



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

From the Heart

Summer 2023

Stories of how you keep families together when it matters most



Celebrating 35 years of supporting RMHC CTMA families!

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut & Western Massachusetts

Hope and Light

This spring and summer, all of us at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts (RMHC CTMA) have many reasons to celebrate and smile!

In April, we celebrated National Volunteer Appreciation Week. Our volunteers are the foundation of who we are. Their love and commitment to our mission of providing a home away from home to children and families is a beacon of light. Volunteerism comes in so many forms. Our mission partners, like Coca-Cola, support us with major funding, while our front office volunteers assist with administrative tasks and provide support to families, and partners like Trader Joe's and Rachel's Table provide food for those staying with us. Families feel the direct impact of all our incredible RMHC volunteers and we are so grateful.

This issue of "From the Heart" features parents, Tessa and Cristian, and their "little fighter," Rio. This June, our Chapter celebrates its 35th anniversary of supporting critically ill children and their families. Since its inception, RMHC CTMA has supported more than 25,000 families, like Rio's, with comfort, kindness and care in our Houses and countless more children and families through our community partnerships.

Your long-standing support and compassion for helping children and families is a promise of hope when the misfortune of illness or injury alters their lives. As long as they need us, we need you.

With Gratitude,



Michelle D'Amore
Chief Executive Officer



Michelle and the Galvis Family.



The Coca-Cola Company recently donated \$5,000 to each of our Houses to support family needs and daily care.

Thank you for continuing to be a great mission partner!

Paige Ramsay, our regional Coca-Cola representative and RMHC Ambassador.

Rio, the Little Fighter

Cristian and Tessa spent three long years undergoing IVF treatments in the hopes of having a baby. After suffering two miscarriages, they were finally able to conceive their son, Rio – their “little fighter.”

Around 20 weeks of pregnancy, Tessa began to experience complications with her blood pressure and blood sugar. She also learned that her placenta was not delivering necessary nutrients to Rio, meaning that her baby was experiencing growth restriction.

Tessa was admitted to the hospital and started to undergo a round of steroid treatment to try to help Rio’s lungs develop in case he needed to be delivered early. When she began to experience pre-eclampsia, Tessa and Cristian were left with no choice but to deliver Rio prematurely.

At 25 weeks and three days of pregnancy, Rio was born. He weighed just 13 ounces and was only 10 inches long. Tessa and Cristian were scared and uncertain of what the future held for them and their baby.

Rio was admitted to the NICU as soon as he was born. Tessa and Cristian had not planned to have their baby in New Haven, and home was well over an hour away. They began to panic at the idea that they would return home without their son while he continued to undergo treatment so far away. That is when they learned about Ronald McDonald House – a place that would allow them to stay just across the street from the hospital so they could be with Rio at a moment’s notice.



Tessa and Rio in the NICU.

“RMH not only gave us a place to stay, but peace of mind as we navigated a challenging situation.” - Tessa

“RMH has done so much for our family. They have supported us during the hardest of times. From the first day, they made us feel welcomed and cared for. They help us to celebrate our son’s milestones and always check in with us to see how we are doing. We’ve received gifts during the holidays, and even a birthday present on Rio’s due date.

RMH offers so much to families staying with them. There are meals provided for us and activities hosted in the House. We have loved being able to meet other families going through the same thing we are and making those connections has made us feel less alone.

Without a doubt, things would have been extremely different for us without the Ronald McDonald House. We would have been trying to commute over two hours a day to visit our son. We would not have been able to be as present, our stress and anxiety levels would have been through the roof, and we would have been exhausted.

RMH not only gave us a place to stay, but peace of mind as we navigated a challenging situation. We are truly grateful for RMH and this facility will forever be in our hearts as a place that lifted us up during a difficult time.”



Cristian and Rio.

Rebuild, Restore, Renew - RMH of Springfield



The new façade and renovated oasis of the Ronald McDonald House of Springfield.

Ronald McDonald House of Springfield was built over 32 years ago, and has since been home to over 12,000 families. After all the years of providing a warm, safe, and comforting environment, the wear and tear on the exterior of the building had caused severe deterioration of the siding, gutters, and windows, to the point of needing full replacement. By addressing these repairs quickly, we safeguarded the guest rooms against possible damage from any additional exterior deterioration, ensuring no families would be turned away.

The Beaulieu Construction Company stepped up to the challenge and worked diligently to preserve the integrity of the House, beautify and reinforce our outer appearance, and were as unintrusive as possible to the families in our care. Throughout the process, RMH families continued to use our services while staying in upgraded rooms as we completed the multi-month endeavor.

