It is a joy to write to you as we are approaching a change in seasons. I’m filled with warm-hearted anticipation of fall and all it brings – the crispness of cool mornings, the harvesting of cared-for crops, and the turning of leaves on trees and also at Altru.

The final touches are being polished for our premiere Gala event and buzz is picking up about the incredible impact for cardiology and community heart health that we are sure to make this year. Pilings for the new hospital are complete and we’re heading into the next phase of construction. Change and constant improvement in the healthcare landscape is as expected as the change in seasons each year.

And although change is constant within Altru, the core of the Foundation continues to remain the same: to connect donors and their passions directly with the needs of patients and families. As a member of this community, I am so impressed by the level of generosity expressed for people in need. It is simply amazing to see the greater Grand Forks community step up and make a difference in so many ways and at so many levels – a true culture of generosity. I know that in my years prior to serving on the Foundation board, I had no idea of the unique and vast healthcare needs our community faces, nor did I completely recognize the many ways that donors of the Foundation positively respond to those needs and impact the lives of so many people.

Serving as chairperson has been eye-opening. I continue to learn and be proud of the amazing work made possible through the generosity of others. A culture of generosity can navigate changes in seasons, leadership and those facing a community. Today, I invite you to join us as we continue to build and strengthen our culture of generosity – how could you lead a more generous life this season?
Welcome to the Board!

Kathryn Kester, executive director of the Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals, joined the Altru Health Foundation Board of Directors at the beginning of August.

“We are delighted for Kathryn to share her community insight, passionate energy and innovative ideas with Altru Health Foundation,” says Kristi Hall-Jiran, chief philanthropy officer at Altru Health System. “Kathryn lives generosity day in and day out with a giving spirit and genuine love for the people around her. We are privileged to have her as a leader in our community and with Altru Health Foundation!”

Kester grew up in Burlington, ND and moved to Grand Forks in 2012. She graduated from the University of North Dakota in December of 2015 with a degree in religious studies and a minor in nonprofit leadership. Kester loves attending community events, especially in downtown Grand Forks. You will often catch her on the Greenway, whether it is with her dog, a bike or a friend.

“Philanthropy is important to me because it allows people to take ownership of their community,” says Kester. “Growing up, I was always taught to give something. This most often came in the form of my time and talents. Volunteering has always given me a sense of pride in the community in which I live. When we are generous to those around us, our community will come together and be stronger than ever.”

ALTRU HEALTH FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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At Altru Health System, the needs of the patient come first. As a nonprofit, community-owned health system, Altru relies on supporters like you. We treat patients in Grand Forks, East Grand Forks and the region. Altru Health Foundation has the privilege of being the liaison between donors and patient care needs.
Altru’s EEG Rooms Have been Transformed Thanks to Jessie Thorson Art and the Association for Medical Imaging Management (AHRA) and Toshiba Patient First Program Grant.

AHRA and Toshiba Patient First Program made it possible for us to transform Altru’s two EEG (Electroencephalogram) rooms, create a Lego model of the fluoroscopy room to show children what happens during a VCUG (voiding cystourethrogram) and create educational books for parents and children about the procedures.

Local artist, Jessie Thorson, was commissioned to create custom fun and whimsical artwork for each EEG room to engage both pediatric and adult patients. The artwork glows in the dark to make turning off the lights for the procedure less scary for children. The grant also made it possible to purchase a projector and iPad to show movies, images or educational material to help calm children during an EEG. An EEG tracks and records brain wave patterns. Small metal discs with thin wires (electrodes) are placed on the scalp, and send signals to a computer to record the results. Normal electrical activity in the brain makes a recognizable pattern. Through an EEG, doctors can look for abnormal patterns that indicate seizures and other health issues.

A VCUG is a minimally invasive test that uses a special x-ray technology called fluoroscopy to visualize a child’s urinary tract and bladder. Having a Lego creation to show children what will happen during a procedure reduces anxiety and helps them feel more comfortable.

“We were so excited to receive the AHRA & Toshiba Patient First Program grant,” says Melissa Swenson, child life specialist at Altru Health System. “We wanted to create a space, that would make EEG scans less overwhelming for pediatric patients. The scans can be uncomfortable for some patients; distraction can really help make the procedure go more smoothly.”

Melissa provides support using coping strategies and distraction with patients for procedures such as catheters, lab draws, IV starts, scans and dressing changes. When kids are prepared for what they will experience and are distracted with age appropriate activities, they cope better with their procedure and it becomes a more positive experience for the medical team, the patient and their family.

“So far, we have had great reviews from patients and staff, including adult patients,” says Melissa. “We are very thankful for the grant and happy with the completed project!”
Heroes for Hospice Raises More Than $20,000 for Altru’s Hospice

The second annual Heroes for Hospice event was held Tuesday, July 16 at Choice Bank. For a suggested donation of $5, guests enjoyed a feast provided by Red Pepper and Marco’s Pizza. All proceeds from the event went to Altru’s Hospice. The event showcased live music, games, a memorial wall to remember loved ones, and honorary local heroes in attendance including Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Fire and Police Departments, Altru Paramedics and members of the Armed Forces.

