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# Crossroads House Newsletter



Fall/Winter 2024

## Change - Inevitable in a Flourishing Organization

By Tom Finn Outgoing Board of Directors President

I have served on the Board of Directors of Crossroads House for six years, the last one as President of the Board. Now my term is up and I have to step away. This was a change I had anticipated and planned for. Anticipating a change is different, however, than having change overtake you, as have many of the changes that Crossroads House has seen over the recent past.

Change is inevitable in life. It may be revolutionary or evolutionary, but in either case, nothing can remain static and continue to flourish. Change comes to us whether we wish it to or not. Winston Churchill stated, "To improve is to change, to be perfect is to change often".

The family that is Crossroads has witnessed the upheaval of revolutionary type change with the departure of long time members of leadership, including our founder. Now there are the changes that come with new leadership at several positions bringing new ideas and procedures. The truth is new ideas and new paths for the organization to follow are evolutionary in nature, positive adaptations that are carefully planned with an end goal of renewed and continued stability. The one change we will not witness is the change in how we care for our residents. That consistent quality of care is, and always will be, the singular goal that motivates the actions and decisions of the Board of Directors and the Administration of this wonderful and enduring organization, Crossroads House. --- Tom Finn



### Our Board of Directors

Steve Johnson - President  
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Jackie Swinarski - Secretary  
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Dr. Mary Obear  
Joni Patri  
Millie Tomidy-Pepper  
Jill Pickard  
Tony Gugino  
Robert Friedman, Legal Counsel  
Dr. Mary Obear,  
Volunteer Medical Director

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Tracy Ford, Executive Director  
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#### Our Staff

Marilyn Almeter-Milbrand - Director  
of Resident Care  
Debbie Paine - Executive Assistant  
Jenn Shaffer - Coordinator of  
Volunteer Services

### In this issue:

Insights from our Staff and Volunteers

Stories of Impact

Fundraiser Updates

News and Plans

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# Embracing Change: A Journey of Compassion and Growth at Our Comfort Care Home

By Tracy Ford - Executive Director

Change is inevitable, often bringing both challenges and opportunities. As I began my role as Executive Director of our comfort care home, I saw this transition as a chance for growth, innovation, and deeper compassion for everyone in our care. We are embracing a brighter future for our residents, staff, and the entire community.

## A New Beginning Rooted in Purpose

At the heart of this home is a deep and unwavering commitment to provide a peaceful, dignified, and comforting environment for individuals at the end of life. This mission is timeless, yet the ways in which we carry it out are always evolving. Every new chapter allows us to revisit the “why” behind our work, ensuring that we never lose sight of what truly matters—the people we serve.

As the director, I am deeply honored to be part of this purpose-driven mission. I came with a passion for compassionate care, and a vision for how we can continue to create an environment where residents and families feel supported, valued, and cherished.

I'm grateful to work alongside compassionate team members like Debbie Paine, our new Executive Assistant, and Jennifer Shaffer, our new Volunteer Coordinator. Both Debbie and Jennifer continue their weekly volunteer shifts, offering hands-on care to our residents and unwavering doula support to their families. We're also honored to have Marilyn Almert-Milbrand as our new Director of Resident Care. She is dedicated to ensuring our residents experience comfort and dignity in their final days.

Together, with our staff and volunteers, this team represents the essence of what it means to serve with love, commitment, and a shared purpose.

## Leading Through Compassion

Compassion and empathy are the core values that binds us all, from caregivers to administration. It is through compassion that we listen, and through empathy that we understand and act. This is a collective journey, where every voice matters, and every hand plays a role in the care we provide.



As we move forward, I want to ensure that every resident feels like they are part of a family, not just receiving care but experiencing genuine human connection.

## Innovation and Growth:

### A New Vision for Excellence

While our core values remain unchanged, embracing new ideas and strategies is key to ensuring that we provide the highest quality of care. In the coming months, we will focus on enhancing our care practices, improving our staffing models, and exploring ways to make our services even more inclusive and accessible. Supporting and fostering a collaborative environment translates directly into better care for our residents. When our team thrives, so does the entire home.

