



June 2022

MESSAGES

A Publication of MEG's Gift, Inc.



MEG's Gift: A Valued Community Partner

Kathryn Scalzo, Treasurer of MEG's Gift, issued a year-end report in December 2021 that the nonprofit public charity incorporated in 2015 to honor the memory of her sister, Megan Garbach, has donated a total of \$332,654 since its inception to eight community organizations that together provide a comprehensive array of services to improve the mental health of individuals in the Rochester area.

Beneficiaries of MEG's Gift funds are St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, Veterans Outreach Center, Consortium on Trauma, Illness and Grief (TIG), Western NY Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Rochester Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Children's Institute, East House Corporation, and ROCovery Fitness. Kathy Garbach, CEO of MEG's Gift, refers to these organizations, as "valued community partners that help us further Megan's legacy, advance our mission to positively impact mental health care, and promote our vision of fostering a more loving community that better understands, accepts and helps individuals suffering with mental health problems."

Help from these organizations comes in many forms: grass-roots advocacy and referral assistance for mental health care; combating stigma toward individuals who struggle with mental illnesses and addictions; counseling and other therapeutic interventions to ease emotional pain and build coping skills; and crisis support services and suicide prevention in times of hopelessness. Some organizations go beyond clinical interventions. They provide safe, affordable housing, education and employment assistance, offer peer support and opportunities to build social and recreational skills- all of which improve quality of life and foster self-sufficiency. In addition, MEG's Gift has benefitted agencies that integrate physical and mental health care and others that have made a commitment to positively impact the social and emotional welfare of children through trainings for parents, teachers and other school personnel that teach and reinforce social competencies.

Kathy adds: "We are grateful to our community partners for their caring and competence as they go about their important work. We have developed wonderful relationships with them and value their enduring friendship."



7th Annual Golf Tournament and Silent Auction Set for August 13

Shadow Lake will again be the venue for the MEG's Gift golf tournament, silent auction and dinner scheduled for August 13. Golfers will follow the same 4-person scramble format as in past years with the option of playing the 18-hole course or the 9-hole executive course. The golf package includes greens fees, cart, lunch, dinner and t-shirt.

We are pleased to be able to welcome back non-golfers this year to participate in our silent auction and join us for dinner. If you are interested in donating to the silent auction, please contact Liz Messina, Auction Coordinator, at (585) 739-9146 or elizabethmessina@rocketmail.com

As in the past, sponsorships are available at six levels. Some include the full golf package for one or more golfers along with recognition through signage on tee holes.

To register, donate or become a sponsor visit:
www.megsgift.org





East House 
moving lives forward

Kim Brumber, President/CEO of East House holds check presented by Ray and Kathy Garbach with Sarah O'Brien, Director of Development & Community Relations (far right).

"I would like to take this opportunity and offer my gratitude for the generous gift that your organization [East House] bestowed upon me. I've been able to return to college and find support for purchasing books for this current semester. All of the East House [employees] have shown genuine compassion and the utmost professionalism in directing and managing my care. In addition to attending school and serving at my church, I am actively involved in social activism and organizing. All of this is possible by the grace of God and the continued support I receive as a beneficiary from all of you wonderful folks."

East House resident who began working with counselors in 2020 with the goal of living independently in his own apartment.

\$30,000 Presented to East House

Kim Brumber, President and CEO of East House, said that she was "overwhelmed and exceedingly grateful" to MEG's Gift when presented with a check for \$30,000 late last year to further the agency's mission of helping individuals recovering from mental illnesses and substance use disorders to move their lives forward. East House began in 1966 as a safe and supportive transitional residence for persons leaving psychiatric hospitals who were not yet ready to live on their own. Over the years, the services offered have expanded to help meet the social, emotional, financial, educational, vocational, and spiritual need of clients. However, stable housing remains the foundation of recovery in the East House service delivery model.

More recently, Beth Hershel, Vice President of Development and Community Relations, shared that East House is using MEG's Gift funds for "recovery support services - the wraparound care that our staff provide to clients in the form of education and employment support, budgeting, social outings, and connections to [community] resources." Beth went on to say that, "MEG's Gift created a ripple effect on our community members in recovery by empowering our clients and residents to live healthy lives, strengthen connections with family and friends, and ultimately build a stronger, safer community for all of us. Thank you for supporting this critical work!"



