social Services assistance with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals
	\$590	EmPATH Summit conference
	\$1,318	International Death, Grief and Bereavement conference
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$96,974</b>	

# CHANGING LIVES THROUGH PHILANTHROPY



Give a gift today!

## What is philanthropy?

Philanthropy, derived from the Greek words *philos* (love) and *anthropos* (humankind), embodies the spirit of giving for the greater good. More than mere charity, philanthropy is a strategic and thoughtful commitment to improving lives and addressing the root causes of societal challenges. Philanthropy is a collective effort to create meaningful and lasting change.

Your support nurtures thriving communities by fostering access to essential care and investing in medical education, research and community health initiatives. Because of your generosity, we can enhance funding for Behavioral Health services, programs that engage people upstream in their healthcare to prevent emergent needs, maternal care and much more. As proud stewards of your philanthropy, we are committed to cultivating a foundation rooted in health and well-being. We offer a variety of giving pathways and honor your contributions through three recognition societies:

### THE LEGACY SOCIETY

The Legacy Society recognizes those who create a gift bequest through a will, life insurance, property transfer or life income program (gift annuity or charitable trust). These gifts can play an important role in the estate planning process, enabling donors to make a gift of a sizeable amount that many may have previously thought was impossible.

### THE HERITAGE SOCIETY

Annual giving at any level has a lasting impact on innovative education and research programs and fostering community outreach programs. We are pleased to recognize supporters as members of The Heritage Society.

### THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY

When your cumulative support reaches \$50,000 or more, you will be honored as a member of The Founders Society.

## WAYS TO GIVE

***All gifts are important and make an impact. We invite you to consider the following ways to give:***

### DIRECT GIFTS

The most popular form is through cash or checks, but real estate or stocks and bonds can also be gifted directly.

### LIFE INCOME

Life-income gifts, such as a charitable gift annuity or trust, can provide immediate tax savings and annual income.

### TRIBUTES & MEMORIALS

Gifts to commemorate loved ones on a special occasion can be a meaningful reminder to those who care.

### RECURRING DONATIONS

Make an impact year-round by becoming a sustaining donor. Whether monthly or annually, recurring giving provides a convenient option to spread your gift in regularly scheduled payments that can be stopped or started at any time.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity and vision of our benefactors. It is our honor to recognize our Society members on a display in the Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital lobby, as well as on an electronic display in the Gundersen Medical Foundation lobby.



**If you have any questions or would like further information on these Societies or our Pathways of Giving, please contact Monica Herman, manager of Philanthropy, at [monica.herman@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:monica.herman@gundersenhealth.org) or at (608) 775-8472.**



# THE MIRACLE CONNECTION

GUNDERSEN MEDICAL FOUNDATION



**Children's  
Miracle Network  
Hospitals®**

Change Kids' Health.  
Change the Future.

**GIVE TODAY.** [gundersenhealth.org/cmhn-hospitals](https://gundersenhealth.org/cmhn-hospitals)

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

## Introducing our 2025 Heroes

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals is proud to introduce our newest group of ambassadors. These Heroes represent the hundreds of local kids and their families whose lives are changed because of your gifts to CMN Hospitals.

*Thank you to our Hero program sponsors:*



Oaklynn

**Age 6, Utica, Minn.**

Stage 4 Wilms' tumor

**Oaklynn** is a strong, energetic and playful girl who loves going to parks and playing outside with her siblings. She also helps raise chickens and recently began learning karate. When Oaklynn grows up, she wants to be a doctor, pilot or chef.

**CMN Hospitals support:**  
Gas cards and meal vouchers



Rhett

**Age 8, Brownsville, Minn.**

Hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, seizure disorder and developmental disability

**Rhett** has a contagious smile and witty sense of humor. He loves to cuddle and have books read to him. One of his favorite books is "The Little Blue Truck."

**CMN Hospitals support:**  
Weekly music therapy, feeding tube supplies, adaptive equipment, gas cards and meal vouchers



Athena

**Age 6, Brownsville, Minn.**

Cystic fibrosis

**Athena** is a happy little girl with a huge stuffie collection. She loves unicorns, playing dress-up and going to parks or the beach. When she grows up, she wants to be a singer and a cowgirl.

**CMN Hospitals support:**  
Chest physical therapy and respiratory equipment, horse therapy, specialized baby formula, gas cards and meal vouchers



Liam

**Age 10, Viroqua, Wis.**

Type 1 diabetes

**Liam** is best known for his resilience and kindness. He likes being outdoors, climbing boulders or trees and taking care of animals. He loves to make people laugh. When he grows up, he wants to be a policeman so he can help others.

