

Around the House

Ronald McDonald House New York Magazine

Volume 13, Issue 1, Winter 2018



Ronald
McDonald
House®
New York

The House Celebrates Its Grand Re-Opening

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Ronald McDonald House New York provides temporary housing for pediatric cancer patients and their families in a strong, supportive and caring environment which encourages and nurtures the development of child-to-child and parent-to-parent support systems.

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The official ribbon cutting at RMH-NY's Grand Re-Opening on September 18, 2017.

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Marian Goldman Photography

"When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible"

-Howard Schultz

All articles were written by staff of RMH-NY

Dear Friends:

As we welcome the new year, we are so proud to welcome families back to our renovated and renewed House here on East 73rd Street. On September 18th, we celebrated our Grand Re-Opening with Board members, donors, friends, and families. This event was the culmination of nearly two years of work, and I am thrilled to announce that our House can now accommodate more families in more comfort than ever before.

Our expansion includes an additional eleven guest rooms. Six of these are dedicated post-transplant suites equipped with private kitchens and laundry facilities, allowing whole families a place to call home when their child requires isolation following transplant surgery. With 95 guest rooms, we are the second largest House in the Ronald McDonald House Charities global network and remain the largest dedicated to pediatric cancer care.

Now that construction is behind us, we must shift our focus from product (our facility) to service. Ronald McDonald House New York has a tradition of excellence in service, and I know that will continue. In preparation for our expanded capacity, all staff members took part in

an expansive series of trainings focused on understanding and meeting the needs of our families.

Over 40 percent of our families come from outside the United States, which means the population we serve is the most diverse among all Houses in the world. We have undertaken and will continue to refine an innovative cultural competency program to ensure all residents, regardless of country of origin or background, feel welcome and supported. We are the world's House, one in which families from so many cultures come together and support one another.

In this issue, you will meet one of our international families, the Wei family, who came to the House from China in January of 2015. Zhe, Vera and their young son Jiayi found support, comfort, and community here with us during such trying times. We are honored that they have shared their story with us.

Over one year has passed since I assumed the role of President and CEO of Ronald McDonald House New York. I am so proud of all that we have accomplished in that short time. Now, building on those experiences and accomplishments, it is time to renew focus on our strategic plan.

We will continue to innovate. We will

always ask ourselves how we can do better. We will continue to assess how to leverage our staff and their skills, engage our donors and volunteers in more meaningful ways, and strengthen relationships with our partners. Now more than ever, we look to work closer with the international RMHC network as well as with our sixteen partner hospitals here in New York.

We will share what we know and what we learn. It is my wish that Ronald McDonald House New York be a leading innovator and thought-leader, not only in the RMHC international system, but among all organizations across the entire spectrum of the not-for-profit world. All that we do, we do to become an even stronger and more impactful organization. It is because of your support that we are able to reach further and do more. Together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of children and families in need.

Sincerely,

Ruth C. Browne, SD
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2. Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian
3. Mount Sinai St. Luke's
4. Kravis Children's Hospital at Mount Sinai
5. The Mount Sinai Hospital
6. Lenox Hill Hospital
7. Hospital for Special Surgery
8. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
9. New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center
10. Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital
11. Mount Sinai Roosevelt
12. Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone
13. Bellevue Hospital Center
14. Mount Sinai Beth Israel
15. New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai
16. NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County

We Couldn't Do It Without You!

Thank you to our Board Members, Volunteers, Donors, and all of the Staff at RMH-NY for helping us in Keeping Families Close.

www.rmh-newyork.org/who-we-are/leadership

Upcoming Events

Skate with the Greats
Friday, February 16, 2018
6:00 PM
Rink at Rockefeller Center

Children's Happy Faces Foundation Casino Night
Friday, March 9, 2018
6:30 PM
Fino Wall Street
1 Wall Street Court, Between Hanover Street & Pearl Street

The United Airlines NYC Half Marathon
Sunday, March 18, 2018
7:30 AM
Manhattan

Queens Family Fun Run
Saturday, April 14, 2018
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
St. John's University

Hogs for Hope "Hope to Ride" Motorcycle Run
Sunday, April 29, 2018
9:00 AM Registration, 11:30 AM Kickstands Up, 1:00 PM Party
Croton Gorge Park Police Escort Ride to JFK Marina on Hudson River

The Hibernia Provident Society Golf Classic
Monday, April 30, 2018
10:00 AM Shotgun
Old Oaks Country Club, Purchase, NY

JLL Sporting Clays Charity Shoot
Friday, May 4, 2018
8:30 AM
Tamarack Preserve, Millbrook, NY

TD Five Boro Bike Tour
Sunday, May 6, 2018
6:30 AM
Battery Park

26th Annual Gala
Monday, May 14, 2018
6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Grand Hyatt New York

Heroes Volunteer Event
Tuesday, June 19, 2018
Time: 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM
Location: Guastavino's

Check out our website for a full and updated list of events:
www.rmh-newyork.org/events



Ruth Browne, Terry Lundgren, Steve Bensinger, Rod Gilbert, Bobby Grubert, Judy Gilbert, Diane Tierney, Ray Tierney, III, and Tina Lundgren at the 2017 Skate with the Greats Event



2017 Queens Family Fun Run at St. John's University



25th Annual Gala Honorees: Michael R. Bloomberg, Founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies & 108th Mayor of New York City, and Jason A. Rabin, President of Global Brands Group, North America

New Year, New Rooms!

