to visit and spend the weekend with their little sister. It truly made an extremely difficult time in our life easier.”

The Ronald McDonald House provided much more than convenience. “The staff and volunteers were incredible, so kind and caring,” said Ellen. “They were always asking if they could do anything for us and they were there if we needed a hug. Having volunteer meals prepared for us two nights a week was so nice, as was being able to just ask for clean sheets and towels. It allowed us to be close to the hospital, go back to the House to sleep each night, and go to rounds every morning. We would take breaks during the day and go to the House for a much needed diversion. Many days the walk back and forth was the only fresh air and exercise we got, as we spent most of our time with Claire in the hospital.”

When Claire was released to the Ronald McDonald House she was so excited! It was her “home” for that month. Finally, eight months after she first got sick, Claire got to go home. But while recovering well from her transplant, she had many other health complications and returned to Mayo many more times (about 25) over the next nine months. “We

(continued on page 5)
EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Season of Giving

This has been an amazing, surprising and momentous year. In May we announced the kick-off of our planned facility expansion and the Love Hope capital campaign. The response has been beautiful! So many people heard our message of hope and hospitality and reached out to help.

While we need to raise money to build the expansion, we also have to fund the current and future needs of the House. We can’t expand if we don’t have the funds to make it run.

Autumn at the House means the start of our Season of Giving. We want to share from a letter we received from a former guest, Krystal, who stayed at the House with her mom. It sums up what this “home-away-from-home” means to our guests:

“During those long weeks the Ronald McDonald House was my refuge. Each day when I would get back from treatment I felt like I was truly home. I cherished family dinners as kind volunteers were so willing to provide food for all. I was able to make friends and talk with other families. I have only fond memories of the Ronald McDonald House and I think of it often. Thank you for keeping the House up and running. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who make activities, dinners and a welcoming environment at the Ronald McDonald House possible. You all do truly change lives.”

Throughout this newsletter you will read so many stories of our amazing community, volunteers and guest families. You will truly see our mission in action.

During this Season of Giving, we hope you will celebrate all that is Ronald McDonald House. We are a welcoming and safe place for children and families to stay while feeling the embrace of support from caring volunteers, staff and a generous community. We are a place where families can truly live. Staying in a hospital bed during the holidays is sometimes necessary, but the House ensures family is nearby and together so they aren’t lonely.

At this time of year, we are reminded of the many hearts and hands who support our mission every day and humbly extend our thanks for the love you share with the children and families who call the Ronald McDonald House home.

In partnership,

Paul Tieskoetter, Board President
Peggy Elliott, Executive Director

Mission Statement

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, Minnesota provides a “home-away-from-home” and gives caring support to families seeking medical care for their children.
On May 4, 2017 we publicly announced plans to expand our House from 42 rooms to 70 to accommodate our ever-increasing need of serving families. Together we have an incredible opportunity to create impact that will be felt for generations to come.

For the latest campaign updates and up to date fundraising progress, please visit our campaign website at: expansion.rmhmn.org

**WAYS TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION**

1. MAKE A FINANCIAL DONATION
2. START A FUNDRAISER
3. SHARE YOUR STORY
4. SPREAD THE WORD

“We are in a historic time of growth not only in our community but also for the Ronald McDonald House. We must expand in order to serve the current and growing needs of children and families who come to Mayo Clinic to receive care.”

– Ed Clark, Campaign Chair

We are making significant progress towards our campaign goal thanks to the generosity of many. We invite you to join our efforts towards continued growth to meet the demand for services from families with children being treated at Mayo Clinic. Together – donors, volunteers, partners, and friends – we will reach our ambitious goal to keep 70 families close, every night.
The Future is Bright!

We are fortunate to have generous benefactors who established scholarships for former guests and House volunteers through three separate scholarship funds. We are proud to share this year’s recipients!

**THE BARBARA HENOCH SCHOLARSHIP**
Active Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN volunteers with more than 100 hours of service are eligible for this scholarship. Thanks to the support of Barb and her late husband, Phil Henoch, our House became a Ronald McDonald House in 1990. Barb remains a close friend to the House and the mission.

Award: $1,000

2017 Recipient: Sara Busche

Next Application Deadline: March 1, 2018

**BARBARA SOIFER SCHOLARSHIP**
Barb Soifer’s career at McDonald’s and Ronald McDonald House Charities spanned more than 30 years. Barb was devoted to her family, career and community and was a strong supporter of the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN.

