

Tennessee's First

Ronald McDonald House™

1705 West Clinch Avenue | Knoxville, Tennessee 37916

knoxrmhc.org

Spring 2016

BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

The first Friday in February needs to be on your calendar if you'd like to be present at the premier post-holiday event in the city. Word has certainly spread about our "Beat the Winter Blues" fundraiser held annually at Stanley's Greenhouse. The 300 guests present this year on February 5th enjoyed the gourmet appetizers, wine, live music, and springtime ambiance that only hundreds of blooming plants could provide.

In addition to thanking our hardworking committee members, we wish to thank our incredible sponsors whose generous support helped make the evening possible: Akima, Sheila Barnett, John and Kathy Buckingham, Anne Jackson, Knoxville Beverage, Massey Electric, Cindy and David Mayfield, Pat Taylor, The Pour Guys, Stanley's Greenhouse, Taylor & Hue, and The Trust Company.



FOCUS ON A FAMILY- THE THOMPSONS

Super heroes seem to be all the rage right now. From movies to comic books, the caped crusaders and others somehow manage to save the day. Our favorite hero has yet "to leap tall buildings in a single bound".... but it's only a matter of time before he does! Titus Josiah Thompson made his first appearance over ten months ago last May, much to the delight of his parents, Matthew and Tiffany. Their delight quickly turned to concern when it was learned that he'd been deprived of oxygen during birth and had been born with Pierre Robin Sequence, an abnormality of the jaw that can cause displacement of the tongue and in his case, also included a cleft palate. Later he



Newest super hero

was diagnosed with Moebius Syndrome, a rare neurological disorder that is characterized by facial paralysis.

The unexpected medical news was certainly a lot to take in for these first-time parents who were expecting a short stay in the hospital, followed by a return to St. Paul, VA where grandparents were eagerly waiting the opportunity to spoil their grandson. Little did they know they'd have to wait four months to do so. In the meantime, the hospital was caring for Titus, but Mom and Dad realized they needed some care for themselves and were thankful for the news that a social worker had made arrangements for them to stay with us.

The House turned out to be a happy surprise for the couple whose only knowledge of a Ronald McDonald House was



Tiffany, Matthew and Titus Thompson

seeing canisters at McDonald's. "The House was beautiful", Tiffany said, "and the staff was very friendly". Once little man stabilized somewhat, Matthew realized the need to return to work and reluctantly had to leave his family's side. "With

my husband gone, the RMH helped so much", Tiffany recalls. "The staff was there when my sister passed away. And after a long day in the NICU, I looked forward to sharing supper with the other families and the night staff. There was always laughter and it honestly made my days better. The House was an enormous blessing to us and I feel we have lasting friendship with the staff and volunteers".

Through it all, Titus healed "faster than a speeding bullet" after the five surgeries he's already undergone and we have no doubt he'll do the same for the several others that are yet to come. While he may not have the power of invisibility or x-ray vision allowing him to see through walls, he has demonstrated bravery and an indomitable spirit every day of his life that would impress even Superman himself!

ADPI

Original Board member Emily Mackebbee, who sadly passed away last year, wore many hats during her years of service at the House. Her involvement with Akima was another avenue for her to assist us, but perhaps her greatest passion was for Alpha Delta Pi as she was instrumental in getting both the collegiate and alum "sisters" involved with us early on.

Thankfully, that beautiful legacy continues over 30 years later as ADPI's loving

support of our House has never wavered and is in full force. The



"Fall Fest" Fundraiser

alums have an annual collection drive for us each fall and the UT girls come faithfully every Tuesday evening to cook, clean, or do anything that's needed.

And if that weren't enough, the entire

organization hosts a huge fundraiser at the University to coincide with a home football game. Their most recent "Fall Fest" was held on October 3rd at Thompson Bowling Arena and attendees enjoyed great food, music and a silent auction, not to mention the delightful company of the lovely sorority members. Our House enjoyed the \$11,277 we received from their incredible undertaking.

And while we might be "out of sight", we're definitely not "out of mind" for the ADPI's at TN Tech in Cookeville. Their chapter hosted "The Lion's Chase" 5K & 1 Mile Fun Run for us on March 19th and

the following day, made the 5-hour round-trip trek to have a work day here which included preparing a meal and writing notes of encouragement to our guests. What sweethearts!!



