



AROUND the HOUSE

The Magazine for Ronald McDonald House of New York, Inc.

SPECIAL SIBLINGS

Youth and Family Services honors "The Forgotten Population"



THERAPY DOGS

These "Angels" Bring More Than Smiles
.....

ONE LIFE:

The Rodriguez Family Finds Their Way
.....



GALA OF GRATITUDE

Plus!

Spotlight on
RMDH's Newly
Designed Website





AROUND the HOUSE

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Cover photo: Jeshwaan Daniel and Jah'eisha Duncan

THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

provides temporary housing "a home away from home" for pediatric cancer patients and their families. The House provides families a supportive and caring environment which encourages and nurtures the development of child-to-child and parent-to-parent support systems. Ronald McDonald House in New York City is the largest facility of its type in the world.



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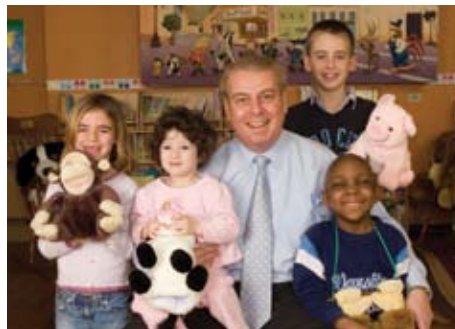
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



(From left) Rhian Brown from London, England; Valerie Rodriguez from Puerto Rico; Bill Sullivan, President, Ronald McDonald House; Connor Brown (standing) from London, England; and Kierol Aaron from Brooklyn, New York.

DEAR FRIENDS,

The month of May celebrates my two year anniversary as the President of the Ronald McDonald House of New York, Inc. The days and months have flown by quickly and I continue to be inspired by our courageous families, extremely committed volunteers and most dedicated staff.

This "Around The House" represents the sixth issue of our expanded quarterly newsletter dedicated to informing you of the activities at the Ronald

McDonald House. Through your generosity—thank you for using the envelopes enclosed in this magazine—you have funded this publication and mailing at no cost to the organization. We hope you will continue to enjoy reading real stories of our struggling families and the volunteers who make a meaningful difference in the lives of children battling cancer.

In 2006, a series of focus groups comprised of family members, volunteers and staff created a new emphasis which we call our "Comprehensive Youth and Family Services". The initiative will greatly expand and enhance our ability to respond to the needs of entire families—including parents and siblings—living at the Ronald McDonald House while a youngster receives lifesaving cancer treatment. Thanks to three foundations, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Naddisy Foundation, and the Skirball Foundation, this new program was completely funded for this year. As you read the article about the Comprehensive Youth and Family Services Program in this issue, we firmly believe this new service will provide the bedrock for significant and measurable outcomes for the families we are dedicated to serve.

Further reading in this May 2007 issue features our new Therapy Dog Program, which is a heart-warming and healing new addition that our kids love. You will also find an update on our newly redesigned website, and a story describing the journey of three of our Ronald McDonald House guests, the Rodriguez family.

All of these programs, new and old, would not be possible without the consistent and generous support of our donors. The article highlighting our Gala Celebration on May 21st details how the event raises 1/3 of the House's operating budget and provides a venue to recognize and honor two great friends of the House: Laurence D. Fink, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, BlackRock, Inc. and Edward J. Malloy, President, Building & Construction Trades Council of Greater New York. Larry and Ed will receive awards for their extraordinary generosity, their devotion to the children of the Ronald McDonald House, and for their commitment to the facility and the families it serves.

In closing, I would like to thank you for two great years and for warmly welcoming me into this Ronald McDonald House family. I pledge to continue to give 100%. I thank you for all you have done and continue to do.

Sincerely,

William T. Sullivan
President and Chief Executive Officer

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HOUSE?



