

# Momentum.

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation Newsletter

Volume 9 / Fall 2015

Mary Free Bed  
Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 10-11**  
**Wheelchair Quad Rugby**  
**Home Tournament**  
**MVP Fieldhouse**  
(Grand Rapids)
- **November 7-8**  
**Wheelchair Basketball**  
**Juniors Home Tournament**  
**East Rockford Middle School**  
(Rockford)
- **November 5, 2015**  
**Mary Free Bed Foundation Gala**  
(Details on page 7)



Eva Aguirre Cooper of WOOD TV8 interviews  
Kate Pew Wolters



## WHAT'S NEW

Mary Free Bed leaders and supporters announced the launch of the *Join the Movement* campaign in August. They include, clockwise from left, Campaign Advisor David Frey, Mary Free Bed CEO Kent Riddle, Campaign Co-Chair Arend D. "Don" Lubbers and Campaign Co-Chair Kate Pew Wolters.

### YOU ARE INVITED TO "JOIN THE MOVEMENT"

Local print, radio and television media were on hand for the August 4 launch of the public phase of Mary Free Bed Foundation's \$66.4 million "*Join the Movement*" Expansion and Renovation Project Capital Campaign.

At a press conference in the West Addition's dazzling solarium, hospital and Foundation leadership were joined by Capital Campaign Co-Chairs Kate Pew Wolters and Arend D. "Don" Lubbers in inviting the entire community to "Join the Movement" and financially support the Expansion and Renovation Project.

Mary Free Bed is changing the face of rehabilitative medicine in this region. The hospital will be a leader in rehabilitative technologies, advancements and programming to help more children and adults in Michigan and beyond achieve excellent outcomes. It is truly a resource for this community.

Philanthropist and long-time advocate for people with disabilities, Kate Pew Wolters will provide a **\$250,000 challenge match grant** to encourage donations to the \$16 million community goal. She said the project will enable staff to continue to impact patient lives through rehabilitation.

"When someone really cares about you they never give up," Kate said of Mary Free Bed staff. "No matter how great the challenge, they stick with it and find a way. It's really more than a job for them, it's a calling."

Don likened the launch of "*Join the Movement*" to the final stage of an important sporting event. "This morning is very much like a track meet. We're lining up for the last race. The gun's going off and we have to win."

We invite friends of Mary Free Bed to "*Join the Movement*" and add their names to our Community Donor Wall to be located in our newly renovated main lobby. Please visit [www.maryfreebed.com/foundation](http://www.maryfreebed.com/foundation) for more details on the project, campaign, and donor wall.



# INSIDE MARY FREE BED



## SUB-ACUTE WELCOMES FIRST PATIENTS

With the launch of the Sub-Acute Rehabilitation Program, Mary Free Bed is better able to provide intense and early rehabilitation to a broader segment of people in need of a high level of care.

This joint venture between Trinity Senior Living Communities and Mary Free Bed is expected to be fully operational later this fall. It offers customized, comprehensive and coordinated inpatient treatment for a wide variety of diagnoses, including brain injury, amputation, stroke, cardiac conditions/surgery and more. It also is a good fit for certain patients recovering from orthopedic surgeries, like hip or knee replacements or fracture repair.

The program's first patient, Chuck Westra, eagerly cut the ribbon to his private room in early August. "I'm impressed by the place. I like the people around here. They're good people. When they asked me where I wanted to go...here I am!"

Patients in the sub-acute program receive one to three hours of daily therapy, versus the three or more hours typical of the acute inpatient program. Therapy takes place in specialized gyms and an "apartment" where patients can practice skills to prepare for the return home.

Occupying the entire fifth floor of the West Addition, the program has 48 private patient rooms, each with a ceiling-mounted lift system, soothing nature imagery and a large window overlooking Grand Rapids. Two "neighborhood" dining rooms offer cheerful spaces where patients can enjoy freshly-prepared meals in a social environment.

An open house in late June gave staff and community members an opportunity to glimpse amenities like the patient salon, spa room and quiet reflection space.







