



Celebrating 36 years of..

Keeping Families Close®

Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Knoxville

1705 West Clinch Avenue

Knoxville, Tennessee 37916

knoxrmhc.org

Spring 2021

HOUSE UPDATE

"Slowly but surely" would describe our quite cautious approach to restoring our House operation. In March of 2020, all Ronald McDonald Houses worldwide were asked to close so we could better prepare for the unprecedented crisis we were facing. Most importantly, it would allow Houses the chance to order necessary PPE supplies, train staff with new safety protocols, and allow time to formulate plans for a calculated re-opening, balancing guidelines set forth by our local medical community and the RMHC Global office.

In the meantime, though, children were still getting sick and hurt with the need for our services ever-present.

A call to Drury Inn & Suites in West Knoxville resulted in their caring management offering

hotel rooms at a greatly discounted rate to our families that our House would be responsible for paying. Arrangements were also made for our families to access meals with no charge to them



at the hospital with our House also absorbing that expense.

By early September, we were given permission to re-open which we did on a very limited basis. With common areas such as the kitchen required to remain closed, mini-fridges were installed in individual bedrooms and microwaves were placed on each floor. Sanitation stations were placed throughout the House,

medical screenings were performed on all prospective families, and staff & guest temperatures were monitored & recorded daily. In addition with a rigid disinfecting regimen

addressed every two hours, we felt as if we were doing everything within reason to ensure the health of everyone.

We have recently segued into the next phase of reopening, meaning we are at 50% occupancy, or "half-way back" to normalcy, while still utilizing the hotel rooms as needed!

With our volunteer program also required

to be temporarily suspended, life has seemed quite surreal as we especially miss the delicious aromas emanating from the kitchen when caring folks are here making daily dinners for those in residence, not to mention all those talented groups of volunteers who come and tackle the repairs we have on our ever-present "Honey-Do" list.

Thankfully, we know that better days are on the horizon and we can see some light at the end of what has been a very long tunnel!! And we have gotten to that point due to a host of caring, compassionate donors and supporters who have been there for us on every step of this difficult journey, and we could never fully express the depth of our gratitude & appreciation for that level of loving concern and support.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

While quite a number of our special events were canceled last year due to Covid, we were delighted to be able to host our annual golf tournament on September 10th at Egwani Farms. A number of new safeguards were put into place as the planning committee had participant safety as their #1 concern with masks and sanitizers being plentiful throughout the course.

For instance, having staggered tee-times in lieu of a shotgun start ensured that golfers were socially distanced and then some! Instead of communal beverage and snacks stations, masked

volunteers were on hand to personally fill bags with items of the golfer's choosing.

Texas Roadhouse was still on hand to provide a "grab 'n' go" meal of their succulent bar-be-cue since our typical buffet simply wasn't feasible.

With Mother Nature also cooperating in providing a sun-filled day, we were just shy of raising \$72,000, a true feat we felt blessed to achieve during such an uncertain time.

And hats off to our most generous sponsors as without their support, this event could not happen: Platinum level: Scooter Foods, Cochran Family McDonald's, East TN Children's Hospital, The Martin-Brower Co,

and UT Medical Center; Gold level: Tom Cochran, Eric & Emily Cochran; Silver level: Broadway Carpets/ Shaw Floors, Texas Roadhouse, Burger Family McDonald's, The Hudson Co, Pilot/ Flying J, Knoxville Pediatric Associates, PYA, P.C.; Bronze level: Hodges, Doughty & Carson, PLLC, Blaine Construction Corp, Team Mayfield, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, Dillard's, Rice Buick GMC, H&L Partners, Kirk & Joanne Huddleston, Will & Becca Edwards, T&T Signs; Individual level: Coulter & Justus, P.C., Martin & Company,



Citizens National Bank, Ted Flickinger, Jr, McDonald's of Jamestown; and Patrons: Restaurant Technologies, John Sheridan, Shoffner Kalthoff, MES, Inc, Keith Goodwin, Staybridge Suites, Superior Steel, Ole Smoky Moonshine, Cherokee Distributing, 3 Rivers Radio Group, Rich Products, and Enterprise Print Group.

Our 2021 golf event has been set for Thursday, Sept 9th at Egwani Farms. Registration information will soon be on our website. Hope to see you there!

BEAT THE WINTER CORONA VIRUS BLUES



Over the past dozen years that we've hosted our signature event, we typically begin the new year by petitioning Mother Nature to provide

iceless, snow-less weather for that first Friday in February.

Never did it occur to us that we'd be dealing with a pandemic... something that makes an ice storm seem fairly inconsequential by comparison. At least ice is gone in a day or two!

We've heard from so many fans of our unique event as to just how much they missed being at Stanley's Greenhouse,

enjoying the food, fellowship, and lovely ambience of the venue.

While the fundraiser might have been canceled, one thing that hasn't been is our commitment to caring for families and their hospitalized children. So hats off and many thanks to the scores of generous patrons who continued their support of our "non-event" as over \$22,161.00 has been raised in response to the

BTWB note that was mailed out in January.

