Heart Strings

Fall/Winter 2026

Ronald McDonald House® Ann Arbor

More Than Just a Place to Stay

A Place to Stay Strong



On February 2nd, the Branham family's world changed instantly. Their child, Ozzie, was rushed to C.S. Mott Children's Hospital after a serious medical emergency. Ozzie experienced seizures and cardiac arrest and was placed on ECMO, an advanced form of life support that temporarily takes over the work of the heart and lungs, for five days. During those frightening first days, the family wasn't sure Ozzie would survive.

For mom Kari, there was nowhere else she wanted to be but by Ozzie's side. She spent nearly every waking hour at the bedside, leaving little time to eat, sleep, or care for herself. After two sleepless nights in the hospital, Kari was given a room inside Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor's Mott House, located on the 10th floor of the hospital, just steps from Ozzie.

Ozzie spent 46 days in the PICU and was heavily sedated for much of the first month. Unable to communicate, Ozzie needed Kari close by. "I really consider parents to be partners in care," Kari said. "Being down the hall from my child allowed me to be there to advocate for what they needed."

At the House, Kari would grab breakfast before heading to Ozzie's room, do a load of laundry, or retreat to a quiet space after a long day. "When you have a critically ill child, you and your family are in survival mode," Kari said. "You can forget to eat and take care of yourself."

Throughout this journey, there were memorable moments of kindness. Kari connected with other parents who understood what it meant to have a critically ill child. She remembers holiday treats and thoughtful gestures that let the families know they were cared for. Those moments mattered.

After 46 days in the PICU and another 10 days in a step-down unit, Ozzie finally went home. The road to recovery continues, but so do the milestones. Ozzie completed schoolwork from home and graduated from high school. Today, Ozzie continues to heal and grow stronger.

Looking back, Dad Darren says, "Kari only left the hospital a couple of times in the almost two months Ozzie spent there. That was only possible with the help from Ronald McDonald House. I would like to give a very big **'Thank you'** to everyone involved. You made a huge impact on our lives, and we will forever be grateful."

In this Issue

Letter from our CEO	2
House Happenings	3
Give Hope this Season	4
Home Run Recap	5
Our Impact	6
Meals Matter	6
Volunteer Spotlight	7
Board Spotlight	7
Round-Up	8

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2026 - 2027

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Ronald McDonald House® Ann Arbor

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A Letter from Our CEO



Family Stays

There's a difference between someone who stops by and someone who stays. Visitors come to say hello. Family stays.

When a child is seriously ill, family doesn't watch the clock. They lose track of it. They sleep in chairs and hospital rooms. They miss work, meals, and time at home. They put everything on hold to be close to their child when they need them most.

That's why I'm proud to introduce ***Family Stays***, the new tagline for Ronald McDonald House.

It captures something we have always believed: when a child is in the hospital, families need to be close, and they shouldn't have to choose between being there for their child and having a place to stay.

At Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor, we stay with them. We provide more than a room. We provide a place to rest, a warm meal, a quiet moment, a caring community, and the comfort of knowing that someone is there for you, too.

These simple things can make an extraordinary difference when a family is facing the unimaginable.

You'll notice another change throughout this newsletter: a refreshed look and feel for Ronald McDonald House. Our new brand brings a more modern, welcoming expression of who we are while staying rooted in the warmth and compassion that have always defined us.

You can explore our refreshed brand on our new website: www.ronaldmcdonaldhouseannarbor.org. While our look may be changing, our commitment to families remains the same.

Because family stays. And we stay with them.

Kim Kelly, Ronald McDonald House CEO



Check out our new website!
ronaldmcdonaldhouseannarbor.org

House Happenings

Programs to make our House feel more like home

The past few months have been filled with summer fun, fall festivities, and special moments designed to bring comfort, joy, and a sense of home to the families staying with us. From celebrating dads and making summer memories to enjoying seasonal crafts and friendly competition, our House programs offer something for the whole family. These shared experiences provide opportunities to connect, unwind, and create happy memories together, even while families are away from home.

Summer Fun at the House

June kicked off the summer with a little magic! Families enjoyed a **magic show**, our annual **Father's Day Cookout** supported by the Ross Business School ASPIRE group, and a special visit from our favorite four-legged friend, **Fawn, the therapy dog**.