The outdoor space in the backyard still requires renovation as the deterioration of the old playground needed removal this past fall. Our plan is to create an inviting space that includes a children's play area, a family activity section, and a pergola to provide shade to families enjoying fresh air and sunshine.

There is still time to become partners with RMHC CTMA in this worthy endeavor. Please consider making a gift to help complete our Rebuild, Restore, Renew Campaign. The contribution that you make today will keep families together and provide hope and healing for children for decades to come.

Celebrating our Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of our Houses. We could not offer our RMH families care, comfort, and kindness without their help! The volunteers who join our organization all have unique stories to share. They all answered the call to service in their own way and we are so grateful.

Lauren was inspired to volunteer at RMH when she learned that there was an opportunity to provide meals for the families in our Houses. On the day that she arrived with her donation, she knew that she wanted to get more involved.

"I love everything about RMH. There's a strong sense of camaraderie between the volunteers and staff. We all work together to bring some comfort to those staying with us. I enjoy my interactions with the families most of all — I am inspired by their strength and bravery."



Donna and Karen were strangers before they began volunteering in our Springfield House, but when their schedules aligned, they became fast friends! Today, they love to do their volunteer shifts together every Thursday morning.

Donna and Karen agree that their favorite part of volunteering in our House is making new relationships with fellow volunteers, staff, and families and feeling like they are part of a family when they are here.

As a student at The Ohio State University, Andrew volunteered at the local Ronald McDonald House and raised money for the organization by participating in a campus-wide dance marathon fundraiser. When he moved back to Connecticut after graduation, he wanted to continue to support the mission of RMH.

Andrew says that helping RMH is important to him because, "Children are the future of the world and deserve the chance to heal and rest with family by their side."



**RMH volunteers change families' lives for the better.
Volunteer at our Houses and start making a difference today!**

Donor Spotlights

Trader Joe's

Trader Joe's has been helping feed RMHCT families for over seven years. Through their Neighborhood Shares Program, fresh fruit, vegetables, and signature treats of cookies, mini cakes, flowers, and snacks are donated weekly. Trader Joe's support ensures a consistent staple of fresh and pantry items for every family to enjoy.

Thanks to special RMH volunteers, like Mary and Bruce, the donations are picked up and delivered to the House. Our staff and volunteers sort and stock all items in the kitchen for family use, as well as arrange the flowers to add color and happiness to our dining tables.



Mary and Bruce delivering a weekly donation from Trader Joe's.

Rachel's Table

Rachel's Table, a program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, has been working to alleviate hunger and reduce food waste in the Springfield community and surrounding areas for many years. The Rachel's Table volunteers collect food from area supermarkets, caterers, restaurants and bakeries, and—with big smiles—deliver it to local non-profits and organizations.

RMH Springfield is one of the organizations they support, and we are appreciative of their kindness. Two days a week, a delivery is made. No two weeks are ever the same. Sometimes, its frozen ready to make lunch or dinner foods, or bagels, ice cream, veggies, chicken nuggets and french fries. At other times the delivery is fresh sandwiches, snacks, pastries or bakery items such as pumpkin and banana bread slices, vanilla scones, cookies and even cake pops. This food delivery is carefully sorted and placed in the shared fridge and freezers by House volunteers, for families to access as needed and desired.

These types of food deliveries allow RMH families to worry less about what's for lunch or dinner and enjoy wholesome nutritious comfort food. This ensures they are focusing all their energy on their child's essential medical needs.



Rachel's Table delivers fresh and frozen goods to our Springfield House.

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

JOIN THE

2023 UNITEX MATCHING CHALLENGE

This summer, every challenge gift received will be matched dollar for dollar by Unitex to ensure children can face their medical journeys hand in hand with their parents.



**Ronald McDonald
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Unitex®
Healthcare Laundry Services



Want to leave a lasting legacy? Consider a planned gift.

If you are interested in making a gift to the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut or the Ronald McDonald House of Springfield, there are several ways to give. Planned gifts may be made of cash, personal property, appreciated assets such as securities or stock, life insurance, and through retirement plans and IRAs. These gifts not only provide necessary, lasting support for our Houses, but also provide benefits back to you by way of tax deductions.

There are a variety of options and strategies available to suit donors. If you have an existing estate plan or are considering one and want to learn more about how to include the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut and the Ronald McDonald House of Springfield, please visit www.rmhc-ctma.org and go to our Plan Your Legacy page, or speak to an estate planning attorney or financial advisor.

Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone to go directly to information on options for planned gifts.





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Did you know ?

You can support RMHC families
right from your smartphone!



Celebrating 35 Years!



RMHC®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