Ronald McDonald House New York Celebrates Grand Re-Opening

On September 18, 2017, the House celebrated the completion of a two year, \$23.6 million renovation and expansion project with a grand re-opening event and formal ribbon cutting ceremony. Mike Woods, meteorologist and television personality from Fox 5's Good Day New York, served as Master of Ceremonies, and to honor this occasion, Mayor De Blasio officially proclaimed September 18th Ronald McDonald House Day in New York City. The ceremony, which marked the first time the House invited partners and guests to visit the updated facility, included multiple room dedication ceremonies, live music from DIVA Jazz Band, and catering by Tony's Di Napoli.

As the first building-wide capital improvement program since its construction in 1992, the House added six post-transplant suites, five additional family units, a relocated and re-imagined Blavatnik Family Foundation Wellness Center, upgrades to existing mechanical systems, expansion of dining room seating, and other capital improvements, including window refurbishment and lobby redesign.

The six post-transplant suites, which are on average 70-90% larger than standard rooms, allow the House to cater to families who have children that recently received a transplant. These new rooms meet the needs of children with recent bone-marrow transplants who must stay in relative isolation for up to three months following treatment while their immune systems recuperate.



Above: Mike Woods of FOX 5's Good Day New York served as Master of Ceremonies.

During the two years of construction, the House remained open at limited capacity, serving 30-35 families. As these families streamed out on their way to hospital appointments, they were met by construction workers and contractors streaming in. Each day, multiple men and women—from steel fabricators to plumbers to engineers—worked together to bring the House one step closer to its new capacity, serving 95 families. The construction was completed by Structure Tone, Zubatkin served as owner representation, and Zaskorski & Associates was the architect.

"The expansion of our facility here is a cause for celebration for all New Yorkers," said Ruth C. Browne, President and CEO of Ronald McDonald House New York. "We're proud that we can offer a loving environment and specialized resources for even more patients and help keep families together during this incredibly challenging period of their lives. The commitment and support of our staff, Board, volunteers, many stakeholders and partners, and the New York community has been invaluable in getting us to this point as we re-open the expanded Ronald McDonald House New York."



Above: Guests of RMH-NY were all smiles as they walked through the doors of RMH-NY's updated facility.



Above: Over 250 guests gathered in the Sol and Margaret Berger Foundation Lobby to celebrate the Grand Re-Opening.

Board Snapshot: Harris Diamond Chairman of RMH-NY



We are honored and privileged to welcome our Chairman of the Board, Harris Diamond.

Harris first became involved with Ronald McDonald House New York in 2006 when he joined the Board of Directors. Over the years, his leadership has played a crucial role in increasing the House's impact in New York City. Harris was a driving force in launching our Ronald McDonald Family Room at New York Health & Hospitals / Kings County and our Happy Wheels Coffee Cart at Hospital for Special Surgery. With his leadership on these programs, we have been able to expand our footprint and successfully give back to the city that gives us so much.

Since 2015, the Coffee Cart program has served 41,000 pediatric care patients, siblings, caregivers and hospital personnel, and, since opening a year ago, 1,000 pediatric and neonatal caregivers have been served by the Ronald McDonald Family Room at New York Health & Hospitals / Kings County.

As head of the Board Strategic Planning Committee, Harris helped lead the House through its two-year expansion and renovation project completed in September 2017 with the re-opening of the House to 95 rooms. He also chaired the Adopt The House Campaign in 2016-2017. His tireless commitment to our mission of keeping families close is evident in all that he does, and we look forward to many future accomplishments under his leadership as Chairman.

Outside of his work for the House, Harris is Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of McCann Worldgroup, a multi-disciplinary marketing services organization that creates communications solutions for many companies and brands around the world.

Harris' civic involvements are not limited to Ronald McDonald House New York. He is also a Board member of the New York City Center, the performing arts venue. He holds industry positions as a board member of the U.S. Ad Council and has served on the Board of Directors of several public companies and as a past Chairman of the Council of Public Relations Firms.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Tina Lundgren, who served as our Board Chair for the past three years. Harris and Tina have worked closely together over the years on behalf of the House and our families. Tina tirelessly has raised millions of dollars in the process, and her leadership has been instrumental in growing the House to where it is today to much acclaim, while she also continued to build out our Board with several significant additions during her tenure. Tina remains on the Board moving forward.

On behalf of Ronald McDonald House New York and all of our partners, we thank Harris and Tina for their guidance and leadership, and we look forward to the journey ahead.



Below: Ronald, Joel Newman, Harris Diamond, Dr. Ruth Browne, Tina Lundgren, Terry Lundgren, Shelly Friedman, and Mike Woods

39th Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner

The 39th Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner was held on October 24th at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. With over 450 guests in attendance, Miles Lima, an 8-year old boy who frequently stays at RMH-NY, opened the night with a stunning performance of "Humble and Kind." Miles, who sings and plays the piano despite having lost his sight at a young age, left the crowd in awe. The dinner continued, as the House distributed 37 awards throughout the evening to acknowledge individual and group volunteers' years of service to the organization. Throughout the program, Miles returned to the stage to perform "Hallelujah," and the crowd honored Terri Eggers, Director of Volunteers, with a standing ovation as a final farewell before her retirement.

Finally, we honored three individuals and one corporate group with the most prestigious award the House can bestow upon volunteers—the Hope Award. Presented by our Chairman of the Board, Harris Diamond, our four award winners were nominated by their peers and consistently demonstrate an outstanding commitment to the House and keeping families close. The 2017 Hope Award Recipients were: Nancy George-Michalson, Elaine Louis, Helena Russo, and PVH.

Below: Miles Lima performing



Above: Andrew Nawn and Betty Perez are honored for their 25 years of volunteer service to the House.

Below: All past recipients of the Volunteer Hope Award



Our 2017 Hope Award Recipients



Nancy George-Michalson is described by her Therapy Dog Team members as someone who "amplifies the true meaning of giving back, community and compassion." As Therapy Dog Team Leader for almost a decade, Nancy has made an immeasurable impact. Whether she is visiting the House with Callie or Melodie, her canine partners, or coordinating an orientation for new Therapy Dog volunteers, Nancy goes above and beyond her volunteer duties, and does so with such infectious enthusiasm. Nancy has been an incredible asset and a truly valued member of our RMH-NY team.