VILLA OF HOPE

selected as 2022 beneficiary



Christina Gullo
President & CEO

The MEG's Gift Board selected the Villa of Hope as its primary beneficiary of fundraising efforts in 2022. Formally known as St. Joseph's Villa, it began in 1942 as an orphanage and for many years has provided residential care to youth with severe emotional and behavioral problems who required intensive treatment and structure that was not available at home and in local school settings. Under the leadership of Christina Gullo, who was named President and CEO in 2010, the Villa began a review and rebuilding journey of "adaptive change" to address fiscal challenges, and a trend away from residential services in favor of community based programs. In the process, it adopted a trauma-informed model of care

which guides treatment interventions and organizational changes that are required to be responsive to client needs. Today, after nearly 10 years of extensive work at all levels of the organization to restructure its services and rebuild its culture, the Villa's 350 employees currently serve approximately 4500 individuals or family units annually from Monroe and surrounding counties within the four programs outlined below.

In a conversation with Villa leadership about what it means to be selected as a beneficiary, CEO Gullo focused on the critical importance of the work that MEG's Gift has already done in "putting a spotlight" on mental health awareness and spoke of the honor of "coming alongside [as a provider] to support that message." Catherine Amico Orlandini, Major Gifts Officer, added: "You are using Meg's memory to make somebody else's life have more meaning and the dollars are going to help us fulfill services." Sounds like the ingredients for an effective partnership that offers people the opportunity to rebuild relationships, recover potential, and renew hope for themselves and their families.

Workforce Development Program

3-phase work readiness program for youth, starting with classroom sessions learning about the world of work, then on-site paid internships, and finally, offsite paid employment with coaching by Villa staff. Also offered is a supported employment program in which individuals 18 and older are guided to conduct a job search, and secure and maintain employment in a position that matches their interests and skills. The success of job placements is dependent on the Villa's partnerships with multiple community employers.

Villa of Hope School

The Villa of Hope School fosters social and emotional development, academic growth, vocational exploration, and increased personal independence for students in grades 7 to 12 whose needs could not be met within a traditional educational environment. With a capacity for 112 students and more than 50 on a wait list, most students commute from area school districts. Year after year, the Villa of Hope School boasts a 100% graduation rate.

Care Coordination & Management

Programs that are designed to give children, families, and adults access to vital services that meet their unique needs in such areas as health care, financial support, food, clothing, transportation, employment, legal assistance, childcare, and more. The emphasis is on referral and advocacy while supporting clients in building their own care networks.

Behavioral Health Department

Offers outpatient counseling and medication management for youth, adults and families dealing with mental health and substance use problems; a residential program for males ages 13-21 struggling with a substance use disorder; an 18-bed medically supervised drug detoxification facility (new in 2022) for adolescents and adults; Hope Place, a casual and safe "living room" setting, open from 3 pm to 11 pm daily, where adult "guests" experiencing difficulties in their recovery find compassionate help from certified peer support specialists, often avoiding an emergency room visit; and an addiction prevention education program conducted by Villa staff in area schools.



6TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT RECAP



As they approached the first hole of the 18 hole course at Shadow Lake on July 24th last year, golfers were greeted by a friendly, physically-imposing guy with the biceps of a weightlifter who offered to hit their drive in exchange for a donation to MEG's Gift. Most took him up on the offer - and for good reason. He is Ryan Steenberg, a Rochesterian and perennially top competitor on the Professional Long Drive Association circuit. After his gigantic drive, what was left was a pitch shot to the green.

Eighty eight golfers played the 18 hole course on this sunny afternoon and another 24 golfers played the 9 hole Executive course that included a large contingent from East House, the primary beneficiary of 2021 fundraising. Participants were treated to lunch before and a buffet dinner following their round of golf. The buzz from many of our returning players and volunteers was that after a year off because of the pandemic, they were happy to be back at Shadow Lake, having fun and supporting MEG's Gift.

**To all of our golfers, sponsors, and volunteers:
thank you for your contribution to another successful event.**

AROUND THE COURSE



MEET THE CHAMPIONS

→ CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 WINNERS!



