

Lee Family Donates \$1M to Aid Homeless Through Door of Hope



Photo courtesy Door of Hope

David and Katherine Lee are donating \$1 million to Door of Hope to build a home for 20 unhoused families. "David and Katherine serve as shining examples of how individuals can leverage their talents and resources to drive positive change and leave a lasting legacy of kindness and compassion," said the Rev. Megan Katerjian, Door of Hope CEO.

David and Katherine Lee have pledged a \$1 million donation to help Pasadena-based nonprofit organization Door of Hope build a new shelter for 20 unhoused families. The facility will be named the David and Katherine Lee home.

"The reason that I agreed to have it named after me and my wife, and the reason for letting people know I do-

nated \$1 million to this capital project, is because I hope it will inspire others to give and to support nonprofits or, of course, the Door of Hope," David Lee said.

Door of Hope provides shelter, resources and support to unhoused families, or families at risk of homelessness,

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60 OR OVER?

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What's the goal?

To find the causes of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and develop early detection tests. If detected early, these diseases could be treated more effectively.

Who can take part?

You can volunteer if you're at least 60 years old, cognitively healthy, not on anticoagulant medicines and able to undergo magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

What do volunteers do?

You'll be interviewed about your medical history and undergo non- and minimally-invasive tests, including: physical exams, EEG, memory and thinking skill testing, lumbar puncture, MRI, retina exams, providing blood and urine samples, and other tests.



How much time does it take?

Over three months, you'll make four to 12 visits of about two hours each to Huntington Medical Research Institutes (HMRI) in Pasadena. Visits will be repeated every few years.

INTERESTED? PLEASE CONTACT:

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CIVITAS

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cussion to a broader audience during the meeting.

That's the mission of Civitas: to build a community of civic leaders who could have constructive collaboration, discourse and creative thinking, and to create a space where members contribute ideas and perspectives that could benefit how the community can be better or more effective.

"That's a typical type of conversation where we try not to take sides," said Wilson of the meeting on architectural modernism. "We kind of understand the complexity of the issue and figure out what is a thoughtful way for giving it."

Civitas members typically meet about twice a month, and occasionally, field trips are held to visit sites and learn more about what can be done for them. The organization is currently a resident-member of the Blinn House but previously hosted meetings at a variety of locations. The club even operated through the COVID-19 pandemic when members held sessions on Zoom during the lockdown period in 2020. Throughout it all, the message was still the same.

"You have speakers who provide an overview of what's happening in the city and what their role is," said Raymond Ealy, a member of the organization since 2020. "You just learn. It's a learning experience."

From meeting with the city's new police chief to learning more about rent control, zoning and architectural restrictions, Ealy says the organization gives members an opportunity to meet people they wouldn't normally meet, exposes them to topics they wouldn't think deeply about, and comes up with solutions to help the group navigate through the landscape.

"You just meet people from all walks of life and you just learn," Ealy said. "That's what I like about it. New information."

Maltazan was just one of many keynote speakers.

"How do we make all the pieces work together harmoniously versus kind of grinding the gears?" said Wilson of Maltazan's ideas. "That was, I think, a wonderful moment to have those different agendas all come together in a constructive and positive discussion. We find out what's working and not working and things like that. So that's kind of a classic discussion for this."

Civitas gatherings and talks range from a myriad of topics.

In a recent gathering, members discussed the future of the Pasadena Central Library, posing questions on the financial impact the library would have to bear for a \$100 million renovation, and how to make that decision worthwhile.

One meeting that stood out to Wilson was a talk about the explosion of pet ownership at the beginning of the coronavirus lockdown. Because it was a remote meeting, Wilson urged everyone to bring their pets.

Another was a walking tour and hike with the Arroyo & Foothill Conservancy, looking at some nature restoration.

Wilson's idea of Civitas started brewing in 2018, and much of the inspiration was drawn from his time as an elected official. The not-for-profit organization held its first meeting just shortly after.

"I think people really feel like it's a game of winners and losers, and people can too often get kind of locked into a point of view," said Wilson of serving as an elected official. "I think that can truncate the ability to find higher-impact solutions."

Wilson believes partisan politics has "eroded" a community's natural inclination to work together and become problem solvers. He highlighted the

"craziness" that goes on in the nation's capital and "how dysfunctional it is," pointing out that elected officials are public servants and "the politics get in the way of doing what's best for the collective community."

"This is a little bit of an effort to go back to the world where we get to have different perspectives, [and] share a common mission of community betterment," Wilson added. "We do that by having respectful, open dialogue."

Those conversations and ideas could be brought back to executive directors, commissioners or elected officials, Wilson added.

A group of heavily involved community members — elected officials, not-for-profit board members and commissioners — helped bring Wilson's idea to fruition.

Former Pasadena City Manager Cynthia Kurtz was among the founding members of the organization. A Civitas board member and the current director of the Metropolitan Water Board, Kurtz thought the idea for the club was a "breath of fresh air."

"It wasn't developed with real, strict rules and parameters or what that could be and what that meant," Kurtz said. "It sounded interesting to me, and equally interesting were the group of people that [Wilson] invited to participate in sort of thinking about forming this group."

Kurtz said the idea was to create a space for people to come together at the end of a workday for a discussion, and initially, the founders thought about hosting meetings with fixed programs and topics. Eventually, they took the direction elsewhere.