## WHEELCHAIR & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

“You get to be part of a team and your team is your family,”  
— Camper Natalie Wright

### SPORTS CAMP EMPOWERS YOUNG ATHLETES

When veteran camper Natalie Wright, 16, returned to Jr. Wheelchair Sports Camp this July, it was an opportunity to reconnect with teammates and share successes with new friends.

“Adaptive sports are a new hope, in a way,” said Natalie, who was paralyzed in an accident when she was five years old and attended her first Sports Camp in 2006.

Natalie said while “able-bodied sports are all over the place,” athletes with disabilities aren’t as visible in mainstream sports culture. She said Wheelchair & Adaptive Sports and Sports Camp encourage kids and teens like her to push boundaries and consider ambitious new goals. “One day, you could be that athlete on TV.”

Fifty campers participated in this year’s weeklong event at Grand Valley State University, with 15 instructors, 44 volunteers and numerous Mary Free Bed staff and interns on hand to help. Kids and teens of all ages and ability levels participated in ten adaptive sports, ranging from kayaking and disc golf, to sled hockey and tennis.

“The camp is not only about learning how to play an adaptive/wheelchair sport, it’s about making social connections, self-empowerment and knowing that as a person with a physical disability, you can lead a full and productive life,” said Maria Besta, manager of the Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports program.

The skills and confidence learned through Sports Camp often have a lasting impact on campers like Natalie. First introduced to wheelchair basketball through the program, Natalie now plays as a small forward for Mary Free Bed’s Junior Pacers basketball team. She eagerly anticipates pursuing her sport at the college level – and beyond.

Learn more about Mary Free Bed’s Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports programs, clinics and teams at [maryfreebed.com/sports](http://maryfreebed.com/sports).



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## The Gerber Foundation



From left to right, Dr. Bill Bush, Catherine Obits and Mary Free Bed's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Michael Jakubowski

## BUILDING ABOVE AND BEYOND

The Gerber Foundation stepped well outside of its traditional donation boundaries to make a hefty \$250,000 donation to the Mary Free Bed Foundation's "Join the Movement" Expansion and Renovation Project Capital Campaign.

The Gerber Outpatient Pediatric Therapy Gym, slated to open next year in renovated space on the Mary Free Bed campus, will be welcoming for children and adults alike, said Mary Free Bed CEO Kent Riddle.

In great part, Bill Bush, M.D., pediatrician-in-chief at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, was responsible for securing the donation. Dr. Bush, who refers lots of his patients from Forest Hills Pediatrics to Mary Free Bed, has been on the Gerber Foundation Board of Directors for 15 years.

Twenty-one years ago, Dr. Bush did a month-long rotation here with Mary Free Bed pediatric physiatrist Andrea Kuldaneck, MD. He joked that up until last year, the hospital hadn't changed much over the last two decades. "But this is going to look different and feel different," he said of the new pediatric gym.

Catherine Obits, program manager for the Fremont-based Gerber Foundation said the Foundation generally puts a special focus on initiatives in Lake, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana counties – typically with grants of \$10,000 or less. The Foundation occasionally supports larger-scale projects outside of those boundaries that may serve children from within them, such as special projects at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital.

When the gym is complete, Dr. Bush hopes to bring the entire board of directors here for a meeting – and a tour, of course.

## MARY FREE BED MOMENTS



## IT'S A GIRL! FATHER ATTENDS ULTRASOUND

Marcus Fairfield, 27, didn't think he'd get to attend the 18-week ultrasound for his first child, due in November.

With creativity and careful planning from recreational therapist Kaitlin Salowitz, Marcus was able to be in the room with his girlfriend Liz Lauer when they learned they would have a baby girl.

Kaitlin, who also will welcome her first child in November, knew how important this opportunity was to the expectant parents. "Liz and I are less than two weeks apart in our pregnancies and we have had fun going through the same experiences together. I knew I wanted my husband at the ultrasound, so I thought 'I have to make this happen and get Marcus to be there for Liz'."

