



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

From the Heart

Stories of how you keep families together when it matters most

Fall 2019



"I often joke that I'm such an emotional being because I was born with a broken heart."

"What I mean to say is that from birth, I've had a heart murmur. It doesn't bother me much, but I've been followed by a cardiologist as a precaution.

When I learned of my pregnancy, a full health history was taken. Due to my murmur, we thought it wise for me to also have the baby's heart checked- just in case. It was at a routine fetal-echocardiogram appointment at 22 weeks where I received news that would change my whole life."

Read the Thorne family's story and learn how you helped
Ronald McDonald House® shape one family's journey. —>

PROVIDING A SENSE OF NORMALCY

The days are getting shorter and there is a crispness in the air as we say good bye to summer and welcome fall. Kids have returned to school and families are returning to their normal routine and schedules. Unfortunately, not all families are experiencing a typical fall.

The families staying at Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut and Ronald McDonald House of Springfield lose that sense of normalcy when their lives are disrupted during their child's medical crisis. Our job, with your help, is to assist families as they work to achieve some sense of balance during this difficult time.



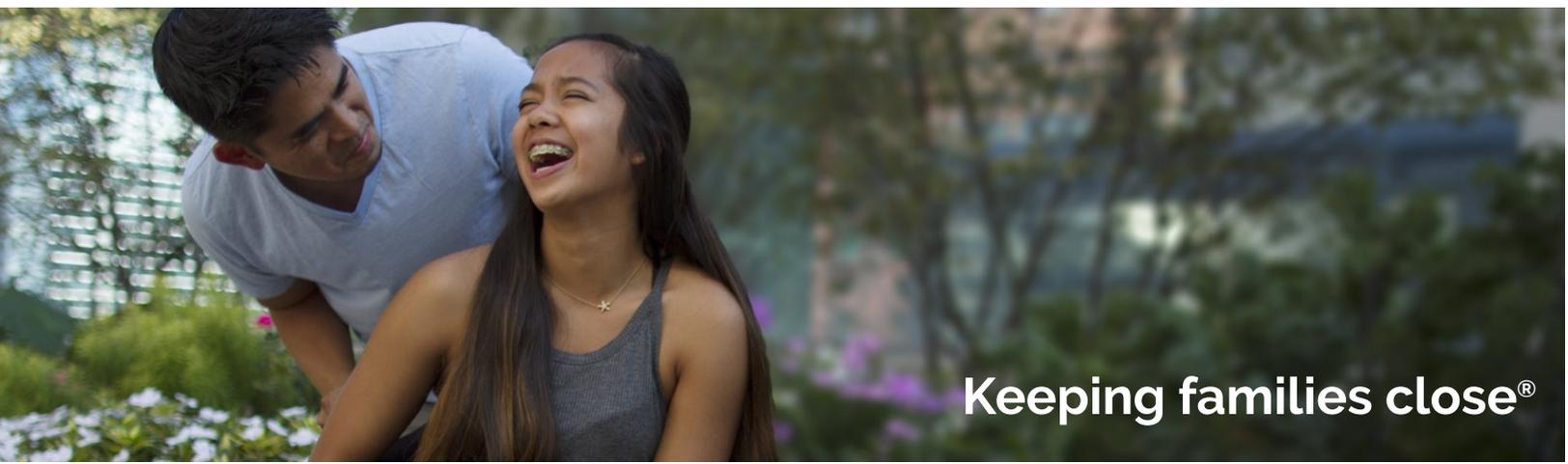
Michelle (left) with participants of the 2nd Annual Red Shoe Run

In this issue of From the Heart, you will hear from the Thorne Family about their journey, while baby Levi was treated in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and mom and dad stayed at the Ronald McDonald House. You will also read about how fortunate RMHC is to partner with Hole in the Wall Gang Camp to provide camp style activities for patients and their siblings at the House, and the Catholic Charity League, who make it possible for families to enjoy a hot meal together through the Monday Meals program.

We are honored and privileged to be the source of even the smallest sense of normalcy for children and families during a medical crisis. Thank you to our donors, volunteers and community groups who help us along this journey.

As long as there are children who need us, we need you!

