

Momentum.

Stories of Hope and Freedom, Powered by You.

Volume 38 / Winter 2026

Mary Free Bed[™]
Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation



WHAT'S NEW

THRIVE GALA 2025: INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF NURSES

This year's Thrive Gala, presented by Buist, brought together an incredible community of over 1,300 supporters for an evening dedicated to celebrating Mary Free Bed.

The night opened with a warm welcome from Lauren 'Shmitti' Smith, local radio host and our emcee, whose energy set the tone for a joyful evening. She invited guests to reflect on the lives changed through their generosity and the hopeful future ahead.

Guests then heard from CEO Kent Riddle, who took the stage with his signature enthusiasm complete with dance moves and a bold orange suit. He shared how appreciation shows up daily across our system: in the way teams support one another, in the perseverance of our patients, and in the generosity of the community that makes our work possible.

This year's invocation from Charlie Nolph, Mary Free Bed graduate, was the highlight of the evening. Known for his resilience and sense of humor, Charlie shared how laughter became a crucial part of his recovery.

But the highlight came when Charlie's physical therapist, Mick, appeared on stage much to Charlie's surprise. Their reunion drew laughs and heartfelt applause as they shared how humor, grit, and a strong partnership carried Charlie through the toughest parts of his recovery. Their

moment together perfectly captured the spirit of rehabilitation and the impact of compassionate care.

Following dinner, guests heard from Chief Nursing Officer and VP of Inpatient Services, Maria Opoku-Agyeman, who shared a personal testimony about the impact nurses have had on the care of her own family members. Her heartfelt reflections highlighted the vital role nurses play in patients' lives and underscored why investing in the next generation of nursing professionals through Mary Free Bed's Nursing Scholarship program is so important.

To cap off the celebration, guests either danced the night away to live music from the Bluewater Kings Band or unwound in our cozy lounge space, ending an evening full of impact, gratitude, and joy.

Thanks to the generosity of our community, the 2025 Thrive Gala has raised over \$340,000 in support of our Nursing Scholarship program, helping us invest in the next generation of exceptional caregivers. Whether you attended, volunteered, or supported from afar, thank you!

To make a gift in support of Mary Free Bed's Nursing Scholarship program, visit maryfreebed.com/thrive.

Save the date for next year's Thrive Gala, presented by Buist, on Saturday, October 17, where we will celebrate the impact of our Mary Free Bed Kids Pain Program.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 29
Let Freedom Spring Luncheon
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
Benefiting Mary's Mission

May 9
Amway River Bank Run
25k Wheelchair & Handcycle Divisions
Downtown Grand Rapids
Sponsored by the Mary Free Bed Guild

June 1
Mary Free Bed Open
Presented by Kent Quality Foods
Thousand Oaks Golf Club
Benefiting Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports



Uncover the impact behind your support.



Scan the QR code to explore Mary Free Bed's 2025 Impact Report.

THANK YOU, THRIVE SPONSORS!

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Electrical | Technology | Engineering

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TRACE3

THE STEVE & AMY VAN ANDEL FOUNDATION

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Orange Carpet: **CARELINC**
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PURE ARCHITECTS

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MOMENTS TO REMEMBER: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THRIVE GALA