**CMN Hospitals support:**  
Diabetes supplies and medical expenses, gas cards and meal vouchers



Marbree

**Age 8, Holmen, Wis.**

Congenital heart defects

**Marbree** loves to be creative and spends time singing and songwriting. She is thoughtful and generous with her time. In the summer, she and her friends host a lemonade stand in support of CMN Hospitals.

**CMN Hospitals support:**  
Gas cards, lodging, meal vouchers and music therapy





## Making miracles happen

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and Mid-West Family La Crosse hosted the 2024 Radiothon fundraiser Oct. 10-11. The event featured interviews with local children and families helped by CMN Hospitals and was broadcasted live on Z93, 95.7 The Rock and KQ98. It was also live-streamed on Around River City.

### Radiothon 2024 by the numbers:

**\$118K+** raised to support Children's Miracle Network Hospitals patients and families

**9**

local **business**  
sponsors

**20**

families and kids  
interviewed live on air

**20**

"Miracle Teams"  
created by businesses  
and Emplify Health  
by Gundersen  
departments

**Save the date!**

The 2025 Radiothon will be held Oct. 9-10, in the Clinic Lobby at Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital. For more information about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, please email [cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org).



Meet our 2025

Radiothon Champion

**Silas**

Age 12, Chaseburg, Wis.

**Silas** entered the world prematurely, weighing just 3 pounds and 14 ounces.

He spent the first six weeks of his life at Emplify Health by Gundersen, managing a diagnosis of Down syndrome and receiving emergency care related to lung and intestinal issues.

### CMN Hospitals support:

Gas cards, meal vouchers and an iPad to build communication skills

### 2024 Radiothon sponsors

#### Title Sponsors

E. Stanek Electric  
River Valley Remodelers

#### Family Interview Area Sponsor

GPC, DEW-ing Good

#### Thursday Day Sponsor

Seland's Karpeland

#### Miracle Room Sponsor

Altra Federal Credit Union

#### Text Sponsor

Ace of All Trades

#### Miracle Team Phone Bank

Paul's Heating and Air Conditioning

#### Miracle Team Phone Bank

Wieser Brothers General Contractor

#### 15-Minute Match

Luke's Auto Repair





# Changing lives, one child at a time

Thanks to your generosity, Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals at Emplify Health by Gundersen raised \$1.2 million to help local families during the 2024 fiscal year.



## What we do... because of you!

**435,774**

**visits** from  
pediatric  
patients



### CMN Hospitals

distributes funds where  
they are needed most



### CMN Hospitals supports:

Meal vouchers  
Gas cards  
Lodging  
Music therapy  
Sensory equipment  
Nutrition drinks  
Diabetes supplies  
And much more

More than

**\$1.2M**

funded **patient care**  
for children and  
families when they  
needed it most in  
2024



Thanks to your  
donations, CMN  
Hospitals at Emplify  
Health by Gundersen  
provides critical funding  
for pediatric medical  
equipment and family  
support services, giving  
children specialized  
care needed to heal  
and thrive

**25**-county  
**service area**,  
regardless of  
where patients  
receive care

**Thank you for helping to change the future by changing kids' lives!**



# A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE

*Dear Children's Miracle Network Hospitals,*

*Our daughter, Briyelah ("Bri"), was born prematurely at 32 weeks in May 2024. She was born across the state in Oshkosh, Wis., and because of her medical needs, she stayed in the NICU there.*

*Our family traveled almost three hours each way to visit her. Her challenging medical complexities continue to impact many organs, from her brain to her kidneys. However, her main diagnosis is severe pulmonary hypertension, for which there is no cure.*

*In June, Bri was transferred to a hospital in Madison for a heart procedure. Once again, we made many unexpected trips to see our little girl through different procedures.*

*Bri spent 66 days in the NICU between the two hospitals, so the costs added up quickly.*

*Children's Miracle Network Hospitals has been our lifesaver by helping with hotel stays, gas cards and meal vouchers, not to mention providing emotional support by checking in on Bri.*

*As of October, our little girl is back in Madison fighting for her life. Her pulmonary hypertension is very severe. Incredibly, CMN Hospitals has already reached out to see how they can help.*

*Many years ago, we decided to donate monthly to CMN Hospitals, and we are so glad we did. Support for CMN Hospitals truly makes a difference to so many families, including ours.*

*Your support and kindness have meant the world to us, helping to carry us through the toughest moments. We are so grateful to have you by our side.*