## Honoring the Past

### Embracing the Future

As we move forward, I carry a deep respect for the work that has come before me. The leaders, caregivers, and families who have been part of this home's story have built something extraordinary - a sanctuary of peace and comfort. I am committed to honoring that legacy.

This new chapter is about community, compassion, and the enduring belief that every life is precious. I am excited to lead this home with a focus on those values, ensuring that we continue to be a place where love is lived every day.

Let's embrace these changes together, with hope in our hearts and a shared vision for a kind and compassionate future.



## A Change of Pace Within Unchanged Purpose

By Marilyn Almeter-Milbrand  
Director of Resident Care

Hello, everyone! My name is Marilyn Almeter-Milbrand, and I am thrilled to have recently joined the Crossroads team as the Director of Resident Services after retiring from a fulfilling career in nursing leadership. When Tracy reached out to me with this opportunity, I felt an immediate excitement about contributing to end-of-life care—a field that demands compassion and expertise, while also offering a profound opportunity to impact the lives of others during their most vulnerable moments.

Throughout my life, I have come to realize that change is often the only constant. While it can feel daunting, embracing change is essential for personal and professional growth. For many, retirement is viewed as a time for relaxation and fulfillment; however, for some, like myself, it can become a gateway to new and enriching experiences.

The reality of end-of-life care can be emotionally taxing. It requires a unique blend of resilience, empathy, and professional skill. Yet, the rewards—both personal and communal—are immense. Each day, I am reminded of the privilege we have as caregivers to accompany individuals on one of life's most significant journeys, providing support not just to our residents, but also to their families. I continue to witness the incredible efforts of our staff, volunteers, and community members who come together to support those facing the last days of life. In doing so, we not only honor the lives of those who are dying but also enrich the fabric of our community. We transform what can often be a solitary experience into a shared, compassionate journey. Through understanding, empathy, and collective action, we help ensure that the final chapter of life is met with dignity, respect, and love.

As the sun sets on one chapter of life, a new one begins—rich with purpose and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference. I look forward to collaborating with all of you as we embrace change and strive to enhance our role in end-of-life care. Together, we can make a lasting impact on our residents and their families, ensuring that their final moments are filled with connection and compassion. Thank you for welcoming me to this incredible journey.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO GRACED OUR HOUSE ON THEIR END OF LIFE JOURNEY

Since our Last Edition

<b>James Blackman</b>	<b>Joseph Bochsler</b>
<b>Leonard "Brian" Clark</b>	
<b>Loren Clark</b>	
<b>Edwin Ewert</b>	<b>Jean Harms</b>
<b>Carol Hilchey</b>	<b>Walter Johnson</b>
<b>Hiram Kasten</b>	<b>Margaret Kauffman</b>
<b>Susan Lawrence</b>	<b>Donna Licata</b>
<b>John Nesbitt</b>	<b>Michael Mager</b>
<b>Joan Mattle</b>	<b>Frank Penna</b>
<b>Don Priolo</b>	<b>Elizabeth Stephens</b>
<b>Teresa Goetz Strobel</b>	<b>David Tullar</b>
<b>James Williams</b>	<b>Kenneth Wood</b>
<b>Corabelle Wright</b>	<b>Gerald Zeitvogel</b>



Follow us on Facebook and watch our events page for details on our fundraisers and other important events! Share with your friends! We'll be most grateful!

Nov 22, 23, 29, 30 - Annual Christmas Sale  
First Presbyterian Church

Dec 7 - Luminary Lighting Crossroads  
House following Christmas in the City 6:45

Jan 25th - **Night Under the Stars Gala Event**  
**Batavia Downs!! Save the date and watch for more details!!**

Feb 7-8 - Annual Betty Ellison Strike Up  
Some Fun for Crossroads Bowling Event -  
Mancuso's Bowling Center Feb 7 and 8



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# Fundraiser Highlights



## Meat Raffle

Our first ever Crossroads House Annual Meat Raffle was a great success! The sold-out event was held August 24 at Notre Dame High School, and it was a night of fun, music, camaraderie, and lots of winners! Of meat, gift baskets, Bills tickets, Air Show tickets and more! We are committing to this as an annual event so mark your calendars for August 23, 2025!