SCHOLARSHIP NEWS: HALF A MILLION DOLLARS TO BE AWARDED

WHAT IT IS: The Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), in association with the Hispanic American Commitment to Educational Resources (HACER), will award \$500,000 worth of college scholarships to Latino students in the New York/tri-state area.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM: RMHC/HACER, the nation's largest college scholarship program for Latinos, was created to offer financial assistance to high school seniors headed to college. Since its inception in 1987, it has awarded more than \$3 million.

THE GOAL: To assist college-bound Latinos. "This is an investment in our youth and the advancement of the Latino community as a whole," says RMHC/HACER Chairman, Roberto Madan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Wilson Guzman at 646-747-8821 or wguzman@index-p.com



CALL ARLENE MIRABEL AT 212.639.0100 TO BUY THESE ITEMS OR GET MORE INFORMATION. CHECK BACK OFTEN TO SEE THE NEW SELECTION OF APPAREL, BOOKMARKS AND TRAVEL MUGS. PROCEEDS GO TO THE HOUSE. HERE IS A SAMPLING OF WHAT YOU CAN GET:



Silk scarf and silk tie with original children's artwork



House key ring



House Cookbook



Bookmark



Lapel pin



Leather-covered travel cups



RMDH snow globe



Women's t-shirts (S, M, L, XL, XXL)

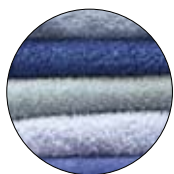
*** RMDH WISH LIST**

From bedding to household cleaners, we need to replenish our cupboards. Through your generosity, we hope to fulfill the below requests. Please send new items to Arlene Mirabel's attention at the House. For an updated wish list and quantities needed, please go to http://www.rmdh.org/involved_5.html.

405 East 73rd Street
New York, NY 10021
Tel: 212-639-0100

New items only please.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Towels: hand and bath | Baby lotion |
| Pillows | Baby shampoo |
| Pillowcases: white | Canned milk |
| Blankets | Coffee |
| Paper goods: cups, plates, napkins, paper towels | Sugar packets |
| Kitchen towels | Fabric softener |
| Dishware | Laundry detergent |
| Glasses | Cascade |
| Cereal bowls | Clorox wipes |
| Kitchen utensils | Dishwashing liquid |
| Pots and pans | Oreck vacuums |
| Personal soap | Art supplies: |
| Shampoo and conditioner | • Brushes |
| Toothpaste and toothbrushes | • Glue |
| Strollers | • Kid's paints (washable) |
| Baby diapers | • Paper |
| Scrapbook supplies | • Print paper |
| | Magazine subscriptions |



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DEDICATION
like Shelly Friedman's is admirable. Since 1985, he's been using his legal expertise in zoning and land use to help the Ronald McDonald House in New York City. One of his proudest achievements was getting the appropriate zoning permits for the current House through an arduous appeals process. As a founding partner of Friedman & Gotbaum LLP, he balances his career with his family life (he's married and has two daughters), yet still manages to find time for the House. What keeps someone involved with such enthusiasm for more

than two decades? "It's an honor to work with the quality of people that are on this Board and who run the House," says Friedman. Through the years, he's seen the growth of the House's importance in serving its families and in furthering cancer research, and he believes the House's unique mission will continue to grow in importance in the years to come. "We are needed, and we need to do more," he says. With that goal in mind, he looks forward to working with his colleagues on the Board to build a new, larger New York City Ronald McDonald House. "It will definitely be a challenge," he says, "but something I know I can make a strong contribution toward." Based on his track record, that's a sure thing.

PARTNER HOSPITALS

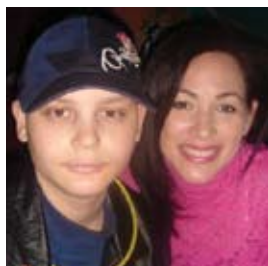
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| Bellevue Hospital | Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital |
| Beth Israel Hospital | Mount Sinai Medical Center |
| Hospital for Joint Diseases | NewYork-Presbyterian-Cornell Medical Center |
| Hospital for Special Surgery | New York University Hospital |
| Manhattan Eye & Ear Hospital | Rusk Institute |
| Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center | St. Vincent's Hospital |
| Montefiore Hospital | |

