

March 2020



# Ada Living

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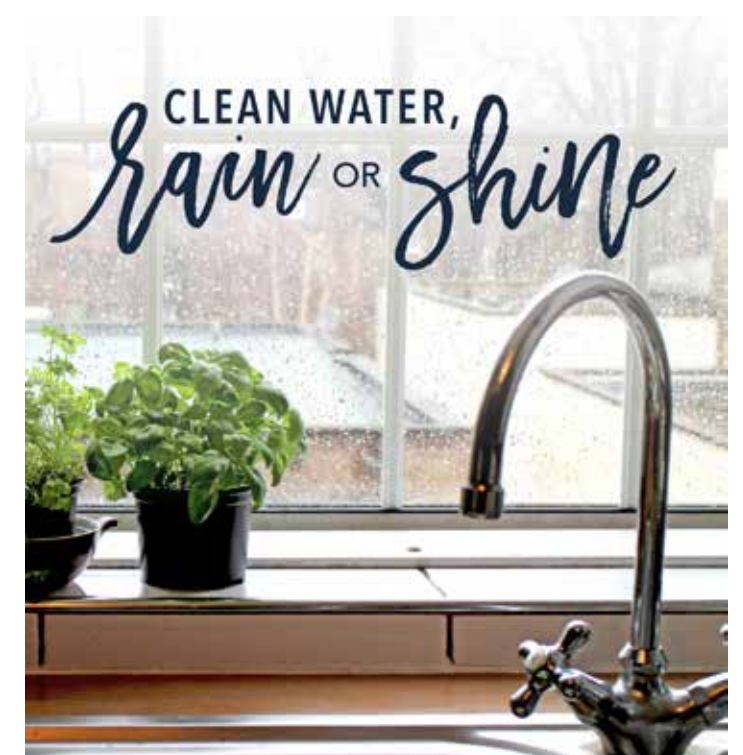
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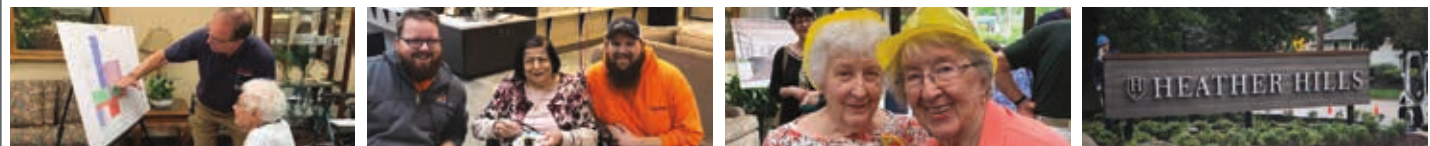
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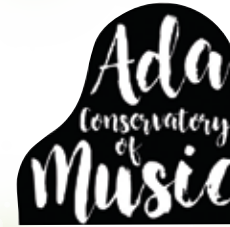
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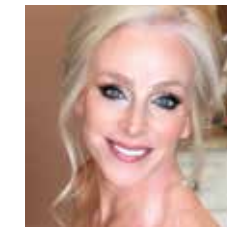
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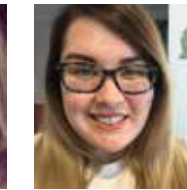
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I hope you enjoy this month's edition of *Ada Living*. Thank you for your readership, contributions, and support. Your kind emails and messages regarding *Ada Living* are so very much appreciated as this is truly a labor of love for our community. If you are ever wondering, "Could we do a story about ...?" or "I could use some extra promotion for a nonprofit I'm involved with ...?" or "My neighbor's home or yard is so beautiful it could be in a magazine ...?" please reach out, as that is why *Ada Living* exists!

I also encourage you to continue to consider the sponsors who support this publication first when a need arises. Many are small, local business owners who have made it a priority to be involved in our community. Let them know that you saw their ads in *Ada Living*, as they may not ask you. And if you have a business of your own, let's talk. There are quite a few opportunities available through our publications for resident business owners to connect directly with their Ada, Cascade and EGR neighbors.



Finally, here's to a much-welcome spring! And to those who are Irish, or at least Irish in spirit, Happy St. Patrick's Day!