Award: $1,000 1st year, $500 2nd year

2017 Recipient: Jacob Roble

Next Application Deadline: June 15, 2018

**THE RICKEE HENOCH SCHOLARSHIP**
Rickee Henoch’s scholarship has supported former guests of the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN for over 15 years.

Award: $750

2017 Recipient: Lauren Campagna

Next Application Deadline: June 15, 2018

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**Beatles Benefit Concert**

Thanks to the support of many, hundreds came together at the Rochester Art Center on May 5, 2017 for a Beatles Tribute Benefit Concert for the Ronald McDonald House expansion project. Attendees enjoyed cover music from the Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band album. Proceeds from the event went to support the expansion project. Thanks to our sponsors Paul Scott (event founder), Coca-Cola (lounge sponsor), KRPR 89.9 (media sponsor), Powers Ventures (food and beverage sponsor) and Mid America Convention and Fox and Fern Floral (ambiance sponsors) for their support.

**Pop Tab Week**

July 10-16, 2017 was officially declared Pop Tab Week in Rochester, MN thanks to a proclamation at our pop tab week press conference by Mayor Ardell Brede. To celebrate the week, “Pop Tab Kid” Seth Bayles, a former guest of the Ronald McDonald House, traveled from Wisconsin with his family to deliver the 1.6 million pop tabs he collected within his community over the summer to support our expansion project. Pop tabs continue to generate between $10,000-15,000 for our House each and every year. Learn more about our pop tab program online at www.rmhmn.org/poptab

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Learn more or donate online to the expansion at https://expansion.rmhmn.org
Claire’s Story

would stay in a hotel until a room opened up at the Ronald McDonald House," said Ellen. “It was always so nice to get back in, where we felt we could unpack our suitcase and stay until Claire could go home again.”

For the family, the Ronald McDonald House truly became their “home-away-from-home”. “We spent much more time at the House than we did our own house for about 18 months,” said Ellen. Claire spent Christmas 2013 and all of the 2014 holidays in the hospital. “As much as she didn’t want to be in the hospital, the Ronald McDonald House made each holiday special for her,” said Ellen. “We so appreciated the Snowflake Room during the holidays, a free store where we could shop for presents for Claire.” The House allowed the whole family – including all three children – to spend the holidays together, surrounded by caring staff and kindred spirits during a difficult time.

With each of these trips back to Mayo, Claire would stay in the hospital for a couple of days to a few weeks. She would not be home long before getting sick again and returning to the hospital. Eighteen months after Claire first got sick, she started palliative care at home.

She had many ups and downs, but really took advantage of her good days and was able to do a lot of fun things. Unfortunately, her health continued to decline. After ten and a half months at home, Claire passed away. “She is now our angel watching over us,” said Ellen.

“Looking back on our journey with Claire, the Ronald McDonald House was a Godsend,” said Ellen. “We made many lifelong friends. Few people really get what it is like to have a very sick child - but at the House we met many people who got it. The staff and volunteers took care of so many things, so we could focus on Claire. It is truly a welcoming house.”

“We so appreciated being able to stay there. It not only allowed us to be close to Claire, it also allowed Claire’s two college-aged siblings, Kelly and Aaron, to visit and spend the weekend with their little sister. It truly made an extremely difficult time in our life easier.”

“The staff and volunteers were incredible, so kind and caring. They were always asking if they could do anything for us and they were there if we needed a hug.”

– Ellen Strawman
Each year, hundreds of volunteers give their time and talent to make the Ronald McDonald House a “home-away-from-home” for our guest families throughout the year. During the holiday season, dozens of volunteers come forward to make the season extra special for families who are away from home for the holidays.

**Volunteers In Action!**

*Keeping our House a Home during the holidays.*

Each year, hundreds of volunteers give their time and talent to make the Ronald McDonald House a “home-away-from-home” for our guest families throughout the year. During the holiday season, dozens of volunteers come forward to make the season extra special for families who are away from home for the holidays.

**Celebrating 20 Years of ThanksGIVING With the Wilson Family & Friends**

Each Thanksgiving Day, the smell of home fills the halls of our House. A traditional meal of turkey, rolls, casserole, mashed potatoes, dressing and of course pie is served to all guests thanks to a few special volunteers.

