



# BEST PRACTICES FROM THE FISHER HOUSE COMMUNITY

Great Ideas from Our Team

## Abstract

This document contains best practices and ideas captured from members of our Fisher House team. The ideas depicted directly assisted in the support of local efforts and have the potential to help other locations.

## Table of Contents

<b>Idea from Fisher House Michigan.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Force Multiplication = Mission Success .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leveraging Major Gifts to Raise Awareness .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Idea from Fisher / Nightingale Houses, Inc.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Donor Recognition Program .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Idea from Friends of Fisher House Southern Louisiana.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Why Put A Nurse on Your Friends of Fisher House Board? .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Idea from Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>LYFT Concierge Program .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Ideas from Fisher House in St. Louis .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Every briefing counts.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Events that start small can grow each year.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Jar Grippers.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ANNUAL golf tournaments also continue to grow.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A TOUR of the Fisher House .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Ideas from Fisher House of the Emerald Coast.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Apron Give Away .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Socks/Bowties .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>National Days .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Superheroes Unite .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Edible Art.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Idea from Gainesville Fisher House Foundation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Nutrition.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Idea from Friends of Pittsburgh Fisher House.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Keeping the Fridge and Freezer Full.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## **Idea from Fisher House Michigan**

### **Force Multiplication = Mission Success**

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With a tiny group of volunteers, executing a state-wide mission would be impossible without force multipliers in hierarchical organizations.

Each state has commanders or presidents of organizations with local affiliates. The American Legion was the first and best example in Michigan.

We pitched the Fisher House mission to the AL State Commander and he decided to make it his special project during his term. Not only did he talk publicly about Fisher House at every opportunity, he directed his District Commanders to support the mission. Those District Commanders, in turn, directed the local posts in their region to do the same. What's more, the SAL and Auxiliary Organizations join in, too!

We defined the mission at the state level (e.g. \$1 for every Veteran in Michigan), and the commander, with his subordinate posts, did the hard work of reaching into every community in the state for us. In the past 11 months, this has meant nearly \$300K in cash toward the Michigan Fisher Houses.

We helped the Commander draft this letter to kick-start the effort among his Legionnaires – please feel free to repurpose any of this highly effective language:

*Dear Legionnaires,*

*My home post in Holly has long supported the Fisher House mission, but this spring, it all changed.*

*This spring, I had the privilege of standing on the grounds where Michigan's first Fisher House will soon stand to support the families of the Veterans who need treatment at the Ann Arbor VA. Being a part of the check presentation ceremony during which American Legion Post 46 in Ann Arbor decided to challenge the state to match their \$100,000 gift, I felt an overwhelming desire to do more.*

*Michigan is the largest state in the nation without a Fisher House, and we Legionnaires must take the lead in changing that. I have decided to make Fisher House Michigan my special project for my term as State Commander, and I hope you will join me in making Fisher Houses in Ann Arbor and Detroit a reality.*

*You can be part of a lasting legacy for Michigan Legionnaires. Let's join forces to do more for Fisher House Michigan. I challenge you to dig deep. There are 650,000 Service Members and Veterans in the state of Michigan, and the least we can do is pledge a dollar for each of them for Fisher House!*

## Leveraging Major Gifts to Raise Awareness

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Major donors give to Fisher House for a host of reasons, and as we enter relationships with potential donors, it's important for us to quickly understand their individual and personal **why**.

Believe it or not, this also applies to potential corporate donors. At the end of the day, it is a person or group of persons who will make decisions for the company.

If part of the **why** is to raise the philanthropic profile of the organization, there may be interest in leveraging the gift publicly. Fisher House Michigan has found that match campaigns are a great way to create such leverage.

A successful "match campaign" accomplishes:

- Marketing opportunity for the donor
- Raises wide-spread awareness of the need for Fisher Houses
- Allows small gifts to make a much larger impact

At FHM, we solicit support for two major match campaigns each year. We have the **Memorial Day Match** which runs from May 1 – June 30 each year. We also ask donors to "**Take the Patriot's Pledge**" each year on September 11 (Patriots Day) and run the match through year-end giving.

