



# Meeting the Moment



2020 GRATITUDE REPORT

# Letter from Our CEO and Board Chair

WE ARE COMPOSING this letter at an especially difficult time in our country's history. Yet, we feel blessed to have the support of so many people like you who believe deeply in our mission.

Your financial, physical, and emotional support have turned darkness into light and fear into faith. The stories you'll read this year happened only because you came forward to meet the moment's challenges. We knew these challenges had to be met with imagination, creativity, conscientiousness and careful attention to detail—and your contributions enabled us to do so.

We are proud to share how a new approach to activities was created at Trinity Springs; how pen pals at Augustana Apartments of Minneapolis changed the lives of participants; and how an extraordinary gentleman at Valley View Village works as a nursing assistant and in maintenance to help residents thrive.

Other stories show how your donations enabled staff to serve those who lost access to adult day centers last year. We are excited about opening Haven Homes, a new community in Maple Plain. We also want to introduce you to an exceptional volunteer and an extraordinary family member who go out of their way routinely for residents and staff.

Since December, Cassia has vaccinated residents, staff and families/essential caregivers. We are grateful for the hope vaccines bring and most of all, for your generosity, fellowship and faith.

*Gary Wilkerson*  
*Robert Dahl*

*Board Chair Gary Wilkerson,  
and CEO Robert Dahl*



Gary Wilkerson



Robert Dahl



A resident received a flower bouquet cake for her birthday at a community called The Pines. She asked Chef Shannon if the cake could be recreated, once the flowers died. On Shannon's day off, she came in with a flower cake filled with flowers from her own garden.



We continue to be inspired by staff who go above and beyond what is expected of them. Our efforts are reflected in the letters we receive, such as the

note sent to Activities Director Gretchen Fulmer from the son of an Augustana Apartments of Minneapolis resident:

"Thank you so much for helping my mother participate in the Zoom call to celebrate her 103rd birthday. She clearly couldn't have done it without your help. It was so meaningful for her (and to us) to enjoy this celebration in the midst of a pandemic. I particularly appreciated your cheerful and helpful attitude as well as your technical expertise."

— Mark Manfred

With the help of Art4Life, Milaca Elim Meadows was able to bring joyful art to residents this past year. Art4Life helped residents decorate windows with their own paintings. No physical contact was made, but the connections made between residents and the artist facilitator were exceptionally strong.



Halloween 2020 brought a chance for staff members to wear costumes while bringing treats to residents. At some locations, children paraded outside in costume.

Thank You for Meeting the Moment with us

# YOU Help Children and Older Adults to Connect



ADDIE FENSTER is seven. Gary Melquist is seventy-three. They met because Addie and her mother **Laudan** learned of a pen pal program at Cassia's Augustana Minneapolis campus, designed to help residents who could not receive in-person visitors.

Staff members worked to find the right pen pal for Addie. They chose Gary Melquist, as he and Addie are both creative artists. The result was a friendship that changed each participant's life.

"Addie had a tough time last spring, after being pulled out of second grade abruptly due to the virus," Laudan says. "She couldn't say goodbye to her friends."

Gary, who overcame years of depression with the help of medication and creativity, believes strongly in the healing power of art.

"Gary does a beautiful job of making her feel strong and smart and part of a conversation," Laudan says.

"I think we can learn from each other," Gary says.

Laudan marvels at how the current situation created an opportunity for her daughter to grow. "She sent Gary a list of her friends, and at the end, said, 'You're a really good friend, too.'"

This summer, Addie was able to meet Gary at a display of his art at Augustana Apartments in Minneapolis.

*Cassia is thankful for young volunteers like Addie for helping residents stay connected to their communities—and for older adults who share their wisdom and talents so generously.*

## Meeting the Moment



Seven-year-old Addie was overjoyed to meet pen pal Gary at his art show at the Augustana Minneapolis campus last year. Addie and Gary discovered a special friendship through our pen pal program.





Pat Gill delivers sandwiches for staff.

## YOU are Family - Showing Exceptional Support for Cassia Caregivers

**PAT GILL SAYS** he knew he chose the right community for his wife **Susan** after asking for a private room—and receiving one about a week later. Originally, Susan shared a room with another resident in memory care at Park View Care Center in Buffalo.

The arrangement didn't allow the couple the privacy they craved after 48 years of marriage. Now, they have their own space, complete with a love seat so they can cuddle when Pat visits daily.

