Mission

The mission of UnityPoint Health® – St. Luke’s Foundation is to support UnityPoint Health - Cedar Rapids in giving the health care we’d like our loved ones to receive.

News and Information

- Our third-floor modernization project is complete! Two outdated medical and surgical areas at St. Luke’s Hospital have been combined into one modern, efficient healing environment. Among those who played a key role is longtime friend of St. Luke’s, Merlin Hulse. See story on page 3.

- St. Luke’s is saving lives by distributing AEDs and Stop the Bleed Kits to more than 100 organizations throughout Eastern Iowa. St. Luke’s Foundation provided the funding for this critical emergency equipment valued at over $100,000.
The hammers have stopped. The construction crews are gone. Two outdated med/surg areas have finally been combined and transformed into one modern, efficient healing environment.

Welcome to our state-of-the-art Surgical Specialty Unit (SSU). This flexible, practical space features 46 private patient rooms, comfortable family areas, and the latest technology for monitoring patient care. All rooms are ADA compliant to ensure patient safety and comfort. Accommodations for specific patient populations include bariatric rooms with specialized equipment and enhanced-safety rooms for behavioral health patients. Workflow has been improved to make it easier for team members to care for all patients.

"Everyone loves it!" exclaims Molly Eilers, nurse manager for the new SSU. "People who remember this area before say 'Wow!' But even those who are here for the first time appreciate how bright, cheery and comfortable it is. And our staff loves to talk about all the improvements."

This transformation was made possible by donations from many generous donors. Among them is longtime friend and supporter of St. Luke’s, Merlin Hulse. Now approaching his centennial birthday, Merlin has donated more than $146,000 for projects including the inpatient modernization campaign, inpatient hospice, LifeGuard Air Ambulance, and St. Luke’s Child Protection Center.

A lifelong farmer in Clarence and former Iowa state senator, Merlin has also played an active role with St. Luke’s Rural Health Care Endowment, which provides matching funds for projects to improve the health and safety of rural residents. Since the program began, we have awarded grants totaling over $470,000. Merlin has served on St. Luke’s Foundation board of directors and our Rural Health Care Committee. In 2013, he received the St. Luke’s Foundation Founder’s Award.

"St. Luke’s has been part of my life ever since I got my tonsils out there when I was three," says Merlin. "That was 96 years ago! I’m proud of the role I’ve played in helping St. Luke’s grow. I know this beautiful unit will provide a healing space for people in our community for years to come."

Every donor makes an impact on health care in our community. You can give to a specific program or service or allow us to direct your funds to an area of greatest need. For more information, call St. Luke’s Foundation at (319) 369-7716.
Heart disease has plagued Chris Montross, her brother Bob and sister Patty all their lives. “We grew up going to funerals,” Chris remembers. “We lost many loved ones because of our family’s long history of heart disease.” That includes their mother at 67, both grandfathers—one in his 50s, the other at 65, two uncles—just 31 and 42—who died two years apart, an aunt and two cousins. Chris’s dad survived a near fatal heart attack at 45.

Chris believes her heart problems began with an unconfirmed bout of rheumatic fever when she was a child. She developed a heart murmur, which eventually caused her aortic valve to fail. Chris admits she dreaded having the valve replaced. “I figured they’d have to crack my chest open, and I really didn’t want that. Then my doctor told me about TAVR.”

Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement, or TAVR, is a less invasive option that enables doctors to replace the damaged valve without opening the chest. The St. Luke’s Heart Care team introduced TAVR to the Cedar Rapids area in 2016.

“TAVR is really something!” says Chris. “I had the procedure on Tuesday and was home for dinner on Wednesday.” Chris was so pleased with the care she received, she decided to express her thanks in a way that helps others. “I told my family instead of a birthday or Christmas gift, I wanted to recognize my caregivers with a Guardian Angel award.” Chris, who retired in 2012 after 46 years at St. Luke’s Hospital, knows from personal experience how much Guardian Angel recognition means.

“It was always a nice honor when somebody went out of their way to thank me for exceptional care.”

