

# GRANITE HOUSE

## DONOR NEWSLETTER

Fall 2021



For our donors, volunteers, and partners on our journey



### NOTES FROM THE BOARD

As we gather soon to celebrate a season of thanks, the board is celebrating the third anniversary of our opening. Our mission and priorities are clear: our staff are our most valued asset, and everyone works together to provide a caring home for the residents. To that end, the board approved a vision and dental plan this year for all employees plus a retirement IRA plan with a match from Granite House. We are proud to share that almost half of our current staff started with us three years ago, proof that Granite House is a great place to work, and we have loyal employees. Wages for new staff now start between \$15.50 and \$17.00 per hour, based on training and experience, and we are doing incremental increases for current staff.

The board continues to meet remotely for now and are kept informed of the activities of the site staff. The managers maintain high standards in infection control yet balance that with fresh air, new programs and some great outings. Our annual staff and family picnic was back and was well attended by staff, resident families, and board members.

Policies and finances of nonprofits are held to a higher standard than other small businesses, and we have just signed off on our first comprehensive state audit. We appreciate the support of our donors and community partners and the board members wish you all a pleasant fall and a blessed holiday season with your loved ones.

## CELEBRATING THREE YEARS AT GRANITE HOUSE



We have had another great summer, with activities to keep everyone busy. With all the outdoor work going on this summer, the residents were outside or watching through the window at the progress. There were big machines and volunteers pulling weeds, plus trips to the parks, beaches, and county fair. See the photos of the work that was done and the fun summer activities.

**GRANITE HOUSE** has built a 24-hour community residence in Stillwater, Minnesota, for the long-term care of younger adults with severe and permanent brain injury who might otherwise be in a nursing home.



### SUMMER GRANT PROJECT

Our friend Lizzy, a neuroscience/geography student from the Univ. of Washington, was back this year with a grant to build raised beds for sensory plantings by the sidewalk. With her dad's help she built four boxes to sit on the big stone blocks. Lizzy will be back next spring to help Tom install the base. She will then select and place a variety of plants and flowers where the residents can reach them from their wheelchairs. Many thanks to Lizzy for this great multi-year project.

**Granite House is a Minnesota nonprofit corporation with a mission:**

To provide support and hope to individuals and families living with severe and permanent brain injury.

# OUR STAFF MAKES GRANITE HOUSE THE BEST PLACE TO BE

**STAFF AND FAMILY PICNIC IS BACK!** After missing our annual picnic last year, we had a great time this year. Our staff brought their parents, children and significant others to see where they work and who they care for. It was great fun for all. Our residents and their families joined in the festivities and enjoyed the beautiful summer day under the tent. We had a fabulous meal with barbeque, potluck sides and plenty of desserts. Kids found bubbles, games and a big pile of dirt to play on, and there was a constant sound of voices and laughter.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
You can view all of our newsletters in full color on our website under the NEWS tab!



## MELIA LEAD CAREGIVER



Melia started in May 2020 working part-time for Granite House and quickly moved to full-time. She is currently assisting the House Manager with meal planning and grocery shopping for the residents. She is the second oldest of ten children and has raised six kids of her own. Her youngest, Jeremiah (pictured) was injured in a car accident and suffered a severe brain injury. In many ways his needs were like those of the Granite House residents. She, along with her family, took care of Jeremiah in their North Hudson home for nine years, until his passing in 2011. She appreciates and truly understands the great need for a place like Granite House. Melia feels that this is the place where she is

“meant to be” and that God used her son’s tragedy to prepare her to be able to help others with special needs. She feels it is a privilege for her to come to work every day and is very grateful to have the opportunity to help care for the residents. With her experience and the heart of a mother, Melia has brought much joy and leadership to the house. Melia’s family is proud of the work at Granite House, and they all enjoyed shopping together last Christmas for gifts for each resident, which were wrapped and placed under the tree along with items for the house. Melia is also blessed to be a first time Grandma to Jeremiah Janet (“Miah”). She arrived on October 4, weighed in at 8 lbs. 2 oz. and was 20 inches long.



# PROGRAMS FOR OUR RESIDENTS

## NEW PROGRAMS FOR OUR RESIDENTS



It was a busy summer with outings, appointments, and special visitors. We started **pool therapy** at the Courage-Kenny Stillwater. Three residents went on a regular basis, with two caregivers in tow, to enjoy the warm water and do some stretching and relaxation. Staff members were eager to sign up to participate and everyone enjoyed it. Once again, the local parks and beaches were favorite outing locations and this year the nearby Washington County Fair was added. The best parts were the animals, the Elvis stage performer and the cotton candy.



Along with our Music Therapy and Massage Therapy, we ended the summer with a visit from **Horse Hugs**, a Stillwater nonprofit. Kathi brought a gentle miniature pony named Timber and a very soft angora rabbit named Sprinkles on a beautiful day and interacted outside with the residents and staff. The visit touched upon many sensory qualities—sight, touch, smell, and with a few big whinnies, sound! It was such a great success that we will likely have Kathi and her friends come at least once a month all year. With a large, heated garage, winter visits will not be a problem.



