



DESERT HEALTHCARE
DISTRICT & FOUNDATION

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: Hanson House provides sanctuary to families facing medical challenges

Leaving a loved one who is critically ill or injured at the hospital can be dismaying for Coachella Valley residents and visitors who live outside of Palm Springs. Staying at a hotel isn't always an affordable option. And while the hospital is often the best place for the family member to receive care, being separated from them by a great distance can affect the peace of mind of all involved. Thankfully, there's Hanson House (hansonhouse.org).



Hanson House is a beautifully appointed, comfortable facility steps away from the Desert Regional Medical Center campus in Palm Springs. Staff photo

Founded in 2003, the tranquil, Spanish-style, Palm Springs property offers a comfortable sanctuary for the family members of patients who are being treated less than a block away at Desert Regional Medical Center. The nonprofit organization is overseen by a seven-member volunteer board and founding president Frank R. Ercoli, MD, and managed by executive director Michele Nobleman and staff.



Frank Ercoli, MD, founding and current president of Hanson House, talks about the origin of the Palm Springs facility. Staff photo

Nobleman recently revealed insight into the mission of Hanson House, which was founded with the financial support of the Desert Healthcare District and Foundation.

What’s a personal mantra or quote that inspires you in your work?

Hanson House is inspiring in itself. The desire to support and protect this sanctuary and our guests is what inspires me.

What are a few things you’d like everyone to know about Hanson House?

1. While there is a fee to stay here, no one is turned away due to lack of funds.
2. We don’t take reservations because hospital stays can be uncertain. We run generally on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. Our guests must be referred to us, we don’t accept “walk ins.” Referrals are usually submitted by social workers, nurses, chaplains or other hospital personnel.
4. Our guests are local and long-distance, with visitors from all over the states and out of the country, as well.



Hanson House Executive Director Michele Nobleman in the chapel just inside the property's entry gate. Staff photo

Please share how Desert Healthcare District and Foundation grants made or are making a difference for your organization and/or clients.

The last mini-grant received was based on our proposal to subsidize the families of trauma patients' room nights. Although we do have a sliding scale for our room charges, at the highest rate of \$70/night, a stay of several weeks is a daunting financial burden for many of our guests. At that rate, one month would be \$2,100, as much as a monthly mortgage payment. By using the mini-grant to help subsidize both our longer-term guests and financially strapped guests, the stay at Hanson House does not cause further stress to already beleaguered families.

What is one mission-related goal you've set to achieve in the next 12 months?

In order to provide low-cost visitor housing, we have the need to reduce our expenses. As you know, summer air-conditioning sends the electric bills to the stratosphere. To control those costs, we are currently putting out grant proposals to pay for WIFI thermostats to be able to remotely control the a/c. To also help with reducing expenses, we will be putting in overhead fans in the eight original casitas that currently don't have them.



Guests enter Hanson House through an expansive courtyard on the Palm Springs property. Staff photo

Please name a volunteer who exemplifies the spirit of your organization, and how.

I hate identifying one person as exemplary, because all of our volunteers are very special. One who has always gone over and above, is Nancy Swanlund. She is a retired educator and is happy to take on extra jobs and shifts, as necessary. She is a wonderful sounding board, for me and for our guests.