Chris’s “Journey of the Heart” recognized the 44 physicians, nurses, therapists and other team members who played a role in her long but successful heart journey. “With much gratitude, I thanked each one of them, my Guardian Angels, and their gift to me of a newly mended heart.” She adds, “Part of our donation went to cardiac rehab and part to St. Luke’s Heart and Vascular Center because they’re doing a big expansion.”

Over the next two years, UnityPoint Health - St. Luke’s is expanding to meet our area’s growing demand for heart and vascular services. Enhancements include a second electrophysiology lab for heart rhythm issues, a third interventional radiology lab for treatment of blood clots and other circulatory problems, and an advanced hybrid operating room that expands St. Luke’s ability to perform minimally invasive procedures like TAVR.

“Heart disease is a terrible thing,” says Chris. “Fortunately, St. Luke’s Foundation makes it easy to support something that’s so important. You can recognize a loved one by giving in their honor or memory and have the money go to a program that’s touched you or your family.”

Having the right tools at the right time can save lives. That’s why UnityPoint Health - St. Luke’s Hospital, through St. Luke’s Foundation, recently distributed 56 AEDs and 92 Stop the Bleed Kits to organizations in Eastern Iowa. Each recipient organization will also receive training from St. Luke’s Heart Saver Program.

An AED (automated external defibrillator) is used to treat sudden cardiac arrest, a life-threatening condition where the heart suddenly stops. Stop the Bleed Kits are designed to help bystanders address a bleeding emergency in the event of a traumatic injury before professional help arrives. St. Luke’s donation is valued at over $100,000.

“AEDs and Stop the Bleed Kits are critical for individuals who are in a life-or-death situation,” says Michelle Niermann, UnityPoint Health – Cedar Rapids president and CEO. “As the area’s heart hospital our goal is to provide the best outcome for every patient every time. These tools aim to give everyone the best chance at life.”

Your gift in honor or memory of a loved one can build brighter futures for heart and vascular patients. Call St. Luke’s Foundation at (319) 369-7716.
If you’ve ever taken a toddler to the dentist, you know what a challenge it can be. Tim and Brita Loynachan’s son Nathan is 25 years old, but due to a chromosome abnormality, Nathan is developmentally more like a two-year-old.

“Nathan is developmentally more like a two-year-old. If I’m having a bad day, I can tell him and he’ll help me work through it, or he’ll get a therapist in there for me right away. He has truly been a rock for me during some difficult times.”

Brita’s doing OK and never gives up,“Her mother adds, “The Guardian Angel award is an outstanding program. You don't have to give a lot of money to recognize someone who really deserves it. It makes the recipient feel good and it makes you feel good, too!”

Michele’s two-year-old granddaughter Bexley presented the Guardian Angel award to Matt at a ceremony in January. “We made sure he didn’t know about the award in advance so he would be surprised!” exclaims Michele. “I wanted him to know he’s appreciated by me and my family.”

Her mother adds, “The Guardian Angel award is an outstanding program. You don’t have to give a lot of money to recognize someone who really deserves it. It makes the recipient feel good and it makes you feel good, too!”

Want to express your appreciation to the caregivers who made a difference for you or a loved one? Guardian Angel gifts can be of any size, and a ceremony honors those who go above and beyond for you. For more information, call (319) 369-7716.
Wherever Gwen Randall goes, she seems to run into the people her husband calls “members of the family.” That’s Gwen’s St. Luke’s family—the friends, co-workers, patients and students she knows from a 34-year career at UnityPoint Health - Cedar Rapids and another 10 years as a St. Luke’s Auxiliary member, volunteer, and board member for St. Luke’s Foundation.

“St. Luke’s is a big part of my life,” Gwen explains. “I didn’t stop caring about them when I retired. During the height of the pandemic, I worried about the nurses and other staff. When I go to an event in town, I look to see if UnityPoint Health is a sponsor. And when it comes to new programs there, I like to get the inside scoop.”

