

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 9-26-19

Caroline Fienga
Interactive Media & Public Relations Specialist
440-816-6723 (office)
216-299-7727 (cell)
cfienga@swgeneral.com

**Southwest General Receives Substantial Donation
from Columbia Station Residents Wayne and Debbie Brassell**

Middleburg Heights, OH (Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019) – Patients who use Southwest General Health Center for their health care needs will benefit from a \$265,000 donation made by Columbia Station residents Wayne and Debbie Brassell.

“This is one of the largest individual gifts that the hospital has ever received,” explains Chris Burdon, executive director, Southwest Community Health Foundation. “Through Wayne and Debbie’s generous donation, we will continue to enhance access to the hospital’s renowned Oakview Behavioral Health Services and to expand training and education opportunities for more than 1,000 dedicated nurses of the hospital.”

Through their years of service to Southwest General, Wayne and Debbie have gained a deep understanding of the urgent need for behavioral health services in Greater Cleveland as well as across the nation. To support this need, \$115,000 of Wayne and Debbie’s gift will be used to launch a Peer Support Program under the Oakview Behavioral Health Services umbrella.

Research indicates that peer support counselors are an effective tool to help those battling addiction and/or mental health issues commit to a treatment path. Peer support counselors are individuals who have personally battled addiction and/or mental health issues, enhancing their ability to establish an authentic connection with the patients they counsel.

“Many hospitals are looking to remove themselves from the psychiatric business,” said Mike Waggoner, MSN, RN, director, Oakview Behavioral Health Services. “It’s quite the opposite for us at Southwest General. We are continuing to grow and invest in our behavioral health programs and to position the hospital as the premier provider of comprehensive behavioral health services in Northeast Ohio.”

“We are grateful to the Brassells for this generous gift,” continues Mike. “It will provide us with the ability to launch the new Peer Support Program to better serve the growing number of patients who turn to Southwest General for care every day.”

Additionally, in response to the mental health crisis among children, \$75,000 of the total gift will be used to fund a partnership between Oakview Behavioral Health Services and the Columbia Local School District. Through the partnership, Southwest General employees and Medical Staff members will deliver behavioral health services directly in the school setting to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Programming may include:

- Guest speakers to talk to students about managing their social media platforms
- Discussions on bullying and other harmful influences
- Innovative programs to promote good mental health
- And more

The final portion of the gift, \$75,000, will be used to advance nurse training and education at Southwest General—a decision largely influenced by a positive patient care experience Debbie had at the hospital following a colon cancer diagnosis in 2015.

“I remember how frightening it was to learn I had cancer,” said Debbie. “But also I remember the wonderful care I received, especially from the nurses. They are the face of the hospital, and I’ll always be grateful for the kindness and compassion they showed.”

About the Brassells

When Wayne and Debbie met and married in the early 1980s, it was difficult for the couple to imagine the impact they would one day have on the health and well-being of the people in their hometown of Columbia Station as well as the surrounding communities.

Since retiring—Wayne from Kokosing Construction as the vice president of the company’s Highway and Asphalt Division, and Debbie from the Strongsville City School District, where she served as the school’s long-time secretary—the couple shifted their focus to helping build the future of health care in the community they love.

“Debbie and I have worked hard for many years, on our own and as a family,” said Wayne. “During this new phase in our lives, we want to make a difference for the people in our community, and Southwest General is an extremely important part of that community.”

The Brassells are widely recognized for lending their service to a number of Northeast Ohio organizations, including volunteer leader groups associated with Southwest General. Wayne currently serves on the Southwest General Health Center and Health System Boards of Trustees and Debbie serves on the Southwest Community Health Foundation Board of Trustees.

“We give to what we believe in, and we believe in the mission and vision of Southwest General,” said Wayne. “We believe in its leadership, its employees and caregivers, and, above all, the value the hospital brings to our community. We hope by sharing our story, we inspire others to do the same.”

“Wayne and Debbie are dedicated to their support and advocacy of our hospital,” said William A. Young, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Southwest General. “Their latest gift builds on a remarkable legacy of volunteerism and philanthropy that will benefit patients today and for years to come. We truly cannot thank them enough.”

Expansion of Southwest General’s Oakview Behavioral Health Services

In April 2019, construction began to expand Southwest General’s Oakview Behavioral Health Services Inpatient Facility. The \$6.5 million capital improvement project will address the growing need for behavioral health services by enlarging the Inpatient Facility by 5,000-square-feet and increasing from 18 to 20 beds. The project also includes:

- The addition of office space for Southwest General Medical Group’s Behavioral Health practice, bringing clinical staff and patients closer together to enhance care
- Development of a multi-sensory room to help calm patients rather than using restraints and to reduce the risk of violence
- Renovation of the current infrastructure (HVAC, plumbing, mechanical, a new nursing station and staff lounge, etc.)

Construction is expected to be completed in the fall of 2019, and renovation of the existing space is anticipated to be completed in early 2020.



For additional information, and/or to schedule an interview, please contact Caroline Fienga, interactive media and public relations specialist, at 440-816-6723 or cfienga@swgeneral.com.

About Southwest General

Southwest General is a private, not-for-profit, 350-bed acute care facility located in Middleburg Heights, Ohio. Founded in 1920, Southwest General is home to nationally recognized physicians with full access to state-of-the-art technology. Southwest General has a deep commitment to providing personalized care and building a healthy future for the patients, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit swgeneral.com or find Southwest General on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

###