

# Our House

News from the Pay-It-Forward House

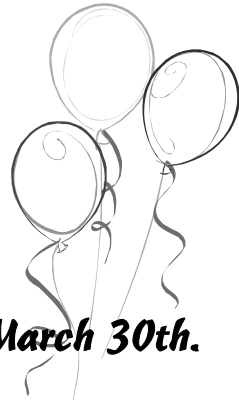
719 Somonauk Street, Sycamore, IL 60178

Winter 2008

www.payitforwardhouse.org

Pay-It-Forward House  
turns 3!

Join us for our 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday party, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., Sunday, March 30th.



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**Chris David** stops by, checks the length of the grass, and if it's getting long, fires up the riding mower and cuts the grass. Unfortunately, he will be leaving Sycamore later this year. Thank you for all you've done, Chris!! *Anyone interested in taking his job? Please call 815-762-4882.*



And then, there are the **Friendly Faces** who greet people at the door, the **Cookie Crew** who keep the cookie jars filled, the **Fundraising Committee** who plans and runs *Meet Me at the Fair* and other fundraising programs, the **Beautification Committee** that does a fantastic job of making the House look beautiful inside and out, the **Steering Committee** who brainstorms the best ways to achieve operational goals... The list goes on and on. We appreciate every contribution of time and talent, big or little, because each helps to spread the spirit of *paying it forward*.



**We found some valuables at the House just before Christmas. If you or a loved one has misplaced something at the Pay-It-Forward House, please call 815-762-4882. If the items were a donation, we would love to thank you!**

## Volunteers Come in All Shapes and Sizes

2008 fundraising efforts have started off outside the Fundraising Committee! On January 5, 17-year-old Robert Bruce assembled musicians for a "Pay-It-Forward House Awareness Concert" at Faith Lutheran Church in Geneva.



Robert's goal was to earn the title of Eagle Scout. His project was to increase awareness about the Pay-It-Forward House in the far western

Chicago suburbs and to raise funds for a new dishwasher for the kitchen. He succeeded on all fronts!

On January 16, the sixth graders on Ms. Hooper's team at Sycamore Middle School learned about the operations of the House from Mary Lou Eubanks. At the end of the presentation, they proudly announced they are running a "Pennies for Power" campaign and collecting items listed on the House's Perpetual Needs List! (Check out our website if you'd like to see the list!)



A few days later, Board President Joyce Mathey gave a tour of the House to representatives of Fifth Third Bank. The Bank has a new program for 2008 entitled *Community Matters*. For every new checking account opened with a \$100 balance, the Bank will donate \$25 to the Pay-It-Forward House. You can do this at any Fifth Third bank, so please consider supporting the Bank's efforts to be part of the community! It's easy, costs you nothing, and effortlessly helps us pay



House bills!

All these endeavors have one astonishing thing in common: no one from the Pay-It-Forward House went out seeking the support. The parties all **VOLUNTEERED!** We are so grateful for all the creative energy that people invest in helping strangers to Sycamore have a comfortable place to stay. Thank you to all who help us help our guests!

## House Guests Volunteer, Too!

A downstate family was involved in a serious automobile accident. Several weeks after the accident, the father was transferred to Kindred Hospital in Sycamore. One of his adult daughters, Nancy Miller, suffered a broken wrist in the accident, and her husband, Jim, had to drive her north to be with her dad. While she sat at her father's bedside, Jim started looking for things to do around the Pay-It-Forward House.



On one of his visits, Jim tackled a poorly operating lock on one of the bedroom doors. The lock no longer set firmly in the door jamb as a result of a guest attempting to jimmy the lock when she'd forgotten her keys inside the room. Previous minor repair jobs had failed. Jim pulled all the old caulk out of the door frame, remounted the lock using shims and liquid wood, then repainted the door frame so that it looks like new.

Once he'd finished that project, he moved on to the broken window shade in the room he was staying in. That did not take too long, but in working, he noticed that the new window frame needed painting on the inside. Jim found his way to the paint store, bought paint and painted not just the window frame in his room, but all the new window frames on the second floor, with the cooperation of the guests staying in each room. And, in keeping with the Pay-It-Forward House rules, he left every space he touched cleaner than he found it!

Guests often find extra ways to help out. Frequently they discover we are running low on some item and volunteer to pick it up at the store. Or they do laundry for a guest who has to leave unexpectedly. One guest returned last spring on planting day with plants to share from her garden downstate. Our guests catch the pay-it-forward spirit and in spite of their troubles, help out each other and the House as well!

