

# COUNTRY HOUSE TRANSFORMATION

The Lake Forest Chapter of the Infant Welfare Society prepares to unveil the organization's 20th Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens—perhaps the most spectacular and significant one to date.

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Wendy Franzen wears an Emilia Wickstead dress and Gavazzeni belt from The Lake Forest Shop.



Pembroke Lodge, built in 1895, designed by Henry Ives Cobb.

“THE 2025 LAKE FOREST SHOWHOUSE & GARDENS will be a celebration of our organization's 20th showhouse—and it will be one of most astonishing transformations our guests have experienced. We are restoring and revitalizing one of our community's great country houses” says Wendy Franzen, current board president for the Lake Forest Chapter of Infant Welfare Society (IWS). “The designers and landscaping firms have fully embraced this storied home and its grounds, imbuing them with truly gorgeous and unforgettable work.” Proceeds from the Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens will benefit The Infant Welfare Society of Chicago (IWS). Founded in 1911, the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago provides community-based health care to underserved Chicago area families through the IWS Family Health Center and its satellite locations. The Lake Forest Chapter of IWS is part of the Auxiliary of IWS Family Health that raises money for the IWS Family Health Center. The Auxiliary is a non-profit organization comprised of seven chapters located throughout the Chicagoland area. Since its inception, the Auxiliary has donated more than \$142 million to IWS and is its largest donor year after year.

Biannually, the Lake Forest Chapter of IWS hosts a designer showhouse as its primary fundraiser. This year

marks the 20th anniversary production of the Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens that will showcase the transformation of Pembroke Lodge. Thirty-eight interior designers, along with several top landscapers, have been selected to reimagine the 15,000-square-foot mansion and its 3.5 acres. The Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens will be open to visitors April 26 through May 25.

Pembroke Lodge is a limestone Georgian-style Lake Forest home, designed in 1895 by Henry Ives Cobb—the architect of Union Club of Chicago, Chicago Athletic Association Building, Chicago Varnish Company Building (a National Landmark of Historic Places and a Chicago Landmark), Newberry Library, and several pre-1900 buildings at Lake Forest College, and the University of Chicago.

Pembroke Lodge is one of the earliest estates developed along Lake Forest's Green Bay Road. Originally built on nearly 40 acres with landscape architecture by

“Our partnerships are allowing us to do things we've never done before.”

Pool House Cabana  
by Meghan Jay  
Design, artist Jane  
Gianarelli

Frederick Law Olmsted, the home was designed to take advantage of sunsets over the prairie landscape. Pembroke Lodge was built for real estate and zinc mining entrepreneur David Benton Jones and remained in the family for 67 years. After David's death, his daughter, philanthropist Gwethalyn Jones, sold over 31 acres to School District 67, where the City of Lake Forest's Deer Path Middle School now resides. In 1935, the 30-room estate saw the addition of a tennis court with a warming hut and a pool house and pool designed by David Adler with interiors revised by both Adler and his sister, famed interior designer Frances Elkins.

"Pembroke Lodge's new owners have graciously allowed our board to create this showhouse in their home," Franzen says. "They have been fantastic partners, committed to bringing back the home's relaxed elegance as a country house. And as great supporters of the arts, they have welcomed every inch of the designers' creativity."



"Guests will see traditional design, moments of glamour, great modern expressions, and even a space that could be considered monastic. The great bones of this house lend a sense of cohesiveness, allowing these imaginative designs to both soar and sit beautifully next to one another. We had a record number of designers apply to be part of the Showhouse & Gardens this year—as a result, there is something for everyone who will visit," says Franzen.

The Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens will include a number of notable events, including its dazzling opening night Preview Party on Friday, April 25, generously catered by the jdR family of companies. Los Angeles-based interior designer Mary McDonald has



The Mahjong Room by  
White Couch Design,  
artist Jane Gianarelli

The Lady's Office by Emily  
Sturges Design, art by  
Natalia Prychedko



been named the showhouse's Honorary Chair and will be the keynote speaker at a luncheon on Monday, April 28. Dara Caponigro, Chief Creative Officer of F. Schumacher & Co., and Editor-in-Chief of design magazine *FREDERIC*, will serve as the moderator, and sign advance copies of her new book *Glorious Gardens: Private Edens of the World's Leading Interior Designers*, to be released in May 2025. *FREDERIC* will also serve as the Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens national media sponsor.

"Our partnerships are allowing us to do things we've never done before," Franzen explains. "Because of our long-standing relationship with Schumacher, our tent for the Preview Party will be swathed in Schumacher fabrics. And the jdR family of companies is graciously providing the food and beverage, incorporating plenty of surprises and delights. With live music, dancing, and Pembroke Lodge's grounds as its glorious backdrop, the party will feel Gatsby-esque—absolutely magical."

Franzen can't say enough about the Herculean efforts of the board, the designers and landscapers, and the volunteers that bring this Showhouse & Gardens to life. "There is so much joy in the camaraderie of this project," she says. "Everyone is extraordinarily dedicated and kind. Throughout the crazy, amazing, and sometimes frenetic, process of creating a showhouse, we never forget that every moment we spend is for our mission: raising money for IWS Family Health, an organization that truly change people's lives."

To learn more about the 2025 Showhouse & Gardens, visit [lakeforestshowhouse.com](http://lakeforestshowhouse.com).

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Chairs of the 2025 Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens: Bennett Erke, Susan Bolander, Shannon Shadler, Cathy Crowley, Dawn Tolma (not pictured Jess Durburg).  
Photograph by Katrina Wittkamp