

DEFINING MOMENTS

FALL/WINTER 2025

A *Beacon* OF *Hope*

Stories of Compassion,
Care, and Community



Howard Young
Foundation



At the Howard Young Foundation, we're a small team with big hearts, united by a shared belief in the power of giving. Each of us supports the Foundation because this work is more than a job — it's a calling to make a lasting difference in our community. As the year comes to a close, we're grateful for your partnership and wish you continued good health and hope in the year ahead.



Jessica Bland,
Director of Giving Programs
Living in a rural community shouldn't mean settling for lower-quality healthcare. It's important to me that my family, friends, and neighbors have access to excellent care close to home—that's why I support HYF. Sending warm wishes for a year full of joy, laughter, and compassion. May 2026 bring you and your loved ones happiness and good health.



Elizabeth Gering-Duemmel,
Director of Donor Relations and Communications
Each season, I have the privilege of writing the stories featured in Defining Moments and witnessing how kindness and care shape lives across our community. That is why I proudly support the Howard Young Foundation. Wishing you a holiday season full of gratitude with the ones you love.



Jessie Halverson,
Director of Operations and Annual Giving
I'm proud to be part of a community whose generosity brings our Foundation's mission to life and ensures exceptional healthcare close to home. Every gift makes a difference and changes lives every day. Wishing you a joyful holiday season filled with well-being and joy.



Erin Biertzer, President
As HYF President, I have witnessed how philanthropy transforms rural healthcare. I give because I believe in our community – to create a lasting legacy of hope, compassion, and care for generations to come. Together we transform lives, one gift at a time. May your holiday season be filled with joy and the warmth of giving.



Learn how you can support Emergency Services in Eagle River on Page 6



Read about Brett LaBarge's success on Page 14



Hope in a Backpack is making spirits bright this holiday season on Page 13

CONTENTS

- 4 Letter from the Chairman and the President
- 5 Year End Appeal: Where Rest Becomes Recovery
- 6 A Beacon of Hope: Aspirus Eagle River Emergency Services
- 9 Did You Know? Walter Olson Fund
- 10 The Gift of Compassion: Jenn's Fund Compassionate Care
- 12 The Gift of Care: Hospice Brings Comfort When It Matters Most
- 13 The Gift of Community: Hope in a Backpack
- 14 Hope for the Future: A Journey of Voice and Victory
- 15 Community Events



Ted & Judy Russell

In Memory Of

In loving memory of Ted Russell, whose kindness and commitment to the Howard Young Foundation will continue to inspire lasting impact.

Special Thanks

Shawn Stigsell
Stigsell Creative, Art Director
Carrie Hoyer, *Howard Young Foundation Board of Directors, Marketing Chair, and Executive Committee Member at Large*
And to all who shared their stories.

Connect

TEL: 715.439.4005
EMAIL: info@hyfinc.org
WEB: howardyoungfoundation.org
MAILING ADDRESS
Howard Young Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 10
Minocqua, WI 54548
OFFICE LOCATION
Howard Young Foundation, Inc.
420 Oneida Street, Suite #100
Minocqua, WI 54548



Dear Friend,

As chairman and president of the Howard Young Foundation, we’re reminded every day why this work matters. For over 40 years, our community has come together to care for one another—to lift up neighbors in need, support patients and families, and build stronger Northwoods communities.

We give because we believe in the power of compassion and action to transform lives. We’ve seen a donation turn into lifesaving equipment, innovative programs open doors for a student, hope in the eyes of tick-borne illness patients that have suffered for years, and a hospice room filled with peace and dignity. Every act of giving—no matter the size—builds on a legacy of kindness that continues to shape our hospitals and our community.

As we approach the holiday season, our wish for the Foundation is to deepen our impact and expand our reach. We hope to inspire even more individuals and partners to join us in this mission, amplifying our ability to meet the needs of our Northwoods neighbors. In the year ahead, may we be blessed with renewed energy, innovative ideas, and the resources to continue this meaningful work. Above all, we wish for a season—and a year—filled with connection, compassion, and lasting change for all those we serve.