During our first year of matches, we secured \$550K from challenge gifts across both matches, and Michiganders rose to meet the challenge. This meant \$1 million for the Michigan Fisher Houses in the first match year. Last year, the number rose to \$1.5 million. In 2019, the Memorial Day Match Corporate challenge is \$500K, and our goal is to raise \$1 million in May and June alone!

Caring for a match is not easy:

- Must begin with a well-honed major gifts strategy to solicit the match challenger(s)
- Graphic design for print collateral in collaboration with the donor(s)
- Postal and e-mailings with a well-vetted mailing list
- Web presence with fresh content throughout the campaign
- Social media hits across properties to engage the widest possible audience
- Visible presence at Veteran and community events (tables, tents, etc)
- Speaking engagements for FHM leadership at strategically high value events
- Photo opportunities throughout the campaign to celebrate gifts and spur action from those who have yet to give

We have discovered that this takes a full-time Executive Director, with a trained and active volunteer corps.



If a major donor has interest in celebrating a gift publicly:

- Offer to **leverage the gift** with a public match
- Donors with big hearts and small bank accounts love the **opportunity to DOUBLE** their gift



- Memorial Day Match: May 1 – June 30
- Patriot's Pledge: September 11 - EOY

## **Idea from Fisher / Nightingale Houses, Inc.**

### **Donor Recognition Program**

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The Fisher/Nightingale Houses, Inc. established a Donor Recognition program on 1 January 2002 to recognize donors. This also serves to solicit return donations each year. Monthly donors are sent renewal letters, starting two months prior to expiration (i.e., expiration of 31 December means they get an initial letter on 10 November, a second request on 10 December and a final request on 10 January – as needed).

**Three Donor Levels:** Each level is defined by the annual donation made, whether financial, in-kind or of volunteer time. To the extent an individual or organization makes a financial, in-kind and/or a time donation, the level of recognition will be the highest level for which qualification requirements are met. The levels and requirements are:

<b><u>Level</u></b>	<b><u>Requirement</u></b>
Supporter	25 hours of volunteer service or a financial/in-kind contribution of \$50 to \$250
Friend	50 hours of volunteer service or a financial/in-kind contribution of \$251 to \$500
Patron	100 hours of volunteer service or a financial/in-kind contribution of \$501 or more

Hours of volunteer time in-house are kept and reported to the Donor Chairperson by the Fisher House managers. Hours of volunteer time outside the House (e.g., events, fundraisers) are kept by the Donor Chairperson. Financial donations are the sum of all donations made during each calendar year, including designated/non-anonymous donations made through the annual Combined Federal Campaign.

### **Impact since inception (as of 31 December 2018):**

<b><u>Active Supporters</u></b>	<b><u>Active Friends</u></b>	<b><u>Active Patrons</u></b>	<b><u>Cumulative Raised</u></b>
354 as of 31 Dec 18	88 as of 31 Dec 18	245 as of 31 Dec 18	\$7,363,367.38

**Donor program renewals in 2018:** 270 donations totaling \$334,743.07 (of 611 donors and \$643,494.93 in total donations in 2018 – or 44% of donations and 52% dollars donated).

