



## News

For Immediate Release

**Media Contact:**

Kate Lilja Lohnes

Lilja Communications for George Family Foundation

952.893.7140

[kate@lilja.com](mailto:kate@lilja.com)

### **Penny & Bill George, George Family Foundation to provide \$2.5 million for first-of-its-kind wellbeing center at the new YMCA at Gaviidae in downtown Minneapolis**

*The George Wellbeing Center furthers Penny George's leadership in advancing integrative health and healing over the past two decades*

*The Foundation also announces additional grants totaling more than \$2.5 million to 37 organizations*

**MINNEAPOLIS (Jan. 8, 2017)** — Penny and Bill George and the George Family Foundation announced today a combined \$2.5 million gift to support an innovative wellbeing center at the new YMCA at Gaviidae, a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The center in downtown Minneapolis will be the first of its kind to be offered at any Y location in the United States.

The George Wellbeing Center will connect individuals with evidence-based, integrative health and healing (IHH) practices shown to reduce stress, promote healing and improve health outcomes. Through the George Wellbeing Center, individuals and families interested in fostering better health utilizing mind-body-spirit practices will access lifestyle and nutritional counseling, massage therapy, reiki, aromatherapy, meditation, light therapy, tai chi, yoga, acupuncture and more. Beyond wellness, wellbeing incorporates other dimensions often undervalued in healthcare such as meaning and purpose, joy and generosity, and healthy relationships and strong connections to community.

“The George Wellbeing Center at the Y will bring wellness techniques and resources to people outside of the traditional healthcare system who might not otherwise have access to them,” said Penny George, board chair, George Family Foundation, who has been advising the Y team on the center.

“Since our first planning meeting in 2017, we've designed this groundbreaking center to help people take charge of their health through accessible, affordable tools and techniques,” she continued. “This is an exciting new offering that will connect people with the integrative healing practices that can make a difference in their lives – and I know firsthand from my own health journey.” Penny George is a 22-year cancer survivor and credits IHH practices as playing an important role in her own recovery and health since that time.

The center builds off the leadership role Penny George and the George Family Foundation have played over the past two decades to advance the principles of IHH both locally and nationally. From co-founding the Penny George Institute at Allina Health, the largest integrative medicine program within a healthcare system in the U.S., to underwriting programs that fund culturally significant healing practices at the grassroots level through its Catalyst Initiative, Penny George has helped to transform healthcare. Additionally, since 1994 the George Family Foundation has provided more than \$17 million to support programs that promote IHH, its largest funding area.

The George Wellbeing Center will provide a home venue to the pioneering Healthy Living Program for holistic wellbeing, leveraging existing community partnerships to link services for underserved populations. Culturally-based healing practices, supported by the work of the Catalyst Initiative of The Minneapolis Foundation, will also be integrated into the program to better serve diverse populations in the Twin Cities area.

The program will serve as a model and initial testing ground for other Ys in the Greater Twin Cities, as well as nationally, noted Glen Gunderson, president and CEO of the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities.

“The YMCA is thrilled to partner with Penny and Bill, and the George Family Foundation to provide a groundbreaking wellbeing center that will advance integrative health and healing practices by offering holistic services for all in our community,” said Gunderson. “I am grateful for their incredible support and commitment to ensure our dynamic and diverse community benefits from having the resources to lead happy and healthy lives.”

Since the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities is leading the national Y's innovation efforts, the goal is to share much of the successful programming developed and offered at the George Center for Wellbeing to Ys across the country.

Founded by Penny and Bill George in 1994, the George Family Foundation is a \$63 million private family foundation that supports programs that promote integrative health and healing, authentic leadership, spirituality and mindfulness, youth development, and the environment and community.

In addition to the grant to the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, the Foundation announced grants totaling \$2,522,500 to 37 organizations. The complete list of grants includes:

\$1,500,000 to **The Minneapolis Foundation** to support the Catalyst Initiative.

\$100,000 to the **Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health** to support the third year of the Consortium's communications plan.