HOUSE STAFF

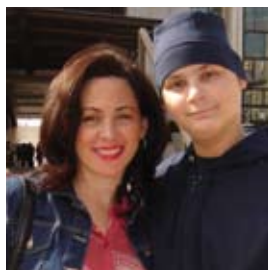
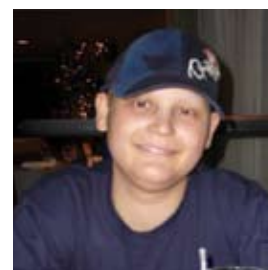
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ONE



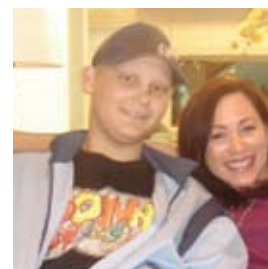
The Rodriguez Family
Finds Their Way
In New York City.



LIFE

W

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time living in the
same room at the

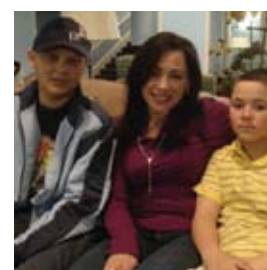
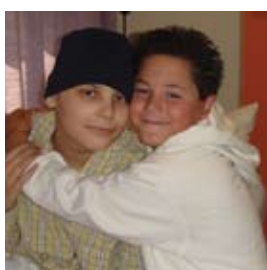
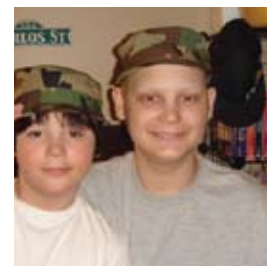


Ronald McDonald House has brought
them closer together, Carlos and Eduardo Rodriguez
seemingly race to see who can shout “No!” first. Which
is to say: they are young, and they are brothers.



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Lizbeth, Carlos, and Eduardo make the most of their time at the Ronald McDonald House in New York City.



The Rodriguez brothers are as different as two siblings can be: Carlos is a peaceful, lanky fifteen year-old with an easy smile; Eduardo is an athletic ten year-old with a seemingly bottomless appetite for activity. As their mother Lizbeth says, the experience of coming to New York as a family to treat Carlos' illness has changed everything.

"Back home in Puerto Rico," she says, "we each lived separate lives. Here, we live one life." This is of course literally true, when one considers that the three Rodriguez's share one room together at the Ronald McDonald House, but the implications of Lizbeth's sentiment reach far deeper. "This has given me an opportunity to know each of my kids so much better," she says.

Carlos and Eduardo are learning a great deal about each other also, including how different they are from each other. Eduardo likes baseball and watching wrestling on TV, and signs up for every event he can find at the House. Carlos would rather stay in the room and explore a book—he read the last Harry Potter in four days—or the vast realms of the Internet, or, on occasion, the spectacle of live theatre at nearby Times Square. Despite these differences, it's clear that Carlos and Eduardo are also learning the extent to which a sibling can be counted on, for support and strength, when it is needed most.

"Mommy, something's bothering me there, in my leg," Carlos said to his mother in the winter of 2005. Soon after, Carlos was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma, a rare bone cancer appearing mostly in teens, with no more than a thousand cases in the U.S. each year. Within weeks of the diagnosis, Lizbeth closed her office as a marketing consultant in Puerto Rico and hurried with Carlos to New York City, to begin immediate treatments at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. "When the doctors said Carlos will have to stay longer," Lizbeth says, "I brought up Eduardo so the kids could be together, and because I missed him."

Before Eduardo arrived, Lizbeth says, Carlos mostly stayed in his room and didn't participate in RMDH activities. Coincidentally, Carlos started walking again when Eduardo came, and as his gregarious brother invaded every aspect of RMDH activities and life, Carlos ventured out more and more to hang out with him. This took some of the care-taking pressure of Lizbeth, and as Carlos says, it also took some of the pressure of Lizbeth's constant attention off of him. "My mom's not on me 24/7 anymore," Carlos says, smiling.