## **Idea from Friends of Fisher House Southern Louisiana**

### **Why Put A Nurse on Your Friends of Fisher House Board?**

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1. **Gallup Poll Data.** <https://www.nationalnursesunited.org/press/once-again-nurses-top-gallup-poll-most-trusted-profession-17-years-running> Nurses rated the most trusted professional 17 years running. Eighty-four percent of public rates nurses' **honesty** and **ethical standards** as "high" or "very high". Nursing is held to the highest of ethical standards. Ethics of autonomy, safeguarding privacy, and demanding justice are practiced on a daily basis
2. **Definition of Nursing.** Nursing, as defined by Travelbee (1971), is an "interpersonal process of human to human relationships". Nurses offer **authentic presence** and thus the ability to actively listen to what is said and hear what is not said. Roach's (1992) **6 C's of Caring** explains how nursing defines their practice of caring to include: compassion, conscience, competence, confidence, commitment, and comportment.
3. **BSN Nursing Curriculum.** Because the BSN curriculum contains at least 40 hours of liberal arts, psychology, education, and sociology courses, nurses can initiate conversations, using art, history, literature, sports, etc., that result in the establishment of trusting relationships. Its focus on research prepares the nurse to analyze and critique quantitative and qualitative studies and interpret factual results and their implications to the public. Health education skills allow the nurse to teach. Global and Community Health courses address the impact of disparities, economics, politics, and environmental and epidemiologic influences on the health of the public.
4. **Communication Skills.** Nurses know the language of pain, suffering, loss, disability, hopelessness, and loneliness; on the other hand, nurses know the meaning of hope, courage, coping, finding meaning in life's suffering and illness, and the joy of achieving small and large personal goals. In truth, it is the function of the nurse in any setting to assist individuals, families, and communities to prevent or cope with the stress of illness, injury, and suffering or to help all find existential life meaning in the same.
5. **Teamwork.** Nurses are accustomed to working within interdisciplinary and inter-professional teams. Nurses appreciate the value of each team member and celebrate individual team member contributions. Nurses respect the chain of command and are outcome driven performers. Nurses have highly developed networking systems. Because of all of the above, nurses can "fit in" in business, educational, political, religious, and social environments/gatherings.

## **Idea from Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation**

### **LYFT Concierge Program**

Sara Morris / Executive Director / [sara@rmfisherhouse.org](mailto:sara@rmfisherhouse.org) / 720-383-0801

Are you looking for a simplified way of providing guests transportation to and from your House to the Hospital? Or maybe getting guests to and from the airport? Taxi's can be unreliable and calling a Lyft or Uber can be time consuming because you have to be involved in the process at that moment.

### **LYFT Business Concierge makes the process easy.**

1. The concierge program allows you to **order rides for guests** by setting up administrators.

• *For example: The House Manager and other FH employees can be set-up as administrators.*

2. Administrators order rides for the guests. And rides can be ordered up to 7 days in advance.

3. The administrator can also select the type of vehicle and write notes to the driver to give them more details.

• *For example: Give an exact location of the pick-up— south entrance of VA Hospital. Or make the driver aware the guest has a wheelchair.*

4. The guest's cell phone number is used when ordering the ride, so the driver can contact the guest directly.

• *Therefore the FH employees DO NOT need to be involved with the actual pick-up.*

5. Guests without cell phones can still use the service

• *However, the administrator will need to enter his/her phone number for the driver to contact just in case there are issues.*

6. All rides can be billed directly to one credit card.

• *For example: the "Friends of FH" credit card can be put on file.*

7. Ride receipts are emailed to all administrators in order to easily track all rides and expenses.

## Ideas from Fisher House in St. Louis

Jim Donahoe, St. Louis Fisher House Board

### **Every briefing counts**

- a. You never know who is in your audience or their influence on others
- b. Example: Briefed 20 DAR members; future State Regent happened to be in the audience
  - i. She made building 3 new FHs in MO her project for 2019
  - ii. She plans to raise \$100+K to help build at Kansas City VA, Columbia VA, and St Louis VA (second house)
- c. Expects DAR will continue in future years
- d. ALL 108 Chapters in MO will participate
- e. Highlight is a statewide “Hike\*Bike 4 Military\* Veterans” in Sep 2019

### **Events that start small can grow each year**

- a. Example: Shapiro Steelfest
  - i. Began as a stop on the “National Redneck Rat Rod Tour”
  - ii. <2,000 attendees to start; now at 5-7,000 attendees from across the Central Midwest
- b. Shapiro family buys memorabilia tee shirts; we help sell them
  - i. They donate profit to the Stl Fisher House
  - ii. Have donated over \$40K in total
- c. Is now an annual event; growing each year

### **Jar Grippers**

The jar grippers are a hot item for our clients with Arthritis. They can be used to open jars, change light bulbs, as a mouse pad, and many other applications. You can easily put a Fisher House logo on this; each cost about 74 cents.