"The Lion's Chase" 5K & 1 Mile Run

KIND FOLKS.... CARING HEARTS

We're always honored and humbled to be remembered in a host of ways... from monetary donations, to receiving needed items collected for us, and the gifts of time and labor... all of which are truly needed to help keep our doors open. Some recent examples of kindnesses shared are:

♥ Our wonderful friends from K-Town Sams who came early last October and presented us with a check for \$1,540. These dear people enjoy camping excursions as an organization and hold fundraisers during these outings, then split the proceeds with other Ronald McDonald Houses within the state. As if that weren't enough, they journey back to the House every January and spend the day making homemade soups, sides and desserts for our families who love every bite.



K-Town Sams

♥ Newer friends from Murphy USA rivaled the Keebler elves recently in their quest to stock both our Houses with enough sweets to delight those with a mammoth sweet-tooth. Never has there

been a larger variety of sugary goodies outside a bakery!! Please pass those cookies!!



Murphy USA

♥ The caring ladies of WELCA within Messiah Lutheran Church held a holiday craft sale last November donating profits to our House. In January, RMH Director Sue Beverly was delighted to return to the church to accept a \$2,724 check from these talented, artistic women.

♥ Once again this year, WS Packaging Group, Inc. graciously donated the paper & printing of our holiday cards that has long been one of our largest annual fundraisers. Nearly \$40,000 was raised during November and December thanks to their generosity!

♥ On yet another mission to assist us, the kind-hearted Tamra Sanders with AutoTrader.com rallied the troops and brought over a host of equally kind-hearted co-workers that spent the day working at warp speed "attacking" the massive honey-do list we'd given them. And that dedicated crew

didn't stop until the last chore was checked off the list.

♥ Many thanks to Betty Coley and her amazing staff at Talbots in Bearden for giving us the opportunity to raise funds and awareness for our House. On October 22 from 4-7pm, they graciously donated 10% of their sales to us which netted an impressive deposit of \$365.

♥ Our wonderful long-time friends who are members of the Smoky Mountain Classic Chevy Club work tirelessly year-round to make certain their May car show in Pigeon Forge is second to none! Their generosity over the years, not only to our House but to other local causes as well has elevated these thoughtful folks to super-star status in our book and we're so very grateful for the \$2,000 we received from the 2015 show.



♥ Who doesn't like to make new friends??!! We were delighted when Orkin's Branch Manager here in town, Gary Hubbard, reached out to us during the holidays asking how they could help the House... And help they did! Imagine our delight when we received a \$1,120 gift from them and a personal visit too.



♥ What can we say about the lovely ladies of Akima? That we're so thankful for their presence at the House? That we don't know what we'd do without them? That they continue to support us with holiday meals throughout the year and for fundraising events, too? That our "bedecked and bedazzled" Home during the Christmas season which rivals the Biltmore is a result of their decorating talents and expertise? To say that they are an integral part of our House would be an understatement of Biblical proportions.



BREAKOUT
KNOXVILLE

♥ We spend much of our time at the House seeking help to raise operating funds... so it was a most welcome change of pace to be contacted by Ben Davis of Break Out Knoxville, a newer company in town that offers escape experience games. He generously pledged a portion of sales his company made the week of November 15-21 and we were delighted to recently receive a \$1,780 check from him.

KIND FOLKS.... CARING HEARTS

While we are always thrilled to have donors of any age, there is just something quite special about "kids helping kids". Some groups that have learned you're never too young to realize that we are all here to help each other are:

♥♥ The kindergarten classes at Sequoyah Elementary School that worked tirelessly to collect snack foods for our families' enjoyment. We were happily amazed to see the bounty that was delivered in early March.

♥♥ Children attending Morning Star Day Care held a "Dance-A-Thon" event for our benefit raising \$1,324. Now that's what we call "happy feet".

♥♥ Who can resist an ice cold glass of lemonade on a hot summer's day?! Apparently, not many folks can as evidenced by the fund-raising efforts of two groups of enterprising and caring kids. Nanny's Edu-Care Center made \$200 with their stand and students from Sam Houston Elementary School raised an equally impressive \$326 with theirs.

♥♥ For years now, the second grade classes at Concord Christian School have worked diligently to create works of art for their holiday market. Then, they work just as hard selling their treasures since they realize that all the profits will be donated to our House! \$1,865 was their gift to us this year and we're still smiling!