"We offer a place for people to drop in to talk about a topic that they go, 'Yeah, I want to know more about that. I don't quite understand it from what I'm reading or what I'm hearing, or I have some opinions. I'd really like to let my colleagues and the people that are presenting know how I feel about this,'" Kurtz said.

A recent meeting with former Metropolitan Water Board Director Jeff Kightlinger was one of the highlights for Kurtz. Kightlinger, who also served as the interim general manager of Pasadena Water and Power, discussed his experiences in running the regional agency and his work with water allocation, specifically during the drought when the state had little water, and the current water allocation following heavy rains earlier this year.

The club currently boasts about 100 active members. Wilson says the organization has admitted at least one or two new members per month and is looking to motivate a younger demographic to join the group. One of Wilson's goals is to build on the membership, adding 50 or 75 new clubgoers, with an emphasis on younger leaders. Wilson said there's an online application process for new members. The organization looks for people who have shown some commitment to community leadership.

"That comes in many flavors," he said.

There's a social aspect to club meetings as well, Wilson added, and amenities are provided to help one another build relationships.

"We try not to take ourselves too seriously," he said. "A little fun and social aspect is important to kind of knitting that fabric of community so that we can all do better work, work together and support each other, and challenge each other in a constructive way."

The organization is completely volunteer-driven with members contributing to the mission after work.

"I have great ambitions that we will bring more leaders into the fold and learn from each other and ultimately, start having a ripple effect in terms of maybe changing certainly some of the dialogue and some of the attitudes about how we can work together here locally," Wilson said.

LEE

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with a focus on helping them regain stability and self-sufficiency.

With this \$1 million gift, the David and Katherine Lee Home will become part of Door of Hope's ambitious plan to shelter more families and make a significant impact on homelessness in the greater Pasadena community.

David Lee, chairman and CEO of Hing Wa Lee Group, said he was inspired by a recent donation to City of Hope hospital from friends Andrew and Peggy Cherng, founders of the Panda Restaurant Group and Panda Express.

"When I saw that, I suddenly had a voice in my mind that said, 'Hey, maybe I can't do \$100 million, but I can do \$1 million to support an organization,'" he added. "That was the catalyst to inspire me to do that for Door of Hope. And I know that if Andrew can do that for me, then I, perhaps, can do that for others."

David Lee explained that Door of Hope offers those experiencing homelessness psychological counseling, training on how to interview for jobs, training on how to take care of themselves and their children, and sharing the gospel of the Christian faith. Lee, who is a devout Christian, says after six months, families or individuals will have a job and home ready for them when they leave the shelter. He added the nonprofit has had remarkable success with its program, as 95% remained housed after one year and 86% after five years.

"Because of that, I feel that I wanted to continue to support this organization to perpetuate more than that," he said. "We can't solve all the problems, but at least, with whatever we can solve, it's done in a successful way."

The nonprofit just opened escrow on a new home in Pasadena that will become its fifth and largest shelter, a future home to 20 families. This development unfolded unexpectedly when the Rev. Andy Bales, CEO of Union Rescue Mission, heard about Door of Hope's search for a new shelter and generously offered his own home as a potential solution.

Just three blocks away from Door of Hope's original shelter on Los Robles Avenue in Pasadena, the property has "ample space to build an addition and is the perfect location for this new endeavor," said the Rev. Megan Katerjian, Door of Hope CEO.

Katerjian added, "David Lee's dedica-

tion to this cause and his involvement in the organization's board leadership exemplify his commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of those less fortunate. David and Katherine are not your typical philanthropists. With a passion for Ferrari cars, active church involvement, an iconic jewelry business, real estate development and entrepreneurial endeavors, and a dedication to making a difference in the world, this couple is leaving a remarkable mark in our community."

David Lee is a member of the USC Widney Society, the Young Presidents' Organization San Gabriel Valley Chapter, and the Lead With Your Life board. He is on the USC Marshall School of Business Career Advantage Program and an executive advisory board member for the USC Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. Lee, who earned a bachelor's degree in entrepreneurial studies from USC, is chairman and founder of the CEO Club and a chairman of the David S.K. and Katherine Lee Endowment Program for Leadership Development for Flintridge Preparatory School in La Cañada Flintridge.

David Lee "has innate business acumen and great success in the business world," Katerjian added. "Wanting to use those skills to solve some of our community's biggest problems, he has been appointed to the California Volunteers Commission by Gov. Gavin Newsom."

Door of Hope announced this new shelter at its recent Hope for the Future Benefit, where the nonprofit organization recognized Bales for allowing Door of Hope to acquire his home; Supervisor Kathryn Barger, for a \$250,000 gift from her office toward the purchase; and David and Katherine Lee, for their \$1 million to help with purchase and construction costs.

The David and Katherine Lee Home will break ground in 2024 and open in 2026, "ready to change the lives of 20 families that year, and far more in the years to come," Katerjian said. "Through David and Katherine's generosity and David's board leadership at Door of Hope, they have not only transformed the lives of countless families but have also inspired others to follow in their footsteps and make a positive impact on the world. David and Katherine Lee serve as shining examples of how individuals can leverage their talents and resources to drive positive change and leave a lasting legacy of kindness and compassion."

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