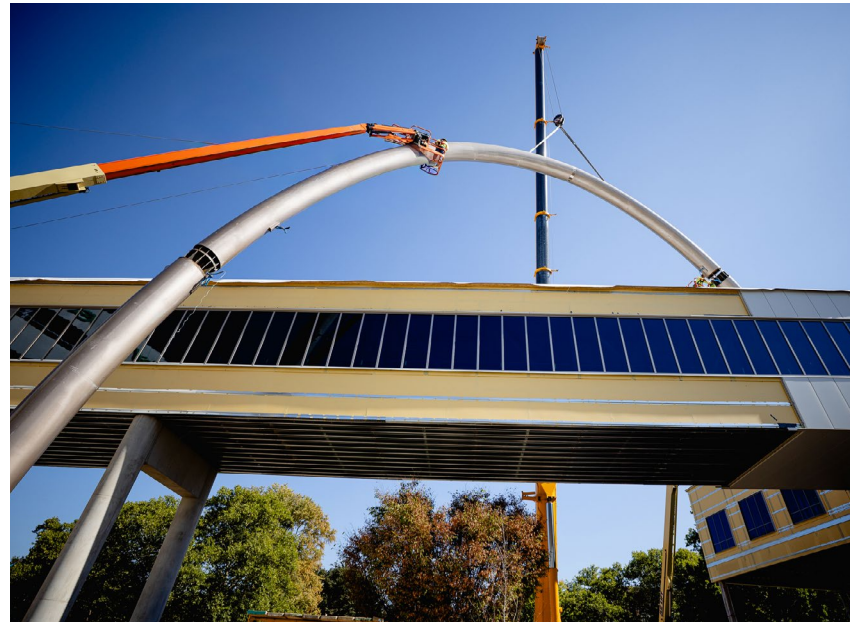
INSIDE MARY FREE BED

AN ARCH OF HOPE FOR PEDIATRIC REHABILITATION

A striking new 80-foot steel arch now towers above Wealthy Street, connecting Mary Free Bed's original Grand Rapids campus with the future Joan Secchia Children's Rehabilitation Hospital (JSCRH). Built thanks to the generosity of the Currie family, the arch symbolizes hope for children and their families receiving care at Mary Free Bed.

JSCRH will be Michigan's first freestanding children's rehabilitation hospital and just one of nine nationwide. Designed exclusively for infants, children, and teens, the hospital's 67,000-square-foot facility will include specialized inpatient and outpatient therapy spaces, private rooms, and equipment tailored to pediatric needs.

We look forward to welcoming patients, their families, and our community into this transformative space in Fall 2026.



THE POWER OF CREATIVE RECOVERY

Mary Free Bed is proud to receive a \$160,511 grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, ensuring two more years of dedicated support for our board-certified art therapist, Libby Smith, ATR-BC. This funding sustains a vital part of our Quality of Life Fund, which provides therapies that boost creativity, resilience, and emotional well-being. These services are not covered by insurance but essential to whole-person recovery and compassionate care at Mary Free Bed.

Through no-cost individual and group sessions, Libby works with more than 90 patients with spinal cord injuries each year, helping them build strength, improve cognitive and motor skills, and express themselves during life-changing circumstances.

MASON'S STORY: FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH ART

One of those patients is Mason, an 11-year-old recovering from a spinal cord injury (SCI) caused by a tumor. When he arrived, Mason was anxious and withdrawn—"not the Mason we know," his family shared.

Art therapy became a turning point for Mason. Drawn to the pottery wheel, he started getting out of bed each day, getting dressed, and actively participating in therapy. One day, Libby invited him to create a pottery mask as part of his art therapy session. While working on the clay, Mason slowly began to share his fears about living with a SCI and what going home might be like. At the end of the session, he said, "I didn't get much done on the mask, but you got a lot done getting me to talk finally. It felt good."

From that moment, Mason's confidence grew. He became more social, joked with staff, and even sparked a friendly NHL rivalry with Libby. Two weeks after discharge, he returned proudly to show her his birthday gift—his own pottery wheel.

LOOKING AHEAD

Stories like Mason's show the deep impact of art therapy, and why the Neilsen Foundation's investment matters. This grant ensures that children and adults with spinal cord injuries can continue accessing creative, emotional, and rehabilitative support that helps them rebuild confidence and independence.

We are grateful for this partnership and for the meaningful work Libby brings to our patients every day.

A LEGACY OF CARE: 2025 MATTHEW FITZPATRICK SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

For the fifth year, the Matthew Fitzpatrick Memorial Scholarship continues to support Mary Free Bed employees pursuing advanced education and professional growth. This year, two recipients were selected: Callie Delaney and Emilie Thibodeau, who both used the scholarship to pursue a physician assistant program at Central Michigan University and Grand Valley State University, respectively. Congratulations to our 2025 awardees!