“Park View is blessed with really good people,” says Pat. “It’s an honor to have them taking care of your loved one.” Although visiting was temporarily suspended to guard against the coronavirus, Pat is again able to visit Susan every day at Park View.

Pat’s appreciation for staff takes many forms. He donated \$1,000 to the Employee Appreciation Fund. Recreational Activities Director **Michelle Hunter** used it creatively to purchase personalized lunches, stationery sets, badge holders with inspirational sayings and more.

Pat also brings treats such as cookies, chili and chocolate to staff “because of my deep appreciation and pleasant interactions with them,” he says. In addition, he gives \$200 monthly to support Park View’s activities programming.

*On behalf of our dedicated staff, Cassia wants to express how thankful we are to family members like Pat. Your support and thoughtfulness mean the world to us.*

*Meeting the Moment*



PAT GILL PHOTO BY JEFF PLACZEK | YOU GOT THIS PHOTO BY PRATEEK KATYAL | PEXELS | PIZZA PHOTO BY NORMA MORTENSON | PEXELS



## YOU SUPPORT CASSIA'S

WHETHER THEY ARE helping residents use FaceTime to talk to loved ones, whipping up scrumptious treats or freshening a room, staff members routinely go the extra mile to show how much they care for those we serve.

Cassia Vice President of Spiritual Life **Nancy Carlson** wanted to let staff members know how much we care about them. She worked with Co-Vice President of Spiritual Life **Dave Kiel** to design a Walk of Support for employees.

Each week, home office staff and others (including donors and families) gather at a different Cassia campus. Masked and six feet apart, they cheer and applaud nurses, nursing assistants, dietary aides, office staff and others.

Staff sends enthusiastic notes to those who attend. "How blessed we were when you all came down to show support," writes **Sherry Wagner** at Park Ridge in Hastings.

"Thank you for coming to our facility and cheering us on! We loved it!" writes Administrator **Bri Wolters** at Lakeside in Dassel, Minnesota.

The Walk of Support is one of the most recent initiatives from Cassia, where spiritual care is a priority. Residents and staff are encouraged to approach chaplains at any time to request personal counseling or prayer.

*Your donations to spiritual care programming help fund the positions of chaplains such as Nancy Carlson and Dave Kiel.*

## MEETING THE MOMENT

## SPIRITUAL LIFE & FRONTLINE STAFF



The Walk of Support was created to show staff how much we appreciate everything they do.

Vice Presidents of Spiritual Life Nancy Carlson and Dave Kiel



Caring volunteers brought an animal parade featuring birds, horses, ewes, llamas and cows.



Renowned musician Helmut Fricker and singer Charlotte Bogert volunteer at Castle Peak to entertain residents.



WHEN HELMUT FRICKER is at Castle Peak in Eagle, Colorado, everyone in the building knows it. The renowned musician can be heard throughout the campus playing accordion and a twelve-foot long Swiss Alpine horn.

Helmut has volunteered at Castle Peak for the past several years, playing concerts and bringing joy to residents and staff. He could not enter the building in spring, but in August was able to play again in Castle Peak's courtyard. Residents listen on their balconies, through the P. A. system, or at a safe distance outside.

Helmut is often joined by his wife, Castle Peak Business Manager and singer **Charlotte Bogert**. Charlotte volunteers her own time to sing with Helmut in the courtyard.

"Residents love Helmut and love listening to him play," Charlotte says.

"Everybody needs to smile and music can do that. It lifts our spirits because music is a universal language," Helmut adds.

Volunteers like Helmut are a shining example of meeting the moment, rallying around residents and staff this past year. Some brought animal parades to Castle Peak and other sites, while others collected cards from children to send to Cassia residents.

*We cannot thank you enough for all you do.*

*Meeting the Moment*

# Where Your Donations Go

The pandemic changed our priorities, and ended up being our largest expense.

More than \$3.1 million dollars was contributed by donors, sponsors and grantors in 2020. Here are some of the ways your gifts helped foster fullness of life for older adults in the spirit of Christ's love throughout all of our Cassia communities.

*Your donations made a huge difference in what we were able to accomplish. Thank you.*

Please note we have moved our donor lists online to create more space for stories. Our goal is to make our gratitude report more user-friendly, reflecting a wise use of funds. Visit [cassialife.org/donors](https://cassialife.org/donors) to see our listings.

A PDF of this report is available at [cassialife.org/gratitude-report](https://cassialife.org/gratitude-report).

