Since seven-year-old Maddix was born, he has battled pneumonia, strep throat, seizures, acid reflux, migraines, apnea, feeding issues, breathing issues, and more. Doctors do not have one diagnosis—they have several. He is medically complex.

And that is only part of his story.

(Photography by LakeHaus Productions, Huron, S.D.)
FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear friends of the Ronald McDonald House,

We hope this first edition of our electronic newsletter finds you well and enjoying sunny days and warmer temperatures. How wonderful to be leaning into spring!

We are thrilled to make the transition to an electronic newsletter! Our new format will arrive in your inbox each quarter, reduce our printing and postage costs, and help us be more environment-friendly. Thank you for embracing this change!

The realities of the global pandemic continue to impact our mission at the Ronald McDonald House. While we are welcoming more families into the House each week, we have not yet returned to full occupancy or normal operations. With the help of our caring community and mission partners, we continue to support families every day with safe housing, warm meals from local restaurants, fresh grocery items, to-go activities, and virtual programming. We are truly making a difference and impacting the lives of those we serve.

Many of us can identify with the Benjamin Franklin quote, “Out of adversity comes opportunity.” This past year presented many challenges for the Ronald McDonald House, but it also provided opportunities to innovate and expand how we serve families who have traveled to Rochester seeking medical care for their children. We are eager to transfer our learnings of the past year into better ways to advance our mission in the coming year.

Thank you for your tremendous support and many kindnesses you have shared with us these past months. Our mission has been strengthened by your caring generosity and confidence in our work. With optimism, we look forward to a House full of families, children’s voices and laughter in the hallways, and a return to all that is familiar in the House that Love Built.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Peggy Elliott, Executive Director

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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.
Since seven-year-old Maddix was born, he has battled pneumonia, strep throat, seizures, acid reflux, migraines, apnea, feeding issues, breathing issues, and more. Doctors do not have one diagnosis—they have several. He is medically complex.

And that is only part of his story.

Maddix was born eight weeks early. When his mom, Tasmah, went into labor, she was life-flighted to Sioux Falls. Both Tasmah and Maddix were in danger.

“I was pretty much dead,” said Tasmah. “I was so sick; I needed to deliver right away.”

Tasmah suffered from HELLP syndrome, a life-threatening condition with serious complications for pregnancy. The condition is characterized by hemolysis, elevated liver enzyme levels, and low platelet levels. Its cause is from pre-eclampsia/high blood pressure and it has wide-ranging symptoms that have lifelong effects.

Despite complications, Maddix was born and immediately moved into the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Because Tasmah was dealing with her own sickness, she was unable to see him for quite some time.

Maddix graduated from the NICU and was admitted to the hospital, where he had his first fundoplication procedure—a surgery for gastro-esophageal reflux disease. The weeks in the hospital became months. After many tests, consultations, and hospitalizations, doctors recommended the family visit Mayo Clinic in Rochester. Because Maddix was so sick, traveling to Rochester was a challenge—even his first appointments were cancelled.

Once they were at Mayo... things moved quickly. “We had so many appointments in a two-week time frame,” Tasmah said. “I can’t even tell you how many doctors we saw. Mayo has so many specialists, but they all work together as a team—they all know you and your child.”

“As a mom...it’s very special.”

Maddix had another surgery for his reflux, but he was still very sick and still struggling with his breathing. After studies, x-rays, tests, MRIs, and more, doctors discovered a
laryngeal cleft. A laryngeal cleft is a rare abnormality involving the larynx and esophagus and negatively affects feeding and induces coughing, among other things.

“The laryngeal cleft explained so much,” said Tasmah. “He was always sick, but never contagious. And it was because he had another rare condition.”

Maddix has traveled to Rochester and Mayo Clinic regularly over the past seven years. He has been both inpatient and outpatient, staying longer than expected on numerous occasions after complications arising from surgeries and infusions. For example: a routine tonsillectomy resulted in more than a one-month stay.

And when stays have become longer than expected...the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester was there for Tasmah and her family. The family has stayed at the House on eight separate occasions for a total of 65 nights.

“You think you’re going to go home, and then you don’t get to go home,” Tasmah said. “So, we stay in Rochester. And we stay at the House.”

Maddix also has high-functioning autism, which makes him sensory sensitive. The House is a calming place for him, which means so much to his mom.

“It’s so overwhelming to think about the House,” said Tasmah. “I can’t believe how people care so much about others. You say thank you, but it’s not enough.

“It’s truly amazing.”

During stays at the House, Maddix formed a strong connection with Paw Pals. Paw Pals is the House’s pet therapy program, offering children and families the opportunity to connect with pet therapy dogs who visit the House on a regular basis with their dedicated owners.

“The way he acted with the dogs—he was so calm and happy,” Tasmah said. “We added Finnley (a Teddy Bear dog) to our family because of Paw Pals. When Maddix is having a difficult time, Finnley does not leave his side. They have a very special bond.

“And it’s all because of our experience with Paw Pals.”
In addition to activities for her kids, Tasmah said the relationships she formed with other moms and families had a long-lasting positive effect. During a one-month stay, Tasmah and four other moms spent every evening together while their kids played together at the House. “Everybody is there for different reasons, but everybody is there for you,” said Tasmah. “It was so meaningful to have friends—the House gave us that gift.”

