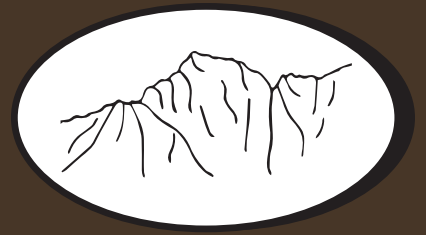


# GRANITE HOUSE

## DONOR NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024



For our donors, volunteers, and partners on our journey



### NOTES FROM THE BOARD

November 14, 2024 marks ten years since the first board of directors meeting of Granite House. We have come so far since that day, when we had a vision and hope that we could create this wonderful place where resident families call home and our caregivers enjoy coming to work. It is so rewarding to know that our mission has not changed; our focus is still on excellence, and our reputation in our community is strong and proud. Granite House is an example of what a nonprofit can accomplish with the support of a generous community of business partners, donors and volunteers. We have raised the bar on what a community residence should look like and how it serves its clients and staff. Much of the credit goes to our management team and exceptional caregivers, who have embraced the values and standards set forth by the board.

Our work this year has been to review, refresh and update our founding by-laws, to reflect how our best practices have evolved over six years of operations. We have looked at the ten-year history of the nonprofit and the six years of operations and are developing a strategic plan to take us into the next decade of service. With a new resident coming in, we can resume our startup list for finishing the hardscape, landscape and driveway over the next few years. We are proud of our work and thank our friends and donors for supporting us and believing in our mission ten years ago when we started this journey. We appreciate your staying with us.

## CELEBRATING TEN YEARS AS A NONPROFIT



That's right, TEN years as a nonprofit and SIX years of operations! Our first Walk for Thought (above) was September 2014, before we'd even assembled our board members. We had a great turnout with our founders, friends, and caregivers (some who would later become Granite House staff) and raised over \$3000 for the MN Brain Injury Alliance that first year. The Alliance members welcomed us, loved our great t-shirts, and have been partners with us since then. Here's the group photo from 2014. Look at it carefully: do you recognize any current Granite House members?

**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. Purpose-built with community support, it opened in November 2018.



### WALK FOR THOUGHT, 2024

The day started out just a little rainy, but by the time the van arrived from Granite House, the officials had canceled the walk due to lightning. Our loyal, hardy group stayed long enough for a photo with family members and staff who met them there. We were greeted and thanked by the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance for making the effort.

**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.

## PROGRAMS FOR OUR RESIDENTS AND STAFF

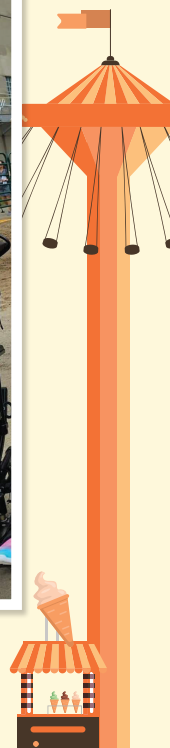
### ANNUAL STAFF & FAMILY PICNIC

It was a beautiful September day, and a great turnout. Some of our newer staff members brought their family to see where they work and meet the residents they care for. Our newest resident came with his family. We love seeing the large families of the residents come and interact with the staff, tour our beautiful home, and enjoy the fabulous food. Speaking of food, Amber's husband Nick outdid last year's smoker selection by adding smoked salmon and smoked cauliflower. The ribs, chicken, mac & cheese and smoked cream cheese are regulars now and always raved about. Thanks again, Nick!



### STATE FAIR OUTING

It's a yearly event now! The residents and staff all enjoyed the excitement at the Fair, and Amber's parents and sons met us there for the outing. Jena went on the big slide, (so did Grace and son Kashton) and there were lots of smiles and great food, especially French fries! When taking a photo of Megan by the horse barn, a mounted policewoman photo-bombed the picture.



## KALANI FEATURED CAREGIVER



Kalani joined us in 2022, not long after he landed in Minnesota. He grew up in Northern California, then lived in Oregon and Washington. His extended family is still on the west coast, and although he has made a few trips back, he misses spending time with them. Kalani chose to pursue a Certified

Nursing Assistant (CNA) course as an alternative to traditional college classes and was licensed in both Oregon and Washington. During the COVID-19 pandemic in Washington, he worked in one of the only state certified COVID facilities. Now that he is established in Minnesota, he is making plans to start college classes.

Kalani held various seasonal jobs, including landscaping, during high school, but most of his adult years have been in the healthcare industry, providing opportunities to work with skilled healthcare providers. He brought this experience and skill set to Granite House, where he is now the lead person for the evening shift, doing training for our new hires and communicating news to all evening staff. Kalani also works the overnight awake shift, doing a double shift at least once a week.

Outside of work, Kalani has many hobbies and interests, such as playing and listening to music. He confesses to spending too much time on video games, but notes that it's relaxing, and the online play helps him stay connected to friends across the country. Kalani's outdoor activities include archery, his favorite, and snowboarding. He's not a real fan of cold weather but enjoys the challenges of the changes in the seasons. After working in larger facilities, Kalani appreciates that Granite House allows him to spend time with individual patients and understand their needs and personalities. Although he has worked with Traumatic Brain Injury patients before, Kalani has learned much more about TBI and the specific needs of each person. He enjoys working in a smaller setting and finds it is "always a joy to walk in and see familiar faces."