Financial information is available on request by writing to [philanthropy@cassialife.org](mailto:philanthropy@cassialife.org).

| Adding Staff Members   | Greatest Need   | PPE and Infection Control Supplies             |
|--|---|--|
| <b>\$715,603</b>   | <b>\$670,471</b>  | <b>\$278,563</b>                               |
| To increase staffing levels and keep residents safe and engaged through COVID-19 | To support residents' most urgent needs, sustaining Cassia's mission through COVID-19 | To protect our frontline workers and residents |

*Each year, our staff photographer Jeff Placzek takes photographs for our gratitude report.*

*This year he was not able to even enter the buildings where our stories took place.*

*Some images were taken by Jeff and other professional photographers and we also used pre-pandemic or stock images. But in many cases, staff (and even our CEO and Board Chair) took time out of their busy days to take snapshots and selfies with their phones so we could bring you images while maintaining COVID protocols. We thank all of them for meeting the moment.*

## Spiritual Life and Chapel

**\$259,215**

To create worship spaces and broaden spiritual opportunities for residents and families

## Technology

**\$213,412**

To provide tele-medicine and help residents and families connect virtually

## Adult Day

**\$210,702**

To provide robust adult day programming virtually and in person

## Activities - Therapeutic Rec

**\$199,672**

To enhance recreational programming

## Caregiver Support

**\$133,223**

To provide support to caregivers taking care of older adults at home

## Building Enhancements

**\$115,853**

To enhance existing community buildings

## CARE Fund

**\$105,315**

To help staff experiencing financial emergencies due to a catastrophic event

## Outdoor Enhancements

**\$69,201**

To develop outdoor living spaces such as patios, gardens and walking paths

## Staff Scholarships

**\$67,658**

To enhance staff care and mission delivery

## Equipment

**\$48,499**

To provide innovative equipment to further Cassia's mission

## Bridge Program

**\$28,973**

To help residents in need of financial assistance

## Staff Appreciation

**\$21,662**

To thank staff for their dedication and lift their spirits

# YOU Help Those Who

**MARRIED FORTY-FOUR YEARS** to his adored wife **Mary**, **Harrison Palmer** has two sons, a daughter and ten grandchildren. Harrison could have retired years ago, but that's not his style. Instead, he joined **Valley View Village** in Des Moines, Iowa as a certified nursing assistant. "I love being with residents because they are great people," he says.

After working a while as a nursing assistant, Harrison transferred to the maintenance department. "I built houses in the past and always liked tinkering," he says. He held onto his nursing assistant's license too because "it's very rewarding," he says. "Being with people here makes me think of my mother and grandmother."

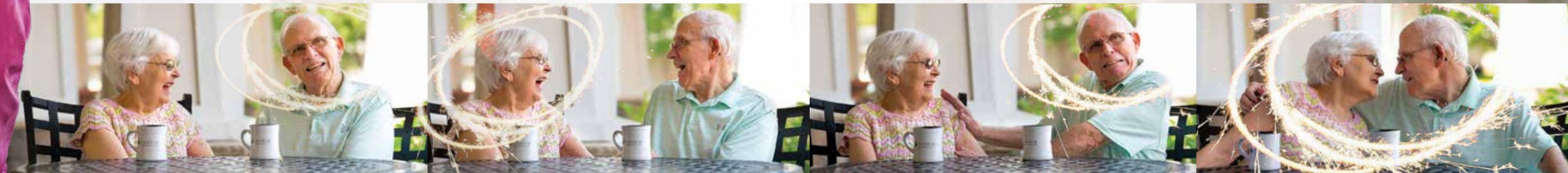
# Are Called to Care

Harrison now works in maintenance and as a nursing assistant should the need arise. Recently, Harrison gave close to \$1,000 to Valley View's employee fund. The fund helps employees with car payments, rent, child care or other expenses if help is needed.

"We never know what the future will bring. Every one of us may need assistance one day," Harrison explains. "I truly believe if you give a little bit of yourself all day long to residents or fellow employees, it's like lighting a sparkler inside them. That's all I want to do."

*Cassia is inspired by Harrison's story and by all employees who make it a priority to help their co-workers.*

## Meeting the Moment



"I truly believe if you give a little bit of yourself all day long,

it's like lighting a **sparkler** inside them..."

## Despite Uncertain Times, YOU Fund a New Building

AS OUR NEW HAVEN HOMES COMMUNITY in Maple Plain neared completion, we knew some of you were wondering why we opened in such uncertain times.

“People deserve the best. The old building didn’t have all the features that strengthen the care we provide,” says Maple Plain Mayor **Julie Maas-Kusske**. The mayor was the former volunteer co-chair of the Haven Homes capital campaign.

