



Home Away from Home

FISHER HOUSE WISCONSIN NEWS

Board of Directors

Dirk Debbink, President
VADM(R), USN, former Chief of the Navy Reserve, Chairman/CEO of MSI General Corporation

Angie Christianson, Vice President
Sr. IT Contract Manager, Johnson Controls

Elliot LePoidevin, Treasurer
Consultant, Cottingham & Butler
Vice President of Sales, Marsh & McLennan Agency

Carmen Anderson, Secretary
Attorney, von Briesen & Roper, s.c.

Bill Michaels, Director
105.7 Sports Talk Radio Host

Brian Dennis, Director
SVP of Retail Customer Engagement
Service Management Group

Chad O'Brien, Director
Partner, Baker Tilly

Dirk Stallman, Director
VP of Marketing, Verlo

Andrea Potthast, Director
Global Marketing Director,
GE Healthcare

Patti Kneiser, Director
VP of Employee Services, Froedtert

Chuck Steinmetz, Director
General Manager, WITI Fox 6

Terry Rhody, Director
Marketing and Customer Success
Strategist, Covance

Michelle Friedman, Director
Sergeant, United States Army
Veteran, Director of Marketing,
DeWitt LLP

Message from the President



It is a privilege for me to "report for duty" as the incoming president of this truly amazing organization. My thanks and sincere appreciation to Andrew Roberts who served as our

president for the past four and a half years, and vice president before that. He continued to build the organization on the strong foundation laid by our founding president, Dan Buttery and his successor, Kim Michalowski (Mick). Our ability to serve literally thousands of Veterans and their families in the past four years since the opening of the house reflects the strong leadership they provided our talented and committed board during their tenures. Thank you, Dan, Mick and Andrew!

Before I go further, I also want to thank you, our donors and volunteers, for your amazing support in 2019. Your generosity is in many ways beyond comprehension. Through your donations and time, you've enabled all that we've accomplished – real, positive impact on the lives of individual Veterans and their families, each with a unique life story forever changed by their interaction with the Milwaukee VA Fisher House at the Zablocki Medical Center. Thank you again and again.

When I retired from active duty with the Navy in the fall of 2012, I knew I wanted to get involved in supporting our Veterans in some meaningful way. My service had shown me the supreme sacrifices many service members and, just as important, their families make through their service to our country – far greater sacrifices than I felt I was ever called upon to make. After spending five years in Washington, DC at the Pentagon, I felt strongly the best place to get involved was on a local level. When our local Fisher House board first approached me in May 2014, I knew almost instantly this was where I needed to apply my efforts on behalf of Veterans. Why? Perhaps for much the same reason you have been so generous: There is no question we are making a difference in the lives of those who have given us so much and to whom we will always owe an eternal debt of gratitude. Now, in 2020, to transition into the role of President of Fisher House Wisconsin is an honor.

Thank you again for your generosity and support, both financial and with the untold volunteer hours you've given the house.

Dirk Debbink,
President
VADM(R), USN, former Chief of the Navy Reserve

Join Us for these Upcoming Fundraising Events!

July 18 – Brewers Community Foundation 5K Run/Walk

<https://brewers.race-mlb.com>

August 1 – Port Washington 5K Wine & Beer Run/Walk 5K

<https://runsignup.com/Race/WI/PortWashington/PortWashingtonWineBeer5kRunWalk>

August 31 – 8th Annual Fisher House WI Golf Outing

<https://bit.ly/3bEz10u>

September 6 – Bill Michael's Annual Poker Run





FISHER HOUSE Family Voices

The Fisher House is a place where families stay while their loved ones receive care at the Zablocki VA Medical Center, but it is so much more—it's a place of peace, comfort and family. Spend time at a Fisher House and you'll leave with stories that will make you laugh, cry and smile with gratitude for those who have served.

Care for the Caregiver

Barbara Denny Sturgeon Bay, WI (150 miles away)

At Fisher House Wisconsin, we serve Veteran and Military Families. What does this really mean? Well, there's no one better to tell that story than Barbara Denny.

Barbara Denny and her husband Marvin married in 2001 and enjoyed a good life in Sturgeon Bay, WI. As the years went by Marvin started having more and more health problems. He served in the Army as a large equipment operator during Vietnam ('64-67). He was one of the first to enter areas needing clearing after trees and vegetation were sprayed with agent orange. In 2019, he was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML).

Prior to this, Marvin battled through many health challenges including a stroke, six bi-pass surgeries, difficult to manage diabetes, high blood pressure and painful circulatory issues. Through all this, Barbara was by his side as his primary caregiver.

