

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

news release

INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY

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NEW AMERICAN HOUSE FOUNDATION RAISES \$50,000 IN FOUR WEEKS

The Gillette family, founders of American House Senior Living Residences, has created the American House Foundation (AHF) to help older adults in the Detroit community and to fund research at the Institute of Gerontology, Wayne State University. AHF kicked off its giving on December 20 by distributing 100 bags of food and 100 gift certificates to low income and homeless seniors identified by the Detroit Citizens for Better Care. The organization also surveyed all the recipients to identify those in need of additional assistance in the future.

The Gillettes' goal for the charitable trust is to raise \$500,000 within five years. The mission of the foundation is to subsidize local companies to assist older adults in need; to fund education and outreach programs run by local organizations; and to endow research at the Institute of Gerontology to improve the mental and physical health of diverse groups of older adults.

Rob Gillette is vice-president of American House Senior Living Residences whose 31 facilities currently house approximately 3,300 seniors. He has long been concerned about the quality of life for older adults who are not in appropriate housing and have few financial or personal resources. "Many elderly persons are alone with no one to help them get what they need to thrive," Gillette said.

"I want every business and service organization to be our eyes in the community," he said, "to spot the older person in need and help us to help them." Whether it's a wheelchair, an access ramp, a mental health evaluation, or a ride to the doctors, AHF will consider all requests. In addition to helping fix today's problem, AHF is also funding the future -- by supporting high quality and substantial research into aging.

"The Institute of Gerontology has a 42-year track record of researching important issues that translate to real benefits to the older community," said Institute Director Peter Lichtenberg, Ph.D. Potential research projects include identifying depression in the elderly, comparing aging-in-place with moving to a care facility, and improving the health of African Americans and Hispanics as they age. The Institute has named AHF its first Legacy Sponsor in honor of the size and perpetual nature of this gift.