



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
of Connecticut &  
Western Massachusetts

# From the Heart

Stories of how you keep families together when it matters most

Fall 2022



Natalia and Loyda Texidor

# Letter from the Executive Director

How quickly this year has gone by! As we enter the final months of 2022, we are reflecting on the impact we have made and the opportunities for growth next year.

This issue of "From the Heart" begins with Natalia's story. For the first time, we are sharing a family story in both English and Spanish, her native language. Natalia has stayed in our Springfield House several times and she and her mother, Loyda, recount their first visit to our House and the comfort they feel upon each subsequent trip.

Summer 2022 marked five years since the grand opening of our new Connecticut House. With your help, we've made an amazing difference for families in the years since. As a result of building the Connecticut House, RMHC CTMA also gained a valuable community partner in Petra Construction and the Petra family, whom we highlight this issue.

We are excited to see the revival of our Meals from the Heart program. Cooking a meal for our families is a great way to lighten their mental load so they may better focus on caring for their child. Our Double the Love giving challenge kicks off on November 1st! Monetary gifts made to our Houses will be matched dollar for dollar, meaning that your donation will go twice as far to help RMH families.

We have accomplished much this year and we hope to achieve even more with your support. Because of you, families will stay together and will feel comfort and support in the months ahead.

With Gratitude,



Michelle D'Amore



## Double the LOVE

November 1 – December 31

Your end of year gift will be  
matched dollar for dollar and  
help twice as many families!





# Natalia's New Start

For the first six months of her life, Natalia visited doctors throughout Puerto Rico with her mom. Natalia was born with a birth defect and the best orthopedic surgeon on the island recommended amputating her leg. Waiting lists for consultations were long and Natalia's parents didn't know what to do. A week later, they received a call from Shriners's Hospital for Children in Springfield, Massachusetts offering to help.

"It was my first time leaving my country," said Loyda, Natalia's mother. "Natalia was so small and I was traveling alone with her. I did not know if this place (RMH) existed. When she was first born, I looked for help all over Puerto Rico. We went to several specialists and the best orthopedic surgeon in Puerto Rico recommended surgery [to amputate] as early as six months old. When she said that I broke down. What were we going to do? How would I help my daughter once the time came for her to walk?"

"Era la primera vez que salía de mi país, yo sola con mi niña en mis brazos," dijo Loyda, la madre de Natalia. "Natalia era pequeña y no sabíamos si existía este lugar. Cuando nació, busqué ayuda en Puerto Rico. Fui a varios médicos y el mejor ortopedista de Puerto Rico me dijo que la podíamos operar a los 6 meses. Comencé a llorar y me sentí desesperada porque, ¿qué iba a hacer? ¿Cómo iba a ayudar a mi hija a caminar cuando llegara el tiempo?"

Traveling so far from home was frightening for the Texidor family. Loyda, is afraid of flying and flying with a disabled child was especially scary. However, they were determined to get the best possible care for Natalia. Once they arrived in Springfield, the family stayed in the Ronald McDonald House while Natalia received care in the hospital for several weeks.

Natalia underwent two surgeries in that time. After the second surgery, she was fitted for her first prosthetic leg. She took her first steps in the hospital at just 10 months old!

Since their initial visit, Natalia and her parents have returned to the Ronald McDonald House many times to receive new prostheses as she grows. Continued on next page.



Natalia shows off her leg!



Natalia and Loyda

## Natalia's New Start

(Continued from page 2.) "Siempre nos quedamos en La Casa. La primera vez que estuvimos aquí, nos quedamos dos meses y medio. Volvimos cuando tenía nueve meses. Viajábamos aquí dos veces al año por dos meses hasta que dejó de crecer tan rápido."

"We always stay at the House. The first time we were here, we stayed two and a half months. We came back when she was nine months old. We traveled here twice a year for two months each time until she stopped growing so fast."

Natalia says, "It's amazing at the House, I love it. It's a really safe space for families. They can feel like they are at home. They have a comfortable space and it's very special. I always say it's nice to stay here, it feels like my second home."



Natalia during her recent stay.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Carol Swiconek

What brought you to Ronald McDonald House?

I recently retired after working with children and families as a child development specialist for 21 years. The House has provided me the opportunity to continue to do what I love.

What do you enjoy the most about being a part of the RMH family?

I meet and interact with so many families from around the world! Everyone in the RMH family is so supportive and positive. There is always something to do as we focus on making the families' stay as comfortable and personalized as possible.