"It made it really real," said Marcus, who acquired a paralyzing spinal cord injury in a rollover car accident in April.

Post-ultrasound, Marcus and Kaitlin decked out his power wheelchair with pink fairy wings and other accessories for a rolling "reveal party" up and down the halls of Mary Free Bed's third floor in the West Addition.

A driven business owner and Iraq War veteran, Marcus has worked closely with the Mary Free Bed Spinal Cord Injury Team to improve his mobility, strength and independence. His growing family has helped Marcus to stay positive and focused on his rehabilitation goals.



## 'I'LL KEEP GOING UNTIL I CAN'T GO ANYMORE'

Thirty-four-year-old Nate Denofre doesn't have much use for the term "disabled." Born without legs below the knee – a result of amniotic band syndrome – Nate prefers to focus on what is possible for him to do, instead of what isn't.

His latest undertaking embodies the odds-defying spirit that's driven him to live a life of competitive sports, outdoor excursions and other adventures. Faced with ever-increasing back pain and degenerating hip joints, Nate said he's likely to soon spend a majority of his time using a wheelchair. Before that, Nate wanted to "do all the things" he soon won't be able to do, including an ambitious hike through the Upper Peninsula's wilderness.

Dubbed "Nate's Last Stand," he set off May 3 for what initially was to be a weeklong journey around Isle Royale National Park. One week wasn't enough, and Nate soon expanded the geographic scope of his project. He surpassed the 100-day mark in late July, lugging a 14-foot canoe along the way. Joined by his pit bull, Hugo, Nate said he intends to stay on the trail until he "can't go anymore."



Nate, who has used Mary Free Bed's rehabilitation and prosthetic services since he was nine months old, hopes to use his hike as a launching point for Courage Incorporated, a nonprofit Nate will be starting to help differently abled kids and veterans get out in the wilderness.

"(Growing up), I sometimes believed I was born as the unluckiest person. One day, I realized I was the luckiest person," Nate said. "I want to show others what is possible."

Photos by Justin Marietti

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Nate Denofre



## STORIES THAT MOVE YOU



### AYDEN'S FIRST BIKE

Four-year-old Ayden Wilson wanted to ride a bike, just like the rest of the kids in the neighborhood. Born with a form of dwarfism, he was experiencing pain in his hips and knees. Even though he lives in northern Ohio, he went to a doctor in Wisconsin and the physician there referred him to Dr. Michael Forness at Mary Free Bed's Center for Limb Differences.

In talking with Dr. Forness; a nurse, Kelly Woodcock; and a social worker, Kelley Purdue; Ayden's desire for a bike became apparent. Because of his pain issues, his mom, Malinda Fisher, could not find a bike that fit Ayden and that he could propel himself. During their visit to MFB, recreation therapist, Christy VanHaver, came to Ayden with two bikes and a helmet. One of the bikes was a perfect fit! Testing it out in the hall, Ayden turned to his mom with a big grin and said, "Mom, I love it!" Seeing her son so happy brought Malinda to tears. She was able to buy the bike that day and take it home with a free helmet.

Now that he is home, Ayden rides his bike with all the other neighborhood kids.



## GUILD HIGHLIGHTS



### SCHOLARSHIP WINNER HAS LONG HISTORY WITH MARY FREE BED

Grand Valley State University student Linnea Dohring never stops moving. The dual major – she’s studying therapeutic recreation and allied health science – did, however, pause long enough to apply for the Mary Free Bed Guild’s second annual Disability Scholarship.

Linnea, 23, said the money will help greatly with her education and joked about her status as a “poor college student.” When she graduates with a bachelor’s degree next May, she hopes to pursue a career in recreational therapy. “That’s where my passion is.”

Born with a limb difference, Linnea forged a relationship early on with Mary Free Bed when she received services at the Center for Limb Differences. In her junior year of college, she volunteered for a semester in the hospital’s inpatient pediatric program. This spring and summer, she completed her field work with an internship with the Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports Program.