18 HOLE COURSE WINNERS

Jack Pero
Scott Lis
Dan Weiss
Ron Barstys



9 HOLE COURSE WINNERS

Mike Colouri
Sam Mastrosimone
Mike Marciano
Mike Pattison



LONGEST DRIVE (Men 18 Holes)

Matt Rodenhizer



CLOSEST TO PIN (Men 18 Holes)

Dan Roop



LONGEST DRIVE & CLOSEST TO PIN (Women 18 Holes)

Wendy Wright



CLOSEST TO PIN (Women 9 Holes)

Marie Duhamel



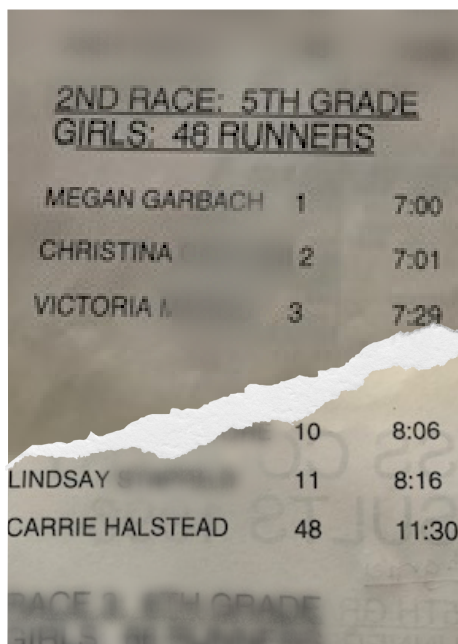
HOW I REMEMBER MEGAN

BY CARRIE HALSTEAD

EDITOR'S NOTE > February 17 is the anniversary date of Megan's death. It is a difficult day for all of us who deeply miss her presence in our lives. It has been eight years. This February 17 began, as it has in past years for many of us, by attending Mass where we prayerfully asked for God's blessings on her and on us. Throughout the day, there was sharing of stories about Megan that never grow old, moments of tears and laughter, and hugs to console and support each other in our continuing grief. We endure on the strength of our faith, family, and friendships. If there was any doubt about that, it was laid to rest by what happened at the end of the day. I, along with others on the MEG's Gift Leadership Team, received this message from Carrie Halstead, Megan's high school teammate and friend, as well as the graphic designer for this newsletter. Thank you, Carrie, for sharing this personal reflection of how Megan impacted your life. It is yet another example of Megan's legacy.

"Hi all! I hope you know I think of you often and especially today. I know I missed seeing everyone at last year's tournament due to some health issues, but it has been the honor of my life to be a part of MEG's gift and I am so in awe of the work you do!

I found something at my parent's house in Penfield a few weeks ago and wanted to share it with you today.



2ND RACE: 5TH GRADE GIRLS: 48 RUNNERS		
MEGAN GARBACH	1	7:00
CHRISTINA	2	7:01
VICTORIA	3	7:29
	10	8:06
LINDSAY	11	8:16
CARRIE HALSTEAD	48	11:30
RACE 3: 5TH GRADE GIRLS: 48 RUNNERS		

I had forgotten all about this, but as soon as I saw it I remembered it so vividly. Though I'm sure this memory of Meg will not surprise

any of you, it made me smile to remember this moment because it was so genuinely Megan.

It must have been a bunch of different Webster schools all running the mile together at North Ponds Park in Webster. It's ironic that I came in last place (by like 2 minutes YIKES) that day because fitness is such an important part of my healthy adult life. I HATED running back then though. Even when Megan and I were playing lacrosse I hated it. I would do anything to avoid it. But I loved lacrosse and the friends I had from it, so that outweighed any hatred I had towards running.

So that day, Megan finished first out of 48 of us. Which isn't a surprise to anyone at all I'm sure. I remember at some point realizing that I was dead ass last by a long shot. Like everyone of the girls from my school had already finished and I probably had at least another 1/4 mile to do.

I could see all the other girls near the finish line chatting and congratulating each other. I remember so clearly I just stopped running at that point.

It seemed pointless to even finish the race since I was already last. But then, all of a sudden out of nowhere, Megan came up beside me and said something encouraging along the lines of 'come on Carrie let's finish this you got it!' I don't remember if she ran beside me or was just cheering me on, but I remember that feeling her kindness and encouragement gave me. It seems like such a small thing, but it wasn't. That was who Megan was. Always finding a way to lift others up and inspire them.