With gratitude,



Trig Solberg, Board Chairman
Howard Young Foundation



Erin Biertzer, President
Howard Young Foundation

Our Mission

The Howard Young Medical Center was built in 1977 through a very generous bequest provided by philanthropist Howard Young. Bearing his name to honor his philanthropic gift, the Foundation was established in 1984 to advance the health and wellness of all people in the communities we serve through your charitable support.



Trig Solberg



Erin Biertzer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TRIG SOLBERG
Board Chairman

ERIN BIERTZER
President

ALDO MADRIGRANO
Vice Chairman

MARK PITMAN
Secretary

GREG NICKLAUS
Treasurer

CARRIE HOYE
Executive Committee
Member at Large &
Marketing Committee Chair

MOLLY AHLBORN

DICK GUSTAFSON

BILL HOPPER

TOM JOYCE

RICHARD REINHART, MD

JUDY RUSSELL

GLENN SCHIFFMANN

BARRY SEIDEL, MD

TERI THEILER

GREGG WALKER



Where Rest *Becomes* Recovery

Imagine a loved one in the hospital - unable to rest when they need it most. That’s the reality too many patients face today. The current beds at Howard Young Medical Center (HYMC) are nearly 16 years old, and while they have served the hospital well, it’s time for an upgrade. We invite you to join our Year-End Special Gift Initiative to fund:



18 Stryker ProCuity beds
10 for ICU and 8 for
Medical Surgical Unit.



**Every gift will be
matched by Aspirus,**
doubling the impact.

JOIN US

Donate to our Special Gift today at [HowardYoungFoundation.org](https://www.HowardYoungFoundation.org) and let’s rest easier knowing we’ve made healing real. Your generosity isn’t just funding beds; it’s building hope, one safe night at a time.

“

These beds are truly game-changers. They’re quiet, comfortable, and cooling — helping patients sleep better, which means they heal faster and feel better. We see the difference every day.”

MEGHAN COYLE,
Manager of Nursing for Med/Surg and ICU at HYMC



Comfort That Heals, Tech That Empowers

Gel-Like Support for Real Rest:

Advanced gel mattresses replace noisy air beds, cradling patients in cool, soothing support that promotes restorative sleep.

Smart Features for Everyday Heroes:

Electric brakes lock with a fingertip touch from the intuitive touchscreen or side rails. The Zoom Motorized Drive glides patients smoothly during transport. Plus, built-in USB ports let patients stay connected to family via phone.



Safer Nights, Stronger Recoveries

Fall Prevention That Saves Lives:

Up to 85% of hospital falls happen right by the bed. The ProCuity bed sits at an ultra-low 11.5-inch height—the lowest in the industry—making it easier for patients to get in and out.

Wireless Freedom for Peace of Mind:

Smart Adaptive Bed Alarm adjusts automatically to a patient’s weight and position, sending reliable, wireless alerts to nurses so help arrives fast—cutting fall risks by up to 50% and preventing injuries that extend hospital stays.

A BEACON OF

Hope

Aspirus Eagle River Emergency Services

In the Northwoods, when the unexpected happens — a heart attack on a quiet morning, an icy-road collision, a call for help miles from town — the response begins with a promise: someone is coming. That promise drives Aspirus Eagle River Hospital's emergency team and now inspires a community-wide campaign to strengthen that lifeline through the **Howard Young Foundation**.

The campaign, **A Beacon of Hope**, will fund three critical initiatives: constructing a permanent helipad, adding GPS-guided approaches for all-weather air access, and training new paramedics. Together, these improvements mean faster response, safer transport, and more lives saved close to home.



A Helipad Built for Every Season

Today, helicopters serving Eagle River often land on grass fields — uneven, snow-covered, and difficult to clear. “An improved helipad is first and foremost about safety,” **Robert Kirkley**, Director of Emergency Medical Services for Aspirus MedEvac says. “On a hard surface, we don’t have to worry about sinking into soft ground or snow, and it allows us to move patients faster when they need to be transferred out.”

The new **permanent, lit helipad** will provide secure, year-round access, so patients needing trauma, stroke, or cardiac care can be airlifted within minutes. It’s a straightforward improvement with profound consequences: every flight that takes off safely could mean a life saved.