The scholarship honors the memory of Matt Fitzpatrick, a beloved Mary Free Bed nurse known for his compassion, humor, and

unwavering dedication to his patients and colleagues. After Matt's passing in December 2019, his family established this fund to carry forward his legacy by investing in the development of Mary Free Bed team members.

Applications for the next scholarship cycle will open in April 2026. To date, the fund has provided over \$8,000 in support to employees pursuing their educational goals and continuing Matt's impact in a meaningful and lasting way.



Callie Delaney and Emilie Thibodeau (far left and far right, respectively) with the Fitzpatrick family

INTRODUCING OUR NEW FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP

We are excited to welcome Patrick Moran as our new Chief Advancement Officer and Sara Mooney as our new Vice President of Advancement for the Mary Free Bed Foundation.

Patrick brings 26 years of nonprofit leadership experience with the Tri-Cities Family YMCA and United Way organizations in Michigan and Florida. He has led successful fundraising efforts, built strong community partnerships, and championed programs that uplift children, families, and neighbors in need. Patrick is eager to connect with patients, families, and supporters to help strengthen the philanthropic partnerships that make their stories possible.

Sara brings 17 years of fundraising and development experience with some of West Michigan's leading educational and healthcare organizations including Van Andel Institute, Davenport University, Choice Schools, and the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids. She is passionate about bold, entrepreneurial fundraising strategies and coaching teams to think creatively in pursuit of ambitious goals.

Both Patrick and Sara are thrilled to join a mission-driven Foundation team, building on the strong momentum already in place. They're most excited



to connect with patients, families, and supporters whose lives have been impacted by Mary Free Bed and to help strengthen the partnerships that make their stories possible.

We're thrilled to have Patrick and Sara joining the Mary Free Bed team—welcome aboard!

Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports

FUELING OPPORTUNITY: THE LEE MONTGOMERY ATHLETE ASSISTANCE FUND IN ACTION

Established in 2022 through the generosity of The Meijer Foundation, the Lee Montgomery Athlete Assistance Fund celebrates the legacy of Paralympian and longtime coach Lee Montgomery by removing financial barriers for athletes with physical disabilities to access training, competition, and meaningful sport experiences. In 2025, the fund awarded \$7,236 across two application cycles, supporting athletes with a wide range of disabilities and backgrounds. Recipients reflected the fund's commitment to inclusion, with both youth and adult athletes represented across genders and disability types.

This year's support made a powerful difference for young athletes, including junior wheelchair basketball players who attended the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater skills camp. Parents shared how access to adaptive sports helped their children build confidence, independence, and a deep sense of belonging. One family described adaptive athletics as "life-giving," while another celebrated watching their child not just participate, but truly thrive all while forming friendships, discovering new skills, and embracing the joy of competition.

The fund also continued to fuel the passion of adult athletes as rising costs make participation more challenging. Sled hockey athlete Connor Fee shared that support from the fund allowed him to continue a sport that has shaped his life through creating lifelong friendships, meaningful memories, and even a path to giving back as a part-time coach. Across all recipients, the Lee Montgomery Athlete Assistance Fund ensured that opportunity, community, and the transformative power of adaptive sport remained within reach.



Coach Lee Montgomery (left) with Chris Kommer, WAS Athlete & CFO of PER4MAX, a Mary Free Bed Foundation Community Partner



Scan the QR code to help expand access to adaptive sports and support more athletes through the Lee Montgomery Athlete Assistance Fund.

Mary Free Bed
open
2026

JOIN US
MONDAY, JUNE 1
THOUSAND OAKS
GOLF CLUB

DOUBLE SHOTGUN
8 AM AND 1:30 PM*

Secure your sponsorship by contacting Laura Dulay at laura.dulay@maryfreebed.com or 616.840.8729. Purchase online at maryfreebed.com/golf.

*All shotgun times are first come, first served.

Sold out nine years in a row!

On Course to Support
Mary Free Bed
Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports

MARY MOMENTS

SPOOKY FUN REIMAGINED

With construction underway on the Joan Secchia Children's Rehabilitation Hospital, our Mary Free Bed Kids Inpatient Rehabilitation team got creative and reimagined this year's Halloween celebration as a "Table or Treat" which featured over 40 decorated stations filled with spooky surprises and treats for patients and their families. This year's event was the largest one yet, bringing even more joy and excitement to our kids.