Eduardo initially had a difficult time adjusting to the move, but Lizbeth explained that his brother needed him. "I'm really happy with the House," she says, "especially the volunteers, they've helped me a lot with Eduardo. He started to feel a part of the House, and that helped me relax."

Indeed, with the Rodriguez family together again—the boys' father, uncle, and grandparents visit from Puerto Rico when they can—a harmony has been achieved. "They give me balance," Lizbeth says, "One is so quiet, staying in the room, and the other is so hyper and likes to meet everyone. I've learned to appreciate them for who they are."

The brothers, too, are finding their way. Eduardo joined a baseball league, and Carlos received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Ronald McDonald House Chapel on April 19. Most importantly, Carlos is through eight of his twelve cycles of chemo. "Things are going good I guess," he says. "They said I'll finish the [treatment] program this summer."

Whatever the future may bring, the Rodriguez's are a stronger family because of their experiences at the Ronald McDonald House, and Carlos and Eduardo have learned—perhaps more than they would like—the true blessing and challenge of what it means to be a brother. ✿

SPECIAL SIBLINGS

Ronald McDonald House's Youth and Family Services Program Honors
"The Forgotten Population"

At 4pm on a given weekday there are kids in the Ronald McDonald House Playroom wearing surgical masks, but they are not patients. They're siblings of patients, and some have to wear masks to protect their sick sister or brother from germs that they themselves might catch. They are in the Playroom for the After-School-Tutoring program, paired one-on-one with experienced tutors who come each day to help them with their studies.

The After-School-Tutoring program is part of the Ronald McDonald House's new Youth and Family Services (YFS), a comprehensive set of initiatives generously supported through its first year by grants from Carnegie Corporation of New York, Naddisy Foundation, and the Skirball Foundation.

Siblings of cancer patients are often called "the forgotten population," left to fend for themselves when the life or death needs of their sister or brother take necessary priority. The daily tutoring sessions are much more than studying Math, Science, and Reading, though these are obviously extremely important. The sessions are also a chance to show the siblings that the Ronald McDonald House not only remembers them, but wants them to know just how special they are.

Youth and Family Services provide for all three populations served by RMDH: patients, siblings, and parents. For patients, expanded transportation services allow families to quickly move back and forth to Hospitals from 6am to 10pm in fully equipped RMDH vans. The cleanliness of the overall House—obviously a priority for immune-compromised patients—was improved exponentially by a complete renovation of the physical RMDH facility and a significant expansion of staff dedicated to keeping the House clean. Now phase two of the program—the brainchild of President and C.E.O. William Sullivan—is in full swing, providing After-School-Tutoring and other activities specifically for the sisters and brothers of RMDH's young cancer patients.

"Traditionally, through no fault of the parents, siblings are neglected," Sullivan says. "Tutors are provided for the sick children in



the hospitals while siblings often fall behind in their schooling."

Children staying at the Ronald McDonald House longer than three months are required by law to enroll in school, and RMDH has established relationships with public schools in the immediate neighborhood—such as P.S. 183, P.S. 158, and Wagner Middle School—to educate the siblings of cancer patients while their brother or sister is in the Hospital. As one might imagine, the strain of a major family crisis compounded with an entirely new school environment, including new curriculums, teachers, classmates, is an incredibly difficult load for any child to handle. RMDH's After-School-Tutoring program eases that burden, providing invaluable education support for the siblings, as well as providing an additional adult support person in their daily life.

Richard Brown, who is staying with his family in the Ronald McDonald House while his son Jack receives treatment at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, has two children, Connor and

Rhian, and they are enrolled in the After-School-Tutoring Program.

"The Tutoring Program excels at providing a structure," Brown says, "which many parents aspire to but in reality might not be able to provide. Further, it assists Connor and Rhian to bridge the gaps between the methods from home and those being taught in the public schools here.