Elaine Louis, a dedicated Tuesday Night Team member and past leader, has been volunteering at RMH-NY for 11 years. Elaine's upbeat demeanor and unparalleled positive attitude are evident in all that she does. Week after week, Elaine shows an unprecedented level of commitment and constantly prioritizes the families' needs above her own. Her team members explain that, "Tuesday nights would not be the same without Elaine's enthusiasm and imagination." Not only does Elaine plan extraordinary nightly activities for our children, but she also regularly offers to help the House in any way she can, serving as a perfect example of what it means to be an RMH-NY volunteer.



Thank You, Terri Eggers!

Please join us in congratulating Ronald McDonald House New York's Director of Volunteers, Terri Eggers, on her retirement after seven and a half years of service to the House. We are extremely grateful for the robust pipeline of volunteers and services that Terri developed over her time at the House as well as the substantial funds that she has raised through her initiatives. We wish Terri well in her new role as Grandmother!



As a volunteer for seven years, **Helena Russo** has served many roles, from Saturday Night Team Leader to current Communications Team Leader. Helena displays a dedication to the House that is unmatched and continues to impress. From volunteering at special events to helping coordinate family trips, Helena always takes the initiative and continuously exceeds expectations. Her team members describe her as "one of the most dedicated and dependable volunteers at RMH-NY," and this is no exaggeration. Helena exudes a selfless attitude that is beyond compare, and she truly embodies the spirit of volunteerism at RMH-NY.



PVH has been a valued corporate volunteer partner at RMH-NY for 17 years. From sponsoring monthly meals to Days of Service, PVH employees go above and beyond to support our families. Not only do PVH volunteers donate their time, but they also help organize special events like backpack giveaways and trips for our children and families during the Great Days summer program. As a corporation, PVH gives back to the House financially, supporting the mission of keeping families close. Time and again, PVH has proven to be an outstanding supporter of the House.

Welcome, Kevin Foster!

We would like to welcome Kevin Foster to RMH-NY as our new Chief Brand & Communications Officer overseeing the Volunteer Department. Joining our staff in September 2017, Kevin brings a wealth of relevant experience and knowledge to the House, most recently having spent 11 years at RBC, where he served as Global Head of Communications for RBC Capital Markets and RBC Investor & Treasury Services. In his new role with the House, Kevin is responsible for developing a comprehensive program for all internal and external communications, including marketing, branding, social media, public affairs, stakeholder engagement, and will also oversee the Volunteer Services programs. We are excited to have Kevin on board!





CVS Provides Flu Shots for Staff and Volunteers

Thank you to CVS Pharmacy for sponsoring three Flu Shot clinics for the staff and volunteers at RMH-NY. With their generosity, we are able to help keep families close and safe!

Thank You!

Below are the community groups and corporations that have volunteered with us and/or sponsored a meal from May 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Aberdeen Asset | FIT Outreach Club | LinkedIn | Rochester Institute of Technology |
| AECOM | Franklin Templeton | Luciano/Goebel | Saint Ignatius Loyola School |
| Albanian Muslim Social | FTI Consulting | Maggie's Mission | Faculty and Staff |
| AllianceBernstein | Genentech | Marriott International | Saint Vincent de Paul |
| American Express | GenerationOn | Marsh | Salesforce |
| Annaly Capital Management | GLG | Marymount Manhattan College | Sanford C. Bernstein |
| Anthony Migliore Dinner | Global Brands Group | Maybank | Sard Verbinen and Co |
| Atlantic Group | Greater NY Association of Occupational Health Nurses | Miss Violets | Skanska |
| Berkeley College | Haddad Brands | Morgan Stanley | Social Impact |
| Bloomberg | Happy Faces | MV4NY | Solving Kids' Cancer - Young Professionals Network |
| Bubba Gump Shrimpossibles | HighTower Advisors | Nasdaq | Southwest |
| Burberry | HighWire PR | NBA | St. George's Society of New York |
| Burlington Store | Hill and Knowlton | New York Junior League | Symphony Communication Services |
| Burns Family | Hilton Garden Inn, Times Square | NFL | Temple Emanu-El |
| Candyland Group | Hormel Foods | Nickelodeon | The Em and Liz Team |
| Capco | Hudson Advisors | NYC Young Professionals | The Nugents |
| Carlito's Wish Foundation | Hunter College SAAC | Kiwanis | The Promise Society |
| CBS | ICSC | NYPD | Tony's Di Napoli |
| CIBC | IEX Trading | NYPD Holy Name Society | Trane |
| CitrinCooperman | Intersection | Oath | Triumph Construction |
| CohnReznick | Invesco | Order of AHEPA Chapter 517 | Tuoro College |
| Conductor | ITG | Orr Associates Inc (OAI) | Voya Investments |
| Cretan Women's Association | JetBlue | Pefin | WageWorks Inc. |
| Pasiphae | Josie Michelle Events | Penske | Wells Fargo Capital Finance |
| Daversa Partners | JP Morgan | Pfizer | Women's Connection |
| Deloitte | JW Marriott Essex House NY | PineRock Productions Inc. | West End, Marine Park, Dyker Heights Kiwanis |
| Deutsche Bank | Knights of Columbus | Project Sunshine | Yext Inc |
| Duane Reade | KOMAR Brands | PubMatic | YGL NYC |
| Eagle | KPMG | PVH | Yonkers Fire Department |
| Eisai Inc Training Department | Le Pain Quotidien | Ralph Lauren | |
| Ernst & Young | Lenox Advisors | RBC Capital Markets | |
| Eze Software Group | Lexis Nexis | Rebecca Taylor | |
| Finra | | RF Binder | |

92Y Seniors: A Close "Knit" Group Giving Back



Through the 92Y Himan Brown Senior Program, Anita Sherman, 97, is part of a group of seniors giving back to those in need. She knits a hat a night to donate to preemies in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and cancer patients of all ages at local hospitals. The 92Y Himan Brown Senior Program recently celebrated seven years of its 'knitting circle' – the brainchild of Phyllis Greenwald, a member of the program. "It's a great activity for people who are home alone and want to stay healthy and active, continuing to improve their quality of life, and the lives of those in need," said Greenwald. RMH-NY is so grateful to the 92Y volunteers for the monthly donations of hats and scarfs for our families during these winter months.