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Tasmah also mentioned volunteers and how they keep the House clean and safe for her children and how they are always willing to listen and go out of their way to make families feel at home.

“Everybody is there for different reasons, but everybody is there for you,” said Tasmah. “It was so meaningful to have friends—the House gave us that gift.”

Even though things are different due to the pandemic, the House still found ways to support us,” Tasmah said. “The House helped us book a hotel room, gave us food, and we received food and activity bags on a recent visit.”

Tasmah and her family received food and activity bags on a recent visit. Even though things are different due to the pandemic, the House still found ways to support us,” Tasmah said. “The House helped us book a hotel room, gave us food, and we received food and activity bags on a recent visit.”

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, like many other organizations, was forced to adjust its services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The House began providing food bags and activity bags for families traveling to Rochester who were unable to physically stay at the House. Tasmah and her family received food and activity bags on a recent visit. Even though things are different due to the pandemic, the House still found ways to support us,” Tasmah said. “The House helped us book a hotel room, gave us food, and we received food and activity bags on a recent visit.”

Maddix and sister, Kenzington
FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The Ronald McDonald House of Rochester values the importance of self-care for children and families.

Through a partnership with Sunshine & Roses, a local traveling art studio, families had the opportunity to sign up for time to utilize the indoor activity room to complete beautiful works of art! The space in the activity room allowed families to take a break from their guest room and the hospital in a warm, fun, and safe environment.

The House is so excited to see this new space being used by children and families!
Chase's son, Braylon, was born premature and suffered from a rare skin condition. After staying at the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester while his son was in the NICU, Chase and his wife, Jenny, wanted to give back. They started hosting fundraisers on Facebook to raise money for the House.

• Why did you select the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester, Minnesota, for your Facebook birthday fundraiser?
  It was an obvious choice. My motivation dates back to when our son was born and my wife and I stayed at the House as our family navigated through that situation. What it means to us; the House, the staff, the volunteers; cannot be overstated, so we try to show our gratitude by giving back in every way possible.

• How did you set your fundraising goal and did your friends and family help you exceed it?
  Facebook pretty much defaults to a $200 goal, but every time we do a fundraiser for the House, we exceed it. When people see the goal being met (and surpassed), it brings them even more joy and motivation. One year we raised almost $2,000!

• Any advice to share with someone who wants to start a Facebook fundraiser?
  My advice would be to share your story or a story that has led you to support the House. If there is no particular story, explain what the House means to you. You can share so much on Facebook, so use that in a positive way to express your desire to give back and motivate others. Most people have big hearts and want to help. And everyone has their own incredible story.

READ CHASE, JENNY, AND BRAYLON’S STORY

What better way to celebrate a special occasion than by supporting children and families?

Start a Facebook Fundraiser or create your own personalized fundraiser for a birthday, wedding, or other celebration!
2021 HEARTS & DIAMONDS SPECTACULAR

The 18th Annual Hearts & Diamonds Spectacular was held on Saturday, Feb. 6. The event included a virtual program featuring a guest family and Hearts & Diamonds in a Box, as well as a diamond raffle and a silent auction.

More than 280 people enjoyed the evening from the comfort of their own home to ensure the health and safety of all, and helped raise more than $150,000!

Thank you, 2021 Hearts & Diamonds sponsors, for your dedicated support to the mission of the Ronald McDonald House of Rochester!


THANK YOU!

SAVE THE DATE
19th Annual Hearts & Diamonds Spectacular
Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022
UPCOMING EVENTS

CANS FOR KIDS
with McNeilus Companies
Saturday, March 13, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Ronald McDonald House of Rochester
850 2nd St. SW, Rochester, MN 55902

SWING YOUR BIRDIE
GOLF CLASSIC
Monday, June 14
Somerby Golf Club
975 Somerby Pkwy, Byron, MN 55920

FAMILY WALK
a Med City Marathon event
Saturday, Sept. 11, 11:30 a.m.
REGISTER NOW

HOUSE DINNER HERO

The House Dinner Program is one of the most beloved and attended programs offered to children and families. House Dinners not only provide a nutritious meal, they relieve the additional stress of figuring out where that meal will come from and how much it will cost.

In an overabundance of caution and with a focus on the health and safety of children and families, House Dinners provided by outside volunteer groups have been paused to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure to guests, staff, and volunteers.

Thanks to generous donors, guests have enjoyed more than 3,600 meals since March 2020. The House remains committed to providing children and families with meals, while focusing on their safety by offering catering, boxed meals, and other nutritious options, until it can safely accommodate volunteer groups.

This has placed an additional strain on the annual budget. Your help is urgently needed as the House continues to provide this much-needed service in 2021.

Will you be a House Dinner Hero?
Thank you for your ongoing support of children and families!

DONATE NOW
SHARE YOUR STORY!
Each family who has stayed at the House has a unique and beautiful story!
Your story is the reason people support the House!

Contact Jacob Dreyer, Communications Director, for more information.

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