**Leigh Hunt**  
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Main Gate of The Richard & Helen DeVos Japanese Garden. Photo by Peter McDaniel.

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# BETH FISHER

## The Gift of Gab and a Love for Words Lead to Launch of Debut Book

By **Gina Kastner** | Select Photos By **Nicole Siembor**

Ada/Cascade resident Beth Fisher is no stranger to the rain. But all you have to do is meet her and you know that she sees sunbeams in most places, and when she does, she catches them. As a young mom at 25, Beth persevered through a successful bone marrow transplant. Today, she is not only surviving, but thriving and sharing her story and insights through one of her many passions—words.



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Beth and her family (Peyton, Beth, husband Ryan, Chase and Olivia)

The spoken word comes easily to Beth. Over twenty-five years of working in corporate sales, she has addressed crowds large and small. At one point during her long career journey, she wondered if she could ever even do anything else. Her mom highlighted her obvious gift and calling to her when she said, “Beth, you can speak to one or a thousand people without thinking a thing of it. I could never do that, I’d throw up!” Beth was confused at how that could be since it was simply what came naturally to her. The gift of gab as some may say, but Beth’s gift is deeply bolstered with experience, reflection, faith, authenticity and inspiration.

The written word comes easily to Beth as well. Two years ago, she began writing more than her usual blogs, newspaper columns and magazine article contributions. Beth has always enjoyed writing even from a young age and wanted to write a book for as long as she can remember, but never had time with a crazy busy life of family, work, travel, education (she has two master’s) and volunteering. With this impetus of recording her experiences, a theme and a resurfaced dream emerged. Voraciously she continued to pour out her heart and mind on her computer. Before she knew it, she had 27,000 words and musings organized into 17 chapters. During a writing seminar this past summer, Suzanne Brooks-Kuhn who founded Brookstone Creative Group and Publishing, met with Beth and encouraged her to keep formulating her message. “I would listen to you and your message, as would my millennial daughters. Let’s get you to the finish line.”

And finish she did!

*Remorseless: Learning to Lose Labels, Expectations, and Assumptions— Without Losing Yourself* was introduced onto bookshelves and online last week. Learning to make decisions based on “who you were created to be as opposed to succumbing to bad decisions based on what others think” has been an evolving topic through Beth’s life experiences, good and bad. Through delightful laugh-out-loud stories, and insightful life examples, Beth brings readers to a place of examining their own life and pondering how this applies to them.

“I am convinced that if we saw ourselves as God sees us, we’d avoid so many bad decisions,” she says. “Labels do not allow for the beautiful differences and nuances that exist within each individual.”



Beth’s daughter, Olivia, was not quite 2 years old when her mom was diagnosed with leukemia. Beth has worked tirelessly with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society over the years. As Beth can attest, that mission has allowed her to see Olivia, now 23, grow up.



Beth now works at Mel Trotter Ministries as the Vice President of Advancement and is a public speaker and business/life coach. She is available for speaking engagements to any group—business, church, school, women, young adult, (fill in the blank!) and you can contact her directly through her website.



Beth recently spoke at Baker Book House on March 3 to introduce her new book. *Remorseless* is now on shelves at Baker Book

House, Amazon, local retailers and available anywhere books are sold. You may also order through her website [bethfisher.com](http://bethfisher.com).

Beth now works at Mel Trotter Ministries as the Vice President of Advancement and is a public speaker and business/life coach. She is available for speaking engagements to any group—business, church, school, women, young adult, (fill in the blank!) and you can contact her directly through her website. She brings her corporate and theological experience in conjunction with her humor and difficult personal experiences (i.e. cancer, divorce, step-parenting, navigating from for-profit to NFP) to individuals and teams all over, helping inspire them to show up in their own stories and circumstances to effect change, re-engineer processes, and execute goals.

After meeting and speaking with Beth, I can’t wait to get my hands on a copy of *Remorseless* and one for each of my kids!