Julie and her husband **Bart**, a firefighter and lead staff member for the Wayzata Streets Department, talk to numerous people wanting to move to the new Haven Homes. “People need a community that meets their needs for care—including rehabilitation and memory care,” says Julie.



Bart and Julie became major donors to Haven Homes despite the financial uncertainty that surrounds us. The couple donated because they were “struck by the genuine care, engagement, and dedication of the staff,” Julie explains. “They have a sterling reputation for care and service.”

**Matthew Haraldson**, who lives in Maple Plain, praises staff for their commitment to residents. “These people care—and that’s important,” Matthew says. His wife’s aunt lived at Haven Homes in the past and his brother Marty moved to Haven Homes recently, due to increasing care needs.

Donations from Julie, Bart and numerous other donors help families like the Haraldsons while supporting Haven Homes’ new chapel and the enhancement of outdoor areas.

*Thank you for making the new Haven Homes possible.*

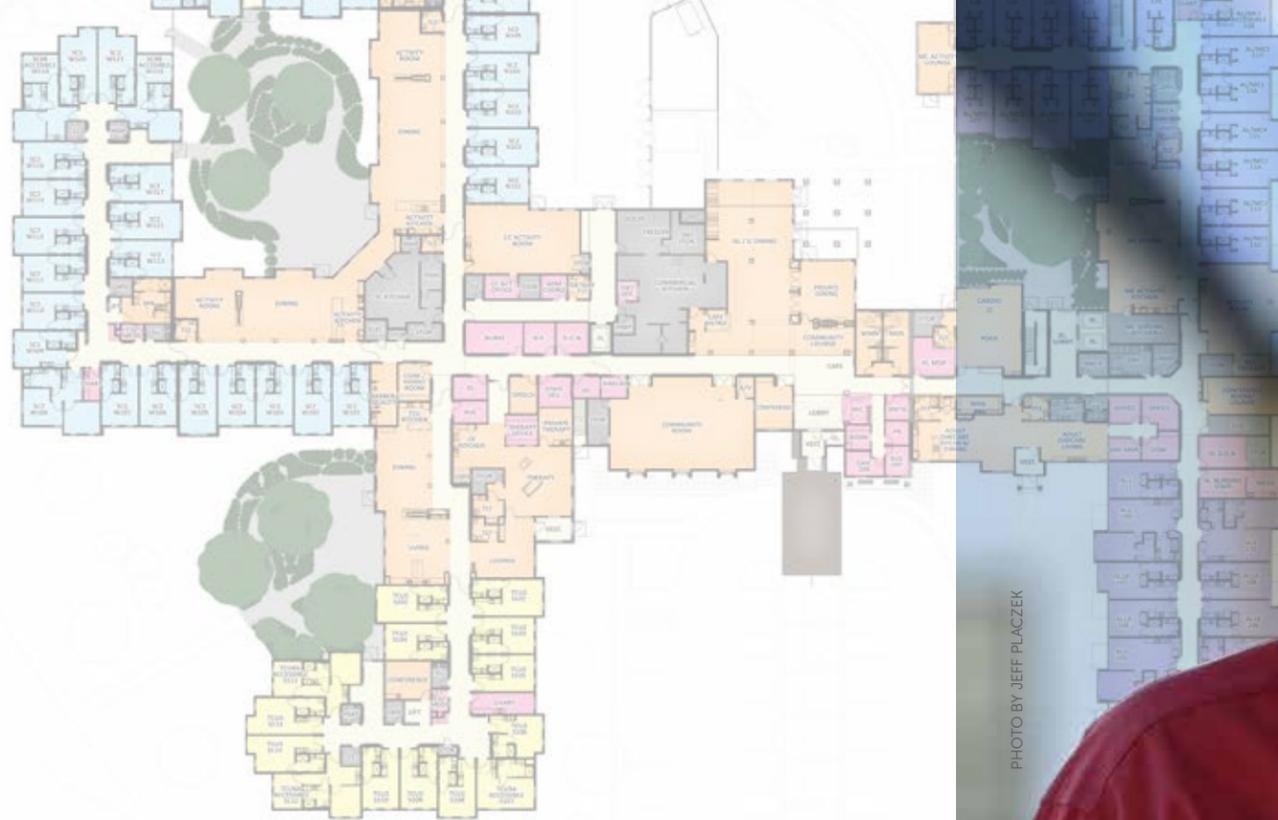


PHOTO BY JEFF PLACZEK

Maple Plain Mayor Julie Maas-Kusske and husband Bart Kusske became major donors to the Haven Homes capital campaign, despite the financial and overall uncertainty we all face.