Administrators at the RMDH-affiliated public schools are also major supporters of the program. "It's a win-win situation because through this tutoring we help kids with their grades that have real measurable results," Sullivan says. "And the schools appreciate it because getting the siblings grades up will raise the overall scores of the school."

Marianne Gunther, RMDH's Childlife Specialist, facilitates the Tutoring Program, which welcomed its first students in February of 2007. "A program like this is only as good as its teachers," Gunther says, "and our tutors are just exceptional. Our staff is very educated and sensitive to the psycho-emotional strain



MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILIES

Ronald McDonald House's new Youth and Family Services is generously supported through its first year by grants from three foundations:

- ☀️ **CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK**
- ☀️ **NADDISY FOUNDATION**
- ☀️ **SKIRBALL FOUNDATION**



that all the siblings are struggling with. “

Each of the four tutors in the program has a minimum of five years experience, both in the classroom and helping children with special needs. One tutor, Stephanie Lawrence, spends her summers volunteering at Paul Newman’s “The Hole In The Wall Gang Camp” for kids with life-threatening illnesses, where many Ronald McDonald House children attend each year.

“It’s been a positive experience so far,” Lawrence says. “I see that they look forward to meeting with me, so one of the positive things is the relationship that’s building.”

Lawrence and the other tutors know that teaching academic subjects is only part of their job. “This tutor time is not only academically beneficial,” says Deborah Guanzon, a nine-year Special-Ed teacher and RMDH tutor. “It gives the kids a one-on-one person to connect to, an adult companion that can support them.”

“I’ve really enjoyed seeing the progress that’s being made,” Lawrence says. “It gives me a chance to praise them for that progress. I

make a point to tell them that this is their time. It’s a sense of ownership for them.”

Seven siblings have enrolled in the Tutoring Program so far, and although the program is primarily designed for kids identified by the Board of Education as “at risk,” all siblings can benefit from participation.

“Even if they’re operating at grade level or above,” Guanzon says, “I look for areas I can help them improve. We identify weaknesses and work on the particulars, and the kids get better and better and it’s got to help their self-esteem to see their improvement.”

Gunther also sees the tutors acquiring important insights into the children’s lives. “They’ve been able to identify some development issues in the children that weren’t picked up otherwise,” she says. “This program goes way beyond the educational.”

RMDH’s Youth and Family Services Program provides other new programs for siblings as well, including “Music Together,” a weekly class where parents and children

join to sing and play instruments. The first session, held on April 11th, was a huge success according to Deanna DeCampos, Co-Director of Eastside Music Together, the organization running the program.

“Music is very powerful and can be a very healing experience,” DeCampos says. “It was just so positive to come [to RMDH] for the first time, getting things off the ground is sometimes difficult but this was such an immediate positive experience. It was a joy to see that there was already a strong community at the Ronald McDonald House.”

Programs like “Music Together” and After-School-Tutoring reach out to RMDH siblings and families and pull them into the larger community and that is one of the great blessings of the Ronald McDonald House. The support that families give each other, through shared experiences and shared lives, is as significant and healing as any service the Ronald McDonald House staff can provide.

Phase three of YFS, improving services for parents, is next on the agenda. “We’re forming focus groups right now,” Sullivan says, “so we can determine what type of services we can provide for parents specifically, whether it be support groups, counseling, or anything else.”

Through a special arrangement with New York Sports Club, RMDH already offers athletic club memberships to parents as an outlet for the stress of holding their families together through a crisis. As the Youth and Family Services continue to expand, the Ronald McDonald House will continue its efforts to serve these populations as best as it possibly can, so no one feels forgotten again. ✨