## Spring Basket Raffle

Jo Disalvo chairs the spring and fall basket raffles, and manages to pull together over 130 baskets donated by forever families of our residents, while creatively assembling many from donated items. Caterer and longtime office manager Gail Smith plans the food and refreshments, and each event is more successful than the last. Jo no sooner closes the doors on one raffle, and begins to work on the next. The fall raffle is coming up Nov 2, with volunteers donating many of the baskets.



## Annual Tent Sale

The tent sale has grown under chairperson Jackie Swinarski's direction to become the most popular annual sale in the area, and the most lucrative fundraiser for Crossroads House. Jackie relies on a devoted and talented group of helpers, (including the wonderful Lee twins above) that begin curating the many donations received for the sale in May for the end of July event. Mark your calendar for July 23-26 2025 to get the jump on next year's sale!



## Van Hulbert Golf Tournament

What can you say about a community organized fundraiser that raises as much money as some of our biggest events? Thank you doesn't seem enough for these devoted members of Hesperus Masonic Lodge, led by Ralph Marsocci and Betty Hulbert. Every August they hold one of the most lucrative golf tournaments in the area, and gift ALL to proceeds to Crossroads House. They are eagerly planning for next year - the 25th Annual!!!



## Community Events

We are humbled and thrilled to be the recipient of donations from a variety of other community organized fundraisers. We're grateful to all of them for finding us worthy of their efforts! Thank you to:

- Norton's Chizzlewood - Fran and Bobbi Norton
  - HL Fishing Derby
  - Ontario Shores FCU
  - Settler's Dine to Donate
  - TF Brown's Golf Tourney
  - Manor House Residents
  - Peter & Dawn Mark
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# A Crossroads in Life Leads to a Most Meaningful Change In Direction

by Jenn Shaffer - Volunteer Coordinator

It was a crossroads in my own life that led me to Crossroads House. Like most people, I'm not a fan of change. It took a lot of convincing and a substantial amount of faith to take the leap in 2021 and step back from my career as I navigated personal growth and transitions. I knew I wanted to do something different in my life, but I wasn't sure what that looked like. During this time, I also welcomed another child into my family, which added another layer to this season of change.

Shortly after my son was born, I stumbled across the concept of an end-of-life doula in, of all things, a novel. The book's portrayal of someone guiding others through their final chapter captivated me. I began researching INELDA's end-of-life doula training, feeling called to pursue this path. While exploring this new avenue, I opened Facebook and saw that Crossroads House was offering an end-of-life doula training. I called Kathy Panepento, and she encouraged me to start with direct resident care while waiting for the training.

After my very first volunteer shift, I came home and told my husband, "this is it!". I knew I had found what I'd been searching for and I committed to two morning caregiver shifts, and soon joined the fundraising committee.

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## Changes of Season and Perspective

by Cierra Tiede Social Work Intern

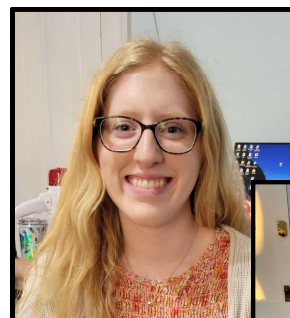
Hello everyone, my name is Cierra. I just started my field placement at Crossroads House at the end of August, and I will be here on and off until May! As of the time that I am writing this, I have only been at Crossroads for about a month, but I have learned so much.

While starting my placement, I didn't know what to expect from a place where people come to spend their last days on earth, but I have been honored and blessed to experience an atmosphere that is overflowing with both life and love. I believe that coming face to face with the reality of what Crossroads House does has the ability to change the perspective that many people hold about the dying process.  
(continued on pg 8).