*Ada/Cascade resident Gina Kastner is a registered nurse who loves family time with her husband, Brian, as well as her four children, especially when all are in town. She enjoys tennis (playing and watching), Bible study, writing, reading, painting, and dancing to '80s music.*



**We love to highlight community residents to provide an opportunity for neighbors to learn more about one another and make connections.** If you, your family or someone you know would like to be featured, please contact [leigh.hunt@n2pub.com](mailto:leigh.hunt@n2pub.com).

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pet tips

# Boarding a Senior Pet for Spring Break

With Dr. Laurie Brush



Pet parents are faced with tough choices when spring wanderlust strikes. Senior dogs and cats truly require more monitoring with advanced age.

“Many of the concerns of old age such as joint pain, incontinence or a change in behavior/temperament can make a boarding experience more trying,” said Dr. Laurie Brush, founder of Heaven at Home Pet Hospice. “Sometimes the stress of boarding can cause medical conditions to worsen. But good communication with the caregivers and advanced planning can help keep your pet comfortable,” she said.

In addition to providing documentation of medications, veterinary info, condition details, routines and feeding habits, you will also want to supply an advanced directive that spells out what kind of emergency procedures you authorize in your absence. Ensuring the provision of extra blankets, incontinence products, walking mats and heated bedding will help keep your pet comfortable.

If you choose a licensed boarding facility, ask if there is an area designed for seniors, which is an emerging trend in the industry. Features such as an area located away from main stay and play areas, extra soundproofing, raised beds, extra-bedding, and increased monitoring create an improved experience.

For example, Whiskers Pet Spa and Resort is launching its “Villas” wing later this spring, designed to cater to senior pets. Another option is boarding with an animal hospital that also provides geriatric treatments such as hydrotherapy, acupuncture or cold laser therapy. Grand Rapids is fortunate to have several boarding facilities of this type, such as Cascade Hospital for Animals.

Other pet parents may be more inclined to seek trustworthy “in-home pet care providers” who either offer up their homes for overnight stays or come to your home. Resources available include the “Air BNB” of the pet world, Rover.com, or in-home pet sitting services. Dr. Brush recommends doing due diligence and asking specifically about caregivers’ experience with senior pets, checking references, and asking if the caregiver is bonded and insured. Trial stays will help your fur friend feel comfortable and help determine if the arrangement is the right fit before considering an extended trip.

Whichever type of boarding experience you choose, thoughtful preparation will help take the stress out of spring vacation for both you and your senior pet.



Dr. Laurie Brush of Heaven at Home Pet Hospice and her rescue dogs, Beezus and Henry. Heaven at Home Pet Hospice can work with you and your routine care veterinarian to help you give your fur-baby the highest quality of life possible in his or her final chapter. Visit [www.PetHospiceVet.com](http://www.PetHospiceVet.com) to learn more.

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precious pets

# Meet ADA FROM ADA!

By Aspen Strauss



Ada is a hedgehog who is loved and owned by Ada resident Faith Monaghan. Ada came into Faith's life after she watched two YouTubers named Marzia and Pewdiepie. The two had their own hedgehog and Faith instantly fell in love with the animal and wanted one for herself.



We know how much you cherish your pets and we welcome the opportunity to introduce them to our community and would love to feature them. Please contact [leigh.hunt@n2pub.com](mailto:leigh.hunt@n2pub.com), and we will highlight them in the next available issue.

Faith adopted Ada into her family on May 5 of 2018 and has never been happier with her decision. Faith says: "My hedgehog is very introverted and does not enjoy a lot of human contact. Although she loves to stick her head into toilet paper rolls, she normally can't get her head back out. So I'll have to take it out only for her to stick her head back in."

Hedgehogs are adorable pets but can be challenging. If they get scared often they curl up into a little ball so all of their spikes are sticking out. They are very solitary animals but can also be active and playful. Many hedgehogs love to be bathed, and often if you watch video online you can see them in the water with little tub rings around them as they float around!

Faith says: "If you're an anti-social person and want an animal that you can relate to, a hedgehog would be a great option."



Aspen Strauss is a senior at Forest Hills Central High School. Her passions include competitive horseback riding, soccer, music, and being an advocate in her community to spread awareness of American Sign Language. Aspen loves animals and one day hopes to make an impact in the field of journalism or film and radio productions.