We promise to be back bigger and better than ever next year, so mark those calendars for February 4th, 2022 and we'll see you at Stanley's!!!



TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE

Saying good-bye is never easy, especially when you're saying it to a long-time & beloved RMH employee. After a 19-year career with us, our office manager, Mary Howard, is retiring to spend more time with husband Randy, who recently retired as well. We wish them all the best as they make an abundance of happy new memories while traveling as they take their new camper on the road to see what adventures await!!



MCDONALD'S SUPPORT IS EVER-PRESENT

Being the first Ronald McDonald House that opened in the state back in 1985 presented a bit more of a challenge as we had to educate those in our region about our unique mission and exactly how we served families in need of a "home-away-from-home". We'll never forget the many calls we received for "to-go" orders for Big Macs from those who thought we were a take-out service for the chain or the inquiries from parents wanting to invite Ronald McDonald himself to their child's birthday parties.

All these many years later, we find that

those type calls have long since ceased and we not only share a name with the celebrated restaurants, we also share the deep commitment to ensuring families find a caring, compassionate, and supportive "Home" while their critically ill children



are being treated in area hospitals.

Since we opened our doors, McDonald's has continued to find new ways in which to help support the work we

do. Installing collection canisters, creating a Round-Up program, plus donating a percentage of french fries and Happy Meals sold are initiatives that offer ongoing revenue for us on a monthly basis.

In addition, they host specialty, seasonal fundraisers such as the heart sales and donating a portion of the sales from McFlurries and Shamrock Shakes.

We couldn't ask for a better partner to "help us" help those in need and are beyond grateful for their effort and interest in moving our mission forward. And hats-off to the wonderfully faithful customers that so generously support the many fundraising initiatives that McDonald's offers for our benefit.



MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome three new members into the fold this year.

Blake Valentine is a native Knoxville and UTK graduate in Finance. Last year, he joined the United Way of Greater Knoxville as Chief Financial Officer, making the transition from the for-profit sector to

the for-IMPACT sector. Blake and Courtney, his wife of 21 years, have four elementary age children and when he's not playing soccer, he is coaching children's soccer.

Joe Burger III is originally from Akron, OH. After serving in the Air Force for 21 years as a healthcare administrator, he retired and realized that with the last name of "Burger",

his destiny was to move to Knoxville and join his family's business of working with McDonald's. He was approved as a franchisee in 2009 and currently owns five restaurants in Knoxville. He and his wife Kimberly have three children.

Matt Schaefer joins East TN Children's Hospital as president & CEO from Children's Hospital in New Orleans where

he served as Sr. VP and COO. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Texas A&M and a Master's in Business Administration from Rice University. He and his wife Kristen and their two daughters are excited about what life holds for them in East TN.



A NEW FACE AT THE HOUSE

We'd like to introduce our new Office Manager, Tori Grindstaff, who began her career with us in mid-March. The Knoxville native now calls Strawberry Plains home along with husband David and son Joe, where they enjoy frequent visits from two grown sons and three sweet grandchildren. Any leisure time is spent further spoiling her cat, exploring various arts & crafts endeavors, and directing activities at her home church.

A twenty-year veteran of Knox County's Engineering and Public Works Department, she comes to us most recently from the CAC Housing and Energy Program where she served as their Finance Manager. When asked how she felt about her new position, she replied, "I feel so very blessed to have been given this extraordinary opportunity to become part of the Ronald McDonald House family. I am beyond thankful to know I will be able to make a difference in the lives of children and their families and to help continue the wonderful work done here at the House."



Focus on a Family...The Swatzells

"Lightning never strikes the same place twice" is a common phrase that's been heard before, often times to reassure someone that whatever difficulty happened, it would not happen again.

Obviously, little Rylen Swatzell didn't realize that being born nearly eight weeks prematurely would have his parents staying at our House once again, six years after his brother Cooper was born six weeks early.

Jefferson City, the family's home, can be almost an hour away depending on traffic, much too far to commute back & forth when Rylen needs Mom

and Dad, Lindsey and Sam, by his side.

As is the case with so many people, the Swatzell's had heard about RMHs prior to their first stay, knew they helped parents stay close to their hospitalized loved ones, but really weren't aware of the full extent of the services offered.

"Our first impression of the House", said Lindsey, "was that it was beautiful, so clean and well organized, with a sweet and helpful staff. This second visit, our car is down and we've had to borrow one from a friend to even get to Knoxville. So knowing we are close to the baby gives us such great 'peace of mind'."

With three brothers at

home anxiously awaiting the chance to meet their new sibling, doctors estimate it could be several weeks yet as Rylen needs to work on eating on his own and not relying on a feeding tube. He also needs to be able to demonstrate "safe sleep" from a prone position without experiencing heart rate drops.

Mom and Dad's constant vigil at his bedside, encouraging words, along with a bounty of hugs and kisses continue to be a big part of his medical regimen.



Fingers are crossed that the family will be home by early April just in time to welcome spring, the Easter bunny, and celebrate the holiday together.



