

# The *spirit* of Giving

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024

## A STATEWIDE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

**During times of darkness and struggle, small tasks can become seemingly impossible. While medication for depression is oftentimes leaned on to help, it doesn't always work.**

That's why Ascension Wisconsin took a new approach to treating medication-resistant depression with implementation of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). Funded by donor support to Ascension Wisconsin Foundation, TMS launched in 2021 at Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus, in 2023 at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's - Milwaukee Campus and now most recently at Ascension All Saints Hospital.

"The support that we have received from Ascension Wisconsin has been instrumental in allowing us to offer TMS as a non-invasive treatment option for our patients who have not found success with medication and therapy alone," said Tina Russell, Ascension Medical Group Operations Manager at Ascension All Saints Hospital. "The benefits to our patients are significant and have far-reaching effects to their personal and professional life."

Since the launch of TMS at Ascension All Saints, more than 10 patients have already benefited from the treatment in a short amount of time.

### A DIFFERENCE-MAKER FOR DEPRESSION:

#### The perspective of an anonymous patient

I am 46 and have tried all counselors, therapists, you name it. I have always felt like something was wrong with me and I wanted to feel better. Nothing I did was ever enough.

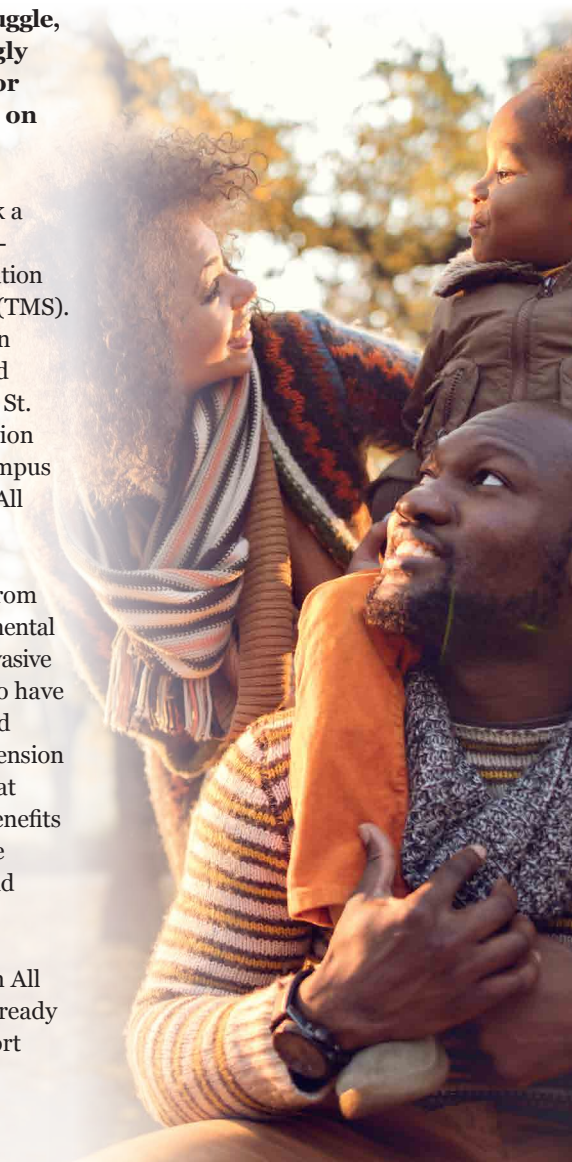
Life with this feeling has been all I know, but I always felt there has to be something different. I eat well, read a lot of self help books, meditate, have good relationships, no debt, etc. Still, no matter what I did, it didn't change. I tried so many different medications.

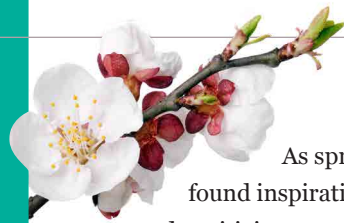
When I first heard about TMS, I was interested. My providers were thoughtful, knowledgeable, positive and encouraging. After one week, I started to feel better. I didn't believe it. Over the next six weeks, I continued to feel better. I walked around the city park and could smell the flowers and see the beauty in things and I actually felt real joy.

