



newhouse news

from full house to a house full of caring
ronald mcdonald house charities of kansas city — fall 2004

Why a New House?

Ronald McDonald House served 1,500 families in 2003 that traveled to Kansas City to obtain medical care for a seriously ill child. Sadly, they told even more, "We're so sorry, but both our Houses are full."

When the Ronald McDonald Houses are full – which they have been just about every night for at least the past seven years – everyone suffers. Parents are forced to devote precious time and attention away from their sick child. Siblings feel lost in the shuffle.

Families whose children may not be critically ill find a hotel if they can afford the cost. Others sleep in hospital waiting rooms, hallways, even cars. The simplest tasks – doing laundry, eating a decent meal or relaxing in peace and quiet – become more difficult

than they ever could have imagined.

Still, there are good reasons why our houses are full. And there is hope.

The first good reason is that Ronald McDonald House means comfort, compassion and stability. That's why families struggling through the toughest of times have come to the house near KU Medical Center and St. Luke's Hospital since 1981 and to the House at 25th and Cherry Streets, next door to Children's Mercy Hospital, since 1988.

Cora Hill expressed what Ronald McDonald House meant to her family in a poem:

*We have truly been blessed,
Staying here gave our minds and hearts a rest.
Being here together feels like home,
We're together and not alone.*

The second good reason our Houses are full is because of the growth in size and reputation of our primary referring hospitals.

"Since opening the house on Cherry Street and the Family Room in the hospital for families of critically ill children, we've quadrupled the size of our facilities and doubled our inpatient activity," says Dr. Randall

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O'Donnell, president and CEO of Children's Mercy Hospital and Clinics. "We used to regularly service 36 counties in Missouri and Kansas. Now we serve more than 75."

Reflecting the close relationship between Children's Mercy and Ronald McDonald House is Dr. Milton Fowler, a Children's Mercy emergency room physician and current president of the Ronald McDonald House board of directors. Before accepting the invitation to serve as presi-

dent, Dr. Fowler asked Dr. O'Donnell whether holding these positions at the same time might raise any concerns about conflict of interest?

"Dr. O'Donnell told me,

"There will never be a conflict of interest between Ronald McDonald House and the mission of Children's Mercy Hospital," and he advised me to jump at the opportunity," said Dr. Fowler.

More families than ever need what Ronald McDonald House provides. In other words, they need another House. Nineteenth century playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote, "The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of *inhumanity*."

The Ronald McDonald House that will begin to rise at 25th and Gilham this September will embody the essence of *humanity*. In Kansas City, we are not indifferent, especially when it comes to children and families. If the House is full, we come together to create a House full of caring.

Major Gifts Co-Chair Sarah Mathews

Something to Feel Passionate About

Sarah Dotson Mathews' mother taught her that you only get involved in causes you feel passionate about. For Sarah, who was 13 in 1978 when her 8-year-old brother Ben died of non-Hodgkins lymphoma, no cause is more important outside her family than Ronald McDonald House.

"It leaves me feeling so full of hope,"

"I feel so strongly about Ronald McDonald House," says Sarah, "not only because of the services they provide but the way they're provided. There's such an incredible warmth about Ronald McDonald House."

Sarah agreed without hesitation when Executive Director Ann Jerome asked her and her husband Scott to serve as co-chairs of the major gifts committee for the capital campaign to build a new house.

"It's difficult for me to imagine a worse situation than having a critically ill child as an inpatient in the hospital," says Sarah. "I can appreciate what these families are going through."

Ben spent 18 of the 20 months he was ill in St. John's Hospital in Tulsa. After his death, the Dotson family established a pediatric enrichment program at St. John's and helped found Tulsa's first Ronald McDonald

House. Sarah was involved in fundraising for the House and volunteered for a Ronald McDonald House in Atlanta while in law school at Emory University.

After a clerkship in Kansas City and a year in management consulting in Washington, D.C., Sarah

resumed law school at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Within a month, she met Scott, whom she married in 1993. Scott is vice president and trust officer for UMB Bank. After law school, Sarah joined Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin LLP, served as associate general counsel for Aquila Merchant Services and was the CEO of the Council on Philanthropy.

Now the mother of three young children, she volunteers every other Wednesday in the Ronald McDonald House Family Room in Children's Mercy Hospital.

