Ever since Sadie was a baby, she had respiratory issues related to swallowing difficulties. But, because of the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, Minnesota...she never stopped smiling.

“Sadie is excited when we leave for Rochester,” said Sherry, Sadie’s mom. “Because it’s not about the clinic—it’s about the Ronald McDonald House.”

She associates the House with the clinic. It makes everything easier. She focuses on the House.

“She loves the staff, the activities and the playrooms. And she really loves the shuttle drivers who take us from the House to the clinic.”

And Sadie isn’t the only one.

“I cannot put into words how I feel about the Ronald McDonald House.” Sherry said. “It’s so wonderful. It’s hard for me to put it into words without getting emotional.”

When Sadie was several months old, she was diagnosed with a laryngeal cleft—a rare congenital abnormality affecting the larynx and esophagus, resulting in difficulty swallowing, among other signs and symptoms. It occurs in approximately 1 in 20,000 live births and is more common in boys than girls. When Sadie was first diagnosed, Sherry was told, “It’s something we [doctors] always look for, but never see.”

But it was Sadie’s diagnosis.

“Hearing her diagnosis was difficult. But hearing it was a congenital diagnosis was even more difficult,”
EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

MORE HOUSE. MORE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.
MORE LOVE AND HOPE.

We are thrilled to share the latest news from the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester and trust you will enjoy the stories of our incredible community, dedicated volunteers and cherished guest families.

Fall has arrived at the House and with it the completion of our Love Tremendously Hope Exceedingly capital campaign and expansion project. It is yet another milestone in our legacy of providing shelter and support to families who travel to Rochester for world-class healthcare.

The construction of the new building wing was completed in May, followed by the remodeling of sections of the existing House, including a limited number of guest rooms on both the second and third floors. The House has grown from 42,000 sq. feet to 90,000 sq. feet and can now host 28 more families each night!

Family activities, suspended during the remodeling phase of our project, are in full swing once again. Children, families, staff and volunteers are delighted! Families are finding comfort in their beautiful, new guest rooms and are finding strength from sharing stories with other families in the community living spaces. Our spacious outdoor plaza has been widely used, along with the playrooms, living rooms and shared kitchens in the new building wing. The Heart of the Home has become the central gathering space for guests and visitors, including our furry Paw Pals, who stop by to bring smiles to the children (and parents!) at the House.

Our expanded and refreshed House is serving more families in need every day!

We remain humbled by the incredible response to our need to serve more families and turn fewer away. Financial gifts along with gifts of time and talents are especially important with our significantly larger House. Thank you for everything you do to support our mission!

As we approach the end of this momentous year, we are reminded of the impact of a caring community, the courage of the children we serve, and the limitless love their parents have for them. We are grateful beyond words for the amazing outpouring of love for the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester and those we serve. Our mission is strong and the future is bright thanks to you and your kindness and compassion.

Sending warm, heartfelt wishes from our House to yours,

Tyler Coleman, Board President
Peggy Elliott, Executive Director

Mission Statement

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester Minnesota

Provides a home away from home...
And gives support to families seeking medical care for their children.
Sherry said, “I did a lot of questioning myself.”

In an attempt to gather additional information on next steps for Sadie, Sherry and Sadie visited several specialists, some of whom did not agree with the initial diagnosis. Sadie’s symptoms worsened and she suffered from pneumonia twice—something was definitely wrong. When Sherry was debating taking Sadie to Mayo Clinic, one of Sadie’s therapists strongly encouraged Sherry to do so.

The doctors at Mayo Clinic agreed with the original diagnosis. After a great deal of testing, Sadie had surgery to repair the cleft. Seven months later she had another surgery to revise the repair.

“The doctor who did the surgery was great—it’s what he does,” Sherry said.

“We were told it is his area of expertise. And it is such a unique culture at Mayo. Sadie was more than a diagnosis—doctors and nurses knew her by name. We received incredible care.

“And she’s doing very well.”

But it may not have been possible without the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester.

“I don’t know what we would have done without the Ronald McDonald House,” Sherry said. “We may not have been able to travel back and forth to Mayo Clinic. Her health was my top priority, but there were so many other challenges and obstacles.

“The House alleviated so much stress.”

Sherry knew about Ronald McDonald Houses before arriving in Rochester, but said “there is something different about the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester.”

“It’s the people,” said Sherry. “The staff is amazing—the most caring and compassionate people you could ever imagine.

“I also think the volunteers don’t fully realize the impact they have on the lives of the people who stay at the House. Anything we needed—no matter what it was—volunteers would say: that’s why we’re here. “They help make it so you can just focus on your child.”