I am so happy I decided to take the treatments and put in the hard work. Yes, it was tough at times, but I was determined. It is like my broken brain has been healed. I truly feel like it is a miracle!

### WHAT IS TMS?

TMS uses repetitive magnetic pulses to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to help with symptoms of depression and other mental health conditions. For most patients, TMS is used when other remedies have not worked.





As spring has neared its approach in Wisconsin, I've found inspiration on how the first signs of the season bring color and positivity to our lives. It's the little things, like seeing the tulips foreshadow the beautiful spring that we are about to have.

The excitement of this beautiful time of the year has come full circle. Just like the flowers bring a glimmer of the positivity to come, your support has had that same impact on Ascension Wisconsin. Your generosity provides shimmers of light, hope and positivity for our patients and providers, and it gives a glimpse at the new and exciting things just around the corner.

You make a lot possible in a short amount of time. While our existing areas of focus — behavioral health, community services and programs, cancer care, heart health, women and family health and more — remain a priority, we have welcomed in the new fundraising area of neurological care. There is a lot of great work being done in this area related to Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, stroke and more, and we are excited to start sharing these stories with you.

You make it possible to equip our providers across the state with the tools and treatments they need to help our patients throughout their journey with Ascension Wisconsin. In the last few months, you've made it possible to support investments like LUCAS chest compression systems, a Brevera breast biopsy system, bassinets for our tiniest patients, pulmonary diagnostic equipment and fund programs like the Cancer Prevention and Wellness Program, Project Under 8, Women of Worth and so much more.

As you read through this newsletter, I hope you enjoy the stories that are all made possible thanks to your support. Wherever you direct your gift, — whether it be a certain site or area of care — you are making an impact and providing hope and positivity to the lives of many.

Gratefully,

**Racheal Faulks**  
*President*  
Ascension Wisconsin Foundation

*"Just like the flowers bring a glimmer of the positivity to come, your support has had that same impact on Ascension Wisconsin."*



## LETTER FROM YOUR FOUNDATION PRESIDENT



Racheal Faulks

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## A NEW RELAXING, CALMING SPACE FOR TEENS

Teens work hard in the Adolescent Day Treatment Program at Ascension All Saints Hospital to overcome mental health and behavioral struggles. When they need a break or a place to regulate their emotions, the program's new sensory room is the perfect place to go.

An existing space in the adolescent behavioral health area was recently repurposed thanks to donor support of Ascension Wisconsin Foundation. Over \$15,000 was invested to enhance the space and create a sensory room with a marble wall panel, lighting displays, soft seating and other soothing and interactive, yet calming experiences for young patients.

"We really are in a youth mental health crisis for our young people, especially after the pandemic," said Stacey Yonkoski, Manager of Behavioral Health Services at Ascension All Saints. **"Our program is provided five days a week from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Being able to offer this safe space to calm their nervous system with lowlights, soft sounds and now these wonderful displays, really helps ground them and better connect with us."**

Cassi Huntington is a Lead-Occupational Therapist for the Adolescent Day Treatment Program and works first-hand with teens in the program. She has seen how the additions have a positive impact.

"This room has been a safe space to talk through tough topics, and to use sensory strategies to help the teens feel calm and emotionally regulated. The wide variety of items were selected in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of patients. We use these different items, like weighted blankets, the interactive marble wall, fidgets and even sour candy to help them focus on the here and now, and not on their overwhelming thoughts. Even the sound of the bubble tube, also visually soothing, can help patients feel more comfortable," Cassi said.