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distinctive homes and living spaces



The Van Dykes' extensive antique collection is now in place (mostly) and fits seamlessly with the design and layout. There is even a perfect spot for their prized antique: their nearly flawless 1965 Corvette has a permanent spot in the spacious 2-stall barn.

However, it was not meant to be at the time. Another buyer swooped in and snatched up the property before Ken and Karen could put in their offer. They spent the next two years wondering what could have been, casually looking at other houses. To their amazement, this home came back on the market just two short years later. They couldn't believe their luck and put in an offer that day to make sure they didn't miss out again. Their extensive antique collection is now in place (mostly) and fits seamlessly with the design and layout. There is even a perfect spot for their prized antique: their nearly flawless 1965 Corvette has a permanent spot in the spacious two-stall barn. As the weather warms up you may spot this Nassau blue 'Vette cruising around Cascade so give them a wave and welcome your new neighbors!



*Kevin Wensley is a Cascade resident and Realtor with Novosad Realty Partners. He is passionate about helping clients get the most for their home using his extensive experience in painting and remodeling. In his free time, he enjoys skiing, biking and golfing with his wife and son.*

# Karen, Ken Kenrob Court

## CASCADE COUPLE CATCHES SECOND CHANCE ON DREAM HOME

By **Kevin Wensley** | Photos by **Brian McDonald Photography**  
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Though Ken and Karen Van Dyke have only lived in their new home since November of last year, you'd think it had been much longer. I don't think a home and its owners could be more suited to each other than the Van Dykes to their home on Kenrob Court. This is a pairing that almost never happened, though in hindsight it seems inevitable. Flash back to 2017, Ken and Karen were empty nesters after having raised three children in their home of 25 years in Fulton Heights on the NE side. They began their search for a new home where they could spread out and enjoy retirement in a quieter and more peaceful environment.

Enter Kenrob Court. This home was on the market at the time and checked off all the boxes. Situated on two+ acres set way back from the end of a cul-de-sac in Waldenwood Estates, it had the privacy they were looking for. The interior had been completely remodeled in the early 2000s in a primitive Early-American style featuring hand-crafted built-ins by renowned designer and carpenter David T. Smith. Wide plank pine flooring was added throughout mirrored by a pine-beamed ceiling in the open kitchen and sitting room. While primitive in style, the kitchen is anything but in terms of functionality. Hidden in those beautiful built-ins are high-end Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances and finished with unique surfaces such as the curly maple and soapstone counter-tops. You can almost picture an early pioneer cooking a meal in the massive all-masonry fireplace with a hand-hewn wood beam mantle. Ken and Karen have been avid antique collectors for many years and the style of this home fit their tastes to a T.



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# Eyes on the Sky



Years ago, Phil and Brenda Veen bundled their three small children in the car and drove through the night to an observatory for a rare viewing of Haley's comet that only appears once every 75 years or so. "Statistically our youngest might be alive for the next passing," says Phil.

Phil and Brenda Veen don't consider themselves amateur astronomers; however, they hopped in the car to pursue the total solar eclipse a few years ago. This meant traveling to southern Illinois and fighting traffic with thousands of skywatchers to be in the best position to view the event. They also bundled their three small children in the car years ago and drove through the night to an observatory for a rare viewing of Haley's comet that only appears once every 75 years or so. "Statistically, our youngest might be alive for the next passing," says Phil.

These astronomical tendencies are probably influenced by Phil's grandfather. The Veen Observatory near Lowell, Michigan, is named after his grandfather, James C. Veen, who was

the co-founder and first President of the Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association. The observatory was built by its members and completed in 1970.

When Phil and Brenda's eyes aren't on the skies, they are pedaling a bike trail or can be found at the end of a kayak paddle. While they enjoy a 20-mile ride down Grand River Drive near their Ada/Cascade home, favorite trails to pedal are the Little Traverse Wheelway from Petosky to Charlevoix with gorgeous views of Grand Traverse Bay and the Grand River Valley trail between Saranac and Ionia. Sometimes they strap their kayaks to the top of the car so they can bike in the morning and paddle in the afternoon. Phil admits, "It gets harder as we get older, as sitting in a kayak for more than two hours is a struggle!"