Now St. Luke’s Foundation is inviting people like Gwen to join our Circle of Friends. This new group draws together individuals who have had meaningful affiliations with St. Luke’s over the years—retirees, former board members, Auxiliary members, volunteers, and School of Nursing alumni. The goal is to help people stay connected with St. Luke’s as we share with them the inside story on everything from new programs and services to major renovations.

“I’m very excited to introduce Circle of Friends,” says Mary Klinger, president of St. Luke’s Foundation. “It’s been a longtime desire of all of us at the Foundation to unite people who share our belief in UnityPoint Health – Cedar Rapids and help them continue to feel like an ongoing part of our organization and the care we provide.”

Committees representing the different constituencies within Circle of Friends are currently brainstorming ideas for activities and outreach. In the coming months, you will hear more about how we plan to connect and communicate with friends of St. Luke’s.

“We’re looking at how we can keep people involved and informed,” adds Gwen. “I see Circle of Friends as informal ambassadors. We’ll let people know what’s going on at St. Luke’s and share their ideas back with the organization.”

If you have been a part of the UnityPoint Health - Cedar Rapids family and would like to be involved in Circle of Friends, please contact the Foundation at (319) 369-7716.

The transition from nursing school classrooms to real-life hospital settings can be overwhelming for new nursing graduates. The pressure in turn may lead to high turnover rates for hospital nursing staffs. At UnityPoint Health - St. Luke’s Hospital, we offer an in-depth orientation to set up a recent grad for success and help reduce turnover. Despite our work in this area the hospital is still seeing four out of 10 RNs leave St. Luke’s in their first year.

That’s why St. Luke’s Hospital introduced the Night Resource Nurse Program. It’s designed to help new graduates succeed in their roles, leading to greater job satisfaction and higher retention rates. Initial funding for the program comes from the Carroll and Lena Nelson Endowment Fund at St. Luke’s Foundation.

“The resource nurses round with every new graduate nurse working the night shift in our emergency department and acute adult care units throughout their first year of practice,” explains Rebecca Moore, manager of professional health practice development. “It gives new RNs someone to turn to when they have a question about patient care. The night resource nurse is a coach who helps new grads build their skills and confidence on the floor.”

Initial response to the program has been very positive. Rebecca says, “Our new RNs tell us it’s a huge relief to have the night resource nurse available to answer questions or lend a hand.” She adds the program also helps recruiting. “St. Luke’s is the only hospital in our area offering this level of support, which is very reassuring for new graduates.”

Brenda Oehler, director of nursing operations, agrees. “As health care becomes more complex, it’s important we continue to find innovative ways to provide great care for our patients. I’m proud to be part of this new initiative to support our team members, while improving patient care at the bedside. And I’m thankful to the Foundation for helping make the night resource RN role possible.”

Want to show your support for the nurses who play a key role in providing the health care we’d like our loved ones to receive? Contact St. Luke’s Foundation at (319) 369-7716 to learn how you can help.

BELIEVE WHAT YOU DO MAKES A DIFFERENCE because it does.
OPENING A DOOR TO THE FUTURE

Michelle Ross loves her current role as a nurse manager at UnityPoint Health - St. Luke’s Hospital. But she knows a master’s degree could come in handy when leadership opportunities arise at St. Luke’s in the future. Now Michelle can pursue her dream of higher education with the help of the Dr. Roy and Bess Keech scholarship from St. Luke’s Foundation.

“I’ve wanted to go back to school for several years,” Michelle explains. “But like a lot of people, I’m still paying off undergraduate student loans. The Keech scholarship makes it possible for me to continue my education.”

The scholarship was established in 1969 with funds from the estate of Dr. Roy K. and Bess Keech. St. Luke’s Foundation now offers two Keech scholarship opportunities for St. Luke’s Hospital team members. These scholarships offset tuition expenses for Mount Mercy University’s expedited RN to BSN Program and MSN in Nursing Administration (leadership) Program.

For more information on creating or updating your will, contact your attorney or call the St. Luke’s Foundation at (319) 369-7716.