People often ask me, "Isn't it depressing?" and my answer is always no. If we were needed to do it for our own families, we would, and we all know many who have had to. This work is incredibly rewarding. I've learned that being there for someone at the end of their life is one of the most profound ways to serve. The opportunity to be a compassionate presence during a resident's final moments is a privilege I don't take lightly.

After serving several months as Executive Assistant, the opportunity arose to fill the role of Volunteer coordinator. I took the leap once again, confident in the path that Crossroads House had laid out for me. I had already loved the mission and serving this population, and was happy for the opportunity to become involved in other ways. This role has allowed me to combine my love for my community, my desire to serve, and my passion for making connections with others. If you're looking for what's missing - it is my experience that Crossroads House may just fill that void, and open your heart and your mind to opportunities you hadn't previously considered. Crossroads House may be the unexpected change you're looking for.



Cierra and mentor Tom Staebell have worked together to implement a volunteer appreciation program. Cierra has quickly become part of our Crossroads family and shown us she has what it takes to be an amazing, compassionate social worker!



# Celebrating Our Awesome Volunteers! Thank You All!

The value of our volunteers cannot be overstated.. They perform the equivalent of over \$ 250,000 worth of services to Crossroads House. Whether a compassionate caregiver, an office whiz, or a garden or fundraising guru, each and every volunteer provides talents that are crucial to the ongoing day to day operations and performance of our mission. We are dedicated to showing our immense appreciation with several volunteer events throughout the year. Here's our 3 most recent events - a night out at TF Brown's in May, a pancake breakfast in August - prepared by our favorite caterer and retired office manager Gail Smith, and Executive Director Tracy Ford, and served up by several members of the Board of Directors. We capped it off with a fall picnic at Horseshoe Lake, including boat rides and new volunteer coordinator Jenn Shaffer getting to know all of our hard working volunteers.



Celebration Cake



Great Night out in May at TF Brown's!!



Wonderful Turnout of Wonderful People!



Board Members Serving Breakfast



Tracy in charge of bacon



FALL VOLUNTEER PICNIC



Great weather, yummy food, fun activities, excellent company at our fall picnic





## Another Forever Family Brings Change to Our Hearts and Home

by Debbie Musilli

In March of 2024, Megan entered Crossroads House. This is a place we were familiar with, as her dad, Gordon, passed away in Crossroads care in 2015. Megan and her dad had the same genetic disease, Spinocerebellar Ataxia (SCA1). This is a neurological disorder characterized by lack of coordination and difficulty walking, slurred speech, trouble swallowing, and deterioration of fine motor skills.

Prior to her diagnosis, Megan was an English teacher at Notre Dame and loved her job. She had a passion for teaching and cared so much for her students. Meg resigned from Notre Dame in 2019, where she was awarded an Honorary Diploma for her dedication and commitment to her students success.

Resigning opened up the door for her to go after even more of her dreams. She became a mother and wrote two novels (which we hope to publish soon!). She also started a blog, eSCaping Type 1, promoting SCA awareness, as well as parenting with a disability and the importance of inclusion. Megan presented at the National Ataxia Conference in 2021 and founded a Parenting with Ataxia support group.

Megan was courageous and strong. She was determined not to let this disease run her life. In her memory, and with the memory of her dad, we created this room at Crossroads. A special place for families to have an eSCAPE; a comfortable room to stay, get a small break, and still be close to their loved one as they go through these difficult times.

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# Change - The Only Constant

By Debbie Paine - Executuve Assistant

Change. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, once said about change, 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.' This simple but profound observation of the continuous changing nature of the universe is a most fitting analogy for my story arc at Crossroads House. I've no doubt many others that have found themselves here for the long run feel the same way. When you are caring for the dying, in a home that requires 100 devoted people a month to perform all of its duties, profound change is a feature of every time interval.

End of life care has many components that are constant for most, if not all of our residents. The medications that ease end of life pain and anxiety, the scheduling of repositioning and other comfort measures, are nearly always the same. These are the bedrock of the physical care we provide.

Yet at any given time, the emotional atmosphere in the house can vary from quiet and meditative, to fast paced and even raucous, depending on the resident's wishes, and their family and social dynamics. It is never the same river at Crossroads.