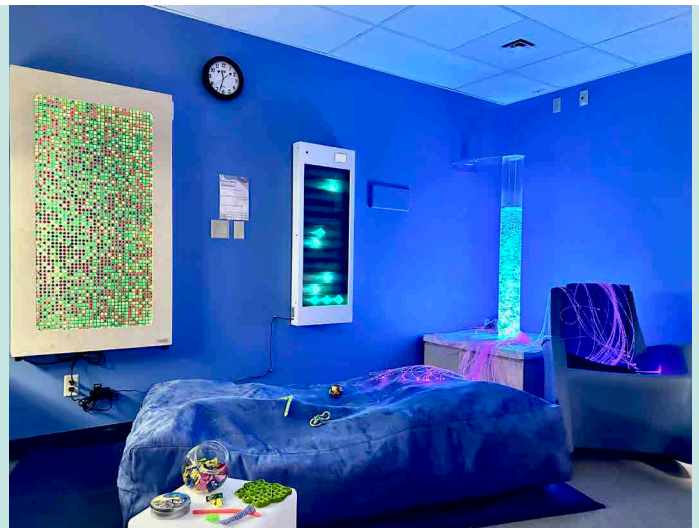
"We have these wonderful methods available to create calming conversations with our teens. It can pull them out of flashbacks or hallucinations. We also have a therapy dog, Bingo, who comes to the program twice a week," Cassi added.



Teens may come to the day treatment program after being in the in-patient adolescent unit at Ascension All Saints. They may be experiencing a variety of behavioral health issues ranging from anxiety to depression, anger control, OCD, psychosis or mild substance abuse.

"We are trying to support these kids when they go back into their life with a continuum of care through in-patient and out-patient services and programs. We follow up and meet with them weekly after they complete the day program so they are still connected to the support they need and with the same counselors they worked with in the program," Stacey said.

*Thank you for helping provide this sensory room to help relax our young patients so they can focus on healing and feeling better. You are supporting their journey to recovery and to become a stronger person in the community.*



BURN CARE

## RECOVERING AFTER A TRAGIC BURN ACCIDENT

October 14, 2022 is a day many will look back on with sadness. An evening meant for fun and laughter turned into a night of panic and pain. A bonfire tragedy caused physical injury to 33 people, and emotional pain to everyone in attendance and the Pulaski community.

Benjamin is one of the people that was severely injured when his clothing caught fire and he was knocked unconscious for part of the time. He suffered burns on almost 40% of his body.

His hands, legs, lower back and face were all affected. His hands and legs endured the most burns. The legs and hands he uses daily for his construction job and to enjoy his lifelong hobbies of hunting and fishing. Benjamin's family and friends describe him as a hard worker, caring and funny with a strong faith that includes his family.

Many of the young victims were rushed to the Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Regional Burn Center in Milwaukee. Benjamin was there from October 15 to December 9. He was the last of the burn victims to be released from the hospital and had three surgeries during his stay, including two skin grafts.

**“There was one nurse, Meghan, that he formed a close bond with. When he was upset or scared, she would talk to him and even bring her work into his room and sit with him while she worked,” said Julie, Benjamin’s mom. “He didn’t want to talk about what happened, but he would open up to her. She would also sit with me and listen to me cry, give me a hug and tell me everything will be okay in time. It meant the world to us at the time.”**

“There was also a staff member, Dee, that he felt was like a grandma to him,” Julie added. “She sat right outside his room. She would always check on us, talk to us and ask if we needed anything.”

As a 6’5” young adult, Benjamin required special accommodations to ensure that he was in a comfortable environment at all times. Knowing this, the staff worked to find him a bed that would comfortably fit him.



As Benjamin continues to recover, support from his family and the community keep him going. In March 2023, Benjamin was able to return part-time to his construction job. He is now working full-time and enjoys fishing. He still gets sore and tired many days as he continues to heal, but he has come a long way on his journey to recovery.

“There were two doctors that worked with Benjamin, but his main doctor was Dr. Fehring. The kindness and patience he showed us helped us. He sat and answered our questions and took the time to explain things to us,” Julie said. “Benjamin worked with Dr. Meyer after discharge and he performed the laser surgeries that he had. He too was patient and answered all the questions we had. Overall, everyone was great to work with.”