Michelle D'Amore
Executive Director



Keeping families close®

Behind the Scenes: How You Helped Shape One Family's Journey

(Continued from page 1)

For over 125 days, Ariel and Marc Thorne called Ronald McDonald House home after the early birth of their son, Levi. Before they left, Ariel shared her personal thoughts on what mattered most and how you helped us ease their stressful journey.

Tell us a little bit about what brought you to Ronald McDonald House.

It was at a routine fetal-echocardiogram appointment at 22 weeks when I received the news that would change my whole life. "Baby's heart looks fine. However, it looks like your cervix is shortening. This is now a high risk pregnancy."

That initial discovery led to multiple conversations with many other professionals and the reality set in. I could be having a premature baby soon. About a week later, at 23 weeks and 4 days, I gave birth to my 1 pound, 3 ounce baby boy, Levi.

What was running through your mind at that time?

As one could imagine, there were a variety of emotions that surfaced. The most present one being fear-fear of losing my child, or my mind, or both! There was so much that I suddenly didn't know. But what I DID know was that as long as Levi would fight, I would be right there beside him.

How did Ronald McDonald House help you?

Ronald McDonald House made being present for our son's medical journey possible. It offered us a sanctuary where two parents of a micro preemie could be nursed to better health; physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally through kindness and caring. The house team and its awesome volunteers have ensured that our basic needs were met. When so much energy is going to my son's care, it was good to have a place that considered our care.

How would you describe Ronald McDonald House to someone who has never heard of it?

The Ronald McDonald House is a respite. We met other NICU parents, families dealing with rare diseases, those with children in chemo for cancer and more. In the open dining area, we connected, chatted, cried, laughed and loved ourselves into a better state.

One of Marc's favorite parts was Wednesday night bingo and I love the playground that allowed my nieces to visit for "auntie time" as this process took me away from them. Ronald McDonald House brought some sense of normalcy back to us.

Without Ronald McDonald House, I'm certain that the stress of this process would have impeded my ability to give Levi all I had to give. Without Ronald McDonald House, I would not have the community that I believe is responsible for keeping me sane. Without Ronald McDonald House, I would not have met the life-long friends I have.

What do you hope happens next?

By a miracle, our son has progressed tremendously. My hope is for us to start our new life in our own home while telling everyone we know about the four plus months when Ronald McDonald House was our home and all the good this organization does. My hope is that we too are able to give of our time and resources to pay it forward. I hope to be a part of the Ronald McDonald House family forever.

CAMP COMES TO THE HOUSE

*Summer Reflection by Emma Huntington
Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, Hospital Outreach Specialist,
Central New England*

"The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's Hospital Outreach Program (HOP) brings Camp-style programming to more than forty medical sites throughout the Northeast. One of those sites, visited weekly by the Central New England HOP Team, is the Ronald McDonald House of Springfield.

Every Thursday, two of the five members of our team provide Camp-style activities for families. The second we walk through the door, we are welcomed with open arms. From mess-making, to designing paper guitars, to painting ceramics – we try to create a fun social atmosphere for the families to connect and enjoy.

The warm, family environment of the House is unique from the hospital settings we are used to –and visiting is something that we look forward to each week!"



House guests enjoy various camp-style activities during visits with Hole in the Wall Gang Camp staff.

GET TO KNOW: Marina



Marina, left, playing games with her sister Faneuria.

What are some of your hobbies?

Drawing

What do you want to be when you're older?

A teacher

What do you like to do most?

Play with my sister

What makes you the happiest?

Going for walks

What does "home" mean to you?

Family

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: OUTFRONT MEDIA

Helping spread awareness in a BIG way!

Raising public awareness of our organization and our mission is vital to ensuring families can access essential medical care for their children and stay together during treatment. Sharing what we do and who we help connects us to the people that really make it happen – our donors and volunteers. That is why the generous and close knit relationship we have with OUTFRONT Media enhances all that RMHC CTMA is able to accomplish.



"OUTFRONT Media is extremely proud to support Ronald McDonald House Charities of CT & Western MA. To their core, RMHC CTMA holds strong community and family values to the highest regard and we know that everything we do will benefit those who really need it. As an outdoor media partner, OUTFRONT Media aids in promoting RMHC CTMA's local initiatives from year-round giving to specific community and fundraising events. We look forward to continuing our support and growing RMHC CTMA's ability to give help and provide all of the amazing services that they do!" Malcolm Little, Marketing, OUTFRONT Media.