## Steering Committee

**Mary Lou Eubanks**  
Executive Director

**Phil Eubanks**  
Board Liaison

**Dave Hamilton**  
Insurance

**Mona Hamilton**  
Communications

**Marge Johnson**  
Member-At-Large

**Dave Klepitsch**  
Grant Research

**Craig Mathey**  
Building

**Joyce Mathey**  
Community Relations

**Diane McQueen**  
**Lois Self**  
Volunteer Coordination

**Chris Thompson**  
Accounting

**Trish Williams**  
Beautification

**Amy Voigt**  
Kindred Hospital & Fundraising

 *Homes that Help and Heal*  
Proud Member of  
National Association of  
Hospital Hospitality  
Houses



# A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It's been a long winter with lots of snow and everyone I talk to is ready for spring. I hope by the time you read this that the temperatures are starting to inch upwards.

Winter is always a busy time for the Pay-It-Forward House because the families of patients at Kindred Hospital try to avoid driving in winter storms. We provided 147 nights of rest in January alone, taking our total to over 3500 since opening in March 2005. By the time we celebrate our **3<sup>rd</sup> birthday on Sunday, March 30, with a fabulous high tea from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.**, we will have easily passed the 3600 mark. Thank you all for helping provide so many guests a pillow to lay their head on!

The focus of this issue of **Our House** is volunteers. With the help of hundreds of people, we are able to keep our budget low and offer a comfortable home-away-from-home for people who come to Sycamore because of a loved one's critical illness. This place would not function without all the people who help in so many, many ways. We are exceedingly proud to list their names. Of course, we also fear that we may have forgotten someone. If we did, please, forgive us and let us know! We value your help, but our recordkeeping sometimes slips as we attend to the multiple facets of this operation.

In past issues, we have featured a few individuals and groups who have helped out. This time, we hope you enjoy learning about some unusual ways in which people share their talent with the Pay-It-Forward House.

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who has voluntarily given of his or her time and talent! We could not operate without you!!

With sincere gratitude,

Mary Lou

### How far do guests travel?

Under 50 miles: 31%  
51-100 miles: 13%  
100-200 miles: 66%  
Over 201 miles: 31%

### Age:

11% under 21,  
56% between 21  
and 55,  
26% over 55,  
7% unkn.

### Demographics:

35% male,  
65% female.  
64% Caucasian,  
11% African-American,  
18% Hispanic, 7% unkn.

Average length  
of stay per visit:  
6.99 nights

Highest number  
of visits by one  
guest: 7



Average  
number of visits  
per guest: 2.14

Average # of  
guests per  
patient: 2.725

## Volunteer Spotlight Who Would Have Thought?

This section of the newsletter usually focuses on a particular individual or group of volunteers. Our purpose is to share with our readers how people support the Pay-It-Forward House with their talents and perhaps make them think "I could do that, too!" The tasks listed below are unusual, but they highlight the many things that need to be done or can be done to support House operations. We hope you enjoy the diversity.



**Sally Scott** loves to paint —flowers, houses, landscapes... She donates her finished paintings that hang in various places in the House. Each bears a small card that suggests the picture can be purchased and the proceeds of the sale will go to Pay-It-Forward House.



**Joe Pivonka** updates [www.payitforwardhouse.org](http://www.payitforwardhouse.org) from the comfort of his recliner while watching TV. His wife, **Cathy**, prefers to be at the House. She serves as a Friendly Face and works in the garden. Their girls have pitched in, too. It's a family affair!



Our "**Snow Angels**" make sure the driveway is cleared after a snowfall. If they drive by in their plow-equipped truck and see the driveway is snowed in, they take care of it! We never know who to thank, but guests and volunteers alike always appreciate that it is clear!



**Sally Stevens** is our clipping service. She reads the local papers with scissors in hand and cuts out any news item that mentions the Pay-It-Forward House. **Betsy Nelson** takes the clippings and other pictures and makes scrapbooks for us.



**Jim Fisher** gets up at the crack of dawn to remove snow from the front steps of the House and shovel a path to the hospital parking lot. When that's done, he brushes off the guests' cars and shovels out around the vehicles so that they don't get wet feet as they climb in.



**Mona Hamilton** not only takes pictures of special events but also has kept a photographic record of the changes to the House and the gardens, in addition to creating our note cards and newsletters.



**Connie Christensen** picks up the In-kind Donations Log about once a month and keys the donations into a marvelous spreadsheet she developed. It calculates the value of these donations, which we need for the House's annual tax return.



**Roger Jacobsen** brings the altar flowers from the Federated Church to the House on Sundays if the donor to the church does not want to take the arrangement home. The flowers brighten the living room and guests never fail to notice the addition!



**Barbara Yusanas** picks up a book of stamps for the House when she goes to the post office and drops them in the mail to us. She seems to have an uncanny knack for knowing when we are running low.



**Marcia Remmert** prepares a beautiful high tea periodically throughout the year, setting the table with china tea cups, scones, clotted cream, finger sandwiches, and other goodies. Our next high tea will be our **3<sup>rd</sup> birthday party celebration, March 30 from 3:30 to 4:30!**

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