This Thanksgiving was the 20th year that the Wilson family and their friends have served a warm, homemade Thanksgiving dinner to Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN guest families. As one of the founding families of our organization, the House has a special place in the Wilson family’s hearts and they’ve made it a family tradition to serve others on Thanksgiving Day. Along with a group of friends who have been volunteering on the holiday for years, the group makes Thanksgiving as home-like as possible for guests who are away from their families during the holiday.

“A few years ago, a little girl who was receiving chemotherapy treatments came down the stairs holding her mother’s hand. She turned to her mother and said in an excited tone, “mom, this place smells just like grandma’s house,” recalls George Wilson. “That’s what we’ve tried to provide over the 20 years we have been doing these dinners. Creating a place that reminds your guests that they are home.”

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**Holiday Decorating**

"I started my role at the Ronald McDonald House by suggesting to change a few front pots to include more seasonal and kid-friendly designs. It was a great way to share my plant knowledge and a little creativity to bring smiles and appreciation from those staying at the House. My favorite part is to come up with creative designs for the pots for all the different seasons. It is especially fun putting up our holiday themed pots and watching the kids’ eyes light up. It makes my little gift of giving all worth it."

- Beth Solie, Gardening Angel Volunteer

"I’ve learned so much from everyone who works at the House, the volunteers and just the families who stay there. It’s been incredible being able to help in even a small way. During the holidays, it’s wonderful to see a group of women come in and transform the entire place in a morning! The best part is seeing the faces of the families and kids who are so excited to see the glowing lights and sparkle. It’s been great!"

-Sue Bouquet, Holiday Decorating Volunteer
Ways to Give Your Time to the Ronald McDonald House this Holiday Season and throughout the year:

**Ongoing Opportunities**

- **Become a Housewarmer** and help keep the House a Home all year long
- **Volunteer as a House Dinner Host** and help keep our House dinners running smoothly
- **Serve as a Ronald McDonald House Ambassador** and help us spread our mission to the community throughout the year
- **Volunteer as a Gardening Angel** and keep our outdoor areas fresh and beautiful

**One-Time Opportunities**

- Looking for a one-time opportunity? We are looking for volunteers to help us **take down decorations following the holiday season**
- Gather a group of your friends, family, co-workers or organization members and **host a House Dinner** for all of our families
- **Donate** 42 (one for each family) of a fun item (snacks, toys, etc.) to the House and we will use them as “mailbox stuffers” so families have a fun surprise to come back to after appointments
- **Decorate and stuff breakfast bags** as a quick ‘grab and go’ breakfast option for our families heading out for a day of appointments

Learn more about all of our volunteer opportunities by visiting our website at www.rmhmn.org

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**Celebrating 20 Years of Service**

Congratulations to these special volunteers who have donated the gift of time to our House and families for 20 years!

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Donna Bakeberg  
Nina Cecchi  
Gretchen Cutshall  
Kathy Lawrence
Family Activities

Having a sick child or sibling over the holidays is never easy. Thanks to our donors and friends, the holidays are a little brighter for our families. Here are a few ongoing family activities that help bring holiday cheer to the House!

**Snowflake Room:**

Each December we set up a store which is known to our families as the "Snow Flake Room". The items in the store are new, unwrapped toys and gifts for all ages allowing parents to go shopping for their kids and kids to go shopping for their parents. Having these complimentary gifts alleviates the stress of shopping and the financial burden during the Holidays while families are dealing with an ill child.
Winter Wonder Evening:

Thanks to the generous legacy of Ned Waldman & family (wife Dari McDonald), guest families at the House are able to enjoy a Winter Wonder Evening each holiday season. The evening includes dinner and a magic show. Families then travel via coach bus to Barnes and Noble where they can pick out a book for each child.

Santa Sunday:

Each year, families are greeted by Santa during our House dinner the Sunday before Christmas. Each child and their siblings get a wrapped gift from Santa.
We would like to extend our heartfelt sympathy to all of our families who have lost their precious children. While their lives were far too short, their spirit is with us forever. The following children earned their angel wings between August 1, 2016, and July 31, 2017.

James Owen
Frank Everly
Sterling Hollister
Kylie
Morgan Charlotte
Evander
Kylynn
Kyrie Tom
Lloyd
Jax Connor
Kordell Lauren

Sadly we don’t always know when a child passes away, but we always care. If you would like your angel remembered in our next issue, or if you’d like to include memories of your child in our Angels of Inspiration memory book honoring House children who’ve passed away, please contact Paula at pharaldson@rmhmn.org.