(...continued on page 7)

Really, that feeling I had when she was by my side is not a feeling you forget. The feeling of encouragement that inspires you to push just a little further when you want to give up. That's something that Megan did for everyone she knew.



(...continued from page 6)

Really, that feeling I had when she was by my side is not a feeling you forget. The feeling of hope and encouragement that inspires you to push just a little bit farther when you want to give up. The spark that reignites the fire inside you. It seems overly metaphoric to compare her small act of encouragement that day to those things, but that's something that Megan did for everyone she knew. Not just me. Or her other friends. Or her family. Literally everyone. I know that day wasn't the first or last time she would inspire me in that way.

Megan and I shared a lot of the same mental health struggles and remembering this moment lit my heart up in a way that I'm sure you all are familiar with.

It's the work you do now with MEG's Gift. It's showing those of us who struggle that people need other people and that's okay. It is a testament to hope and healing. A reminder that our lives aren't defined by our darkest moments or our deepest fears. That no matter who you are, one small act of kindness can change the course of someone's day.

That's who Megan was. Always so genuinely kind and willing to help those around her. That's how I remember Megan. By the gifts she freely gave to those of us who were blessed to know her in any capacity.

And I think that's why I saved this momento and put it in my scrap book. (I mean obviously I didn't save it because I was proud of coming in last place haha!) It's crazy though because I made this scrap book as things happened, so I haven't seen this thing since probably like 1998. Really a touching thing to find in the month of February.

So, thank you. Thank you for what you do and letting me be a part of this inspiring work.



(Carrie (far left), Megan (center) and senior teammates at their Webster Schroeder senior lacrosse game in 2004.

I can't wait to work with you this year and help carry on Megan's loving legacy.

Love always,
Carrie Halstead

MINDFULNESS IMPROVES HEALTH

BY DOUGLAS L. BUFANO, PH.D., LMHC

"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why they call it the present."
Alice Morse Earle, American Author

How are you using this gift of today? If you are spending an inordinate amount of time and mental energy ruminating about the events of yesterday and/or worrying about what's on tomorrow's agenda, you will not be fully available to truly "experience" what the present has to offer. Practicing mindfulness can change this for you. Rooted in Buddhist traditions, mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing your attention on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting (without judgment) your feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations.

Developing the capacity to live life more mindfully comes through the practice of daily meditation in which you deliberately pay attention to something specific such as a bodily sensation, object, activity, thought, or emotion. Most beginners to mindfulness meditation focus on aspects of breathing: becoming aware of inhaled and exhaled air moving through the nose and mouth, observing the gentle rise of the chest on the in-breath and the relaxing on the out-breath, and sensing the rhythm of normal breathing. By intentionally focusing on what is happening in the present (i.e., breathing), you are less likely to get caught up in the "noise" (like ruminating and worrying) that your mind generates.

If your mind wanders, gently invite it back to the present. The activity of noticing when your mind wanders and bringing it back again builds mindfulness. Instead of reacting to random or intrusive thoughts and feelings, practice being a "compassionate observer." Just sit and pay attention to what is happening, accepting it for what it is, and not judging things you become aware of as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant.

In the past 20 years there has been a proliferation of books written that describe mindfulness and hundreds of CDs and downloadable apps produced that demonstrate mindfulness meditation. In addition, there is a growing body of research supporting the health and wellness benefits for people who have cultivated mindfulness that includes reduction of anxiety and stress, improved mood and emotional regulation, improved sleep and lessening of fatigue, enhancement of immune system and memory, improved blood pressure, and reduction of emotional eating. I encourage you to view this article as a point of departure on a journey to learn more about mindfulness and then put it into practice in your life. While it will take time and patience, it is worth the effort.





MEG's Gift
P.O. Box 876
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Recipient
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

**"I love you from the top, middle
and bottom of my heart..."**

A familiar closing to messages from our Meg 

MEG's GIFT INC. is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit charity.

MESSAGES Staff:
Douglas Bufano - Editor
Carrie Halstead - Graphic Designer



**MEG's Gift Leadership Team at the
2021 Annual Golf Tournament**

Pictured left to right: Kathy Garbach, Theresa McCormack, Liz Messina, Doug Bufano, Ray Garbach, Jackie Cushman, Kristie Nadeau, Katie Scalzo and Maria Garbach-Blakey

Not pictured: Tim Garbach & Carrie Halstead