Meeting the Moment

## YOU HELP US SERVE THE COMMUNITY WITH ADULT DAY SERVICES IN TOUGH TIMES



PHOTO BY JEFF PLACZEK

Esteemed musician Cornbread Harris has brought his talents to Open Circle for many years.

### MEETING THE MOMENT

AFTER THE REQUIRED closure of adult day services at Open Circle due to the pandemic, many caregivers panicked, wondering how their loved ones would be able to age in place. “Mom was distraught she couldn’t be with her friends,” says Maggie Wille, whose mother Betty attended Open Circle five days a week.



Open Circle quickly provided alternative services such as daily wellness checks, activity videos, home-delivered meals, activity packets and home visits. It wasn’t clear if there would be a revenue source for these services, but

fortunately, generous individuals and foundations provided financial support.

“Activity packets gave us things to do,” Maggie says, recalling how she, her siblings and grandchildren scrambled to provide care and keep their mother engaged. “When Open Circle sent a staff member to see her, it provided respite, too.”

Knowing Betty’s love for art, Open Circle partnered with the Adler Institute to provide art classes to her and others, using Zoom. As summer approached, Open Circle was able to serve some members at 50% of



its capacity. “Mom attended once a week for a few hours. She said the day she returned was the best day of her life,” Maggie says.



*“Contributions help us to do the right thing,” says Director Peggy Gaard. Thank you for allowing us to provide resources that families and members depend on daily.*

# You Help Residents Live More Fully



Nelson and Gail Moore at an indoor Farmer's Market

WHEN GROUP ACTIVITIES had to be suspended due to the coronavirus, life enrichment departments throughout our communities had to change course. At Trinity Springs in Florida, staff wanted to be sure new residents like Nelson and Gail Moore could live fully.

Nelson and Gail moved to Trinity Springs to find fellowship and more opportunities to exercise. They were not expecting the world to challenge their plans.

At first, activities had to be provided individually in people's apartments. As restrictions eased, smaller-size group activities were created so residents could participate while using masks and being socially distant. Activities were modeled on TV game shows.

Games at Trinity Springs typically include elements of TV shows like "Card Sharks," which asks residents to answer trivia questions while playing cards. Other games are similar to "America Says" and "Wheel of Fortune."

"The Price is Right Grocery Game" offers prizes when residents guess the correct price for select groceries. In addition, volunteers create painting tutorials and craft ideas and distribute them to residents.

"Staff members have done an excellent job creating new games and adapting them to the needs of the residents," says Gail.

*Cassia is grateful to you for supporting therapeutic recreation departments throughout our communities. Your gifts help life enrichment directors make life fuller and richer for residents.*

## Meeting the Moment



Residents Ted and Lillian Hong attend exercise class with Sandra Casanzio (center).

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- \* GARY WILKERSON, CHAIR
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- \* CHARLES PARKS JR., SECRETARY
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- \* ERIK ELLINGSON
- \* BRIAN FARONE
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- \* LARRY KULA
- \* STANN LEFF
- \* MARSHALL MACKAY
- \* PAT NUSS
- \* JERRY NYE
- \* SCOTT RAMSDALE
- \* GUY TANGEDAHL
- \* MICHELENE VERLAUTZ
- \* LORES VLAMINCK
- \* HENRY "BUD" WESSMAN

## DURING 2020:

Close to **9200 people** received **community-based services** (in addition to residents/patients/clients). Services included:

- ✔ outpatient therapy
- ✔ adult day programs
- ✔ Meals on Wheels
- ✔ child care
- ✔ hospice and home health care
- ✔ technology training
- ✔ caregiver support and
- ✔ home modification assistance



DEVICES, STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS PHOTOS BY JEFF PLACZEK

## Cassia Served More Than 16,500 People



Generous donors allowed Cassia to purchase **524 devices** used at residential locations and in community-based programs. The devices helped residents, patients and families with activities, family communications and telehealth during the pandemic.

More than **3,600 people** were served at Cassia health care centers.



**1,500 volunteers** donated their time and talents to Cassia.

More than **3,200 residents** lived in Cassia housing or locations where we provided services.



**71 students** participated in learning programs, internships or projects. Three students lived at our Minneapolis campus.

Close to **600 people** received care in specialized COVID units during the past year.





[cassialife.org](https://cassialife.org)