“The donations from our second annual Heroes for Hospice event will help support the important services that Altru’s Hospice provides for our communities. We believe that we are truly living out our PeopleFirst culture with this event and we appreciate the support from our local businesses, individuals, and volunteers to make the event successful,” said Chris Johnson, Grand Forks market president for Choice Bank.

Hospice provides specialized care for those facing a life-limiting illness. Each of us has the right to die peacefully and with dignity. Altru’s Hospice offers comfort and support to patients and their families.

Altru’s Hospice:
» Treats physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
» Provides care in the patient’s home, nursing home or hospital setting.
» Supports family and caregivers through counseling, training and education.
» Ensures the best possible quality of life through comfort care.
» Offers choices and honors the patient’s wishes.

For more information about Altru’s Hospice, please call 701.780.5258 or toll-free at 800.732.4277, ext. 5258.
Sunshine Hospitality Home Celebrates One Year of Serving Patients

The Sunshine Hospitality Home celebrated its one-year anniversary with an open house, tours and a short program July 17, 2019.

Altru's Sunshine Hospitality Home is a place of comfort, compassion and convenience for patients and their families who must travel for healthcare needs. Comfortable and serene, the home allows individuals to stay close to their loved ones to assist with care, rehabilitation, home care teaching and support. It is conveniently situated west of Altru’s Columbia Road campus across from Sertoma Park (933 Duke Drive, Grand Forks, ND).

More than 3,000 donors came together to generously support the $4.5 million project spearheaded by the Sunshine Memorial Foundation. The need for donations to support Sunshine Hospitality Home continues to be great. Donations can support day-to-day operations or can be directed more specifically toward the wellness room, art and music room and faith room.

The Sunshine Hospitality Home can house up to 64 guests each night and up to 20,000 individuals every year. Length of stay within the home varies from a half day to months depending on the family's situation. Cost for an overnight stay is $40 per night. Financial assistance is available to those who qualify.

For more information on supporting Sunshine Hospitality Home, contact the Altru Health Foundation at foundation@altru.org, or call 701.780.5600. Donate online by going to altru.org/donate and choose "Sunshine Hospitality Home."

For more information about the home, call 701.732.7900 or email sunshine@altru.org.
Thank you for providing a wonderful place to retreat during a difficult time for our family. So nice to have a home away from home.

- A grateful guest

The Sunshine Hospitality Home has hosted guests from 56 counties in North Dakota and Minnesota, as well as 16 other states and two Canadian Provinces.

Your generosity will ensure Sunshine Hospitality Home reaches more milestones and serves more guests.

TOTAL NUMBER OF GUESTS SERVED: 1,800
TOTAL NUMBER OF NIGHTS STAYED: 3,079
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: 3.3 NIGHTS
VOLUNTEER HOURS: 938

Wish List:
- Shuttle car
- Power lift chairs
- Soft sided chairs for rooms
- Storage shed

You can help Sunshine Hospitality Home by adding a few extra items to your shopping list:
- Ground coffee
- Napkins
- Bottled water
- Clorox bleach wipes
- Prepackaged snacks
- Laundry soap
- Boxed meals
- Dryer sheets
- Canned goods/soup
- K-cups

“Thank you for providing a wonderful place to retreat during a difficult time for our family. So nice to have a home away from home.”

- A grateful guest
Altru's Home Visit Program

Altru’s Gala 2018 raised over $387,000 for Altru’s Home Visit Program. The generous support from Altru’s Gala 2018 has truly made a difference in the lives of hundreds of patients and their families. Since the Gala, there have been an average of 225 home visits a month, a huge increase from the previous year.

Altru's Home Visit program is a no cost service that makes it possible for respiratory therapists, nurses, paramedics and residency doctors to visit the homes of patients with high risk medical conditions who have recently been discharged from the hospital. The team helps patients become comfortable with care in their homes after being hospitalized by answering any questions the patient and family may have, checking that the patient is taking medications correctly, making suggestions to improve quality of life in their home, and in some situations, setting up a home monitor to keep their doctor updated on vitals such as blood pressure and other important healthcare information.

“The Home Visit Program has been an essential piece of helping many patients transition from their hospital stay back into the comforts of their own home,” Courtney Caron, manager of case management at Altru Health System reports. “Many patients go home with a number of new medications or a treatment plan that can be overwhelming. Having someone come into their home environment and go through everything with them really puts them at ease and gives them the tools and the confidence to be successful at home. They also create a connection, or a lifeline, to somebody that they are comfortable reaching out to if they have any questions, concerns, or needs that arise.”

Bethany Abrahamson, RN, BSN and health coach at Altru Health System has worked with many patients through the home visit program. She has been with the program since it started and has experienced the good that a program like this does for patients in need.

Bethany shared one of the most impactful experiences was with a 55-year-old patient. He was in and out of the hospital, did not come to his follow-up appointments and didn’t take his medication. After a home visit she learned that he did not have enough money to afford his medication. In fact, some weeks he only had four cans of soup to live on. He relied on the bus to get him to his appointments, so if he got on the wrong bus or the route changed he had no way to make it to the appointment.