The Veens also enjoy volunteering in their retirement. Brenda still works as a bookkeeper for a CPA several hours a month but also helps with the baking of Paul's Mom's cookies weekly. The cookies are sold to raise money to support Degage Ministries Open Door Women's Center. Phil volunteers maintaining supplies for Family Promise's temporary shelter and volunteers at their church. Formerly a general manager for a manufacturing company, he likes volunteering behind the scenes. "I don't want to run the show, I've done that enough years," he says.

When cold weather arrives, they can be found indoors at the local Y, keeping themselves fit so they can enjoy their active pursuits. Phil also adds, "Our life got more interesting because two of our kids moved back to Michigan this summer." Now they can spend more time with family. They had envisioned a lot more travel in retirement but found they are happy pursuing activities closer to home. Are there any other celestial sightings in their future? "We have the next eclipse on our calendar," says Brenda, "it's in 10 years."



Lori Baas is an Ada/Cascade resident along with her husband, Dan, and two children. She enjoys running, hiking, biking, golf, travel, and reading.



Seasons is a feature page dedicated to celebrating Ada/Cascade's older adult community. If you or a neighbor would like to be featured, please contact leigh.hunt@n2pub.com.



PHOTO BY NICOLE SIEMBOR

## SPRING INTO STYLE!

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The summer before her freshman year of high school, Lizzie was diagnosed with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy; a kind of epilepsy that starts roughly when someone is 14 years old.



Lizzie's epilepsy has played an integral part in bringing her closer to her family. The struggle of epilepsy has been a source of bonding between Lizzie's two brothers and her parents. Her mom, Kathy Agee, has been Lizzie's rock throughout her entire journey with epilepsy.



When asked about his favorite moment, Austin talked about the time he had with his teammates after scoring a 96-yard touchdown. "They all came running up to me and were so proud of me; it was the time of my life."



kid 2 kid



# MEET Lizzie Agee

## Making Purple Matter: Raising Awareness and Funding for The Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan

By Amy Teodorescu

*Lizzie Agee is a senior at Northpointe Christian High School, a baton twirler, and a cheerleader. She also has epilepsy. Each seizure wipes out an entire day for Lizzie. They result in memory loss and complete exhaustion. They have caused her to miss school and at one point kept her from getting her license. While epilepsy is a central part of her life, it does not define her.*

Lizzie loves to dance on her cheer team and as a baton twirler. In her free time, she paints to relax. Her family also has a farm up north where together they enjoy their horses, snowmobile and kayak. A Vikings fan, Lizzie enjoys watching football with her family.

Lizzie's epilepsy has played an integral part in bringing her closer to her family. The struggle of epilepsy has been a source of bonding between Lizzie's two brothers and her parents. Her mom, Kathy Agee, has been Lizzie's rock throughout her entire journey with epilepsy. A biology major and a teacher, Kathy took it upon herself to sift through medical journals and articles to try to find something to help manage Lizzie's symptoms. They tried all different kinds of medicines with unfortunate side effects. With Kathy's research, they were able to manage Lizzie's epilepsy on a cellular level with a common energy supplement for Coenzyme Q10.

When Lizzie was 14 years old, she started to experience uncontrollable arm spasms each morning. Her arms would jerk randomly and she'd drop her hairbrush. Though scary at times, they assumed the spasms were just a symptom of tired muscles and didn't worry too much about them. Then, the summer before her freshman year, Lizzie, her mom, and her best friend all went on a trip to New York. One morning, as they were getting ready for the day, Lizzie experienced her very first grand mal seizure. Lizzie's best friend kept her safe and reassured her and they got on the plane back to Grand Rapids. They went from the airport to the ER where they expected to be told that she had a concussion. Instead, they were referred to Helen DeVos

Children's Hospital. After EEGs and a couple of weeks, Lizzie and her mom were informed that Lizzie had juvenile myoclonic epilepsy; a kind of epilepsy that starts roughly when someone is 14 years old. Considering that there was no family history of epilepsy, they were not expecting that diagnosis.