We Give Thanks to our Volunteers in Blue

The holiday season at Ronald McDonald House New York would not have been the same without the support from the New York Police Department. Year after year, various police precincts and units bring the "season of giving" to life for the families staying at the House, and this year did not dissappoint.

It all started on the eve of Thanksgiving when the NYPD picked up our families on NYPD buses and drove them down the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon line up to watch the balloons inflate. On Thanksgiving morning, the NYPD buses were back bright and early to transport the families to a VIP viewing of the 91st Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Thanks to the generosity of the New York Athletic Club, our families were able to view the parade from a banquet room overlooking the route and enjoy a wonderful breakfast. Back at the House, NYPD officers and their families were busy peeling potatoes and stuffing turkeys in preparation for a delicious Thanksgiving Dinner.

But it didn't end there! On Wednesday, December 20th, the NYPD and Tony's Di Napoli went above and beyond to make sure that our families, although celebrating the holidays away from family and friends, had smiles on their faces. The NYPD escorted the Macy's Santa with flashing blue lights from Macy's Herald Square to the



House where he handed out gifts to every child.

The 19th Precinct's own Officer P.J. Conley purchased the toys after raising over \$5,000. James P. O'Neill, Commissioner of the New York City Police Department, and Assistant Chief James Murtagh enjoyed the evening as well and even went the extra mile to call in the K-9 unit to meet a child who was a dog lover.

The NYPD continuously goes above and beyond in supporting and in bringing hope to our children, and we cannot thank them enough!



Credit Suisse Gives Back

This past year, Ronald McDonald House New York had the privilege of being part of the Credit Suisse Holiday Charity Initiative, an employee-giving campaign for Credit Suisse in the Americas. Within the Holiday Charity Initiative, employees were able to choose to donate to 40 different charities representing various geographies, programs and causes. Six of those charities were chosen based on an employee nomination and voting process. Thanks to Lindsay Willig, wife of Ben Willig, who is one of the House's Sunday Night Volunteers, RMH-NY was nominated and received a spot in the Initiative.

The one month campaign culminated in "The Tough Trader Challenge," a component of the Holiday Charity

in which employees across the bank are eligible to form teams to support a charity and compete in a series of challenges to earn an additional award for their chosen organization. The Credit Suisse RMH-NY Team not only dressed up as Ronald McDonald, but also fought hard through multiple physical and mental challenges to place second in the competition.

At the conclusion of the campaign, after the company matched the employees' donations, they raised more than \$52,000 in support of our families. We are incredibly grateful for Credit Suisse and its employees for their fundraising on behalf of the House.

#KeepingFamiliesClose



As the Wei family sits down, they caution that now is not a good time. But that is exactly why they want to talk. For over two years, they have traveled back and forth from China while their son, now three years old, goes through cancer treatment. The Weis have reached an impasse and are unsure what comes next. They share their story now because they want to help others.

Vera and Zhe first met during the Moon Day festival in the fall of 2012. Their first date was at a fast food restaurant in Shenyang. She was a doctor at a local hospital. He was a chief information officer at a major international company. By the third date, both had decided they were a match. Zhe felt lucky to be with someone so naturally good, and who was so kindhearted toward his family. He wanted them to travel the world together.

Zhe invited Vera to dinner at a very expensive restaurant. At the end of the evening, Zhe reached into his pocket and proposed by giving her an iPhone. "Not a ring. A phone," Vera laughs. He then asked her to have dinner with his family. "In Chinese culture," Zhe explains, "it can be a little shy to say marriage directly." Vera says it is a little like a puzzle. Between the iPhone and the invitation to dinner with his family, it was very clear. The couple received their marriage license in January 2013 and had a summer wedding with family and friends. They honeymooned in Greece later that year. When they returned home, they found out they were expecting their first child, a son.

When Jiayi was born in June, they were prepared. Vera read and studied extensively on how to care for their newborn son and planned to take leave from work for his first six months. Zhe changed careers, becoming a professor so he could devote more time to their family. When Jiayi was five months, however, Vera's mother in law noticed "a little white" in his left eye.

Vera took Jiayi to her hospital where she says they used a camera, but not an ultrasound, to examine him. They found nothing out of the ordinary. Two months later, though, Vera herself saw something amiss. She and Zhe took their son to a larger hospital in their city where they used an ultrasound. The doctors told them it was Retinoblastoma. "In China, if you get this cancer, the first treatment would be to pull out the eye," she says. They did not want that for their son. Jiayi

was only seven months old. The Weis found that there was a doctor in Shanghai who could administer injections that could save his eye, but were then told that the medicine was illegal.

Through her hospital, Vera found out about another child in their city who also had Retinoblastoma and had come to New York for treatment. Zhe connected with the other family who reported positive results from treatment. They knew traveling to New York would be very expensive. "We love my son," Zhe says, "So we collected the money." Together and with help from their families, they put together \$300,000. The hospital provided a letter so that they could receive a medical visa. Then their social worker told them about Ronald McDonald House New York. It was the first they had heard about it, and they were so relieved to have a place to stay. In early April of 2015, they came to New York.

