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Munson Medical Center Named Hospital of the Year by Gift of Life Michigan

Munson's John Stanifer, MD and ICU Manager, Eric Jean also to be recognized.

TRAVERSE CITY— Gift of Life Michigan has announced that in April it will honor Munson Medical Center (MMC) as Hospital of the Year along with ICU Nurse Manager, Eric Jean as Donation Liaison Champion and John Stanifer, MD, and his wife Molly as Community Partner Champion.

Over the last year, Munson Medical Center helped to honor the last wishes of 22 organ donors and 56 tissue donors (fourth highest in the state). Each organ donor can save up to eight lives while each tissue donor can help up to 75 patients heal. This amounts to hundreds of lives that have been transformed by the generosity of organ and tissue donors from MMC.

"Each of these last wishes that has been fulfilled represents a wish of hope fulfilled for someone else and their loved ones," said Ed Ness, President & CEO, Munson Healthcare. "This recognition is a reflection of the compassion of our healthcare team and their commitment to this profoundly important work."

At the center of much of this work is Intensive Care Unit Nurse Manager, Eric Jean who will be honored as Gift of Life Michigan's Donation Liaison Champion for 2024. Eric earned recognition for his compassion, clinical expertise, dedication to improving lives and for placing a priority on ensuring families of donors are cared for and respected.

He also has been heavily involved in working with provider groups, program development, and answering questions at all hours of the day or night. Since taking on this role in 2018, he and his team have helped more than 100 families honor the wishes of their loved one, often during the most difficult of circumstances.

"I feel like in these cases, you are able to pull something positive from a tragic event," said Jean. "They help provide closure and peace for the families and a great sense of purpose for the members of our team. They are difficult moments, but it is remarkable to think about the broad impact that these families and our team have made through these gifts."

Munson Healthcare is non-profit, eight-hospital health system serving the 500,000 residents of northern lower Michigan. Learn more at munsonhealthcare.org.



Gift of Life President and CEO Dorrie Dils said the state's organ and tissue donation program could not save and heal lives without its hospital partners across the state.

"Munson Medical Center is leading by example in every aspect of the complicated life-saving donation process," Dils said. "There is a culture of donation there – a sense at every level that it's an important way to save and improve lives. The teams there also understand that donors and their families want something beautiful to come out of their tragedies."

"Munson's team members – with Donation Liaison Eric Jean leading the way – make an incredible difference for patients across Michigan and the country."

John Stanifer, MD, Munson Healthcare Nephrologist (kidney specialist), along with his wife Molly will receive this year's Community Partner Champions Award. The couple established Kidney Companions in 2021, a group of medical professionals, engaged community members, and kidney donors who support the needs of patients in Northern Michigan seeking kidney transplantation.

"The idea was that through the power of companions, we can bring people together to help our fellow community members living with kidney failure," said Dr. Stanifer. "This award truly is a reflection on their selfless work done by so many compassionate, empathetic, caring people who have been willing to go more than the extra mile to advocate for our kidney patients."

Dr. John and Molly Stanifer, Eric Jean, and MMC will be among more than 20 honorees at this year's Gift of Life Champion's Gala on April 4 in Novi.

To see all the award winners, buy tickets and learn more about Gift of Life Michigan, visit <https://giftoflifemichigan.org/event/champions-gala>.

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CONTACT:

Ashlee Bartleson
Senior Corporate Communications Specialist
Munson Healthcare
231-318-9731 (media pager)
231-935-7964 (voicemail)
abartleson@mhc.net

Betsy Miner-Swartz
Editor and Senior Advisor
Gift of Life Michigan
517-285-8628
bminerswartz@golm.org