## PROGRAMS FOR OUR RESIDENTS AND STAFF

### ST. CROIX COUNTY FAIR, WISCONSIN

We made the trip out to Glenwood City, WI to the county fair so we could see one of our caregivers, Libby, show her prize pig. It was fun to see her win a ribbon and then come over to hang out with us. Katie made friends with a sheep, and we all had a great time.



**LIMITLESS CYCLING** A chance meeting at Courage-Kenny introduced us to this St. Croix Valley nonprofit that brings adaptive bicycles to places where people can enjoy the wind in their face and smiles for miles. Limitless Cycling's mission is to create memorable outdoor experiences for those who cannot bike independently, fostering connection and joy through their rides. With their fleet of adaptive bicycles, they make the outdoors accessible to everyone.



## FRANK RITTER FEATURED BOARD MEMBER



pediatric epilepsy, he has enhanced the board's understanding of long-term care for people with brain injuries.

A native of Salt Lake City, Utah, Frank grew up downhill skiing, biking, and hiking in the mountains and desert. After undergraduate school at the University of Utah, he moved to Rochester, NY for his Pediatric Internship, where he met his future wife, Gladys. They moved several times during his eight years of residencies

and medical school, coming to Minnesota for a fellowship in neurophysiology and epilepsy. He and Gladys have now been here 40 years and are fortunate to live near their daughter Mallory, son-in-law Kolby and new granddaughter, Claire. Their time together, says Frank, is "a treasure". In his retirement, activities include walking the dog, hiking, music, travel, cooking, and watching a good baseball game.

While earning his initial degree in Biology, Frank served as a teaching/research assistant in Embryology and the chemistry/genetics lab while taking graduate courses in Neuropharmacology. After time at Duke University and Children's National Hospital in Washington DC, Frank and Gladys moved back to Utah for a Neurology Residency. During medical school, Frank earned an MD in the Pediatric Honors Program and presented his research about seizures to the National Academy of Science.

With his residencies in Pediatrics, Neurology, and Epilepsy, Frank earned board certification in these areas. As a co-founder of the Minnesota Epilepsy Group, he has done multiple publications and presentations on the assessment of pediatric epilepsy and its medical and surgical treatments. He is most proud of establishing and providing care at an internationally recognized center of excellence for the treatment of pediatric epilepsy in Minnesota. He is also a co-founder of the first Magnetoencephalography and Magnetic Source Imaging in Minnesota.

What Frank finds most special about Granite House is that it is a home, not a facility. "The respect and care for adults with severe brain injury is very difficult to find," he says, "and those families who find it are fortunate. Granite House cares for people and their families with respect and compassion."



**HORSE HUGS RETURNS** We had great fun with a visit from Stillwater-based Horse Hugs! Kathi brought our old friend Timber, as well as a very soft bunny and two silky chickens in a basket. It's the best "pet" therapy around!



## 2024 OLYMPICS

The residents loved watching the Olympics. A resident mom bought shirts for everyone, and Grace bought the special blanket for us.

## WELCOME, JASON

Our newest resident moved in the week of the family picnic, and his parents met the other families and caregivers. Jason's family enjoys coming to visit and he likes being outside on these warm early fall days.



## SUMMER VOLUNTEERS

Excel Energy employees contributed work hours to help with yard cleanup this summer, and Excel will donate their workday earnings to Granite House. Amber's husband Nick, with co-worker Luke and their son Austin came to clean up under the big oaks, while staff member Libby's parents Heidi and Casey worked on weeding. Nick helped us with the picnic again, this time with three smokers, providing very tender meats as well as some amazing sides!

## HAVE YOU GONE PAPERLESS?



Sign up to receive these newsletters, **IN COLOR**, in PDF form in your e-mail inbox. Send Carol a note for any newsletter-related requests at [carol@granitehousemn.org](mailto:carol@granitehousemn.org)

## NOTE FROM THE STAFF

Granite House was once again represented at the Minnesota Brain Injury Professional Conference in April. We hosted a table and greeted old friends while passing out brochures and folders to those new to our mission. It's important to us that people with severe brain injuries have a voice, and we are sharing it with the community through these venues. We celebrate our tenth year as a nonprofit this fall and the members of the board, as well as our caregivers, feel pride in starting our seventh year of operations. It's always a great feeling to welcome a new resident and family to our home. The staff is looking forward to all the fun that comes with the holiday season.

*Amber and Grace*

## CONTACT US

House phone 651-337-2647 | [www.granitehousemn.org](http://www.granitehousemn.org) | [info@granitehousemn.org](mailto:info@granitehousemn.org)  
Amber Rolewicz, **House Manager**, [amber@granitehousemn.org](mailto:amber@granitehousemn.org) | Grace Hadd, RN, **Nursing Director**, [grace@granitehousemn.org](mailto:grace@granitehousemn.org)  
Tom and Carol Insley, **Founders**, [carol@granitehousemn.org](mailto:carol@granitehousemn.org) | Granite House, 2114 Stagecoach Trail N, Stillwater, MN 55082