FUNDRAISING & EVENTS



GALA
EVENT

Once a year, Ronald McDonald House hosts a defining event attended by the stars of Wall Street and Corporate America. This year's event, the Ronald McDonald House 15th Annual Spring Gala, is the cornerstone of our annual activities and will raise in excess of \$3 million, a full one-third of RMDH's operating budget. Cocktail hour and filet mignon are only the beginning: our big bash is just around the corner and the excitement is

palpable. ABC News Chief Washington Correspondent and Anchor of ABC's "This Week"... George Stephanopoulos, the master of ceremonies for this special event, will help Ronald McDonald House tell its story to the New York City business community, whose incredible, continuous support make the House possible. Two honorees will be specially recognized for their relentless support of the House: Laurence D. Fink, Chairman

and Chief Executive Officer of BlackRock, Inc. and Edward J. Malloy, President of Building & Construction Trades Council of Greater New York. Their generous financial support and assistance is immeasurable, and we are thrilled to be accommodating so many guests representing all field of business, from finance to construction, without whom we could not make this House what it is and has the potential to be. The program for the Spring Gala

features our wonderful Ronald McDonald House kids, including a performance from our music program, Tunes Are Us, as well as highlights of several of our incredible volunteers. Please join us for this unforgettable night.



SAVE THIS DATE!

Mark your calendar with these upcoming RMDH Fundraising Events you won't want to miss.

GREEK DIVISION WALK-A-THON

Date: **Saturday,
May 19, 2007**
Location: Ronald McDonald
House

ANNUAL SPRING GALA

Date: **Monday,
May 21, 2007**
Location: The Waldorf=Astoria

TEAM RONALD MCDONALD

Date: **July 2007**
(Date will be announced soon)
Location: Latitude
Night Club

Visit our web site
for more information
and update on
these and other
upcoming events.

WINGED FOOT GOLF OUTING

Event: **Monday,
October 1, 2007**
Location: Winged Foot
Golf Club,
Mamaroneck, NY

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL WITH THE NEW YORK GIANTS

Date: **Monday,
September 24, 2007**
Location: New York Athletic Club

KIDS CHARITY FUN RUN

Event: **Saturday,
November 3, 2007**
Location: Central Park

LITTLE MERMAID BROADWAY SHOW

Date: **Wednesday,
November 14, 2007**
Location: Lunt-Fontanne Theatre
Broadway,
New York, NY



Laurence D. Fink
Dinner Honoree



Edward J. Malloy
Dinner Honoree



George Stephanopoulos
Master of Ceremonies

Annual Spring Gala

Monday, May 21st

6:30 pm Cocktails, 7:30 pm Dinner

The Waldorf=Astoria Grand Ballroom:
Park Avenue at 50th Street

How to Get Involved with Team Ronald McDonald

“We are looking to tap into the minds of the most innovative and creative thinkers that bring ideas to fruition in fundraising, donations and filling our events with as many people as possible,” says Team Ronald McDonald Chair Jef Campion. If you would like to contribute your time and brainpower to the Team, contact Ralph Vogel at 212.639.0180 or email him at rvogel@rmdh.org. Volunteers are needed in a variety of realms requiring anywhere from a little time to a lot. Any help you can provide is greatly appreciated!

HERE ARE A FEW UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WHICH VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED:

CAMP RONALD MCDONALD:

A summer camp at the House, complete with tents and a camp-like setting and atmosphere. The kids love it: all the excitement of the great outdoors with all the comforts of home!

DAILY ART PROGRAM:

A special time for kids to relax, have fun, and let the creative energy flow.

DOG THERAPY:

It's truly remarkable the healing effect that a furry friend can have. Find out more about how you and/or your loveable canine can enjoy some fun playtime with the kids.

* TEAM RONALD MCDONALD COCKTAIL PARTY

To take advantage of National Volunteer Recognition Week, we invited volunteers and staff to mingle together at an evening cocktail party on April 19th. What started as a simple open-bar social hour at midtown's swanky Kitano hotel turned into an energetic pep rally for the coming year. Almost 200 volunteers had a chance to mingle and get to know each other while learning about all the fun new ways to get involved—from afternoon tutoring to pet therapy—as well as what's on the radar for the future of the House. Rick Martin, the new Development Director, spoke about the importance of our volunteer program and how special each and every person is to the families and the House. HR Director Ralph Vogel introduced Jef Campion as the new chair of the volunteer fundraising committee, known as Team Ronald McDonald (formerly the JR Committee). Jef talked with the volunteers about this year's event and how we will need everyone to step up and help to make it a great success. Team Ronald McDonald is open to all volunteers, and guests walked away energized and enthused about the projects we have coming up. See below left for more ways to get involved with the Team. This first-ever volunteer recognition cocktail party was such a success that we're sure it won't be our last.