Two years after she was diagnosed, Lizzie looked up epilepsy events and found a hockey game for epilepsy awareness. From there, her involvement in the community flowered. Every year there are epilepsy strolls to help raise awareness and funds for the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan. Lizzie couldn't attend a summer cheer camp last year and there her cheer team came up with an epilepsy awareness football game where the cheerleaders wore purple bows and the football players wore purple socks. Purple, the color of epilepsy awareness. Lizzie spoke at the assembly for the football game as well as at an epilepsy stroll.

Lizzie has since received her driver's license after being six months seizure-free. After high school, she plans to take a gap year and work at Springhill Summer Camp as a counselor and do missionary work until she enrolls in the MSU business program as a marketing major. Lizzie's dream job is to work in marketing for the Epilepsy Foundation where she can help spread positive change and awareness.

*Ada/Cascade resident Amy Teodorescu is a regular contributor to Living Magazines. The majority of her time is spent trying to develop a life plan and get into a good college. When she's not stressing over her future, Amy participates in school musicals and the choir program at Forest Hills Northern High School.*



**Hey, kids!** We'd love to get to know the kids on your block. Do you know a family that would enjoy being featured? Contact [leigh.hunt@n2pub.com](mailto:leigh.hunt@n2pub.com), and we will do the rest.

athlete of the month

# Meet Austin Idziak

By Emily Williams

Austin Idziak, 16, is a sophomore at Forest Hills Northern high school. He has been playing football for a total of 11 years starting with flag football as a kid, then tackle, and finally JV as a freshman. This year, he was pulled up to play on Varsity three weeks into the season and was very grateful for the opportunity.

Austin and his team practice every weekday during the season after school at the FHN field. His favorite mentor is his old coach, Coach Medellin. Austin mentioned that he is inspired by Tom Brady. "Even though he and his team win a lot, he always stays humble and trains hard in the off-season," said Austin.

As far as traveling for games, Austin doesn't usually go outside the West Michigan area; however, there have been some football camps where he went out of state. Aside from playing games on fall Friday nights, Austin has also participated in 7-on-7s, scrimmages, and has coached elementary school flag football teams along with some friends. The biggest honor he's achieved during his high school football career was getting pulled up to varsity. Over the past two years of playing, Austin learned to "Always work hard and never give up. Getting the outcome you wish for only gets achieved if you stay determined and focus on your goals."

Austin's favorite thing about football is being part of the team and always having fun with them at every practice and game. When asked about his favorite moment, Austin talked about the time he had with his teammates after scoring a 96-yard touchdown. "They all came running up to me and were so proud of me; it was the time of my life."

After graduating, Austin plans on attending Notre Dame or Michigan State University to study engineering. He also hopes to continue playing football in college. For anyone hoping to start playing football, Austin says, "You have to be willing to always work hard and when you fall down you need to get back up and give your all into every practice, game, and play that you take part in. And even if things don't go your way, you need to keep your head up and move on."



*Emily Williams is a sophomore at Forest Hills Northern High School. She lives in the Ada/Cascade area with her family of four. She has one older sister at Hope College named Maddy, and she loves theatre and her three dogs!*



If you or someone you know would like to be featured as our next Athlete of the Month, please contact [leigh.hunt@n2pub.com](mailto:leigh.hunt@n2pub.com).

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making a difference

# Cascade Community Foundation Awards Make-A-Wish Foundation of Michigan



Since 1984, Make-A-Wish Michigan has granted more than 10,000 life-changing wishes to Michigan children with critical illnesses. Pictured from left: CCF's Justin Swan, Martin Marino, Steve Hale, Curt Monhart, Dirk Bloemendaal, Kimberly Livingston, Justin Knapp, Rae Ann Yuskowatz.

Cascade Community Foundation has gifted Make-A-Wish Michigan with \$2,500 to help a Cascade, Ada or Forest Hills area child in need of a wish come true. The gift is designated from the Tom and Joyce Wisner Fund.

"This request certainly popped out right away and caught our attention," said Cascade Community Foundation CEO, Justin Swan. "To impact such a tremendous organization and to bring joy to residents who are facing an illness, or worse, was very compelling."

But the work has only just begun, according to Swan. "This will only partially fulfill the need, so more is required to fully support those hoping for this special experience of having a wish granted."