Safe Landings in All Weather

Even with a better helipad, weather can ground a helicopter for up to **180 days each year**. The solution is a certified **GPS approach** — technology that allows pilots to fly in lower-visibility conditions using precise coordinates. “With GPS, we can fly in situations that would’ve grounded us before,” Kirkley explains. “It could reduce canceled flights by at least ten percent — and if that means 18 more patients a year getting care on time, that’s huge. Even one makes it worthwhile.”

The upgrade also increases safety for flight crews and reduces extra costs for patients by eliminating the need for additional ground transfers. “It’s a small investment with an enormous return,” Kirkley adds.



Building Our Own EMS Future

“Aspirus EMS is the lifeline for our rural communities,” explains Kirkley, “But we’re struggling to find paramedics — not just here, but across Wisconsin.”

The **EMS Sponsorship Program** will change that. With donor support, local EMTs can become paramedics through a paid sponsorship that covers tuition and a modest stipend. “By helping EMTs train right here, we keep people who already know the area, the roads, and the community,” says Kirkley. “That means shorter response times and care from neighbors who are truly invested.” This investment will help close a 25 percent staffing gap while ensuring the next generation of emergency responders is ready when seconds matter most.

“

This is where our Foundation, together with our community, shines — our philanthropic efforts turn good hospitals into great ones.”

Community Commitment in Action

For the Howard Young Foundation, this campaign represents a meaningful expansion northward. “At the Foundation, we look for projects with the greatest community impact,” says Carrie Hoye, HYF board member and Women’s Legacy Council member. “When we learned how we could strengthen emergency services in Eagle River, we jumped at the opportunity. Growing up in a rural area, I have personally experienced the life saving impact of a medical helicopter when my mother needed emergency surgery for a ruptured aneurysm. Supporting emergency care often translates directly to saving lives — as it once did for my own mother.”

HYF Board member Molly Ahlborn agrees. “When our hospital president raised the idea of improving

emergency response in Eagle River, I was immediately on board,” she says. “My family’s business is there, and we love that community. This is a critical investment — for my family, my neighbors, and everyone who calls the Northwoods home.”

A Promise That Reaches Everyone

Together, these three projects — building a helipad, securing GPS navigation, and training local paramedics — form a single, powerful vision: faster, safer, and more reliable emergency care for all.

“This is where our Foundation, together with our community, shines — our philanthropic efforts turn good hospitals into great ones.” With every gift, donors help ensure that when the call for help goes out, hope rises with it — a beacon shining through every storm.

Donate to the Aspirus Eagle River Hospital Greatest Needs Fund at howardyoungfoundation.org to support this lifesaving investment.

Did **YOU** Know?

For more than 40 years, the **Walter Olson Fund** has been helping local healthcare providers stay at the forefront of medicine—right here in the Northwoods.

What it is

A special fund created by a legacy gift from innovative businessman Walter Olson in 1977 to support education, training, and innovation for the physicians and healthcare professionals of **Howard Young Medical Center**.

Why it matters

By investing in our providers, the fund helps ensure that **patients across the Northwoods receive the highest quality, most up-to-date care possible.**

Make an Impact

If you’re passionate about advancing medical education in the Northwoods, you can make a gift online at **HowardYoungFoundation.org**

* It is not the intent of the Walter Olson Medical Staff Education Committee to provide funds for routine CME on an individual basis, as funds for these types of CME are typically available from other sources.

What it supports

- **Advanced medical education** and training opportunities
- **New technologies** and procedures that enhance patient care
- **Group learning programs** and workshops for continuous quality improvement

Funding available

Educational funding is available to physicians and healthcare professionals that support **Howard Young Medical Center.***



THE GIFT OF COMPASSION

Jenn's Fund

When Jennifer Waite-Kane lost her battle with chronic Lyme disease in 2015, her parents, Jeff and Jillayne Waite, turned their grief into a mission: to ensure that others would not have to face the

same struggles alone. Today, Jenn's Fund: Compassionate Care Appeal carries that mission forward—helping patients receive life-changing care at the Aspirus Tick-Borne Illness Center, regardless of their ability to pay.