\$100,000 to the **Women's Foundation of Minnesota** to support the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota.

\$60,000 to **Walking Mountains Science Center** to support the Center's community programs.

\$60,000 to **YWCA of Minneapolis** to support the Girls Inc. program.

\$50,000 to **Everytown for Gun Safety** to support general operations.

\$50,000 to **Marnita's Table** to support general operations.

\$50,000 to the **Minneapolis Institute of Art** (Mia) to support the "Hearts of Our People: Native American Women Artists" exhibition.

\$50,000 to **Relationships First** to support general operations.

\$50,000 to the **Somali Success School** to support general operations.

\$37,500 to the **Penny George Institute Foundation** to support the Art of Healing program and to provide funds for practitioner education and pilot projects.

\$30,000 to **VoteRunLead** to support the *Run As You Are* program for women in Minnesota and Colorado.

\$25,000 to **Karuna-Shechen** to support Shechen Clinics in Nepal.

\$25,000 to **Mayo Clinic** to support the Healthy Living Program.

\$25,000 to the **Mind & Life Institute** to support the Mind & Life Dialogue with the Dalai Lama XXXIII: Dharamsala, India 2018.

\$20,000 to the **Destiny Arts Center** to support general operations on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

\$20,000 to **Fresh Lifelines for Youth** (FLY) to support its work incorporating mindfulness with staff and volunteers.

\$20,000 to **Lundstrum Performing Arts** to support general operations on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

\$15,000 to **Audubon California** to support programs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

\$15,000 to **Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative** to support Nicollet Square Supportive Services.

\$15,000 to **Children's HeartLink** to support general operations.

\$15,000 to the **Eagle Valley Land Trust** to support general operations.

\$15,000 to **Global Minnesota** to support general operations.

\$15,000 to the **Minneapolis Institute of Art** (Mia) to support the Annual Fund.

\$15,000 to **Minneapolis Pathways** to support general operations.

\$15,000 to the **Minnesota Orchestra** in honor of the leadership of Marilyn Carlson Nelson and Paula DeCosse.

\$15,000 to **Minnesota Public Radio** to support the Annual Fund.

\$15,000 to the **National Parks Conservation Association** to support NPCA's Yellowstone work.

\$15,000 to **Twin Cities Public Television** to support the Annual Fund.

\$15,000 to **Walk-In Counseling Center** to support general operations.

\$10,000 to **Betty Ford Alpine Gardens** to support general operations.

\$10,000 to **Big City Mountaineers** to support scholarships for girls to attend BCM's Minnesota programs.

\$10,000 to **Café Momentum** to support general operations on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

\$10,000 to **Family Wellness Dallas!** to support general operations for Bonton Farms.

\$10,000 to the **MacPhail Center for Music** to support the North Minneapolis After-School Strings Program and the MacPhail Northside Youth Orchestra on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

\$10,000 to the **Mindful Life Project** to support general operations on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

\$10,000 to the **Minneapolis College of Art and Design** to provide scholarships for the Summer Youth Programs on behalf of the Next Generation Fund.

The Foundation also awarded \$108,500 to organizations designated by its board members.

###

### **About the George Family Foundation**

Founded by Penny and Bill George in 1994, the George Family Foundation supports programs, organizations and initiatives that transform lives. The \$63 million private family foundation has an annual grantmaking budget of more than \$3.8 million. Areas of foundation interest include integrative health and healing, authentic leadership, spirituality and mindfulness, community, environment and youth development. For more information, visit the [George Family Foundation](#) website.

### **About the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities**

The YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities is a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Established 161 years ago, the Ys provide life-strengthening services across the greater Twin Cities metro region, southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin communities. The 29 Y locations and program sites, seven overnight camps, 10 day camps, and more than 90 child care sites engage more than 350,000 men, women and children of all ages, incomes and backgrounds. To learn more about the Y's mission and work, visit [www.ymcamn.org](http://www.ymcamn.org).