♥♥ Support from area Key Clubs has been such a tremendous benefit to Ronald McDonald Houses across the United States. Locally, we've been more than blessed to have

worked with some dynamic chapters such as the Bearden High School group that for 20 years now and counting have sold parking places at the House during home UT football games, raising \$140,670 so far. The clubs from Clinton and Cocke County high schools both come on a regular basis and can oftentimes be found in the kitchen preparing delectable meals for our appreciative families and perhaps even adopting us for a work day as yardwork and cleaning are always high on our list of needs.

CHOCOLATEFEST

Jennifer Johnsey is a true Renaissance woman possessing a wealth of talents ranging from over the airwaves to entrepreneurial ones that resulted in the creating of her business, Imagination Forest Parties and Play Center several years ago. So how does this busy wife, mother and business woman find the time to plan, execute, and host a major event such as Chocolatefest? We have absolutely no idea but are just grateful that she does. The January 30th event held at the Expo Center was wildly successful as witnessed by the hundreds of folks waiting in line before

the doors leading to the decadent sweets even opened. Our House was honored to be adopted again this year by Jennifer and her dedicated Board and we were equally thrilled to receive over \$6,200 as a result of their Herculean efforts. Chocolate rules!!



FARM BUREAU

When a new family checks into our House and settles into their room, their next question typically is: "Where's the kitchen and what's to eat?" Trying to feed up to 65 people three meals a day could seem like a daunting task... and it is... but it's one that is made manageable by caring friends and donors like our extended "family" who are part of Farm Bureau.

For years now, these dear people have faithfully come to the House from many different East TN counties with a singular goal in mind... to fill our pantries, storerooms, and freezers with food. And fill them they did on a recent visit here with \$3,600 worth of food to be exact. And to top it off, they also left some grocery store gift cards with us so that we can purchase whatever needs we might

have in between their annual visits.



DILLARD'S

What a friend we have in Dillard's! Once again last Fall, they sold Southern Living cookbooks to benefit Ronald McDonald Houses across the country. Walking through the store, the cookbooks could be seen among the holiday finery adorning the counters next to most registers. And their sales staff was instrumental in helping increase the number of books sold by gently encouraging customers to support our cause and thanking them on our behalf when one was sold. Store manager Geoff Johnson and assistant manager



Presentation of check for \$7,800 from Dillard's

Caleb Lottes, both new to the Knoxville market, recently took time from their hectic schedules to come tour our House and to present us with a check for \$7,800 representing 2015 proceeds. We're so thankful for Dillard's and their generous patrons.

Birthday Surprise

Our 31st birthday was definitely made happier by the kindness and generosity of Martin-Brower employees who once again raised money for our Ronald McDonald House and other Houses within their district. Their field service manager, Jorge Reyna, dropped by our House on March 8th bearing a check for \$5,409.64 which was the "icing on the cake" on our special day



Our Director receiving the gift from Jorge.

LET'S COOK

Who wants to cook dinner after a long day at work? For those who don't, there is a respite the second Monday of each month offered by the caring folks at Patterson's Home Appliances and Jenn Air. For nearly three years now they have played host to the best chefs Knoxville has to offer, who in turn, create a delectable three-course meal to share with the appreciative audience. Besides being able to enjoy mouth-watering food, attendees have the chance to ask culinary questions of the chef and receive copies of the evening's recipes. All this for only \$10. And 100% of those proceeds benefit our local House. So come on out and join us. You know you're hungry!



SAVE THE DATE

*The Smoky Mountain Classic Chevy Car Show in Pigeon Forge on May 21

*Our RMH Golf Tournament at Egwani Farms is set for June 3rd, with an AM and PM shotgun start. Registration info will soon be available on our website.

*The encore presentation of "Dueling Pianos" is coming up on August 6th at the DoubleTree Hotel in Oak Ridge. Thanks in advance to the incredible KFI Board members for all their time and effort in hosting this unique musical evening.

CHANGE DOES MATTER

One question that is often posed to us is whether or not the money in the canisters at McDonald's actually does come to us. And we can honestly answer with a resounding... YES... that it indeed does come our way on a monthly basis. In fact, canister revenue continues to be a major part of our annual budget and we had a record-setting year in 2015 with a grand total of \$156,275 raised from the 78 restaurants in our area!

BOARD UPDATE

We were delighted to welcome Dana O'Kelley and Keith Goodwin back into the fold to begin serving another 3-year term on our Board. And we were equally thrilled when Stephanie Strutner agreed to join our RMH family for the first time. Welcome Stephanie! !