Established by the Howard Young Foundation in partnership with the Aspirus Tick-Borne Illness Center, Jenn's Fund was inspired by the unwavering advocacy of Jeff and Jillayne Waite, who helped shape the Center's mission from its earliest days in 2019. The fund honors their daughter's strength and spirit of service. "The words compassionate, giving, and caring define Jenn," says her mother, Jillayne. "She had a sincere sense of

adventure and used her talents to help others."

For patients navigating tick-borne illnesses, the financial burden can be overwhelming—especially when treatments aren't covered by insurance.

Through Jenn's Fund, patients can receive awards of up to \$2,000 for chronic tick-borne illness care or \$1,000 for acute cases, based on financial need. Every dollar given helps remove a barrier between a patient and their path to healing.

"Compassionate care is more than financial support," Jeff explains. "It's a promise that no one will ever be turned away because they can't afford to get well."

Every donation makes that promise real—offering relief, hope, and the chance to heal. "When patients receive support from Jenn's Fund, we see the gratitude in their eyes," Jillayne shares. "Because someone cared enough to give, they get a chance to get their life back."

To support Jenn's Fund: Compassionate Care Appeal, visit HowardYoungFoundation.org.



A PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Finding Hope in the Northwoods

When Andrea Pitman of Minocqua began feeling constant fatigue, aching joints, and mental fog weeks after removing a tick, she brushed it off as stress or soreness. "At first, I thought I was just tired," she recalls. "But soon, my arms felt heavy, my head pounded, and I started wondering if I was losing my mind. I made all the mistakes — I flushed the tick, ignored the signs, stopped my medication early — and convinced myself it was nothing."

After a frustrating experience at another clinic, Andrea turned to the Aspirus Tick-Borne Illness Center, where she met Dr. James Thatcher. "He didn't judge me—he just listened," she says. "He explained what was happening inside my body in a way that finally made sense. For the first time, I felt seen, understood, and hopeful."

It wasn't just Dr. Thatcher's expertise that made a difference—it was the entire team's compassion. "From the nurses to the receptionists, everyone there cares,"

Andrea says. "When you're scared and don't feel well, that kindness matters more than anything. The women at the front desk are literal gems—they greet you with warmth and remind you that you're not alone."

Today, Andrea is healing, grateful, and paying that hope forward. "I tell everyone: go to the Tick Center. They give you the care—and the compassion—you've been looking for."

Andrea's story reminds us why Jenn's Fund: Compassionate Care Appeal matters. Your gift helps ensure that everyone—no matter their financial circumstances—can experience the same understanding, healing, and hope that Andrea found.

Give to Jenn's Fund today at HowardYoungFoundation.org and share the gift of compassion.



“When you're scared and don't feel well, that kindness matters more than anything. The women at the front desk are literal gems—they greet you with warmth and remind you that you're not alone.”

ANDREA PITMAN,
patient at the Aspirus
Tick-Borne Illness Center

THE GIFT OF CARE

Hospice Brings Comfort When it Matters Most

How to Begin the Hospice Conversation

Starting the hospice conversation early can bring peace and clarity when it's needed most. Families are encouraged to talk with their loved ones and doctors about care preferences before a crisis arises. If you're unsure where to begin, the Aspirus Hospice team is just a phone call away—ready to listen, answer questions, and guide you through every step with compassion.

Call 715-847-2424 to learn more about hospice care options in the Northwoods.



In the tender embrace of winter, Aspirus at Home's hospice care shines as a beacon of hope, wrapping patients and their families in comfort, dignity, and love to make every moment meaningful. For many families, the word hospice can feel heavy—something meant only for the final days of life. But as Heidi Kraege, Community Resource Liaison for Aspirus at Home, explains, hospice is really about living fully and comfortably for as long as possible.

"People often think hospice is only for the last few days," Heidi said. "But patients can be in hospice for months, sometimes more than a year. When they start sooner, they get the full circle of care—comfort, peace, and support for both the patient and their loved ones."

Aspirus Hospice provides compassionate, comprehensive care wherever patients call home—whether that's in their own residence or at the Aspirus Seasons of Life Hospice House in Woodruff. Hospice at home includes nursing care, medical equipment, medications, and a full support team of social workers, chaplains, and even music and massage therapists.