As a result, Swan is encouraging residents in the Ada, Cascade and the greater Forest Hills area to come together and establish an endowment fund at Cascade Community Foundation to help fulfill more wishes.

"Establishing a long-term benefit for causes like Make-A-Wish Michigan is the primary role of this community foundation," said Swan. "To help bring joy to those who are suffering in our community is certainly a worthwhile cause, and that deserves long-term support through a designated fund here at CCF."

"We are excited and appreciative of this support and the potential to create greater impact," said Dirk Bloemendaal, a member of Make-A-Wish Michigan's volunteer board of directors. "Nine individuals in need of a wish in the Forest Hills area is nine too many, which is why we are so thankful for Cascade Community Foundation's gift and their encouragement for our community to do more."

Cascade Community Foundation is a 501C3 established in 2001 now operating in its 20th year. CCF serves as the bridge between impact and generosity in the Ada, Cascade and Forest Hills area by offering long-term solutions and philanthropic services that allow businesses and families to be intentional and strategic in their local giving. Visit [www.cascadecommunityfoundation.com](http://www.cascadecommunityfoundation.com) to learn more.

Contribution From CCF Thomas & Joyce Wisner Fund Will Benefit Ada, Cascade or Forest Hills Resident on Make-A-Wish Waiting List



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resident recipe



## MARCH is National Peanut Month and March 14 is National Pi Day



Let's Have Some Peanut Butter Pie to Celebrate!

Submitted by Ada/Cascade resident Maddy Williams

### Ingredients

- 1 (9-inch) prepared oreo cookie or graham cracker crust
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 (16-ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 15 miniature chocolate-covered peanut butter cups, unwrapped

### Directions

- Mix the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar and peanut butter together until smooth. Fold in 1/2 of the whipped topping. Spoon the mixture into the graham cracker crust.
- Place the remaining whipped topping over the top of the peanut butter mixture and garnish with the peanut butter cups. Chill for at least 2 hours or overnight before serving.

"This recipe is a favorite of our family and friends. It is great for birthdays or special events as well as an easy-to-make sweet treat!"



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compassion of Christ and offer services and hope to any human being who comes here,” said Dennis Van Kampen, President and CEO. “People are worth immeasurably more.”

To that end, “Immeasurably More” is Mel Trotter Ministries’ unifying theme. It is MTM’s vision, and the framework that holds their donors, staff, guests and work together. It echoes the entire mission and is confirmed not only in people but in programming and recent efforts.

After two years of negotiating with competing health systems, Mel Trotter is launching free medical clinics onsite. The Mission has had dental, vision, chiropractic, and RN’s onsite for many years; however, now there are physicians as well through partnerships with Spectrum Health, Mercy Health Saint Mary’s, Michigan State University Medical School, and Grand Valley State University Health Systems.

MTM, who announced a merger with Heartside Ministry in January of this year, has also entered into a deep partnership with Next Step, a ministry that employs returning citizens from jails and prisons. Next Step teaches the skills they need to be laborers, construction workers, and craftsmen. Rundown houses were purchased from the City off the tax rolls, then turned right around and totally renovated by Next Step employees—ultimately restoring the once unlivable houses into habitable and welcoming homes. Along with purchasing the homes as part of its programming, Mel Trotter helped almost 600 men, women and children find permanent housing in 2019. Past data shows that once families find permanent living, 80% of them do not return to the mission.

Additionally, in 2019, 269 men and women found permanent full-time jobs, and 207 came to faith. You see, while Mel Trotter Ministries has existed since 1900—they know people have existed and been loved for even longer. Regardless of differences. Regardless of the circumstances. Regardless of experiences. And certainly regardless of where they came from.

MTM believes that “immeasurably more” means just that—we cannot measure or quantify the unconditional love God has for each of us. Nor can we fully understand our worth and value, especially in the midst of hardship. As we are each made in the same image of God, we must hold each other’s pain in our hearts.

The Mission’s hope is that every person who walks through its doors would come to know they are made for immeasurably more. Mel Trotter continues to exist today to demonstrate that understanding—through faith-filled relationships, programming, and accountability with homeless individuals and families which leads to changed behaviors, and ultimately, restored lives.