KIND FOLKS.... CARING HEARTS

♥ Heroic actions can take many forms. Take for instance the members of Knoxville's Firefighter's Association. While they protect property and save lives on a daily basis, they are heroes to our wonderful House for their philanthropic endeavors.



For years now, the Association members have worked tirelessly to host a series of concerts that benefit area charities, with our Ronald McDonald House being one of the fortunate recipients of their efforts.

Typically, check presentations have been made at the concert venue, but with such events canceled due to the pandemic, we assumed the revenue would be canceled as well.

Imagine our surprise and delight when we received a call in December from Kevin

Faddis, the group's president, telling us he had a check to drop off. Amazingly, it was a check for \$15,000 that rendered us speechless (a true feat!). Over the last five years, they have graciously and generously donated \$55,000 to us, an astounding amount raised by an equally astounding assembly of caring, community-minded heroes.

♥ Our holiday card sales and mail-out continues to be a wonderful source of revenue for us raising an astonishing \$61,133 this past season.

The promotion is a great success for two reasons: our caring community that believes in our mission and the generosity of Multi-Color Corporation (formerly WS Packaging, Inc) that for years now has donated the needed materials and all printing costs associated with the card's production. We simply can not thank them enough for their ongoing support and commitment to our mission.



♥ Knowing how deeply working parents depended on her business, Child Creations Day Care owner, Debbie Snyder, kept the doors open throughout the pandemic, adding whatever safety precautions were needed to keep the children in her charge safe & secure. And knowing how deeply our Ronald McDonald House depended on her generosity, she graciously hosted the Second Annual Trike-A-Thon early last summer with young cyclists making laps around their outdoor track, taking donations for each one completed. At the end of the day, Debbie was delighted to learn she'd be making a donation to our House of \$8,102. Never underestimate "pedal-power"!!

♥ Neither rain, sleet, snow, or pandemic could keep the Bearden High School Key Club members, under the leadership of Ernie Roberts, from donating their Saturdays to park cars here during

the UT home football games. While the sanctions limiting the number of fans that could attend the games, coupled with fewer games played did impact their bottom line, the fact that they still managed to raise \$2,990 and were willing to sacrifice part of their week-ends for our benefit, has endeared them to us even more so!



Additional Key Clubs such as one from Powell High School have supported us as well by hosting a drive to collect household needs for us.

The Cocke County High School Club had a collection event raising \$701.00 for us.

And thanks to the Farragut High School Club for donating cleaning supplies and pop tabs to recycle.

KIND FOLKS.... CARING HEARTS (CONTINUED)

♥ Two first grade classes at Farragut Primary School, under the direction of Ms. Katie Gagley and Ms. Kim Lara, had a special Valentine collection to help "share the love" with our House, raising an impressive \$526.65. It just goes to show that you're never too young to impact the lives of others in need and these remarkable children are the perfect example of that. They



have also learned an important "life lesson" at an early age... we're all here to help each other.



♥ The lovely ladies of Alpha Delta Pi have been a vital part of the Ronald McDonald House family since the first House opened in the mid-1970's. From the collegians to the alumni

members, their support has been generous and unwavering. Actually, we're twice blessed to have the support of two chapters, Alpha Kappa from UT Knoxville and also



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE

Epsilon Psi from TN Tech in Cookeville. Last year, their combined efforts raised over \$27,000 for us and through February of this year, \$10,096 is in the bank thanks to the

creative efforts of the ladies from UT. A query was once posed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr... "Life's most urgent question is... 'What are you doing for others?'" And we can honestly answer when it comes to ADPI, they are going "above and beyond" in their efforts to so beautifully support us.



Tennessee
TECH

THE VALUE OF IN-KIND GIFTS

In-kind gifts, which are non-monetary donations that can run the gamut of donated meals, professional services, to needed household items, are always a huge benefit to our bottom line. Year in and out, hundreds of volunteers lend their time and talents to us by preparing delicious meals and snacks for families to enjoy, decorating

the House for holidays, helping with fund-raisers, creating "welcome bags", donating baby quilts and children's pillow cases to brighten a hospital room. We're equally delighted to have those brave souls who come to address the needs on our ever-present "Honey-do" list and assist with yardwork and minor home repairs.

Locally, businesses such as Common Grounds, Proffitt & Sons, Smoky

Mountain Water, Waste Management, Lawn Butler, Glass Doctor, and a host of others save us untold dollars annually as they render their invaluable services "gratis".

Area McDonald's and many of their suppliers have also long been part of this giving initiative with Coca-Cola, Ecolab, Tyson, Flavor Reddy Foods, Georgia Pacific, & Wexford Labs contributing on a regular basis.

The RMHC Global office is dedicated to the quest of securing donors that could offer benefits to Houses worldwide. As a matter of fact, we're expecting a shipment of new mattress sets, courtesy of Tempur-Pedic, any day now. A great night's sleep is a gift beyond compare as is the generosity of so many caring businesses that we appreciate beyond measure!