CREATING OR UPDATING YOUR WILL

“People need to be persuaded from doing nothing,” said a recent participant after completing the Values Based Estate Planning program sponsored by St. Luke’s Foundation. The Covid-19 pandemic increased Americans’ awareness of the need to have a will. Yet data from a recent survey by Caring.com shows only 33% of Americans have put their plans in place. According to 40% of the individuals who participated in the survey, the biggest reason for not completing a will is they just haven’t gotten around to it. Another 33% said they don’t have enough assets to need a will, 13% said the estate planning process is too costly and 12% said they do not know how to get a will.

If you have any amount of money or belongings and you have loved ones in your life, a will is beneficial. It does far more than distribute your assets. It also specifies who takes care of your children and assigns powers of attorney for your financial and health care decisions if you are unable to do so.

A will is not just for you. It’s a final gift to your family and benefactors.

For more information on the confidential Values Based Estate Planning program, contact St. Luke’s Foundation at (319) 369-7716.

Sam and Mary Ann Osborn

Michelle Ross

Harper Bean
2022 DISBURSEMENTS

2022 FUNDING PURPOSE

- Capital - $2,567,843
- Programs & Services - $1,754,388
- Equipment - $73,738
- Education - $55,546
- Scholarship - $856,764
- Patient Assistance - $72,680
- Employee Assistance - $23,787

Total: $5,404,746

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Kathy Epley, Chair
- Jim Levett, MD
- Gene Neighbor
- Lois Buntz, Chair-Elect
- Michelle Niermann
- Susan Ovel
- Tami Culver, Secretary
- Don Paynter, MD
- Gwen Randall
- Guy Johnson, Treasurer
- Connie Robinson
- Gary Speicher
- Jake Kendall
- Betty Sauer
- Keith Krewer, MD
- Mary Klinger
- Ex-officio

St. Luke’s Foundation is pleased to welcome three new board members: Dr. Jim Levett, CEO of Presa, Inc., served on the Linn County Board of Public Health and was Surgical Director, Perioperative Services at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke’s Hospital. Susan Ovel retired from Kirkwood Community College, where she was Director of Planned and Endowed Giving. And Gene Neighbor is an Executive VP with Farmers State Bank and is a past board member and board chair with St. Luke’s Foundation. The Foundation thanks Niki Lee and Doug Laird, who retired from the board after nine years of service.

2023 FUNDING PURPOSE

- Capital - 47.5%
- Programs & Services - 32.5%
- Programs & Services Expenditures - 1.3%
- Equipment - 1.0%
- Employee Assistance - 0.4%
- Total: 100%

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St. Luke’s Administration
David and Sue Tesdahl
Patrick and Mindy Thies
Dr. Steven Wahle and Dr. JoAnn German Wahle
Dr. Christopher and Barbara Walsh

$1,000+
Dr. Alecia Allen
Alliant Energy Foundation
Alpha Tau Omega
Dr. Ken and Kathy Anderson
Loretta Angerer
Bankers Trust
Randy and Julia Bauer
Kyle and Jazmin Baumgart
Miriam Bergman
Kyle and Jasia Baumgart
Patrick and Mindy Thies
Dr. Eric Johnson
It Has to Matter
Ironside Apparel & Promotions, Inc.
Iowa Fire Protection
ImOn Communications
International Flavors and Fragrances Inc.
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Nicole Nelson
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Cara Milder Forbes
Patricia Miller
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Dr. Wendell and Minnie Kirkpatrick

Velma Faler
Linda Feller
Suzanne Felton
Dr. Jay and Katherine Friesen
Dr. Ren and Corrine Gambaugh
Charles Gardner
Lisa Gaspar Thompson
April Golwitzer
Marilyn Gott
Dr. Matthew Gray
Greater Cedar Rapids Housing & Building Association
Dr. Angela Greif
Lisa Hackenmiller
Jeremy Hague
Karen Hansen
Rhonda Harmon
Sally Hendrickson
Hills Bank and Trust Company
Clay and Shawa Holsman
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Maureen McEvoy
Dr. Thomas and Sandra McIntosh
Carol Meade
Mercy Medical Center
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Gary Kester
Dr. Wendell and Minnie Kirkpatrick