The Wei family knew New York from movies and television, but to experience it in person was entirely different. It was exciting. "New York is the capital of the world," Zhe says, "but most important here is that there is hope for my baby." Their first trip to New York lasted six months, though Zhe had to return home after the first month so that he could provide an income for his family. Vera and her mother stayed with Jiayi. Vera remembers being shocked at the prices in New York. "When I came to New York, I found everything so expensive," Vera explains. She was grateful for RMH-NY, and after six months of treatment, the family took the 14 hour plane ride back to China, knowing they would have to be back soon.

Zhe brought Jiayi for his first check up one month later. The results were good: Jiayi was stable. Doctors cleared them to go back home and return for a check up every six to eight weeks. They followed this schedule for almost one year, during which the tumor came back twice. The first time, they ended up staying at the House for a month while doctors administered radiation to his left eye before clearing them to go home. Three months later, the tumor was back again. They spent another month at the House while Jiayi went through an onslaught of injections and chemotherapy. Treatment appeared to be working, and in December 2016, doctors told them they could go

home for three months.

"We were so happy," Zhe says, "But when we got back to China, within two weeks, he got a fever and had belly pain, so we took him to the hospital. They found something in his belly." At the time, doctors did not think it was anything to worry about and treated the fever. Not long after, though, Jiayi could not walk or even stand. Zhe and Vera took him to a larger hospital in their city where he got an MRI. The something in his belly was in actuality a large tumor wrapped around his spine. Zhe was shocked. Vera remembers watching her husband cry in the hospital. "They told me there was no measure to treat it," Zhe says, "So, yes, I cried a lot." Zhe called the doctors in New York who suggested the tumor could be a migration of the cancer in the eye. The family went to three of the largest hospitals in their city to find a doctor who could remove the tumor. Zhe recalls, "All of them said even if they can do surgery to take the tumor out, it will come back again." They were told to just keep their son comfortable. Vera sighs, "It was hopeless."

The Weis refused to give up. In January 2017, they came back to New York, against the warning of their doctors that flying could be dangerous. "There is a lot of hope here," Vera says. Zhe agrees, "If we come here, there is hope that the doctor can treat him. If we don't come here, there is no hope." For these two parents trying to save their son, the choice was clear. Upon arriving in New York, Jiayi was examined and doctors initially posited that the tumor around his spine was an extension of his Retinoblastoma.

It was then, Zhe says, that they were presented with a bill totaling more than two million dollars. "We don't have that much money," he says. Their doctor stepped in and said that the most important thing was getting Jiayi to stand and walk again. He told the Weis not to worry about the bill, Zhe recalls, saying this was an emergency. "I am very thankful that we did not have to give up and stop treatment," he says. Jiayi began getting better every day and, Zhe notes with pride, he was soon able to walk, run, and jump again. Their joy at his progress was brief. A biopsy soon brought new cause to worry.

The tumor around his spine was something else entirely. Tests indicated that Jiayi now had a second cancer in his body: Neuroblastoma. He would begin treatment for both cancers simultaneously. By May, the results of his bilateral course of treatment seemed promising. The tumor appeared to be gone, and their medical team was able to move ahead with a cell transplant. After the transplant, Vera recalls the doctor performing a test to see what positive effect, if any, it had on her son. "He found a tumor so quickly, just as he had finished the transplant," she says. Jiayi began radiation and another two cycles of chemo. But there was a bright spot during that grueling summer. Zhe smiles, "Just during that treatment, there were Great Days." The Wei family loved taking trips, Jiayi in particular if a swimming pool was involved. With the start of our Great Days programs this past summer, there were many.

Jiayi received radiation in the mornings. Their doctor told them that he would need anesthesia, and that would keep them waiting in the hospital for a long time. "He would

miss the trip," Zhe explains. So the parents asked their son if he could stay still without anesthesia. "He said he can. Because he wants to come on the trip," Zhe says. Vera smiles, "He was so great." For up to 30 minutes each morning, Jiayi would be alone in a large machine, arms held above his head, and remain completely still, all without anesthesia. He had only just turned three years old. The doctors had never seen anything like it. With Great Days, The family spent the summer kayaking, golfing, and, best of all, swimming at private country clubs. Whenever there was a pool, Jiayi would spend all day in the water, smiling.

"We all love my son, and that's why we want to stay here," Zhe speaks through tears. "The Ronald McDonald House is a very good place," says Vera, "All the staff and the volunteers here are very kind people." Zhe credits the House community for making his son happy and keeping him brave. "He knows a lot of people love him," he says. A Ronald McDonald House recently opened in Changsha, China. Zhe has told all of his old colleagues that they should do something meaningful and volunteer there. When his son is older, he says, he will volunteer too.

Above all, the Weis say, their love for their son has kept them going. Two days ago, Jiayi had another PET scan. "They found many tumors," Zhe says, "all over his body." Doctors have begun to doubt whether further treatment will be useful. "Maybe there's no answer to save him," Zhe admits, but adds with resolve, "We do not want to give up." Through it all, Vera and Zhe have tried to give their son the best life they can. "In his three years," Zhe says proudly, "Jiayi has more experiences in life than we had in 30." He has traveled the world. He swam at beaches on three continents. Vera took Jiayi to Mexico for a weekend, which he loved. But even then, he was so excited to come back to the Ronald McDonald House New York. Jiayi is a child immeasurably full of life. His parents have given him a full life to match.



