



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

From the Heart

Winter 2022

Stories of how you keep families together when it matters most



Then and Now Jessie's 5 Year Journey

Reflections of Gratitude

Happy New Year! Ronald McDonald House Charities of CT & Western MA (RMHC CTMA) kicked off 2021 with hope, gratitude and a sense of purpose. Throughout the year these sentiments grew and thanks to the incredible support we have received from friends like you, we felt a renewed sense of purpose as 2021 came to an end.

While 2021 continued to challenge us, your support never wavered. It enabled us to move forward with our mission of providing essential resources to sick children and their families. Your impact was impressive and this issue of *From the Heart* tells the story of why this year's accomplishments are so meaningful.

This issue highlights the lasting impression your support makes years after families leave the House through a story shared by Rhea, Will and Jessie and an update from the Lee Family. These stories illustrate how ongoing acts of philanthropy and volunteerism enable families to be close to their children while they received critical medical care in nearby hospitals.

Lastly, this issue is dedicated to the memory of Claire DiMartino, a founder of RMH of Connecticut. Claire left a lasting impression on everyone who met her. She dedicated her life to serving families and touched the lives of each one that stayed with us during her tenure as a volunteer, staff member and Board member. Her love of the families and her work to comfort them was boundless. Claire's dedication and compassion have left a lasting legacy for us to uphold.

Just like Claire, you give families a home away from home, support, and compassion when they need it most. As long as they need us, we need you.

Thank you for all you do. I look forward us to continuing this important in 2022.

With Gratitude,



Michelle D'Amore



Get into Shamrock Season!

\$0.25 from every Shamrock Shake purchase between 3/1 and 3/15 will be donated to support our RMHC families!

Jessie Rose's story

Although it's been over five years since we moved out of Ronald McDonald House in New Haven, Connecticut, the House, the people, and the experience are never far from our minds.

In July of 2016, I was brought to Yale New Haven Hospital via ambulance and our lives were changed forever. Our beloved baby was here, but very early and incredibly small (less than two pounds). We lived at Ronald McDonald House (then on George St) for nearly 3 months so we could be as close as possible to our little miracle girl. Every day in the NICU was filled with uncertainty and more emotions than I thought I could ever experience. But waiting for us when we returned "home" to RMH were the people who came to feel like family. The staff and volunteers always made sure the house felt warm and safe. There was always someone to talk with if you needed to deconstruct your day, or if you just needed to talk about anything BUT your day. The other guests were also on their own difficult journey, and often we'd congregate in the dining area at nights, sharing a meal or a tasty treat at the end of an impossibly long day, another one sure to be soon on the horizon.



Baby Jessie with Rhea and Will

After nearly 3 months, our beautiful daughter, Jessie, came home.

Although we'd heard of Ronald McDonald House prior to our stay, we really had no idea of what actually goes on at one until we were in a position where we had to move in. We know now that we'll be grateful to RMH for the rest of our lives and we'll continue to raise awareness and support for this tremendous organization.



Although her entry into this world was rough, Jessie is now thriving. At 5 1/2, she's loving, kind, funny, smart, and giving. She loves to sing, dance, read, and pretend. She's in kindergarten and she loves school! Her favorite friends are her 3 cousins, and she just loves with her whole heart. We couldn't have given ourselves the luxury of thinking this far into the future when we were at RMH. Now, we couldn't imagine it any other way.

We all returned to New Haven this December to visit the Trees of Hope event at the Maritime Center and Jessie gasped with excitement over each of the nearly 150 Christmas trees. We are so very lucky that we get to experience this journey with her. And we will never forget the generosity of Ronald McDonald House.

Jessie and her parents enjoyed visiting Trees of Hope this year!

297

**Families
stayed in
our Houses**



4,569
Nights provided
to families

Families came from
22 & **3**
States Countries

Families saved



\$1,139,385

in out of pocket lodging and meal expenses
by staying in our Houses

34%

of families
stayed for
more than 1
week

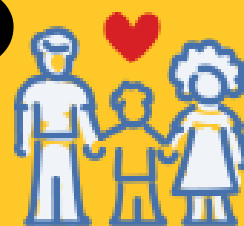
16%

of families
stayed for
more than 1
month

181

volunteers
donated a
total of

4,338
hours



Family Featurettes

The Lee-Galullo Family

After staying in our Connecticut House for 196 nights, Kingston said goodbye and went home with his parents!