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester recently opened its expansion. The expanded House has 70 guest rooms and additional community spaces. It is the largest House in the state of Minnesota and one of the largest in the country and the world.

“We followed the progress of the expansion from the very beginning,” said Sherry. “It is so beautiful and will be so appreciated by the families who stay at the House.”

Sadie is doing well and has only follow-up appointments at this point.

“I can’t fully explain what the House did for my family,” Sherry said. “It’s not only the resources the house provides—it’s the other families and their stories. It’s a life-changing place. “And if everybody everywhere was treated the way you are treated at the House...the world would be a very different place.”
The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, Minnesota, cut the ribbon on its expansion on May 16, 2019!

The 70-room House is the largest in the state of Minnesota, the 11th largest in the United States and the 17th largest in the world. Additionally, the expansion includes an indoor activity room, large outdoor plaza with basketball hoop and playground, meditation room, exercise room, and underground parking.
Founded in 2019, the Fresh Food Co-Op serves the children and families staying at the House and on the waiting list by providing them with fresh and healthy perishable food items, such as protein, produce, dairy and more, at no cost to the families. It provides access to healthy, supplemental food options, allowing children and families to focus solely on their health and well-being. Originally funded by a $50,000 Remarkable Impact Grant from Ronald McDonald House Charities through the generosity of AbbVie, the Fresh Food Co-Op is sustained and maintained by individuals, businesses and community partners.
Why Do You Volunteer?

I volunteer because I sincerely believe in the mission of the House. We provide a home-away-from-home for families undergoing terrific worry and stress while hoping to get help for their seriously ill children. That’s a mission that is almost impossible to beat. And every shift I see that mission in action.

The House provides a place for a family to live and be comfortable. We also coordinate groups that want to come in and provide a meal for our families. The staff schedules recreation, therapy animals, programs, games and entertainment for all to enjoy.

Every time I volunteer, I am inspired by the children who are our guests. They are so brave. When a child is not feeling the best, they are usually very quiet, very still, and not communicating a lot. But as soon as they feel even a little bit better, they are ready to play, to give a high five, and to ask questions! And it is comforting that there are other children for them to get to know as friends.

After being here for many years, I realize the most comforting thing the House offers is that all these parents are around other families going through the same fear, worry, and uncertainty that they are. They support each other. I don’t think anyone knows what those emotions feel like unless you are experiencing them, and every Ronald McDonald House family has that in common.

This is a great place to volunteer. You receive far more than you can ever give.

HOUSE DINNER PROGRAM

The House Dinner program has been revamped and improved!

The House Dinner program offers children and families staying at our House the comfort of a warm and delicious meal, prepared with love from our caring community. This is a great way for groups to support the House and relieve an immediate need for our families, interact with them, and provide an opportunity for families to build positive, supportive relationships with each other.

Groups select a date, choose the menu, and either prepare the meal on-site or have the meal catered in, and serve it to families in an engaging experience.

• Dinner opportunities are offered Monday through Thursday evenings
• Volunteers with the group must be 13 years old or older
• Group sizes can be as few as 4 or as many as 15
• To assist with ease of finding dates and scheduling, sign up online through our website at https://www.rmhmn.org/dinner/
NEW STAFF

Jammie McGuire, 
Operations Director  –  
Provide leadership on organizational activities, such as: general administration and strategic planning, financial management, operations and technology.

Emma Endicott, 
Family Services Manager  –  
Ensure that guest families have a safe and comfortable stay, fostering an atmosphere of hospitality and a pleasing environment for all in a positive community setting.

Nancy Bambenek, 
Hospitality Associate  –  
Make families and visitors feel welcome, connect with the local community and share local entertainment and recreation options to families.

Paige Organick, 
Volunteer Associate  –  
Recruit, train and celebrate the volunteers who provide care and support to the children and families, as well as working with volunteer and special event committees.

20-YEAR VOLUNTEERS

Three volunteers started volunteering in 1999! Thank you, Kathy Geisler, Jill Wylam and Becky Harris, for your dedication to the many children and families who call the House home and your combined 60 years of service!

VOLUNTEERS BY THE NUMBERS

To date, volunteers have logged a total of 229,041 hours in the House! This is a rough estimate of direct, scheduled volunteers (service groups, board and committee volunteers, and House Dinner groups not included). At $25.43/hour (national average value of volunteer time), that is $5,824,522.80 in time donated to the House.

We have had 2,040 volunteers in recorded history volunteer at the house (service groups and House Dinner groups not included).

Scholarship Recipients

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! Visit www.rmhmn.org/scholarships to apply!