In the time between the writing of this piece and its publication, Jiayi's journey took a turn for the worse. Early one fall morning, now inpatient at the hospital, he turned to his parents and told them he loved them. He then closed his eyes and went to sleep. We will close his story as it should be. Jiayi will grow up and go to university. He will volunteer at a Ronald McDonald House. He will fall in love and get married. And many years from now, when he is a father, he will fight for, protect, and have a love for his child just as strongly as his parents have for him.



Family Room Update

As we head into 2018, we celebrated one year at the Ronald McDonald Family Room at New York Health + Hospitals / Kings County. Since our soft opening in January 2017, we have welcomed over 1,000 parents, caregivers and other family members to enjoy, relax, and refresh in this important space. The response to the Family Room has been positive and emotional. Family room staff and volunteers have been hugged and cried on for asking about a day or even remembering a name. They have been thanked for cups of coffee, comfortable chairs, doughnuts, and bottles of water. Family Room visitors enjoy the conversation, refreshments, and the respite from the hospital setting. On numerous occasions, families have said that this is such a relaxing space that it doesn't even feel like part of a hospital. In the past year at the Family Room, there have been dinners, a Mother's Day giveaway and lunch, and a summer-long book giveaway that was very popular. There is so much more to come, and we look forward to sharing it with you as we celebrate our one year anniversary.



Great Days!

With summer comes another season of Camp Ronald McDonald, right? Well, no, actually. Introducing Great Days, an incredible series of individual trips and events designed for whole families to enjoy.

This past year, we welcomed families from the House, Hospital Outreach program, and—for the first time—House alumni to join us for some truly unforgettable experiences. Families spent sunny days at private beach and country clubs, reveled in the VIP experience at a Mets game, and even spent a few days kayaking, swimming, and pontoon boating in Highland Lakes. We visited our old friends at The Craft Studio, our new friends at Dō Cookie Dough Confections, and took in private tours of the Museum of Natural History, Top of the Rock, and Citi Field before watching the game from a private box. Particular highlights included private advance screenings of *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and *Despicable Me 3* including meet and greets with the stars: Tom Holland (as Spiderman) and Steve Carrel (as Gru), respectively. We are so thankful to our wonderful friends and donors who made all of these special programs possible. We are excited to share many more Great Days with our families and with you throughout 2018.



Wild, Wild West

Families from the House, Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, Hospital for Special Surgery and Kings County Hospital spent the day in the "Wild, Wild West." A full police escort, facilitated by the NYPD and Rockland Sheriff's Department, brought them to the location of this special event: Kruckers Catering & Picnic Grove. Upon arriving, each child received western wear and the Rockland County Sheriff personally swore in all in attendance as honorary deputy sheriffs, made official with their own badges.

Families spent the rest of the afternoon exploring various law enforcement vehicles (including a helicopter, ambulance and bomb squad car), swimming and relaxing by the pool, and challenging each other to games of basketball, cornhole, and volleyball. Hole in the Wall Gang Camp hosted a booth where the children made their own slime. Krucker's donated all of the food, and the staff volunteered their services for the afternoon. At the end of the day, three outlaws—the House's own Jen Ricca, Charlie Lownter of the Rockland County Sheriff's Department and Tucker Legerski from Hole in the Wall Gang Camp—were slimed in front of a cheering crowd. A grand total of 125 people attended the afternoon, and everyone walked away with a gift bag full of books and fun supplies.

To Rye Playland We Go!

For the eighth year, RMH-NY took families to Rye Playland, an amusement park that is located in Rye, New York. Each year, this signature event gets bigger and better, and we are eternally grateful for the many benefactors that have helped make this trip so special.

At the park, families enjoyed mini-golf, the pool, beach, and boardwalk, Kiddyland rides, adult rides and a great BBQ that the volunteers hosted in the covered picnic area. In addition to the BBQ, ArtWorks provided free arts and crafts for the kids and families to enjoy. The event was well attended by both our kids and families from the House, as well as our kids and families from our Hospital Outreach program.

We would like to thank Adam Harvey and his staff from Rye Playland, Lynne and Jayne, the staff from the Service Tours Bus Company, Amy Sokal, Fran Heyman, and

Michael Albert from the ArtWorks Foundation. In addition, we want to thank all of the volunteers for their continued help and support, as without them, this trip would not be possible.



Celebrity Corner!

The House has been busy with many special guests stopping by to say "Hi!" to our families. Featured above is **John Cena**, who held a private screening for our families of the hit movie *Ferdinand* at the Bryant Park Hotel! Featured below is **Liam Neeson**, who spent the afternoon with our families taking selfies and action shots. Thank you to our friend Meagan Celeste and MDC Productions for helping to make these wonderful visits happen.



But that is not all! RMH-NY has been featured in the news quite a lot in the past few months. We were on the TODAY show with **Savannah Guthrie** and on FOX5's Good Day New York with **Mike Woods** and the team!



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Subscribe to our electronic newsletter on our website!
www.rmh-newyork.org



11th Annual Children's Happy Faces

Golf Tournament

The Children's Happy Faces Foundation, with the support of the New York Real Estate Industry, raised over \$575,000 at its 11th Annual Golf Tournament to support Ronald McDonald House New York.

This year's golf event was held on Tuesday, September 26th at three world-class venues – St. Andrews Golf Club, Hudson National Golf Club and Sleepy Hollow Country Club – with a total of 284 golfers and 15 tennis players. At the conclusion of the day's activities, all participants gathered together with invited dinner guests at the mansion at Sleepy Hollow for a one-of-a-kind networking experience that included entertainment by the Parker Reilly Band and the American Bombshells. The live auction, featuring numerous items including a dinner at RAO's Restaurant, brought in record support.