As for myself, this house holds countless childhood memories, as my grandparents lived here for several years when I was growing up in the 60's and 70's. Then it was the nexus for a changing stream of children, from the many foster kids my grandparents brought in to fill the four upstairs bedrooms, to the three preschool cousins that lived here when my uncle went off to fly missions over Vietnam. Even then, it was never the same river at 11 Liberty St.

I came back to this house in 2012 as a reluctant volunteer caregiver, coaxed into the role by a sly volunteer coordinator who, short on volunteer caregivers, looked beyond the fact that I had only applied to help in the garden and with fundraising. I knew I wanted to be part of this house of my childhood, but hands on caregiving was not something I felt at all cut out for. I was encouraged to just shadow as a caregiver, with no obligation if I still felt it wasn't for me. I was at first very timid and uncomfortable in this role, and would have accepted any excuse I could find that might allow me to opt out while saving face.



Me, with cousins in parking lot behind 11 Liberty St circa 1972



But in no time, after being supported by other volunteers, as well as our founder Kathy Panepento, I successfully handled the more awkward caregiving situations I had feared most. I settled comfortably into the role, and actively immersed myself in anything that would increase my ability to be a more compassionate and confident caregiver.

I've watched people come and go in various key positions here, each time wondering how our house would continue through these changes and losses. But while I find myself always a different person in a different river at Crossroads, there is an unchanging bedrock, and that is the mission of Crossroads House, to ensure that our residents "live, until they take their final breath" that endures beneath our changing "river".

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## Changes of Season and Perspective

Cont. from pg 5

Just as the seasons do, the body is constantly going through change, from birth until death. As Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 says, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die..."

But it doesn't stop there. Verse 11 states that "He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time". Though it seems like an oxymoron, there can be beauty in death. Even in creation we see this as the shift from bright green leaves turns into breathtaking oranges and yellows that people travel miles to see. I believe that Crossroads House is a place where this beauty in the dying process can be experienced. It is a place where memories are made and family dinners are had and laughter is shared, even in the midst of pain. I hope that my time with Crossroads House will help me in altering perspectives, including my own, because the fact that God "has made everything beautiful in its time" is true even for the dying process.

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# The Power of Positive Change: A New Deck for Our Comfort Care Home



At Crossroads House, we believe in the transformative power of positive change. Every day, we witness the small and large acts of kindness that make a significant difference in the lives of our residents and their families. Today, we are thrilled to share a beautiful example of this positive change, made possible through the generosity and dedication of our extraordinary supporters: Emmett and Antoinette Clancy, alongside Janet and June Lee.

Emmett and Antoinette Clancy have been steadfast champions of our mission for many years, providing support that has enabled us to grow and thrive. Their commitment to our residents and to creating a compassionate, healing environment is deeply appreciated. It was no surprise when the Clancys stepped forward once again, eager to make a lasting impact by contributing toward a new deck that will enhance our residents' comfort and quality of life.

Equally inspiring is the enduring dedication of Janet and June Lee, twin sisters who have been volunteering with us for many years. Week after week, Janet and June bring warmth, laughter, and care to our home, brightening the days of everyone they encounter. When they learned about the Clancys' vision for a new deck, the Lee sisters were quick to join forces, offering a generous gift that underscored their commitment to our community.

Together, the combined gifts from the Clancys and the Lee sisters have made it possible for us to construct a beautiful new deck—a serene space where residents can enjoy the fresh air and moments of peace with their loved ones. Their commitment ensures that our residents can experience the outdoors in a welcoming space, surrounded by the love and support that our home embodies. We are profoundly grateful for their generosity and vision.



## New Garage AC

Our Garage and Tent Sale go-getters prepare for our July Tent Sale in the garage behind Crossroads House. For years they cheerfully did this prep in the late June and July heat with no escape from the summer heat and humidity. Never fear! Batavia Rotary Club and Arctic Refrigeration to the rescue! With a grant from Rotary to purchase the ductless air conditioning units, and donated labor from our friends at Arctic, these hard working ladies can do their amazing work in a cool and refreshing space. Thank you Batavia Rotary Club, and Arctic Refrigeration!