In July 2015, Marvin needed inpatient care at the Milwaukee VA for a leg amputation. This stay lasted for four months and Barbara was by Marvin's side through it all. To avoid the expense of a hotel Barbara would spend most nights of the week sleeping in her car. "I'd park in the front parking lot." Barbara explained her routine, which included a 5AM wake-up, washing-up in the women's restroom and then getting to her husband's side for the day. "You do things when you have to do things." said Barbara. Even with sleeping in her car, this was an expensive way to live away from home. There was the expense of eating out, five hour round trips back and forth from Sturgeon Bay once a week for essentials and laundry, and the occasional hotel night to try to get a decent night's sleep. Barbara continued this routine week after week – for four months. Months later, in April 2016, the Milwaukee VA Fisher House opened its doors.

On February 5, 2019 Marvin was admitted once again to the Milwaukee VA, this time to seek treatment for leukemia.



“The volunteers are amazing.”

Barbara again by his side, but this time would stay at the Fisher House. Her stay was quite different from the last time she stayed in Milwaukee to care for her husband. She explained that it was like having a home close by the VA; if she received a call in the middle of the night – she could be by her husband's side in no time. Most important, she felt it was like having “family away from home.” She developed relationships with the other guests at the house, the house manager and the other volunteers at the house. “The volunteers are amazing.” Barbara said. Food was always available – “I didn't have to run out for anything.” Barbara only had to make one trip home for a work-related need and said Fisher House took care of everything, so she didn't need to go anywhere. The beautiful room, shower and available washer and dryer were among the items she noted as well. She had planned to return home with Marvin at the end of February, however they needed to extend their trip unexpectedly. Fisher House quickly planned to continue her stay at the house while Marvin continued to receive care at the VA.

On March 27, 2019, Marvin lost his battle with cancer. “I was a caregiver for so many years, and then nothing.” Barbara reflected on the care that she received at the Fisher House. “They take so much stress off of you.”

It was an honor to serve you Barbara, and thank you for caring for Marvin. We are truly thankful for his service and yours.



Four-Year Anniversary of the Milwaukee VA Fisher House

On April 23, 2016, Fisher House opened its doors to support Veterans and their families. The 13,000-square-foot home can accommodate up to 16 families and includes a fully equipped shared kitchen for families and caregivers to use during their stay. We're so grateful for all the support that the Fisher House has received since opening!

Donations are critical to our mission to sustain a home away from home for Veterans' families. Even the smallest gifts make a difference. During this particular challenging time, whether through Fisher House Wisconsin or through another organization, we encourage you to find any way to support Veterans in your local community.

In honor of a loved one, FHW's Anniversary or Memorial Day, consider making a donation to Fisher House Wisconsin.

Donations can be made online or by mail:

Fisher House Wisconsin
5000 W. National Ave.
Milwaukee, WI
53295

FisherHouseWI.org

COVID-19 Update

Although times are tough and we are all praying for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fisher House Wisconsin is still finding ways to support our Veterans.

Since mid-March, the VA has limited all visitors to only visitors of Veterans in hospice care or receiving emergency care. This was done to reduce the risk of patients becoming infected with COVID-19. In addition, plans for a potential surge in COVID-19 cases led the VA to temporarily transition the Fisher House to be available to VA medical staff, should the need arise. Longer hours and the need to protect staff from additional exposure off VA grounds, led the VA to this important decision.

The VA Milwaukee Fisher House, like many others around the country, is temporarily in a 'no guests' status. However, during this unrepresented time, we are proud to be able to support the care providers (doctors, nurses, specialists and more) who give so much to care for our Veterans every day. Thankfully, to date, there has not been a surge in cases at the Milwaukee VA. For the latest information please visit the Milwaukee VA Medical Center website at www.milwaukee.va.gov.



Some other ways your Fisher House Wisconsin is helping during the pandemic:

- Delivered snacks for the staff at the VA – they are working hard; the least we can do to try to brighten their day!
- Continue to support families that need lodging. Set-up special arrangements for them at nearby hotel.
- Support visiting families with food gift cards to lighten the burden and expense while they are away from home.



Fisher House Wisconsin, Inc.
5000 W National Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53295

FISHER HOUSE WISCONSIN NEWS

PRESORT
STANDARD
U.S. Postage

PAID

Milwaukee, WI
Permit #178

TEE UP FOR



MILITARY FAMILIES

2020 FISHER HOUSE WI GOLF BENEFIT

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2020
Geneva National
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

REGISTRATION OPENS 10:00 am

Coffee & Bloody Mary bar available

SHOT GUN START 12:00 pm

Event Includes:

- 4-person scramble
- Contests
- Lunch Buffet
- Swag Bags
- Raffles
- Live & Silent Auctions
- Awards
- Reception & Buffet Dinner with Cash Bar

ENTRY DEADLINE August 1, 2020

REGISTRATION

Registration can be made by mail or online and is limited to the first 288 paid golfers.

Register Online

<https://bit.ly/3bEz10u>