

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the shivering, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these. George Washington Carver

Being compassionate with the aged is at the core of Homme Home of Wittenberg's purpose for existence which stretches back 143 years since its founding by Rev. E.J. and Ingeborg Homme. That makes Homme Home for the Aging one of the oldest, if not the oldest, senior living organization in the state of Wisconsin. That is definitely a feather in Wittenberg's cap and it is an outstanding example of Wittenberg's commitment to "taking care of our own"! Homme Inc. of Wisconsin which has been a 501c3 Non-profit organization since 1980 has two branches—Homme Home for the Aging in Wittenberg and Homme Heights, known as Forest Park Village, the Gardens, and Stone Crest in Wausau.

Since May 1 of 2024 Homme Home in Wittenberg has not been allowed to admit any new residents because the Department of Health Services determined the building needed expansion of the fire alarm system and updates in its life safety plan. The upgrades in the fire alarm system are primarily in parts of the building where residents don't live. A revised life safety plan has been approved by the Department of Health Services. A plan for the fire system updates was submitted to the Department of Health Services on June 16 but Homme hasn't heard yet whether that plan has been approved.

Since the ban on admitting new residents was put in place in 2024, Homme staff and outside vendors have worked heroically to meet the state's requirements for getting the ban lifted. Homme has worked with the architectural firm of Community Living Specialists to come up with a plan for the required changes in the life safety plan, with PerMar Security to update the fire alarm system, and with Performance Fire Protection to repair cracks in walls. Homme has put more than \$200,000 into building upgrades. In addition to the architectural firm, the security firm, and the fire protection firm, Homme has engaged an attorney to advocate for us and to represent us in negotiations with the Department of Health Services. This attorney, Robert Lightfoot, specializes in working with elder care facilities. We have also worked with our state legislators, with Leading Age Wisconsin, and with Shawano County Economic Progress.

Progress has been made; a 24 hour per day Firewatch that had been put into effect in December of 2024 was lifted the week of June 16 but the ban on admitting new residents has not yet been lifted. Homme's board and staff believe the ban will be lifted and when that happens, the building will have been upgraded in terms of accessibility, safety, security, and technology.

When the ban against admitting new residents went into effect, there were 57 residents living at Homme Home in Wittenberg. Now, due to deaths, there are just over 30 residents. This has caused an enormous financial strain on the institution. Homme Inc. has recently expanded its fundraising program designed to meet the current financial crisis by helping to cover daily operations. Another branch of fundraising focuses on strengthening Homme's finances for the future. In undertaking the expanded fundraising campaign, Homme is honoring its legacy of service to elders since 1882, and it embraces a future where Homme will be able to continue providing care for elders well into the future. **Homme Home of Wittenberg is committed to keeping E.J. and Ingeborg Homme's dream alive!**

The fundraising campaign has many approaches. It began this summer with fundraising letters sent to current residents' families and sponsoring congregations. There are fundraising ads that are being broadcast on 89Q radio station and on a weekly radio polka show. There have been several fundraising events that have taken place including purse bingo nights, meat raffles, and a fun walk/run, the angel appeal, and formerly a golf outing. Many of these events will continue into the future. Grants are being actively pursued to address specific needs. Once the do not admit order is lifted, planned giving will be pursued. There are some congregations with endowments that will be approached to give money to Homme but we have been advised, that can happen only after the ban against admitting new residents is lifted. Additional fundraising collaborations and ideas are welcome. The board and staff of Homme acknowledge rebuilding the Foundation is a long-term project and the board and staff are well aware that not all of the money raised will come from families and congregations.

Homme Home in Wittenberg is an organization worthy of support from community leaders for many reasons.

1. Communities are stronger and more compassionate when they include people of all ages. The stories about many generations of people from the same families who have been residents of Homme Home for the Aging are very moving and the length of time Homme has provided this care is one of Homme's greatest strengths. That continuity of care for members of the Wittenberg community is priceless.
2. Homme Home has a significant economic impact on Wittenberg and the surrounding area.
 - a. It employs people, many of whom support local businesses.
 - b. The residents of Homme receive much of their medical care locally.
 - c. The elders support the nearby communities when they go on shopping trips and other outings.

- d. Family members and friends of residents visit their loved ones and often support local businesses during their visits.
- 3. Maintaining Homme Home for the Aging as a resource for housing for elders is important for the future of long-term care in our state. By 2030 it is estimated there will be a need for 33,000 more long term care beds in Wisconsin and by 2040, that need will jump to 138,000 additional beds. There is already a shortage of beds for elders needing care in Shawano County as well as the nearby counties. Already existing assisted living facilities such as Homme Home for the Aging are worth fighting for.