Hearts of Gold – Give a Gift That Endures

When it comes to defining your legacy of caring, your options are many. Here are just a few flexible, versatile and secure ways you can help keep families close for years to come. Even people of modest means can make a difference in the lives of children by planning a Hearts of Gold legacy gift.

- **Include us in your will** – Designating a percentage of your estate for the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN in your will can help future generations of children in need.
- **Establish a life income gift** – Receive fixed or variable payments for life and gain valuable tax advantages when you create a life income gift.
- **Donate life insurance** – You can easily support our mission by naming the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN as a beneficiary on a policy you already own.
- **Consider your retirement plan assets** – By making a simple designation on your plan’s beneficiary designation form, you can save your loved ones from a heavy tax burden while helping us.
- **Give property** – If you have a house or another piece of property you no longer want to manage, it may help us continue our vital work.

Learn more by contacting us:

We’re here to answer any questions you may have about planning a gift. Please contact Samantha Rother at (507) 424-3216 or srother@rmhmn.org for more information or to share your intentions.
2017 Special Event Highlights

HEARTS AND DIAMONDS SPECTACULAR

This year's 14th annual Hearts and Diamonds Spectacular was held on Saturday, February 4, 2017 at Somerby Golf Club. The event continued the 13-year tradition of diamonds, dining and dancing. This year's theme was “Shine Bright (the brightest stars are those who shine for the benefit of others)” and 270 guests were reminded of the impact our House has on the families we serve through a touching video and speech from a recent guest dad. Collectively, the event raised over $200,000. Our signature sponsor was Sterling State Bank with Hight & Randall Personal Jeweler being our exclusive diamond sponsor. McNeilus Companies, Rochester Motor Cars, Somerby Golf Club and Weis Builders were major sponsors of the event. Next year’s Hearts and Diamonds Spectacular: Saturday, February 3, 2018.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE FAMILY WALK

In partnership with the Scheels Med City Marathon, our two-mile Ronald McDonald House Family Walk celebrated its third year on May 27, 2017. 160 walkers of all ages joined to support our children and families. The event’s signature sponsor was DataSmart Computers & Telecommunications. Next year’s Ronald McDonald House Family Walk: Saturday, May 26, 2018

SWING YOUR BIRDIE GOLF CLASSIC

On Friday, July 28, 2017, 145 golfers supported the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN by participating in the 39th Annual Swing Your Birdie Golf Classic. This best-shot tournament held each year at Willow Creek Golf Course is known as the longest running golf tournament in Rochester. Thank you to this year’s sponsors including Think Mutual Bank (presenting sponsor), Hiawatha Sno Seekers (major sponsor), Benike Construction (lunch sponsor), and Dunlap & Seeger (social hour sponsor). Next year’s Swing Your Birdie Golf Classic: Friday, July 27, 2018

PARTY AT THE PAVILION - RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE BENEFIT CONCERT

Our second annual Party at the Pavilion benefit concert was held on Thursday, September 7, 2017 at Willow Creek Golf Course’s outdoor pavilion. Music was performed by Darlene & The Boys, Debbie Anthony & Level Best and County Line Drive. Thank you to event sponsors Wendell and Dianne Pittenger (event founders), Bremer Bank (premier music sponsor) and Heartman Insurance (opening band sponsor), Andy’s Liquor and Dunlap & Seeger (heart of hope sponsors), Clements Chevorlet, Rochester Plumbing and Heating (heart of love sponsors) and Premier Bank (raffle sponsor).
Letter from the Heart

“I cannot imagine our six week journey of radiation treatments without the support of the Ronald McDonald House. You’ve provided us with the most important piece of the puzzle - a place to call home. It is evident in every smile, every gift, every meal and every room that this is the house that love built!”

- 2017 Guest Family

Holiday Wish List

Thanks to the generous support of our community, we are able to make the holidays a little brighter for our families. By stocking our Snowflake Room (learn more on page 8) with gifts for all members of the family, families can focus on what’s really important during the holidays - keeping their children close to the support and medical care they need.

Our full holiday wish list is available at rmhmn.org or you can find our wish list on Amazon by searching Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, MN.

- Small Flashlights
- Small Toolkits
- Lotion Sets
- Makeup Sets
- Card and Board Games
- Baby and Toddler Toys
- Teen Gifts
- Lego Sets

Donations can be dropped off at our front desk seven days a week.