**GRANITE HOUSE IS ONE OF THE BEST-KEPT SECRETS IN THE ST. CROIX VALLEY CAREGIVER COMMUNITY.**

We thought we'd try to get the word out to potential caregivers, so we created a video, which has just been published online. You can see it from the home page of our website.

Zach Peterson from Imprezz Studios in Stillwater, who filmed and produced our founding video in 2015, filmed the outdoor scenes on a beautiful fall day. You'll see interviews with some of our staff members, site managers and resident family members, all so proud to share their support of our wonderful place. For those of you who have not visited, it will be a real treat to see how great the house looks and what excellent caregiving looks like. It's the best place to work, hands down, so share it with your best friends!

[granitehousemn.org](http://granitehousemn.org) 

## DENISE MASSAGE THERAPIST



Twice a month, Denise comes to do on-site therapeutic massage for some of our residents. For people with decreased mobility, massage can relieve pain and muscle tension, increase circulation, and provide feelings of caring, comfort and connection. It may also provide a benefit for contracted muscles. As a massage provider for 20 years, Denise provided injury relief massage in a chiropractic office for 12 years and chair massage in a corporate workplace. Denise partnered with the City of St. Paul to provide licensing for new massage therapists for four years and volunteered with chair massage for seniors. With a certificate from the Minneapolis School of Massage and Bodywork, Denise is licensed in the

City of St. Paul and in the State of WI. To maintain her license, she takes 24 credit hours of annual training plus recertification in First Aid and Basic Life Support. Denise has been a friend to Granite House since early 2018, when she began to provide massage to one of our residents at home. An active volunteer in our summer gardening group, she is a great supporter of our mission. "My favorite thing about Granite House", says Denise, "is working with the staff. They are welcoming, friendly, and provide an exceptional level of care for the residents. Everyone is working with the common goal of improving the quality of life for them, which is very important to me."



**SUMMER GARDENING PROGRESS** Our summer volunteer, Lizzy, was back at Granite House and made a big impact on our outdoor areas. She was the catalyst for our weekly gardening group and arrived bright and early every week with lots of enthusiasm. Every Tuesday morning all summer, we had a group of volunteer gardeners help to spruce up the areas near the house. We divided and planted day lilies, weeded around trees and put down mulch, and hauled away piles of brush. Finally, the hillside was ready for grass seed and the last project was to prepare, seed and lay down straw. It looks beautiful and we will continue to work on it next summer. Watch for news about our new vegetable garden coming next spring. If you are interested in joining us next year for gardening, please contact Carol or Amber.



### **ANOTHER BIG RETAINING WALL**

The second stone retaining wall was completed this summer. Tom used his equipment (including a new grapple for lifting stones) to lay out a series of stone walls on the steep hill along the north side. Including the wall at the lower entry, over 80 tons of local stone outcroppings from Rivard Stone in Houlton, WI were used. Many thanks to our friends at Miller Excavating for donating multiple truckloads of backfill material for the two-year project. Between the multiple tiers of stone, a flat, sunny area was claimed as the perfect place for next year's vegetable garden. We will build raised beds with pathways to bring residents up close to watch and help plant.

### **MANY THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS**

It was a busy, productive summer and so much was accomplished with the help of our volunteers. Please see the story about our summer gardening crew--Denise, Susan, Lizzy, Chase, Sue, and Carol. Tom is volunteering his time and his equipment to do the big retaining wall project. Many thanks to Richard for bringing over a lift to clean the gutters and wash the windows with Tom this spring. The house and yard looked just great for the staff picnic! We also appreciate Phyllis and Don bringing over baked goods every week, and Rick for installing our new smoke detectors.

And thanks to Lizzy and her dad Scott, for the work on the planting boxes. We also extend a big thanks to Kathi at Horse Hugs for bringing her gentle horse and rabbit to visit the residents. Just before our video shoot, we welcomed eight volunteers from the Saint Ambrose Church Ladies Bible group, who cleaned and carved pumpkins. And last, a big thanks to our board of directors who donate their time to guiding our policies and approving benefit increases for our wonderful staff. Everyone involved volunteered their time and enjoyed working for a cause that continues to make everyone feel proud.

♥ *thank you!*

### **NOTE FROM THE STAFF**

We had such a busy summer with outdoor activities and outings! The picnic was fun, and it was so nice to meet the families of the staff. We started new activities this summer and the staff enjoyed the outings as much as the residents! As we reach our third year of operations, we are proud that almost half of our current staff have been with us since we opened our doors in late November of 2018. With a great group of workers, benefits that compare to much larger places, and a cozy home, it feels like we are all part of one big family. A big thank you to our volunteers and resident families who support us and cheer us on. We wish you all a warm and happy holiday season.

*Anna and Amber*



### **CONTACT US**

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