## Lights of Love Luminaries

We are excited to follow last year's successful Love Cone Tree Lighting with a luminary lighting event to coincide with Christmas in the City Dec 7. We are selling these snowflake luminaries for \$25, that can be purchased in memory or in honor of someone as uniquely special as an individual snowflake. These luminaries are lovely and long lasting, and will become part of your Christmas decor for years to come. Call Debbie at 716-474-0125, or go to [www.crossroadshouse.com](http://www.crossroadshouse.com) to purchase yours, and be a part of this wonderful holiday time remembrance of a loved one.



## Reviving a Popular Fundraiser



Covid sure put a crimp on the grand fundraising events, including our Musical Memories annual concert. This was a very popular entertainment night out, attracting hundreds of brass band and drum & bugle corp fans to experience a night of the best of these musicians in our area. Frank Panepento, talented trumpeteer and husband of founder Kathy Panepento, misses those musician reunions, as does the community, so plans are being made for a March or April redux! STAY TUNED!

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# Ways to Support Crossroads House (You may not have thought of)



## Spread the Word

While Crossroads House has created a solid community presence, we still hear from a surprising number of people that say "I had no idea you were here" or "I've heard of Crossroads, but I didn't realize what you do there". It makes us sad to think we might have served someone, had they known about us.

Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about Crossroads House! If you belong to an organization or church - we'd love to come and speak to your members about what we do, and how they can help! Give us a call and let's talk about talking!



## Share Your Talents

We all have one. A special talent that our friends or family rely on. Crossroads House is a home like any other, with the same maintenance, repair, lawn care, shopping and cleaning needed in any household. We're also like a business, and can make use of the office and organizational skills needed to handle the day to day office tasks, promotions, event planning and fundraising. Don't hesitate to inquire if you think you have a talent to share. Call us anytime and we bet we'll find a spot for you!

## Create a Fundraiser

The Mager Family of Arctic Refrigeration, donates to Crossroads instead of buying Christmas gifts for their huge extended family, donating over \$2300 at Christmas 2022.

Our supporters at Horseshoe Lake turned a planned fishing derby into a fundraiser, donating over 600 dollars.

The Mark's have an annual barn party, and choose a non-profit for guests to make donations, giving \$900 to Crossroads this fall.

Is there an event in your group or family that could easily become a fundraiser?



## Grant A Wish

Watch for our Wish List Wednesday Facebook posts and fulfill one of our wishes! We've had Amazon orders of wish list items donated by Facebook followers show up on Thursday! Great when we have a last minute need.

## And Don't Forget

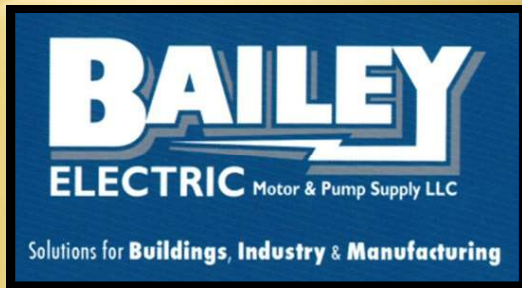
- **Support our sponsors and business partners**
- **Attend Our FUNdraisers**
- **Return recyclables to Batavia Bottle and Can Retrieval**
- **Share our Facebook Posts**
- **Declutter and donate to our annual tent sale**
- **Attend a community organized fundraiser**



## Or Donate Now

Scan the QR code above and make an easy, quick donation, or set up a monthly donation. Only takes 2 minutes!





## Gold Sponsors



## Silver Sponsors



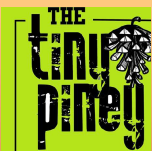
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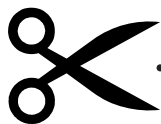
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Donation Form Fall/Winter 2024

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one if applicable : My Gift is in Memory of   or   My Gift is in Honor of

Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your contribution is tax deductible by law.  
Thank you for your generosity.