"Hospice doesn't move in with you," Heidi said with a smile, "but we're only a phone call

away. We visit regularly, educate families, and help ease fears about what to expect."

For some families, home care eventually transitions to Seasons of Life Hospice House—a serene eight-room residence surrounded by peaceful gardens. There, families can simply focus on love and time together while the compassionate team tends to every detail, even homemade meals and fresh cookies baked daily.

“It’s everything—and so much more—than I ever imagined. The care, the kindness, the laughter... it lifts you up and brings such peace of mind. It feels like home.”

JUDY RUSSELL, RETIRED NP,
HYF Board Member

that everyone can experience this level of care regardless of their financial situation.

"At Aspirus, we believe every patient deserves comfort, dignity, and peace—especially at the end of life," Heidi shared. "Because of our donors, families can spend those final moments together, not worrying about bills, but simply being present with the people they love."

Your gift to the Seasons of Life Hospice Fund ensures that every family can cherish their precious time together at Seasons of Life Hospice House, free from financial burdens, creating lasting memories filled with love and peace. Donate at howardyoungfoundation.org.

HEIDI KRAEGE, Community Resource Liaison for Aspirus at Home

THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY

Hope in a Backpack

On Thursday afternoons across the Lakeland area, something small and beautiful happens: a backpack goes home a little heavier, and a weekend feels a little lighter. Hope in a Backpack—a collaboration between Lakeland Pantry, Ascension Lutheran Church, and Calvary Lutheran Church—quietly fills those bags with kid-friendly, nutritious food so students can rest, learn, and just be kids.

What began in a church storeroom has grown into a community lifeline. Each week, volunteers pack and deliver hundreds of backpacks to local schools, where counselors ensure they reach the right hands. Around the holidays, the same caring circle provides Thanksgiving and Christmas meal boxes—complete with turkeys or hams and all the fixings—so every family can gather around a full table.

Your gift to Lakeland Pantry, designated to Hope in a Backpack, directly nourishes local children, ensuring no child faces hunger over the weekend. Each donation to the pantry stretches further—stocking with kid-friendly, nutritious food and sustaining this vital program week after week, sending a message of hope home in every backpack.

The Pantry's motto is simple: Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Every packed backpack, every shared meal, every smile at the door reminds us of what it means to belong to a community that looks out for one another—with open hands and full hearts.



Make a Difference Today!



“

This program reminds me every week that kindness still wins," says Jane Lipp, Lakeland Pantry board member and longtime volunteer. "It's a simple, tangible way to help local children, and your dollar goes far—because the Pantry buys food at reduced prices, we can feed more students more often."

JANE LIPP,
Lakeland Pantry Board Member
and Hope in a Backpack volunteer

Donate today at howardyoungfoundation.org

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

A Journey of Voice *and* Victory

With continued donor support, Lakeland STAR and Rising STAR are expanding programs that build communication, confidence, and independence. A new speech and language initiative now reaches area elementary schools — supporting children when they most need it, helping them find their voice early and thrive for years to come.”

STEPHANIE CULL,
Principal, Lakeland STAR School/Academy

When Brett LaBarge was finishing middle school, his teacher knew that a traditional high school setting would feel like venturing into “the jungle”—a chaotic, overwhelming place he humorously likens to a Family Guy episode. Instead, Brett found a home at Lakeland STAR School/Academy and then later a Rising STAR Transition Center, a haven designed for students like him with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to learn,

grow, and belong. “Instead of running to the jungle,” Brett said, “I was just like, okay — now I’m with a bunch of people just like me.”

Thanks to the vision and generosity of Howard Young Foundation donors who established Lakeland STAR School/Academy and Rising STAR Transition Center, that sense of belonging was the foundation for everything that followed. With the support of his teachers, including his one-on-one aide, Ashleigh Hermann, and Principal Stephanie Cull, Brett learned not only academics but life itself — how to budget, cook, clean, and even open his own Roth IRA. At STAR and later at the Rising STAR Transition

Center, every lesson had purpose, every success built confidence, and every challenge became an opportunity to grow.