On behalf of the children and families we serve, thank you OUTFRONT Media for your generous support!

OUTFRONT
WE GET YOU AMERICA

34th Annual Golf Tournament

RMH Connecticut

With a sold-out tournament of 144 golfers, Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut's 34th Annual Golf Tournament was one for the books! Along the course, golfers enjoyed the IceCream Emergency truck, Hummel Bros. hotdog station and a chance to win the Hole in One prize, a 2019 Buick Encore. A new addition to this year's tournament was the well-received Whack A Duck contest with a prize awarded to the golfer who hit their rubber ducky the farthest. The perfect closing to the day was the Steele Family sharing their RMH story and little Taylor awarding prizes to the top teams!



19th Annual Golf Tournament

RMH Springfield

The 19th Annual Ronald McDonald House of Springfield Golf Tournament held on August 5th was a great success. This year's event was held at a new location, Twin Hills Country Club in Longmeadow, MA, and the food, course and staff were outstanding. Thank you to all of our sponsors who made this year's event one of the best yet! Special thanks to Matt Perry and Ryan Hess, event co-chairs, and to the Borghetti Family for sharing their RMH story with attendees.





MONDAY MEALS with CATHOLIC CHARITY LEAGUE

In 2010, the Catholic Charity League (CCL) invited a representative of Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut (RMHCT) to speak to their organization members. After hearing about the various needs at RMHCT and the opportunities to get involved, CCL members decided that providing meals fit their mission "to provide assistance to those in need in the greater New Haven area."

'Monday Meals' started at the Ronald McDonald House on George Street, with food for 25 guests. With up to 40 guests at the new House, "We challenged ourselves to meet the need and grew our participation. CCL's members have a wonderful tradition of helping others, there are over 60 members along with family and friends involved in this project," shared Janet Barese, CCL member.

When asked why, 9 years later, they continue to provide Monday Meals, their answer was clear. It's all for the families. Janet recalls one occasion, dropping of their Monday Meal, and chatting with a parent. "She told us about parents gathering late in the evening, after returning from the hospital, and sharing their stories while snacking on what we brought for dinner. We can all identify with gathering around the kitchen table and the comfort that brings," said Janet. "We (members of CCL) take great pleasure in being recognized as the Monday Meal group and being able to deliver meals to Ronald McDonald House every Monday evening. We encourage other organizations to get involved and realize the benefits participating brings in return."

Prepare a meal for
our families!

**Did you know you can donate a
fully prepared meal or volunteer at the
House and cook for RMH families?**

Preparing a meal for the families of Ronald McDonald House is a much needed service that lifts the burden of worrying what is for dinner. Parents supporting their sick children don't often have the time, funds, or energy to prepare a healthy, home-cooked meal. You can provide that comfort and accessibility to a healthy meal by donating a fully prepared meal or coming to the House and cooking for the families.



To learn more about donating a meal for families, please contact our
Community Engagement Coordinators:
In Connecticut: Antonnique 203.777.5683 In Springfield: Skochii 413.794.5683



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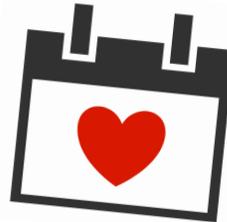
203.777.5683

 **DONATE**

Did you know a gift of just \$15 covers
the cost of a family's one night stay?
Visit our website to donate today!

rmhc-ctma.org

Save the Date!



Ronald McDonald House® of Connecticut's

Trees of Hope Holiday Spectacular

December 7th-15th, 2019

Open 10 am – 5 pm Daily (Open until 7 pm Tuesday & Thursday)*

Maritime Center, 555 Long Wharf Drive, New Haven, 06511

Open to the Public • Free Admission • \$1 raffle tickets sold at event!



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE OF
SPRINGFIELD'S

**LIGHTS
OF LOVE**

JOIN US!

DECEMBER 7, 2019
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE
OF SPRINGFIELD

34 CHAPIN TERRACE
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01107

Tree Lighting

Holiday Music

Hot Cocoa & Treats



Please RSVP by November 18th to
Skochii Bennett-Polchlopek at
skochii@rmhc-wma.org or at (413) 794-5683