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  |  Recipient: Brynn Karstens  |  Next Deadline: March 1, 2020

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  |  Recipient: Nicholas Pahl  |  Next Deadline: June 19, 2020

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  |  Recipient: Lauren Campagna  |  Next Deadline: June 19, 2020

Photo credit Fagan Studios
The Activity Room is one of the many new community spaces in the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester expansion! It’s an indoor space for kids to run, play…and to just be kids!
SHARE A NIGHT

When you join the Share a Night campaign, you make a family’s stay at the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester possible. Your gift to the Share a Night campaign ensures families don’t have to worry about where they’ll stay tonight or any night while they’re in Rochester and keeps their focus on healing.

Visit https://give.classy.org/rmhshareanight to Share a Night!

HEARTS OF GOLD

You can leave a legacy here at the Ronald McDonald House and ensure families have a home away from home for years to come by joining Hearts of Gold, the House’s planned giving program. Including the House in your estate plans will help ensure support for more families than ever before. Because of people like you, parents can concentrate on what matters most—the health of their child.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

For donors 70½ and older, a gift to the Ronald McDonald House can be directly rolled from your IRA and save you from paying income tax. The gift counts toward your minimum required distribution for the year and can be a tax-wise option for many donors in this age group. Contact your IRA administrator for additional information on Qualified Charitable Distributions. It makes a difference for kids and families at the House and helps you reach your goals!

PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING

Become a fundraiser!

Share your birthday, wedding or special day with families by asking for gifts to the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, Minnesota. Create an account to get started at https://give.classy.org/celebratermhmn.

For more information on how you can support the House, please contact the development staff: Kristen Penz (507-424-3484, kpenz@rmhmn.org), Angela Christensen (507-252-2163, achristensen@rmhmn.org), Samantha Whipple (507-424-3216, swhipple@rmhmn.org).

Please 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 passed away between August 1, 2018, and July 31, 2019:

- Alessio
- Angela
- Anna
- Ava
- Clayton
- Corrine
- Eliana
- Elizabeth
- EvaMae
- Faith
- Finn
- Gustavo
- Henry
- Jayden
- Micah
- Riley
- Rocco

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

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2019 Special Event Highlights

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester special events are a key component of our mission to keep children and families together and near the care and medical support they need. In 2019, our four signature events raised more than $300,000 for the children and families we serve. Thank you to all of our sponsors, attendees and the community for supporting our special events!

16TH ANNUAL HEARTS & DIAMONDS SPECTACULAR PRESENTED BY STERLING STATE BANK

The 16th Annual Hearts & Diamonds Spectacular was held on Saturday, Feb. 2, 2019, at Somerby Golf Club. 270 attendees enjoyed diamonds (provided by Hight & Randall Personal Jeweler), dining and dancing and heard how the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester impacted a guest family. The event raised more than $215,000! Save the date for next year’s Hearts & Diamonds Spectacular: Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020.

5TH ANNUAL RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE FAMILY WALK

Sponsored by Data-Smart Computers and Telecommunications and as part of the Scheels Med City Marathon, the 5th Annual Ronald McDonald House Family Walk was held on Saturday, May 25, 2019. The two-mile walk raised more than $8,000! Save the date for next year’s Ronald McDonald House Family Walk: Saturday, May 23, 2020.

41ST ANNUAL SWING YOUR BIRDIE GOLF CLASSIC PRESENTED BY THINK MUTUAL BANK

On Friday, July 26, 2019, 125 golfers gathered at Willow Creek Golf Course for the 41st Annual Swing Your Birdie Golf Classic. The longest-running golf tournament in Rochester raised more than $55,000. Save the date for next year’s Swing Your Birdie Golf Classic: Monday, June 22, 2020 at Somerby Golf Club.

4TH ANNUAL PARTY AT THE PAVILION

The 4th Annual Party at the Pavilion was held on Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019, at Willow Creek Golf Course. Annie Mack and Six Mile Grove were the featured musical artists for this year’s event. Founded by Wendell & Dianne Pittenger and sponsored by Major Sponsors Egan Company, Harris and Knutson Construction, the event raised more than $20,000. Watch for details about the Party at the Pavilion in 2020.

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester special events are a key component of our mission to keep children and families together and near the care and medical support they need. In 2019, our four signature events raised more than $300,000 for the children and families we serve. Thank you to all of our sponsors, attendees and the community for supporting our special events!
Letter from the Heart

“The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester has become much more than a place to say – it has truly become our home.”

– Angie, Malia’s grandmother

Share Your #RMHMMNStory

Each family who has stayed at the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester has a unique and beautiful story, including your child’s! Your story makes the House special. Your story is a support for families with similar situations. Your story is the reason people support the House. Your story is our story! Are you willing to share your child’s story with the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester? Please contact Jacob Dreyer at JDreyer@rmhmn.org.

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10% post consumer waste recycled fiber