James and Mary Pratt
Quad Cities Community Foundation
Laura and John Rainey
Joan Reiter
Vicky Richards
John Robenalt
Ervin and Cynthia Root
Debbie Sadower
Teresa Schafer
Emily Scherbring
David and Jennifer Schuchmann
Ann Sealy
Peggy and Leland Smithson
St. Joseph Catholic Church
Ginger Stallman
Eric Strader
Surgery Center Cedar Rapids
Eric Suter
Dr. Sarah and Karl Swenson
Dr. Benjamin Tallman
Texas Instruments Foundation
The Accel Group
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
Rick and Joyce Trotter
Dr. Chris and Charity Tyler
Unitarian Universalist Society
University District Dental Society
Karen Van Dee
Dr. A. John and Jennifer Vander Zee
Sara and Dan Veenhusen
Walter Kelly Memorial Golf Tournament
Lori Wei and Ben Wickum
Catherine Wieren
Women’s Golf at Kernouste Golf Club
$500+
Action Sewer & Septic Service, Inc.
Jahn and Brett Ayer
Bryan Anderson
Libby Arnold
ATO Fraternity
Stacey Barrett
Georgeina Beary
Dr. James and Rachele Bell
Valissa and Jeffrey Berg
Angela Berns
Beverly and Larry Blades
Valerie Boddicker
Peggy Bragg
David and Donna Buresh
Dr. Stephen and Katie Burke
Dianna Burnett
John Carius
Marilyn Carter
Mary Chester
Chewzn Ventures, LLC
Cuckooberry Family Trust
Deanna Cook
Mona and Don Cook
Julie L. Coppel
Rene Crumley
John Dage
Dahn, Knapp and Associates, P.C.
Judy Deming
Robert Dennis and Eloise Beatty Dennis

Syracuse Village at the Community Cancer Center Children’s Holiday Celebration, sponsored by Among for a Cure (A4C)

Andrea Waterston and family enjoying the Community Cancer Center Children’s Holiday Celebration

A4C’s Steve “Santa” Ries with Jennifer Sweeney and Tony Arnold at the Community Cancer Center Children’s Holiday Celebration

If you’d like to show our team members how much they matter to you, give to our compassion fund at bit.ly/UPHGive or call (319) 369-7716.
Celebration of Generosity, June 2022

Guardian Angel ceremony honoring the Surgical Specialty Unit and Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation.
The power you hold in your hands is incredible, and the result of your generosity is nothing short of amazing.

Thank you for sharing our passion and vision for making a difference.

 UnityPoint Health
St. Luke’s Foundation
CELEBRATING COMPASSIONATE HOSPICE INPATIENT CARE

In February, we celebrated 10 years of providing peace, hope and comfort to patients and their loved ones through our community’s first inpatient hospice program. The Ed & Joan Hemphill Inpatient Hospice Unit was completely funded by generous contributions to St. Luke’s Foundation. Thanks to continuing support from donors like you, patients on their end-of-life journey have a peaceful, homelike environment and compassionate care in their final days.

PETSMART PUTS SMILES ON PATIENT FACES

Imagine being a young child facing the unfamiliar, even scary, environment of a hospital ER or surgery center. At times like that, a cuddly friend can make all the difference.

Thanks to the generosity of PetSmart shoppers in our community, more than 2,700 stuffed animals were distributed to St. Luke’s. Departments that received the toys include pediatric units, the Emergency Department, SurgiCare, behavioral health, and the Dental Health Center.

“Who doesn’t love a stuffed animal?” asks Christina Fortmann, RN, St. Luke’s SurgiCare. “A cuddly toy can relieve separation anxiety by acting as a friend to help kids or even adults feel safe and secure. Sometimes these small things make the biggest difference in someone’s hospital experience, changing a child’s tears to smiles and happiness.”