“It was personally rewarding to be recognized by Mary Free Bed after my involvement with the hospital,” Linnea said. “I have the opportunity to share Mary Free Bed’s vision out in the world.”

Linnea, who opts to not use a prosthetic, is a lifelong athlete. She did gymnastics, played competitive “mainstream” soccer, and was a member of her high school marching band. She’s excited to help young people realize their own recreational and creative opportunities.

“Seeing kids and their successes is rewarding. That intrinsic feeling of helping any person – just one person. It makes a difference.”

Here are the other winners:

**Irina Bird**

Pursuing a bachelor’s degree in elementary education at Spring Arbor University

**Brooke Doherty**

Pursuing a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies/health services at Western Michigan University

**Bryce Gould**

Pursuing a bachelor’s degree in allied health sciences at Grand Valley State University

**Maju Wilhelm**

Pursuing a doctorate of nursing practice at Grand Valley State University



**THANK YOU**  
FOR MAKING

**Mary Free Bed**  
Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation

**THE BENEFICIARY OF THE**  
**REEDS LAKE**  
**TRIATHLON**  
**& DUATHLON**



## SPENDING TIME WITH PATIENTS

One part of my job that I really love is visiting with patients and their families. I try to meet as many patients as I can. A five minute conversation is never long enough and I often spend forty-five minutes with each patient listening to his or her story. Often these stories hit on every emotion. From fear, pain and anxiety; to joy, elation, inspiration, hope and a deep desire to be independent again.

Even for a short moment, becoming involved in each patient or family's experience is the most wonderful blessing. Last week, I met a young boy with cerebral palsy, about ten years old, with a bright, positive spirit who was rehabilitating from surgery. As I bent down to look him in the eye and hear him tell me of his favorite nurses and therapists, I wish you could have been there to see his eyes. They lit up with hopefulness and excitement at the outing our recreation therapists had planned for the next day.

This moment, along with many hundreds more like it, take place every day at Mary Free Bed. Each of you, who choose to support Mary Free Bed, deserve our thanks for enabling it all to happen. Thank you!

## FROM THE CEO

Kent Riddle



## A FAR OUT, FUNKY, FUN GALA!

The second annual Mary Free Bed Foundation Gala is fast approaching. Do you have your tickets? You won't want to miss it.

The featured guest this year is Noah Galloway, an Iraq War veteran who lost his left arm above the elbow and his left leg above the knee in an Improvised Explosive Device attack. In 2014 he was named the Ultimate Health Guy by Men's Health Magazine and earlier this year he was a finalist on ABC's "Dancing with the Stars." Now a personal trainer and motivational speaker, Galloway doesn't take excuses from his clients, fans and followers – and finds ways to get things done. He continues to compete, participating in adventure races around the country.

"Noah truly embodies what we do here at Mary Free Bed," said Tim Pietryga, Mary Free Bed Foundation's vice president of advancement. "We are thrilled to have him as our guest and look forward to hearing his incredible story of tragedy to triumph."



Please contact Sydne Harris ([sydne.harris@maryfreebed.com](mailto:sydne.harris@maryfreebed.com) or 616.840.8137) for information about tickets or sponsorship opportunities.

Visit [www.maryfreebed.com/gala](http://www.maryfreebed.com/gala).

**Mary Free Bed Foundation Gala  
November 5, 2015, 6.P.M.  
Steelcase Town Hall**

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## HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THE FUTURE?



### DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

Some people think that the future will take care of itself. Creating a plan is easy with the step-by-step Wills Guide.

For more information on the benefits of creating a will, trust, or to request our FREE Wills Guide, please visit [www.maryfreebed.com/plannedgiving](http://www.maryfreebed.com/plannedgiving) or contact Tim Pietryga at 616-840-8130 or [tim.pietryga@maryfreebed.com](mailto:tim.pietryga@maryfreebed.com).



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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2015  
NOON - 3 PM  
GAINEY ATHLETIC FIELD - GRAND RAPIDS

A PORTION OF EVENT PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT MARY FREE BED REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

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