July brought sunny days and plenty of ways to cool off and have fun! Families splashed into summer at our **Splash Party**, enjoyed a tropical escape at our **Family Luau**, and celebrated our favorite summer tradition, the **Fourth of July party**, with delicious food, festive fun, and plenty of red, white, and blue. Our friends at **PandaPrograms** returned for their **Summer Adventure program**, bringing an outdoor obstacle course right to our backyard! And, of course, no summer would be complete without an **Ice Cream Socia**l to sweeten the season!

Fall Festivities and Family Fun

As the seasons changed, we ushered in fall with a **family tailgate** to kick off our annual **Battle for the Houses**—Go Team Blue! For a creative outlet, **Kits for Kids** hosted a **craft-making** event. Families also enjoyed a little friendly competition on a **mini golf course** built right inside our House, thanks to our friends at AccumTech. We wrapped up the season with a festive night of **pumpkin decorating**.

Whether it's sharing a meal, trying something new, laughing together, or simply taking a break from the challenges of everyday life, our House programs are about so much more than activities. They're about creating moments of joy, building connections, and reminding families that while they may be away from home, they're always welcome here. Because at the House, a little fun, a lot of love, and time together can make all the difference.

If you would like to contribute your time or talent to serve the families at Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor, contact Mary Moffett at mary@ronaldmcdonaldhouseannarbor.org











Give the Gift of Comfort and Support

During the holidays and all year long, being together matters most. Thank you for helping make that possible for families facing a child's medical journey.

Stock the Pantry

Our pantry and coffee bar provide comfort and convenience, giving parents one less thing to worry about. You can help by donating pantry items to keep our shelves stocked and our families supported!

Cook for our Families

After long days at the hospital, a hot meal brings families comfort and a sense of normalcy. Preparing dinner is a simple way to show families they're not alone and remind them that their community cares.

Shop for Toys

We're collecting new, unwrapped, child-safe toys for our Holiday Shop, where families can choose gifts at no cost. Help families make holiday memories by donating today! Holiday Shop donations can be dropped off at the Main House by December 11th.

Give today so families can stay together over the holidays.

7 Ways to Give Today

1. Donate on our website
2. Become a Monthly Donor
3. Give from a Donor-Advised Fund
4. Give from your IRA
5. Donate a Used Car
6. Ask about Employee Matching Programs
7. Leave a Legacy - Join our Together Forever Society



Home Run for the House was a Hit!





With your help, we raised over $90,000.

Hats off to our Honorary Co-Chairs:
Tracy & Jaime Smith and Spencer & Makenna Torkelson

Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsors, Alro Steel and The Jones Family Foundation. Because of their support, Home Run for the House was a free event for over 300 current and past Ronald McDonald House families to enjoy!








See you next season!

Stay tuned for next year's event details and we'll meet you back at the ballpark!

Putting Families at the Heart of Care

Did you know?

Families travel from near and far and stay long, often uprooting their lives, including jobs, other children, and income, and the effects are both immediate and long-lasting.

Check out our impact numbers to learn more.

43 Average night stay

31,860 Meals provided (breakfast, lunch & dinner)

$9,980 Average savings on lodging and food per family!









Sharing Comfort, One Meal at a Time

Meals Matter

At Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor, we know that a comforting meal can make all the difference when families need it most. Through our Meals Matter program, we are dedicated to providing families staying at the House with home-cooked meals each night, lunch and freshly baked sweet treats.

We can't do it alone! Our generous community helps make this program possible. We are asking you to gather your family, friends, coworkers, or club and sign up to prepare a meal or bake a special treat at the House. Your time, kindness, and care offer more than just nourishment; they bring comfort, connection, and a taste of home when families need it most.

Sign up to cook a meal today!

There are still dates available until the end of the year, and our 2027 calendar is open now!

Having meals prepared each night was a real lifesaver for our family. Thank you. - Tia, a Grateful Mom

Volunteer Spotlight

Pam Miller



Pam Miller has been volunteering with Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor since June of 2018. When her youngest son was born prematurely, a moment of kindness from a hospital volunteer stuck with her.