*Danielle, Kevin, Eliyanah and Briyelah Root*



## 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 Emplify Health by Gundersen service area, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals has raised more than \$24.8 million since 1986. Each charitable donation—whether through special events, annual gifts, business partnerships, sponsorships or planned giving, such as bequests—benefits children locally throughout the 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  
[cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:cmnhospitals@gundersenhealth.org) | (608) 775-4424 | [gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals](https://gundersenhealth.org/cmnhospitals)



Save the date



Monday,  
June 2, 2025  
La Crosse Country Club



Saturday,  
Sept. 13, 2025  
Riverside Park, La Crosse

**Looking to sponsor an event?** Connect with Olivia Moths, philanthropy program coordinator, at [olmoths@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:olmoths@gundersenhealth.org) or call (608) 775-6634.

NEW TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**Bailee Schmidt** *stewardship and communications specialist*  
[bailee.schmidt@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:bailee.schmidt@gundersenhealth.org) | Direct: (608) 775-4927

Please join us in welcoming Bailee Schmidt to the Gundersen Medical Foundation team. Bailee will serve in the newly-created role of stewardship and communications specialist.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Bailee spent eight years working in broadcast news and has experience in promotional content creation and storytelling. She looks forward to sharing the powerful impact of Foundation initiatives with the community.

GUNDERSEN PARTNERS

75<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

**Gundersen Partners was established in 1950** as the La Crosse Lutheran Hospital Auxiliary and is comprised of caring, committed members who are dedicated to enhancing patient care, healthcare education and community well-being through service and fundraising. During the past 75 years, Gundersen Partners has donated more than \$1.5 million for capital campaigns, including support for the Cancer Center and the Legacy Hospital—both at Emplify Health by Gundersen La Crosse Hospital. In honor of their 75th anniversary, Gundersen Partners has also committed to being early supporters of the new Behavioral Health EmPATH Unit (see page 7 for more). In addition to funding, Gundersen Partners has provided volunteer support for patient and family care areas, such as Hospice, family waiting in surgical and cardiac care areas and the La Crosse gift shop. Please join us in congratulating Gundersen Partners on their 75th anniversary.

Honoring  
excellence

*In remembrance, we pay  
tribute to the medical staff  
who served Emplify Health  
by Gundersen during their  
careers and who passed  
away between Oct. 1,  
2024 – Feb. 28, 2025.  
We recognize their individual  
dedication to patient care and  
their collective contribution to  
the field of medicine.*

- Larry Lindesmith, MD



GUNDERSEN  
MEDICAL FOUNDATION

Leadership

**Chair**  
Stephen Shapiro, MD  
**Vice President**  
Lindsey Preston, MASL, RN  
**Executive Assistant**  
Jean Hougom

**Philanthropy**  
Todd Mahr, MD, medical director  
Mandy L. Richardson, MPH, CFRE, director

**Medical Education**  
Benjamin Jarman, MD, vice president  
of Medical Education/designated  
institutional official  
Jennifer Lee, director

**Research Institute**  
Jennifer Kleven, MD, medical director  
Carolyn Heath, director

**Resolve Through Sharing®**  
Randi Berg, MD, medical director  
Mary Beth Hensel, director

Philanthropy staff

**Administrative Support**  
Cindy Steinhoff  
**Data System**  
Nicole Aponte  
Sarah Worman  
**Annual Support**  
Courtney Daniels Burke  
Carly Frerichs  
**Major Gifts & Planned Giving**  
Monica Herman  
Rachel LaValley  
**Operations/Stewardship**  
Katie Berkedal  
Bailee Schmidt  
**Fund Allocations**  
Ashley Rickaway, OTR  
**Special Events**  
Olivia Moths  
**Children’s Miracle Network  
Hospitals®**  
Abby Ryan  
Ashley Zibrowski, MASL

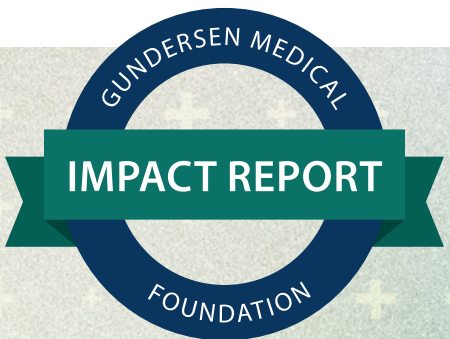
**Our Mission**

*Be an integrated and trusted partner to improve health and care in our community through exceptional medical education, research, and philanthropic support of Emplify Health by Gundersen.*

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2024



**FISCAL YEAR IN REVIEW**