"Providing 11 successful years of direct support for the

The First Annual LEO Hockey Game

On Sunday October 22, 2017, the first LEO Charity Hockey event was held at Chelsea Piers Sky Rink. The event was led by Meagan Celeste of MDC Productions and law enforcement officers from the New York Police Department and New Jersey State Police to raise funds and awareness for RMH-NY. This benefit ice hockey game united esteemed members of law enforcement communities across New York and New Jersey with the families who are served by the House. MDC Productions, a company that aims to broker strategic relationships between world-class non-profit organizations and high-profile individuals in order to produce effective results, donated its services for this event.

The game was followed by a reception at the Sunset



Above Left: David Lipson, Mitchell Barry, Brenda Moore, Ronald, Pam Barry, Paul Shapiro and Stan Barry
Above Right: Jeff Schwartz and Steve Sladkus with the Winner's Circle Trophy

programs at Ronald McDonald House New York, it is truly a collective effort of countless supporters and volunteers and has been an amazing ride," said David J. Lipson, CEO & Founding Member of Children's Happy Faces Foundation and Senior Managing Director of Century Management Services Inc.

"We are extremely grateful to the Children's Happy Faces Foundation for its years of support and all who participated at this year's golf event," said Ruth Browne, President & CEO of Ronald McDonald House New York. Century Management was once again Title Sponsor for the golf event and was joined by Platinum Sponsors Hercules Corporation and National Cooperative Bank. Gold Sponsors included Efficient Combustion & Cooling Corp., ICAS Corp., Morgan Stanley, Zurich Insurance Co., and Adriatic Plumbing; Silver Sponsors were Alex Dimitreif, Arthur J. Gallagher, Bargold Storage Systems, Daniels Norelli Cere & Tavel PC, M & R Management, and Mann Report.



Back: Liev Schreiber, Malik Yoba, Grace Hightower, Robert De Niro, & RMH-NY Families; Front: Kai Schreiber, Sasha Schreiber

Terrace with the families, players and special guests. Guests included Hollywood celebrities Liev Schreiber, Robert De Niro and Malik Yoba, and former NHL players Ron Duguay, Chris Kotsopoulos, Ken Daneyko, Sergei Brylin and Sergei Starikov. In the end, the event raised over \$33,000 to benefit the families at RMH-NY. Many thanks to Meagan for all that she does to help keep families close!



Above: Guests at the 2017 Masquerade

Masquerade

Ronald McDonald House New York's Board of Associates, a non-policy making group of young professionals committed to philanthropy and the mission of RMH-NY, hosted its sixth annual "Masquerade" on October 19, 2017 at The Dream Hotel PH-D Rooftop Lounge. The evening raised over \$245,000 in support of keeping families close while their child receives pediatric cancer treatment. Throughout the night, guests enjoyed exquisite views of Manhattan, cocktails, including the signature drink "Berry Thankful", savory and sweet hors d'oeuvres, a photo booth experience, great music and a variety of fun masks. The Board of Associates collectively secured exciting raffle prizes and silent auction items for additional fundraising on-site. We are very thankful for this year's Leadership Sponsors-Annaly Capital, RBC Capital Markets, and Goldman Sachs—and all who attended and supported our 2017 Masquerade!



Above: Robert Grubert, Vice President of RMH-NY's Executive Board of Directors, and his family at their Room Dedication Ceremony in honor of his father.

Did You Know...

You too can host your own fundraiser to benefit the House! We will equip you with all of the tools you need to make it a success. Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.rmh-newyork.org/ways-to-give/host-a-fundraiser>

Greek Christmas Dinner

The Greek Division of Ronald McDonald House New York celebrated its 22nd Christmas Dinner which was held on Tuesday, December 12th at the New York Athletic Club. Nikitas and Marika Drakotos, co-founders and associates of M & N Management Corp, were this year's honorees. Continuing the tradition of supporting our organization, the Drakotos family presented the Greek Division of RMH-NY with a \$50,000 donation at the dinner.

His Eminence Archbishop of the Americas, Demetrios, delivered the inaugural prayer, while the Minister of Tourism, Helena Kountouras, thanked the Greek community, especially the Drakotos, stressing that, "it is very important to help children who are our future." The event was also honored with the presence of the Consul General of Greece in New York, Dr. Konstantinos Koutras with his wife, Popita, Consul Lana Zochiou. Michael Bapis, the Greek Division's Chairman and the event's MC, along with Dr. Ruth Browne, President & CEO of RMH-NY, thanked the Greek community for its continued support of the House and the long-standing partnership that has developed over the years.

The Christmas Dinner and the Walk-a-thon of Love are the two main events organized by the Greek Division of Ronald McDonald House New York, which was founded 39 years ago by the impressive Niki Sideris, with the support of then RMH-NY President, Vivian Harris.



Above: Michael N. Bapis, Mr. Nikitas Drakotos, Mrs. Marika Drakotos, Archbishop Demetrios and Ruth Browne