A huge thank you to our community partners: CareLinc, Cavallo, Consumers Credit Union, Lake Michigan Credit Union, as well as our staff and volunteers, for bringing incredible energy and festive spirit to make this event unforgettable.



BRINGING HOLIDAY CHEER TO MARY FREE BED

This year, Mary Free Bed's Deck the Halls celebration filled the hospital with warmth, laughter, and festive cheer. Our staff, volunteers, and community partners transformed the spaces into a cozy winter wonderland, complete with twinkling lights, seasonal music, and sweet holiday treats.

Patients and families joined in the fun, from creating crafts to decorating cookies, sparking moments of joy and connection that brightened the season for everyone. The event was a heartwarming reminder of the community, care, and spirit that make the holidays truly special at Mary Free Bed.

SHARING HOPE AND VISION AT BREAKFAST WITH THE CEO

In September, we welcomed community partners and supporters to our annual Breakfast with the CEO. Mary Free Bed CEO, Kent Riddle, shared inspiring patient stories that highlight the life-changing care donors help make possible, along with updates on what's ahead for our growing rehabilitation system. Guests also enjoyed a fun sneak-peek at the construction progress for the new Joan Secchia Children's Rehabilitation Hospital.



A WINNING HAND FOR MARY FREE BED KIDS

Friends of Mary Free Bed gathered for the fourth annual *Bridge for Kids* event, where community members came together to enjoy an afternoon of bridge while raising funds to support Mary Free Bed Kids. Organized by dedicated volunteers Iva Tol, Marty Campbell, Sharron Reynolds, and Laurie Webster, the event brought together 75 participants and was generously sponsored by Honor Credit Union. Thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of attendees, *Bridge for Kids* raised nearly \$30,000 to benefit children receiving rehabilitation care at Mary Free Bed.

Mary Free Bed

Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation
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CONTACT

Phone: 616.840.8137

Web: maryfreebed.com/foundation

Email: foundation@maryfreebed.com

STAFF

Jocelyn Dettloff

Major Gifts Director

Laura Dulay

Development Director

Kelly Fitzgerald

Executive Administrative Assistant

Darrow Goodspeed

Major Gifts and Donor Relations Director

Ashley Koop

Event Planner

Sara Mooney

Vice President of Advancement

Patrick Moran

Chief Advancement Officer

Maggie Smitt

Annual Fund Director

Tim Tuthill

Director of Planned Giving

WISH LIST

Items on our wish list, like therapy equipment or specialized tools, play a critical role in transforming lives and empowering recovery. Your generosity ensures that our patients continue to receive the care and resources they need to thrive—thank you for making a difference!

Basketballs for Jr. Pacers Wheelchair Basketball

New size five Molten basketballs will help Jr. Pacers athletes step onto the court ready to grow, compete, and thrive by supporting their development while meeting updated league standards for the 2026–2027 season. (\$300)

Therapy Garden Flower Package

Our Margaret G. Bertsch Courtyard Therapy Garden is an oasis for patients and their families to retreat to during their hospital stay. Within this therapeutic space, patients can engage in home-like activities such as planting flowers, vegetables, and herbs, harvesting them, and creating floral arrangements for their hospital rooms. The garden also serves as a dynamic environment for our recreation therapy team, allowing them to design seasonal experiences. (\$1,000)

My Journey Media Kit

This versatile audio and video recording kit will let kids share their rehabilitation journeys in creative ways—from documenting milestones on video to recording personal reflections or even producing their own podcasts. It supports therapeutic expression, confidence-building, and communication skill development while giving patients a fun, empowering outlet to tell their stories. (\$1,700)

If you'd like to fulfill a wish, please contact Darrow Goodspeed at 616.840.8196 or darrow.goodspeed@maryfreebed.com.

Thank you to John and Ann Cameron who generously fulfilled a recent wish list request by donating an accessible tennis ball machine, giving Wheelchair Tennis athletes greater flexibility and independence in their training.