**ANNUAL golf tournaments also continue to grow**

- a. Use different, unusual events to create excitement and publicity: e.g. auctions, helicopter ball drops, ballzooka, etc.
- b. The TEST is not how much this year, but total over time
  - i. Average of \$7K / year = \$70K over a decade.

**A TOUR of the Fisher House**

A TOUR of the Fisher House and meeting / talking to the residents is your BEST incentive for groups and individuals to help you

## Ideas from Fisher House of the Emerald Coast

### Apron Give Away



### FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

Apron give away to meal preparers

Each month we ask those who share meals to enter a drawing to win an apron. A winner is selected each month and presented their apron, with a photo opportunity. This enables us to share what others are doing to bless our house, and to encourage others to awesomely bless our guests.



### Socks/Bowties



### FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

Socks/Bowties for Fisher House bling

Last year at conference, we loved Curtiss Peck's sock auction. For our 320 person black tie in October, we offered one pair of socks with our logo on them and one custom made bowtie from fabric with our logo at each table for purchase. People might not want something in our auction, but this way they could support at a lower price point something more meaningful to our mission and not leave their table. Out of 10 at a table, we only had to get 2 people to spend \$20 each.



## National Days



### FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

#### National Days

To encourage different kinds of support, we offer National theme days twice a month. We try to pick a breakfast, a cookie, a snack, something other than a meal so it could be easier or more random for those wanting to do something.



## Superheroes Unite



### FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

#### Superheroes Unite

Last year our theme was Superheroes Unite and we engaged with a causeplay group who provided costumed heroes for free to attend our event and mingle with guests. For our top sponsors, we made beauty queen banners for these costumed heroes to wear. Photo ops were available and when the sponsors names were read from the podium, the superheroes walked through the crowd with the sponsors banner. More advertising for our sponsors, especially when attendees took random photos on their own and posted socially. \*Please note our backdrop – since our house is on a secure facility, this backdrop is of our house so people can relate their support to a real thing.





## FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

### Superheroes Unite

Post event, we also sent thank you to each of the sponsors and included printed photos of them taken randomly during the event with their superhero.



### Edible Art



## FISHER HOUSE EMERALD COAST IDEAS

### Edible Art

An event within an event, an upscale bake sale. Last year for our gala, we created an Edible Art division and engaged professional bakers, both with kitchens and those from home to compete for Fisher House's Finest. We had six entries, had a peoples choice for bought votes, and gave each one of our 320 people in attendance a ticket to vote authentically. That winner became the overall and received a feature article in a local prestigious magazine's bridal issue. \$1295 value. We auctioned the overall winner, and did Chinese raffle for each of the runner ups. Some cakes were donated to military squadrons by the winners, and also to our house.



## Idea from Gainesville Fisher House Foundation

### Nutrition

Goal: Reduce Stress

GAINESVILLE FISHER HOUSE Foundation

Comfort Food Can Be Great Food

Gainesville Fisher House Foundation, our House Manager Michelle Howard and a staff nutritionist will be working together to come up with a great list and pamphlet about this grant project. Our new project is to raise the standards of nutrition among our guests and what we and our volunteers provide for them in the Mealtrain Program.

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AVOCADO OIL

## Idea from Friends of Pittsburgh Fisher House

### Keeping the Fridge and Freezer Full

**KEEPING THE FRIDGE AND FREEZER FULL!!!**

**Friends of the Pittsburgh Fisher House**

**Giant Eagle curbside express**

**Yinzer Basics:  
Pittsburghese for Beginners  
Gine Iggle**

- On a Weekly Basis the Pittsburgh Fisher House Manager Orders Food Online from Giant Eagle's Curbside Express Service.
- The Food is Picked Up and Paid for by a FOPFH Board Member.
- Giant Eagle Employees Shop, and Load the Car!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- The Food is Brought to the House and Happily Unloaded and Put Away by a Combination of the Managers, Guests, Housekeepers, Shuttle Driver and Volunteers. It Fast, Fun and Truly a Group Effort!

Wooden floor background