*Thanks to donor generosity to Ascension Wisconsin Foundation, more than \$2,000,000 of support has been invested in care provided at the Burn Center. Recently, new radiant heat panels and patient lifts were purchased to support this care. Thank you for making this possible.*



HEART CARE

## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY: HEART PATIENTS SHARE THEIR STORY

Donor support has made it possible to enhance heart care initiatives such as cardiac rehabilitation, transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) and community outreach efforts.

This means patients across Ascension Wisconsin can receive the high-quality heart care that they deserve. Care that saves lives for patients like Rodney and Brent.

### RODNEY'S story at Ascension Calumet Hospital

When Rodney started his heart journey eight years ago and struggled to find out why he consistently had irregular heartbeats and shortness of breath, he sought help close to home at Ascension Calumet Hospital.

After going to the emergency department, Rodney was referred to a cardiologist at Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus. It was decided to perform a catheterization and Rodney received a stent.

In October 2019, Rodney was unconscious for 12 hours before he was found and rushed to Ascension Calumet. He was then transported to Ascension Mercy in Oshkosh because of ICU availability and his need for dialysis.

In March 2022, his physician referred Rodney to the Heart and Vascular Institute of Wisconsin. Rodney underwent an ablation procedure before receiving a pacemaker in November 2022.

“What is so great about Ascension, is that my doctor from the Heart Institute could come right to Ascension St. Elizabeth to do my surgery. And my doctors from Ascension St. Elizabeth come here weekly to Calumet. It’s so convenient to have this kind of system that meets patients where they are,” Rodney said. “The care at Ascension cannot be beat. The hospital in Chilton is so close and convenient and the ambulance can be here within a couple of minutes.”

**“The care at Ascension cannot be beat. The hospital in Chilton is so close and convenient and the ambulance can be here within a couple of minutes.”**

RODNEY



**Brent McKerchie** finished his first half marathon last September.

### BRENT'S story at Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus

Brent McKerchie crossed the finish line of his first half marathon with a smile consisting of pride and accomplishment beaming from his face. Just nine months prior, he was in the operating room at Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus undergoing open heart surgery.

Brent was feeling uneasy and scheduled an appointment with his primary care provider for testing and it was discovered that he had a heart murmur. That monitoring lasted five years before it was time for further measures.

On December 6, 2022, Brent went in for open heart surgery at only 31 years old. The surgery was done to repair his valve and ensure that he would have no further heart issues. Everything went well as Dr. Abouzlam, cardiothoracic surgeon at Ascension St. Elizabeth, and his surgical team repaired his heart.

Within 24 hours Brent was up and walking. He stayed four more nights at Ascension St. Elizabeth before being discharged and cleared to start cardiac rehabilitation.

Brent signed up for his half marathon and crossed the finish line on September 17, 2023, a day which is now one of his proudest moments and he is very thankful for the care he received.

“It started as a joke at first, but I told my sister that if everything went well with my heart surgery, I would sign up and do a half marathon with her,” Brent said. “We both completed it, and it was exactly nine months and one week from my surgery. I was so, so proud of that.”

DONOR IMPACT

## REACH OUT AND READ: PROMOTING EARLY LITERACY



**“This is a really positive thing for kids and I can’t think of a more positive program to be involved in.”**

**MARY BETH  
NIENHAUS**

**Reach Out and Read**, funded 100% by philanthropy in the Fox Valley, is also available at:

- Ascension All Saints - Four Mile Road in Racine
- Ascension All Saints - Green Bay Road in Mount Pleasant
- Ascension All Saints Pediatrics - Spring Street Campus in Racine
- Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin - Ninth Avenue in Oshkosh
- Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus in Appleton
- Ascension Columbia St. Mary’s Family Health Center in Milwaukee
- Ascension Wisconsin Health Center - Mount Pleasant

“Every day, my goal is to put a smile on peoples’ faces. When kids get a book, I know it puts a smile on their face,” Mary Beth said. “This is a really positive thing for kids and I can’t think of a more positive program to be involved in.”