A HEALING

Ronald McDonald House's
Delta-Society-Certified Therapy Dog
Program Brings More Than Smiles



“Are the dogs coming tonight?”

This is how some children at the Ronald McDonald House greet Chaplain Cheryl Frei every time they see her. “No hello or how are you Mrs. Frei,” she says, laughing. “What can you do? They love the dogs.”

Since the Therapy Dog Program began at the Ronald McDonald House in August of 2006, an almost magical event occurs every time Chaplain Frei or one of the program's volunteers brings a therapy dog into the House. Kids appear out of nowhere, no matter what the hour of day or night, they are magnetically drawn by the friendly presence of the dogs. “It's all about the power of touch,” Frei says. “When the child interacts with the animal, it's very soft, gentle, and loving.”

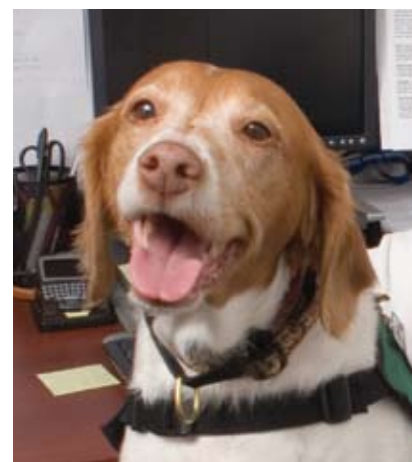
The benefits that children, parents, and the RMDH staff receive from simply being in the presence of these animals is scientifically measurable, and therapy dogs are a growing area of treatment for all kinds of illnesses and clinical issues. For example a recent study conducted at The Albertina Kerr Center in Portland, Oregon found that children with emotional and behavioral disorders significantly improved progress in treatments when a therapy dog was present. Chaplain Frei sees the same results with the Therapy Dog Program at the Ronald McDonald House.

“There was a child in the house who could barely walk,” Frei

PRESENCE



The kids enjoy playing with Chaplain Frei's dogs Teigh and Belle



says, "and she walked this dog all through the House. It provided her with motivation to do her physical therapy."

Interacting with a therapy dog, evidence shows, can blunt pain, improve mental health by decreasing anxiety and lowering feelings of depression, increase socialization for children with behavioral difficulties, and stimulate motivation and learning along with a growing list of other benefits. "The animal has a way of lifting the child up, even if it's just for a moment," Frei says, "to get out of bed and play with the dog. Then maybe the child is motivated by that activity to eat, to take in valuable nutrition."

Chaplain Frei coordinates the Therapy Dog Program at the RMDH, and her husband David is Director of Communications for the Westminster Kennel Club (WKC) and Executive Director of "Angel on a Leash," a charity of the WKC. All the dogs serving at the Ronald McDonald House come from "Angel on a Leash," which helps pet owners through the therapy dog certification process and connects certified dogs to healthcare institutions.

It is worth noting that therapy dog

(continued on next page)

There was a child in the house who could barely walk, and she walked this dog all through the House.

owners are volunteers, often paying hundreds of dollars a year in license and certification fees to qualify to volunteer with their dogs in health care facilities.

“Dog owners everywhere understand how dogs make us feel good by just being there for us,” David says. “So it’s an easy extension to bring trained therapy dogs and their human partners into health care facilities to enhance the healing process.”

The dogs that come to the Ronald McDonald house are referred by the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and the elite Delta Society Pet Partners program, an incredibly rigorous certification process preparing only the very best dogs for therapy work. Frei takes this selection process even further, requiring an additional year of Pet Partner experience in health care facilities before an animal comes to the RMDH. She also seeks pet owners who can bring something extra to the House. “I’m looking for pet owners with another level of training,” she says. “clinical or medical, with which to contribute an added benefit.” One of the House’s therapy dog owners is a Child Psychologist, another a Registered Nurse, and Cherilyn and David bring their own Brittany’s, “Teigh” and “Belle” to interact with the kids.