And they do it, all while remaining steadfast to their unifying framework and vision, one first stated thousands of years ago by a man named Paul—who was also at one time lost before someone stepped in to help him see the light. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.” (Eph. 3:20-21).

making a difference



## Mel Trotter Ministries

Mel Trotter Ministries exists to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ, through rescue and restoration for anyone experiencing hunger and homelessness. It all started in 1899 when city leaders in Grand Rapids discovered an influx of lost and addicted individuals. They called the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission in Chicago for help, and Melvin E. Trotter, a former hopeless alcoholic, was called upon to start the Grand Rapids City Mission in 1900. In his 40 years of running the Mission, Mel Trotter tapped many others to help start 68 more Rescue Missions across the country.

Mel Trotter Ministries (MTM) has served the greater Grand Rapids area for 120 years. The organization is uniquely positioned for growth in five key areas: Strategy, Sustainability, Partnership and Collaboration, Excellence, and Faith. Housing objectives and strategies have been outlined for each of these growth areas. MTM’s “Vision 2020” plan also identifies key performance measures that will be used to track and evaluate progress. Vision 2020 is a dynamic, ongoing effort. Many exciting changes are underway as Mel Trotter Ministries adjusts to new circumstances and opportunities. However, the one thing that will never change is MTM’s commitment to Christ and His people.

Speaking of God’s people—who does that include, you may ask. “Everyone. We are not here to serve people based on what we think they should look, act, or think like. We are called to demonstrate the



# Opera Grand Rapids to give away 900 tickets to Spring Show at DeVos

*In March 2017, the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania released a two-year study that revealed a quantitative relationship between the presence of cultural resources in a neighborhood and key aspects of social wellbeing. Low- and middle-income demographics with more access to the arts experience better education, security, and health outcomes. The benefits of arts education programs in schools are too numerous to list but include improved academic performance, better decision-making skills, focus, teamwork, and student accountability. Grand Rapids’ local opera company is listening to the research.*

Opera Grand Rapids (OGR), Michigan’s oldest and longest-running professional opera company, announced January 31 the creation of a new Community Tickets Program. The company is prepared to give away up to 900 seats to its spring production of Puccini’s Turandot May 1/2 at DeVos Performance Hall. OGR hopes that a focus on outreach and inclusion will not only strengthen the community but also strengthen the opera company. “I don’t know of many performing arts organizations that succeed by excluding large swaths of the community,” said OGR Executive Director Emilee Syrewicze. “We want to eliminate all barriers for people in West Michigan to experience opera,” she continued.

The company is investing roughly \$40,000 into the program and is partnering with local community groups to distribute the tickets. Unlike similar programs in performing arts organizations nationwide, OGR’s program will give ticket-holders prime seating. “We don’t want to relegate community ticket-holders to the worst seats in the house. That defeats the purpose of equity and inclusion,” said Diane St. Claire, president of the OGR Board of Directors.

The free tickets are available through partner organizations and are restricted to individuals who are not previous OGR ticket holders. The organizations partnering with OGR include (but are not limited to): Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities,

Grand Rapids Public Library, Salvation Army of Kent County, Woodlands/Suburban Library Cooperative, Grand Rapids Urban League and Community Food Club. OGR is still accepting partner organizations and program sponsors and the program is first-come, first-serve.

Financial contributions to support the program can be made online at [www.operagr.org](http://www.operagr.org).





## RESIDENT BUSINESS GUIDE

Attention Residents: Do you own or run a business? To have your business listed monthly in the Resident Business Guide please contact Edward.Volovlek@N2pub.com. There is no charge and is open to Ada Living and Cascade Living distribution recipients.

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Lucas Howard  
Group

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2075 Pine Nook Court NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525	\$745,000	5	4	4,200	ACTIVE
4844 Summer Ridge Court NE, Ada, MI 49301	\$889,000	6	4	6,332	ACTIVE
5615 Sanctuary Drive NE, Ada, MI 49301	\$670,000	3	2	3,844	SOLD
4525 Gray Fox Lane, Ada, MI 49301	\$749,000	4	3	4,010	PENDING
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