Through the generosity of Howard Young Foundation donors, Brett gained access to the tools and programs that would shape his independence: immersive speech and occupational therapy, the PAES Lab for hands-on job training, community employment experiences, and the apartment-style



Brett LaBarge, Lakeland STAR and Rising STAR Transition Center Graduate

living classroom where students practice daily skills. “No matter how small a donation is,” Brett shared, “it goes a long way. Lakeland STAR is one big family — and it keeps shining.”

His teachers couldn’t agree more. “Brett learned that his disability does not define or limit him,” said Ashleigh. “He’s capable of achieving anything he sets his mind to.”

Brett’s journey from “the jungle” to a future brimming with possibility shows the transformative power of compassion, opportunity, and community. Your generous gift to the Howard Young Foundation’s Autism Services ensures that more students like Brett can find their voice, build their confidence, and achieve their dreams at Lakeland STAR and Rising STAR.

Donate to Autism Services today at howardyoungfoundation.org to keep their stars shining bright, creating victories for every student, every day.



*Thank you
to all who sponsor,
volunteer, participate
in or donate to one
or more of these
community events.*

ANNUAL
COMMUNITY
EVENTS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8TH, 2026

Uncork & Unwind

A Women’s event benefiting the Lakeland Pantry at Norwood Pines. **Limited tickets available at [Save More](#).**

MONDAY, JUNE 8TH AND
TUESDAY, JUNE 9TH, 2026

Lakeland STAR
Golf Outing

The annual Lakeland STAR Golf Outing is held at North Fork Fin & Filet and the Minocqua Country Club. This event supports Autism Services and the students of Lakeland STAR School/Academy and Rising STAR Transition Center. **For more information visit howardyoungfoundation.org.**

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH, 2026

Let’s Tee Off Against
Breast Cancer

A vibrant, women-only golf event at Trout Lake Golf Club raises funds for “We Care” care package totes for first time breast cancer patients across the Northwoods. **Visit troutlakegolf.com to learn more.**

SATURDAY, JUNE 27TH, 2026

Lakeland Pantry Bear
Cupboard Run

Lace up for the 17th Annual Bear Cupboard Run on the scenic Bearskin Trail! Every step supports the Lakeland Pantry and its mission to feed local families. **Learn more at lakelandpantry.com.**

SATURDAY, JULY 18TH, 2026

Seasons of Life Gardenfest

Stroll through beautiful gardens, enjoy live music, raffles, Lakeland Gardeners plant sales and ice cream — all benefiting the Seasons of Life Gardens. **Learn more at lakelandgardeners.org.**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15TH, 2026

Minocqua Dragon
Boat Festival

Experience the excitement of the 10th Annual Minocqua Dragon Boat Festival! Enjoy thrilling races, teamwork, and community spirit — all to support the work of the Howard Young Foundation. **Register, volunteer, sponsor or pledge at minocquadragonboat.com.**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2026

Bonhomie Club
Recognition Evening

An evening dedicated to you — our generous donors. Qualifying 2025 donors will join us for an exclusive event to celebrate your contributions to our hospitals and/or Seasons of Life Hospice with hors d’oeuvres and an update on Howard Young Foundation activities. To be a part of the Bonhomie Club in 2026, donate \$100 or more before the end of this year.



**Howard Young
Foundation**

P.O. Box 10, Minocqua, WI 54548

Grateful Hearts

If you've received care that touched your heart at Howard Young Medical Center, Aspirus Eagle River Hospital, or Seasons of Life Hospice House a grateful patient gift offers a meaningful way to say thank you.

To honor any team member who made a difference in your life, make a gift *"in honor of"* them today or share your story with us at info@hyfinc.org.

Your Gratitude Can Change Lives



This publication is brought to you by the Howard Young Foundation, serving our community since 1984. To make a donation:



CALL

Our office at
715-439-4005



MAIL

Howard Young Foundation
P.O. Box 10
Minocqua, WI 54548



ONLINE

Visit our website at
howardyoungfoundation.org



PLANNED GIVING

when you include us in
your estate planning.
(Talk to your tax advisor.)



STOCK

donations are a
tax-smart way
to give. (Call for
instructions.)

The Howard Young Foundation does not provide financial or tax advice and encourages donors interested in advanced planning to speak with their CPA and/or tax advisor.