Why is helping Ronald McDonald House important to you?

I have great empathy for the families who come to RMH. Through my work in the Early Intervention system, I have supported and assisted many families of premature infants. We often have such families staying at the House and I am always sensitive to their needs. The gratitude that families show is a big part of why I volunteer at RMH.



Carol prepares produce for families.

## Your Fundraisers Matter!

**Did you know 18 people have held Facebook fundraisers for RMHC CTMA families this year?**

Help us reach 30 by the end of year and create a RMHC CTMA FB Fundraiser on your profile page! All donations are used to ensure our families are surrounded by care, comfort and kindness throughout their stay!



# Comforting Meals that Warm Hearts



Ronald McDonald House strives to provide every family with all the comforts of home, plus the compassion and hospitality of our staff, volunteers and other families.

Our Meals From the Heart program allows individuals and small groups to prepare a meal in our kitchen or order a meal from a restaurant of their choosing and have it delivered to the House. Donations can also be made to cover the cost of a meal.

Warm and healthy meals give great comfort to our guest families and allows them to focus on their child's well-being without the added stress or cost of preparing daily meals.

Supporting our families with a home cooked or catered meal is among the most generous donations you can make, helping to nourish parents and their children during trying and difficult times.

If you would like to provide a meal for our families, please call our Houses to schedule a date and time for your meal donation. This will allow us to notify the families staying with us of your generosity and ensure that multiple meals are not donated at the same time.



**New Haven, CT House**, please contact Kaitlyn Darcy at 203-777-5683x409 or [kdarcy@rmhc-ctma.org](mailto:kdarcy@rmhc-ctma.org)

**Springfield, MA House**, please contact Celine Hamilton Quill at 413-794-5683 or [chamiltonquill@rmhc-ctma.org](mailto:chamiltonquill@rmhc-ctma.org)



# Five Years of Impacting Families

In June, we celebrated five years since the first families moved into our new Connecticut House located at 860 Howard Avenue. With your help, we've made a BIG impact on the families who need us!

**800 families** received care, comfort, and kindness within the walls of 860 Howard Avenue.



**22,134 nights** of lodging, love, and support were given to families who needed our services.

**100 families** called us home for over 2 months.



The longest a family stayed with us was **330 nights**.



**163 families** had multiple stays in our House. **29 families** stayed with us more than 5 times since 2017.

**591 families** who stayed with us reside within Connecticut. The largest populations came from **Fairfield, New Haven, and New London Counties**.



**YOU** helped families save **\$5,422,830** by providing a home away from home, meals and daily necessities.

## Donor Spotlight: Guido and Diane Petra



Launching the campaign to build the new RMH of CT introduced our organization to new individuals and businesses throughout the New Haven community. One of the strongest and most compassionate relationships that formed was with Guido and Diane Petra, as well as all those involved at Petra Construction.

As a family owned business for over six decades, Petra Construction and the Petras themselves understand the importance of family, community, support and dedication. Their compassion for the mission of RMH has been palpable in every interaction and conversation.

Petra Construction was a valuable partner in the creation of our new facility. Guido and his team brought expertise and the highest quality standards to the project. Their long standing relationships and respect for local tradesmen enhanced the project by securing the best craftsmanship. Every foot of the new House was constructed with care and extra special attention because all involved knew that one day, special children and families would benefit from their work. Petra Construction employees embraced the House during their time on site as well as in the following years. They continue to attend events, donate their time, and provide donations to ensure families have all they need. We know they are always be a quick phone call away for any needs that may arise operationally.

Both Guido and Diane personally became ambassadors for RMHC CTMA. Guido serves on the Board of Directors to share his connections and expertise with the entire Chapter. He continues to impact the CT House as well as provide support to our House in Springfield through his knowledge and connections. Diane deepened the relationship with the Yale New Haven Hospital Toy Closet and our families by turning her keen eyes to the needs of age specific items to enhance the time children spend in between doctor appointments and treatments while at the House. By providing items that allow children to play and be creative, she helps alleviate their worry and stress if just for a few precious moments of play. Both personally and through their business, the Petras continually support all of the House's fundraising events and help ensure their success.

In just a few short years, Guido, Diane, and all of Petra Construction have left a significant mark on RMHCT. They continue to ensure families can always have a home away from home that is safe, sound and supportive. We are forever grateful that our capital campaign introduced us to them.



Ronald McDonald  
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### Did you know ?

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right from your smartphone!



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to help children and families.**