*Thanks to the support of generous people like Mary Beth, providers across Ascension Wisconsin can help in supporting the healthy development of our youngest patients. Thank you for making this possible.*

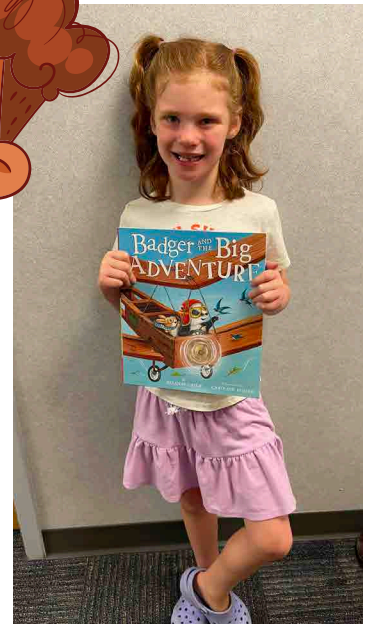
Reading to a baby or young child creates warm, loving memories but it also does something else — it helps their brain develop and kickstarts learning from the day they are born.

When Mary Beth Nienhaus first learned about Reach Out and Read, she knew that she wanted to support the program’s implementation at Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus.

“When I first heard about the program, I went ‘oh my gosh this is a perfect fit,’” said Mary Beth, a retired teacher from Appleton. “Reach Out and Read is such a positive program and I strongly believe in the impact that books can have on young kids, especially when going to a doctor’s appointment where they may be feeling anxious.”

Every well-child visit starting from birth to five years begins with the child receiving a new, age-appropriate book to take home. Doctors can use the books to help ease a child’s nerves during the appointment, but the impact goes much further than that.

Reading to children at a young age has been proven to help children better recognize sounds and letters, increase their range of vocabulary, support listening skills and deepen the child-parent bond.



**Maren**, a young patient, pictured with a book she received at a recent annual visit.

Your generosity to Ascension Wisconsin Foundation has enabled us to support personalized, compassionate care close to home.

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For a full list of all donors, please visit our website at [giveAWF.org/donors](http://giveAWF.org/donors).

# EVENTS

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for these upcoming events. We would love to see you!

For more information on upcoming events, please visit [giveAWF.org/events](https://giveAWF.org/events) or email [AWFEvents@ascension.org](mailto:AWFEvents@ascension.org).

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Geneva National Resort & Club  
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Benefitting Heart Care for Ascension Wisconsin

AUG

6

2024

## City Slickers: Rumble

Harley-Davidson Museum  
Milwaukee, WI  
Benefitting Cancer Care for Ascension Wisconsin

SEP

14

2024

**PLEASE JOIN US!**



Join us for the reimagined Kentucky Derby Gala as Derby Day! The event will benefit the **new Bariatric Surgical Program at Ascension All Saints Hospital**.

We invite you to attend this memorable afternoon and experience the southern charms of the Churchill Down close to home

Visit [giveAWF.org/derby](https://giveAWF.org/derby) or scan the QR code to register for Derby Day



Art Below Zero Franksville, WI Benefitting the Bariatric Surgical Program at Ascension All Saints Hospital

**SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2024 | 2-7 PM**



# THANK YOU



We would like to extend a meaningful thank you to everyone that made our Spring Beginnings Gala a success in March! More than 200 individuals came together in support of Neurological Care across Ascension Wisconsin, making it possible to provide advanced care to every patient.

We are incredibly grateful to have heard inspiring words from our incredible Ascension Wisconsin speakers while being able to explore the Domes, take in the tunes from the Ron Bedal Orchestra, make memories on the dance floor and enjoy amazing comradery — all while making a difference for a great cause - thank you!