“We were able to help him move into an assisted living facility, where he has a comfortable home environment, help with medications and a meal every day,” says Abrahamson. “We were able to just visit with this patient a little longer to learn that he is not noncompliant, he just needed help and someone to listen to his story. This patient once told me that he never asked for help because he was taught that this is a sign of weakness.”

This is just an example of the impact that Altru's Gala and Altru’s Home Visit Program has had on patients in need. If you would like to support Altru’s Gala 2019 please contact Altru Health Foundation at 701.780.5600 or foundation@altru.org.

“We had a very pleasant visit with the doctors and nurse. The home visits seem to be a valuable addition to family medicine, emphasis on the family. Much can be learned from seeing the home environment. Thanks for coming!” – A grateful patient
After about 20 minutes, Eric was in a lot of pain and he said out loud that he was going to pass out – after that he does not remember anything that happened. Crystal called 911 and followed the instructions that the dispatch told her.

Before the first responders could get there, Eric stopped breathing. Crystal tried and tried but could not find a pulse. Right there in the apartment, Eric died on the floor. Crystal performed CPR on her husband until the first responders arrived.

What happened next was a blur. Emergency responders and police worked together to get Eric's heart pumping again using an AED, (Automated External Defibrillator). He received two shocks from the AED each time leaving Crystal screaming and in fear.

Eric was then transported by ambulance to Altru as quickly as possible. There, Dr. Almanaseer performed surgery to unblock Eric's artery which he said could not have gone better, but that would need another procedure to another artery.

"There was a 100% blockage on one artery, 95% on the other," says Crystal. "Dr. Almanaseer asked if he smoked and I said not anymore. He asked when he quit and I told him, 'when he died on my living room floor.'" Eric and Crystal both quit smoking that week.

"There were a lot of lifestyle changes that we had to make and we did them together," explains Crystal. "We changed our eating habits, stopped smoking and began working out. I read all of the literature that the hospital sends home with you when this happens; it became my lifeline. It's incredibly good information that is very valuable. The biggest, best change was to quit smoking."

Eric’s event was over three months ago now. “I’m not taking every day for granted anymore,” says Eric. “I think that, without being morbid or silly about this, it is a blessing that this happened at this age. We can still recover from the unhealthy lifestyle that we had. I have some stuff I want to do yet in my life. Everything worked out the way it was supposed to.”

“With inadequate equipment, with subpar facilities, Eric wouldn’t have made it,” says Crystal. “Altru has the right people, the right facilities, the right technology and the right training, and the staff are so nice. We could not have asked for better care or a better place to have this happen.”
Golfers, sponsors, and volunteers all came together for the 17th Annual Altru Cancer Center Golf Tournament on June 13, raising over $87,000 for Filling the Gap and Caring for Kids. Throughout the years, the tournament has raised over $1 million for patients in need.

“As a new leader here at Altru, I was so happy to see how much the community steps up to support our cancer center,” shares Georgia Smith, Altru’s director of cancer services. “The monies raised will be used to fund our Filling the Gap program, which assists patients in transportation, lodging, meal supplements, and more. These are things that insurance does not cover but are necessary to being able to have the best possible chance at a cure.”

Similar to Altru’s Filling the Gap program, Caring for Kids helps to ease the financial burden of families with children receiving pediatric cancer treatments or treatments for chronic illness.

Because of the generosity of donors from the golf tournament, we are now able to expand the program to serve more children,” says Melissa Swenson, child life specialist at Altru.

pediatric patients with chronic conditions are treated throughout Altru Health System every day. Every month, families take multiple trips to Altru or to specialists in Minneapolis or Rochester as part of treating their children's health conditions. These trips can quickly become a financial difficulty for families. Caring for Kids provides gas cards and lodging accommodations to financially qualified families.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor to the Altru Cancer Center Golf Tournament or donating to Filling the Gap or Caring for Kids, please contact Altru Health Foundation at foundation@altru.org or 701.780.5600.

“Without Filling the Gap, I don’t know how I would have made it to my treatments,” says Diane, a patient at Altru Cancer Center. “I am so appreciative of people who would give to help a stranger.”

- Diane, North Dakota
Thank You Sponsors!

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Summer Intern Highlight: Shirley Yang

This summer, Altru Health Foundation welcomed Shirley Yang as a Nonprofit Leadership Intern. Shirley is working on obtaining a Bachelor of Sciences majoring in biology with an emphasis in professional health sciences, as well as a minor in nonprofit leadership from the University of North Dakota. She also currently works as a certified nursing assistant at Altru Health System and hopes to become a physician.

During her time at the foundation, Shirley learned all facets of philanthropy and participated in strategic planning and grant writing as well as worked with Altru leadership. “I am truly grateful for the opportunities and experiences Altru Health Foundation has provided time as an intern,” says Shirley.
Altru’s TEARS (Together we Educate About the Realities of Suicide) annual fundraiser

Walk to Remember, Walk to Support

Sunday, September 15
Registration begins at 12 p.m.
Event begins at 1 p.m.
UND Wellness Center | 801 Princeton Street