Though there was a pause in House volunteering in 2020, Pam was one of the first volunteers to return after the pandemic. Pam stepped up to help with meals once a month after noticing a need for it on one of her regular house shifts. She is known for preparing orange chicken and rice for the House and always greeting the families with a warm smile.

Thank you for your over 150 hours of service, Pam!

Interested in volunteering?
Contact our Volunteer Program Manager, Kristen Harter, at kristen@ronaldmcdonaldhouseannarbor.org

Red Shoe Affair

Save the Date: April 24, 2027

Step into something extraordinary at our Signature Event. Join us for an unforgettable evening at Saint John's Resort in Plymouth. Get inspired by our mission-focused program and dance the night away at the Afterglow Party.

Board of Directors Spotlight

Rob Sundy

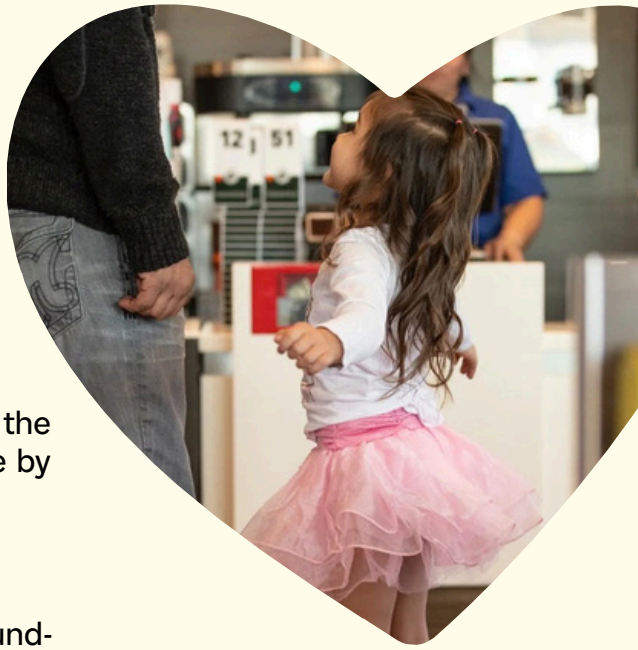


We're excited to shine a spotlight on Rob Sundy, who joined the Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor Board of Directors in 2025! As President, Retail for La-Z-Boy Incorporated, Rob leads La-Z-Boy Incorporated's Retail segment, overseeing 236 of 370 La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries® stores, as well as sales to the remaining independently owned La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries® stores. In addition, he is responsible for the company's marketing function.

Rob and his wife, Kim, call Ann Arbor home and are generously serving as co-chairs of this year's Forks & Corks event at Barton Hills Country Club on November 13th. When he's not working or giving back to the community, Rob enjoys traveling, skiing, and playing golf. We're grateful for Rob and Kim's commitment to our mission so families can stay together, supported, and close to the care they need.

Family and being a parent means everything to me and serving on the Ronald McDonald House Ann Arbor Board is an opportunity to help families when they need it most. I'm honored to be part of an organization that brings comfort, hope, and a sense of home during some of families' most challenging moments.

ROUND UP
for Ronald McDonald House



Mobile App
Round-Up is now available in the McDonald's Mobile App! Add it easily to the end of your order with a simple click.

In-Store
At the end of your order, at the in-store kiosk or at the front counter, Round-Up for Ronald McDonald House by clicking the button.

Drive-Thru
After placing your order in the drive-thru, ask to Round-Up for Ronald McDonald House! No change needed!

Round-Up at every visit if you can, because small change makes a big impact.
Every cent counts towards helping Ronald McDonald House families. Thank you!

Ronald McDonald House®
Ann Arbor

Connect with us:
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Our Mission:
We provide essential services that remove barriers, strengthen families, and promote healing when children need healthcare.

Family Stays

At Ronald McDonald House, we believe no family should have to choose between being there for their child and having a place to stay.

So, we give them more than just a room. We give them rest. Warmth. A hot meal. A shoulder. We give them something that feels like normal, even when nothing else is.

Because when a child is in the hospital, family stays. And we stay with them