"It leaves me feeling so full of hope," she says. "I see people in incredibly trying situations. At the same time, life goes on. Some children get better. Some don't. But the siblings survive and the families bounce back. I may sound like Mother Teresa, but I like helping others. It's an important part of who I am, and it sets a good example for my children."



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The New House Capital Campaign As Good as the People Who Believe in It

The strength and success of any effort depends on the people behind it, and the capital campaign to build a new Ronald McDonald House is no different.

A team of people with a single vision – to provide more rooms to families in need – has been working since last September to achieve an ambitious goal to raise \$11 million to make this vision a reality.

The Steering Committee, chaired by Jon Zindel, has set a goal to raise \$7.7 million, 70 percent of the total needed, through leadership gifts of \$25,000 or more pledged over a five-year period. Honorary Steering Committee chairs are Bob and Phyliss Bernstein, Jean and Tom McDonnell and Ann and Bob Regnier.

"Thanks to the commitment and hard work of the Steering Committee, we were able to report that more than \$6 million had been pledged to the new House when we publicly announced the campaign on May 26," said Ronald McDonald House Charities Executive Director Ann Jerome.

Now, the Major Gifts Committee, chaired by Laura and Spence Fitzgibbons and Sarah and Scott Mathews, is reaching out to the community to raise \$2 million in gifts or pledges of \$5,000 to \$25,000.

As Jon Zindel told a diverse crowd of civic leaders, patients, children, families and Ronald McDonald House supporters at the May 26 announcement: "We have had a wonderful response from the community since the start of the campaign back in September, which began with a \$1 million pledge from local Ronald McDonald's owner/operators.

"The next step is to break ground in September. We would like to have at least 70 percent of our goal pledged by then. I am confident we will get there."

Capital Campaign Leadership

Honorary Chairs

Bob and Phyliss Bernstein

Jean and Tom McDonnell

Ann and Bob Regnier

Chair

Jon Zindel

Steering Committee

Senator Dick Bond

Marilyn Dobski

Jill Embry

Gayle and Tom French

Trent and Julie Green

Jeff Jernigan

Teresa Martin

Steve McDowell

Dr. Brad Warady

Adele Hall

Dr. Milton Fowler

Major Gifts Chairs

Laura and Spence Fitzgibbons

Sarah and Scott Mathews

Major Gifts Committee

David Bagby

Laura Meyer

Richard and Mary Wetzel

Mark Hassenflu

Kirk Isenhour

Karen Holcomb



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Campaign Co-Chair **Jean McDonnell**

Families' Courage Inspires Volunteer Leadership

Some ten years ago, a friend told Jean McDonnell she would love Ronald McDonald House and asked if she would be interested in learning more about it.

"I must have been between being over-involved and working," recalls Jean who, with her husband Tom McDonnell and two other couples – Ann and Bob Regnier and Dr. Phyliss and Bob Bernstein – are co-chairing the campaign to build a new House. "I thought about it and went on the board."

It was an exciting time for the organization. The Cherry Street House had been open just a few years. Children's Mercy Hospital, across the street, was achieving national prominence as one of the best pediatric medical centers in the country, with new construction under way to accommodate its rapidly growing patient population. Fundraising for the Ronald McDonald House Family Room in Children's Mercy Hospital was in full swing.

But, says Jean, nothing cemented her connection to Ronald McDonald House more than her work as a House volunteer.

"On the board, we hear families tell their stories. But when you're at the House week after week, you really see what they go through. You see their courage and feel lucky to be healthy and have healthy kids. You see how much it means to these families to have a place to stay close to the hospital, to have a big kitchen with volunteers to prepare meals, and to have other families around to support them."

Jean served two terms on the Ronald McDonald House board of directors, her last as president. She and Tom are very excited about working together as a team to raise funds to help ensure that no family in need

will be turned away.

Jean is also active as a board member for the Bishop Miege High School Foundation – her alma mater – the Upper Room, Inc., the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and serves on committees at Visitation Church and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. A sociology major at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., with an MBA from Rockhurst University, she began her career and met her future

**"...makes you feel
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minute you walk
through the door."**



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husband at DST. After their marriage, she was the office manager for the Center on Rural Elderly at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Jean and Tom have two daughters and four grandchildren.

For Jean, what's special about Ronald McDonald House is what's special about Kansas City.

"They're both warm and welcoming," she says. "It's that wonderful small-town feel that makes you feel at home the minute you walk through the door."