“Usually when we bring in the dogs,” Chaplain Frei says, “everyone is interacting at the same time—the parents, the kids—everybody gets benefit from it.” Therapy dogs are brought to the RMDH to normalize a crisis or bereavement situation, to remind kids of their own dogs at home, or simply to play. Frei has countless stories of children positively impacted by the dogs.

“How a child interacts with the dogs tells a lot of stories,” she says. “One child likes to hold the leash, which allows for a feeling of empowerment, a moment of control. The dogs respond to voice commands, and some kids enjoy that the most. We also see outgoing kids encourage more shy children to interact, teaching them how to pet and hold the leash.”

What is most amazing when these “Angels” visit the Ronald McDonald House are the smiles. “Smiles everywhere,” David says. “The kids, their parents and their other family members. These dogs are touching people’s lives.”

RMDH’s therapy dog program currently works with six dogs, and another four wait to complete certification. So thankfully, whenever Chaplain Frei hears the question “Are the dogs coming tonight?” she’ll have good news to share. These “Angels on a Leash” are here to help. ✿



TO LEARN MORE

If you would like to learn more this program and or to volunteer please call Ralph Vogel at 212.639.0180 or email him at rvogel@rmdh.org.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME PAGE

Ronald McDonald House's Website: The Future Is Now

The next time you have an extra moment in front of the computer, visit Ronald

McDonald House's newly designed website—rmdh.org—for a comprehensive experience of all RMDH has to offer guests, donors, volunteers, and the public at large. The site, created by Michael Kukla from Riveredge Design and maintained by RMDH Technology Manager, Jesse Determann, includes an interactive Floor-by-Floor Tour of the physical House, a complete rundown of RMDH programs and guest services, and an up-to-date interactive calendar for volunteers, donors, and other friends of RMDH, among other cool features.

Most of all, the new site is easy to use and as warm in its design as the great lobby of Ronald McDonald House itself. “Potential guests,” Determann says, “who are probably a little nervous about their stay in the city, can look at the site and be a little bit more comfortable arriving, and a little more prepared.”

Renovating the website was a major priority for Determann when he joined Ronald McDonald House in October of 2005. “But RMDH was at the bottom of the technological barrel,” he says, “and there was a lot of ground to cover before we could get to the website.” RMDH's old website was generously donated by a House volunteer, but when that volunteer left RMDH the website fell into disrepair. Riversedge did some graphic design work for our House events, and because of Kukla's familiarity with Ronald McDonald House, Determann tapped him for the re-design.

“The fact that many people accessing the site are young and from different countries,” Kukla says, “we made the decision to go with a youthful yet easy design. This adds to the value of Ronald McDonald House as a friendly and caring place.”

The new site also includes state-of-the-art security measures, for example the interactive calendar is password-protected so only volunteers and other House associates can access it. “So people can't walk in off the street,” says

Determann, “and tell us they're coming to an event they saw on the website.” Eventually, Determann hopes to expand the website to include “Volunteer Spotlights” as well as photo and video archives of House events. Currently, the site features a wonderful profile of a RMDH guest Kevin Lall, who the profile says “has become famous at the hospital for his ever-present smile as well as his inner and outer strength.” [Editor's note: It's true. Kevin is awesome.]

RMDH's new website is another facet of the House's ongoing efforts to provide the best possible services to its clients. “We are now able to deliver information to potential guests and potential donors,” Determann says. “And volunteers can access information regarding their involvement with the House. These are essential services.”

And, as Kukla says, rmdh.org will expand and evolve as Ronald McDonald House continues to grow, so keep checking back for more exciting changes...



www.rmdh.org

The new site is easy to use and as warm in its design as the great lobby of Ronald McDonald House itself.

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