J. McLaughlin Sip & Shop

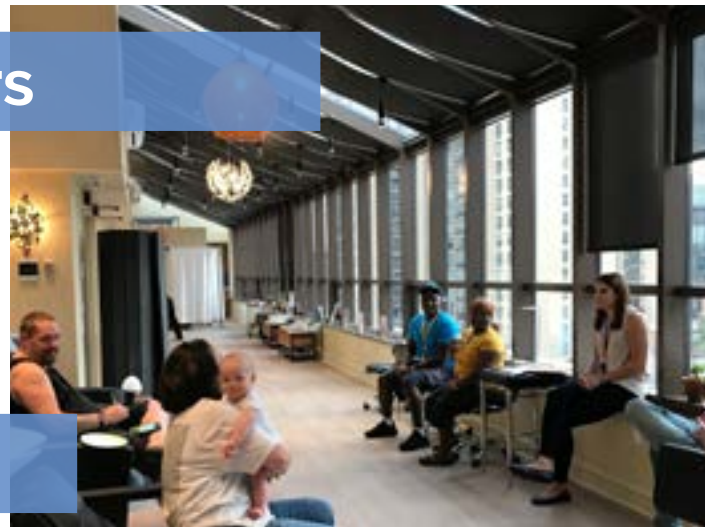
On November 30, 2017, Communications Team Volunteer Helena Russo arranged a Sip and Shop Benefit at her favorite Upper East Side store, J. McLaughlin on 72nd St and Lexington Ave. The event was easy to organize and a great Do-It-Yourself fundraiser for RMH-NY. J. McLaughlin has a culture of giving back, and Store Manager Janine Cinque quickly agreed to host an event and donate 15% of all sales to RMH-NY. The evening served as a wonderful kick-off to the holiday season, allowing volunteers and supporters of the House to give back while shopping and sipping on cocktails. Many thanks to J. McLaughlin for hosting this benefit and to all who attended in support of the House.

Caring for the Caregivers

Family Support

Since the latter half of 2017, the RMH-NY Family Support team has been working with our families to create an environment that is strong, supportive and caring. Upon check-in, every family is matched with a Family Support team member at the House. Our team of support coordinators are on-call to provide emotional support for our families in person, in group settings, at the hospital bedside, and via phone or text. The team also provides a diverse calendar of supportive activities including weekly parent, patient, and sibling support groups, therapeutic art groups, and monthly special events such as Family Resource Nights, Caregiver Appreciation Nights, Family Nights, shopping trips, and cultural excursions.

Beginning this year, the Family Support team will be inviting specialists to the House to lead workshops and training opportunities on a variety of topics including grief and coping, financial counseling, stress management, parenting education, and much more. The team will continue to provide navigation resources to new and seasoned families to help the transition process before, during, and after each family's stay. Bedside services will also be expanded to provide additional emotional support and programming to our inpatient families and our new post-transplant families. The Family Support Team is incredibly excited to be a part of the seamless circle of support at Ronald McDonald House New York, and we are thrilled to serve our families.



Blavatnik Wellness Center

The Blavatnik Family Foundation Wellness Center serves the caregivers staying at RMH-NY by providing respite and critical self-care support for the mind, body and spirit. With that mission in mind, a variety of fitness classes and equipment, meditation sessions, massage and spa services, healing music classes, nutrition workshops, and stress-management discussions are offered on a daily basis. Thanks to the incredible generosity of Emily Blavatnik and her family, our caregivers are able to practice yoga or simply get their hair cut and styled without having to leave the House or be far from their loved ones.

The center's beautiful view and open environment offers a serene, peaceful space to have a cup of tea or coffee, a fresh smoothie or healthy snack, read in the sunshine, or simply take a rare moment to one's self to breathe and connect with other caregivers. In the spirit of meeting the needs of our wonderfully diverse House population, volunteer-run programs such as seasonal and cultural cooking, knitting lessons, DIY craft projects, and guided walking tours of New York City are regularly scheduled throughout each month. Special events, such as Spa Night for Caregivers hosted by New York's premiere Peninsula Spa and Nutrition Workshop Circles, allow caregivers to relax, be cared for, and learn how to optimize their own health and wellness while staying at the House.

A Look Back at 2017



Maritime Industry Teams, The Hanson Brothers and an RMH-NY Family at the the 2nd Annual Charity Hockey game. This year's event, spearheaded by John Tavlaris of Gener8 Maritime Inc. and Chris Teryazos, raised over \$46,000.



The Annual Ronald McDonald House New York Golf Tournament was hosted by title sponsor Marsh, Inc. and supported by many of the insurance industry's leading companies. Bob Howe, RMH-NY Board Member and Managing Director of Marsh, Inc., chaired the tournament on June 20th, bringing in over 160 golfers and \$500,000 to benefit the House.



Over 27 celebrity golfers joined 125 retail industry golfers for the 8th Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament. The tournament, under the guidance and leadership of RMH-NY Board Member Rich Wurtzburger of Peerless Clothing, raised over \$440,000. Each foursome played 18 holes of golf with a celebrity golfer on Baltusrol Golf Club's renowned lower and upper courses.



Over 400 people gathered at DaSilva Memorial track at St. John's University for the 2nd Annual Queens Family Fun Run and Walk. The participants ranged in ages 4 through 17 for the Run, and entire families participated in the Walk raising over \$56,000.



RMH-NY's Greek Division held its 22nd Niki Sideris Annual Memorial Walk-a-Thon chaired by Taso Pardalis, Senior Partner at Pardalis & Nohavicka LLP. Consul General of Greece Dr. Konstantinos Koutras and Mr. Manos Koubarakis Consul of Greece joined Michael Bapis, Greek Division Chairman, Ruth Browne, President & CEO of RMH-NY, and the Greek Committee at this special event.



The 7th Annual Builders of Hope Award Reception was held at the New York Athletic Club and raised over \$160,000 for our children and their families. The evening was a huge success with over 160 Construction Industry and Union Executives in attendance to pay tribute to our honorees: Billy Hill, President, BAC Local 7 - Tile, Marble & Terrazzo, Vincent Striano, Owner & CEO, Striano Electric Co. Inc. and Richard D. Anderson, President Emeritus, New York Building Congress.



The 9th Annual Hogs for Hope ride raised \$46,000 and was led again by Ken Geiger and a host of his fellow Yonkers Fire Fighters as well as Josh Siegel and the Road Kings MC. The main sponsors were Prestige Custom Cycles and Empire Harley Davidson.



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SAVE THE DATE
MONDAY, MAY 14, 2018

CELEBRATING 39 YEARS OF NEW YORK'S HOUSE

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@42nd Street NYC

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Dinner & Awards | 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

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