His parents, Alyssa and Eddie expressed their gratitude for staying in the Ronald McDonald House.

"We were actually able to bond with him because we were here. We live far away, so being near him helped us to be together as our little family. It's been a great experience and we're really grateful."



Getting to Know Emilia

What are some of your hobbies?

Painting and drawing

What do you like most about staying at Ronald McDonald House?

The elevator, and going up and down the stairs.

What does "home" mean to you?

Family



**Thank you
for making our
2021 Holiday Challenge
an overwhelming
success!**

**We received 753 gifts to provide
care, comfort, and kindness to
RMHC CTMA families.**

Donor Spotlight: The Fusco Corporation



For more than 15 years, Fusco Corporation's headquarters (Long Wharf Maritime Center) has housed Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut's largest annual fundraiser, Trees of Hope. Their generosity has allowed Trees of Hope to flourish and grow and it has becoming a holiday staple in New Haven.

Vice President of Fusco Management, Laura Carpenter, shares "Fusco is proud to support the Ronald McDonald House and the Trees of Hope fundraiser. We look forward to hosting the event each year and enjoy the creative displays that deck the halls of our Long Wharf Maritime Center."

Despite the unprecedented times we find ourselves in, Fusco Corporation continues to be a steadfast partner devoted to working alongside Ronald McDonald House to host the event in the safest way possible.

In 2021, the 32nd Annual Trees of Hope raised \$121,000 to cover more than 1,000 nights for families in need. Since Fusco Corporation's involvement, Trees of Hope has raised over \$1.3 million in support of the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut!

With Fusco Corporation's dedication to our community and the RMHC mission, we look forward to kicking off the holiday season with Trees of Hope at the Long Wharf Maritime Center for years to come.



Claire DiMartino, Founder and Friend



Claire pictured with Dick Popilowski and Michelle D'Amore at Trees of Hope

Claire was a founding member of the Ronald McDonald House of CT. She played a vital role in the efforts to purchase the original building for use as the future Ronald McDonald House of CT and worked with the committee to secure the license from RMHC in 1985. Being a parent of a sick child, she understood the need for parents to have a home away from home during a child's illness. Through her many community ties and work experience with local unions and tradesman, Claire helped to secure product, labor and volunteers to renovate the existing structure at 501 George Street into a Ronald McDonald House. In 2017, Claire was instrumental in advocating and raising funds to build the current RMH Connecticut on Howard Ave.

In her many years of service, Claire held roles of employee, volunteer, board member, philanthropist, and friend to each family who walked through the door. The crown jewels of her work were Trees of Hope, the annual golf tournament and Lights of Love, ensuring they became signature annual events which continue to provide essential resources to the House today.

Claire will be deeply missed throughout the community. We find peace knowing her spirit will live on through the RMH mission for years to come. We dedicate this issue of *From the Heart* in memory of her and plan to celebrate her life long history with Ronald McDonald House this coming spring.



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

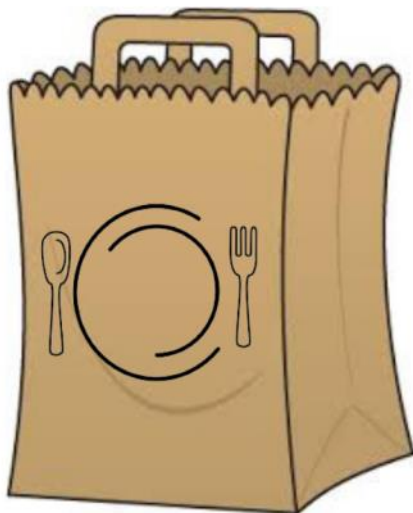
www.rmhc-ctma.org
860 Howard Avenue, Suite A
New Haven, CT 06519
203.777.5683

Did you know ?

You can support RMHC families
right from your smartphone!



Virtual Ways to Give



SUPPORT RMH FAMILIES BY
ORDERING A CATERED MEAL
STARTING A FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER
PURCHASING WISH LIST DONATIONS

CALL OUR HOUSES FOR MORE INFORMATION!
203-777-5683 (CT) OR 413-794-5683 (MA)