

A Year in Review 2022



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
Southwest Florida



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Illey Farese
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A Letter from our President & CEO



Laura Ragain

This past year brought many blessings and some challenges to our community and our Chapter. The blessings were indeed plentiful... We had the pleasure of welcoming nearly 80 families this year to our recently expanded 12-bedroom Ronald McDonald House, reaching full capacity on a few occasions. Volunteers at the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Golisano Children's Hospital welcomed dozens of patient families daily, offering sandwiches, snacks, treats, and beverages to maintain their strength while remaining close to their child's bedside. Through our partnerships with Healthcare Network and Family Health Centers, more than 8,000 underserved children in Collier, Lee, and Hendry counties received medical and dental screenings, preventive and restorative dental care, eye exams, physicals, and health education aboard our two Ronald McDonald Care Mobiles.

I do not need to recall for you the devastation that occurred on September 28th, but you may not know something that happened here on September 27th. After all 12 families left the Ronald McDonald House to secure their own homes, Karen Marshall, our Director of House Operations and Services, and I did a final walk-thru of the House, which looked absolutely pristine. It was around 3:00 when we wished each other well - I went to my home, and Karen would soon pack up and leave to stay with her sister about 20 minutes away. But before she left, Karen placed an orange traffic cone in front of the House and said a prayer that our Ronald McDonald House might be spared from any damage or flooding caused by Ian.

The cone never moved.

Debris everywhere. Trees uprooted. Cracked and broken limbs hanging precariously. Our beautiful House did not sustain any structural damage and no water damage. We were spared the wrath of Ian. The hospital daycare directly behind us has still not re-opened due to flood waters of over four feet.

The power of prayer.

Due to a water main issue at the hospital, many of our families were transported to other hospitals. Ronald McDonald House Chapters in Tampa Bay, Orlando, and Miami prepared for their arrival. I will forever be grateful to my colleagues for working so quickly to provide accommodations while their own areas were also hit.

When the families returned to Golisano and to our Ronald McDonald House, we learned that several of the new Moms had not yet had a baby shower due to premature births and, of course, Hurricane Ian. As many of you know, we hosted a wedding for a German couple on vacation here last spring. Mom went into premature labor with twins, thus missing their wedding date in Germany! Thanks to our friends at Shangri-La Springs, the happily married couple went home with the most special of souvenirs! Surely if we could host a wedding, we could arrange a baby shower for these deserving Moms - and we did!

It is truly an honor to be part of an organization whose mission is to create, find and support programs that directly impact the health and well-being of children and their families. And it is humbling to witness our incredibly thoughtful and tireless volunteers, community partners, dedicated staff, and board members consistently coming together to support our mission of keeping families close.

Thank you, and Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2023!

James Ragain

Our Impact



1,563 FAMILY NIGHT STAYS IN THE HOUSE

The Ronald McDonald House® provides lodging, meals, and other supportive services for families with children receiving medical treatment. Families can stay at a Ronald McDonald House anywhere from one night to several months, depending on their family's needs



1,436 PATIENT FAMILY VISITS TO THE FAMILY ROOM

The Ronald McDonald Family Room® at Golisano Children's Hospital provides food, refreshments, laundry facilities and a relaxation area for family members of hospitalized children



8,000+ CHILDREN SERVED BY THE CARE MOBILE PROGRAM

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile® Program provides dental care through our partnership with two health care providers to underserved children. Of the 43 RMHC Care Mobile programs worldwide, we proudly have two to serve our community.



306 MEALS SERVED TO FAMILIES 1653 VOLUNTEER HOURS COOKING

The Family Meal Program provides support to families who are taking care of their sick children, and often don't have the time, funds, or energy to prepare a home-cooked meal. After a long day at the hospital, a hot meal is a blessing!

The mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southwest Florida is to create, find and support programs that directly impact the health and well-being of children and their families in Southwest Florida. When a child is sick, the entire family needs comfort and support. We strongly believe that when families are together they cope better, which is why we make it our mission that no family has to deal with their child's medical crisis alone.

Home Away From Home

The Ronald McDonald House provides a “home-away-from-home” for families in a clean, affordable, comfortable and supportive environment while keeping them near their hospitalized child. A family is eligible to stay at our House as long as their child is receiving medical treatment. Depending on the child’s illness and treatment, stays may last from a few days to several months and in extreme cases extend to a year or more.



VOLUNTEERS

We appreciate YOU!

The past few years have been trying, inconsistent and unpredictable. Even as volunteers went through their own obstacles, they remained dedicated, supportive and loving to RMHC. To celebrate them all, we hosted a big Volunteer Appreciation party! It was a BLAST! From the delicious food to the refreshing drinks, the hilarious Bingo games, escaping the rain without letting it ruin our party... it's safe to say everyone felt the love and had so much fun! We will never be able to express our appreciation for the fantastic volunteers we have. To those who give so much time, effort, love, and kindness, you forever hold a spot in our hearts. As we always say, we could never do it without you, and we wouldn't want to anyway. Thank you for another good year!





FAMILY MEAL PROGRAM

Meals Made with Love

Our Family Meal Program is still the most popular way to help families going through a tough time. Whether it's a group of friends, family members, students, or colleagues, the meals they prepare mean everything to our families! A warm, home-cooked meal after a long day in the hospital is such a blessing. Here are some of our chefs!





Two Babies & a Wedding



Manuel and Julia are a very sweet couple that stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Fort Myers all the way from Germany. The couple vacationed in Cape Coral for their babymoon sometime in April. Shortly after their arrival, Julia went into premature labor, and twins Marla and Matilda were born a couple of months early. This caused the couple to have a much longer stay than anticipated.

With their wedding date quickly approaching on May 7, the couple had to make the difficult decision to cancel. In a casual conversation with Volunteer Manager Illeny Farese, they expressed their sadness about not being able to get married. They joked about getting married in Florida and having RMHC plan it! Well, anyone who knows Illeny knows she will do anything in her power to make magic happen for a family! So, after a chat with staff, we decided we had to make this happen! We called Lee Bellamy, the general manager of Shangri-La Springs in Bonita Springs and a long-time RMHC board member. He immediately agreed to help Manuel and Julia's dream wedding come true at his venue! Tracy Stein, Director of Sales at Shangri-La, sprung into action by securing donated food, flowers, hair + makeup, photography, and more! Generous Macy's staff came together and donated a handsome suit for Manuel. The team at RMHC SWFL purchased the cake. It was all really coming together!

Golisano Children's Hospital staff who were caring for the twins joined the RMHC team at Shangri-La on May 26, 2022, to watch the beautiful union of Manuel and Julia! Even one of the fathers staying at the Ronald McDonald House attended to show support. It was the perfect day for a perfect couple!

We cannot express how incredibly honored we were to help Manuel and Julia tie the knot! Without the generosity of our community, it wouldn't have been possible. With so much sadness going on in the world, this day full of happiness was much needed by all. Manuel and Julia came to Florida as an engaged couple, but they'll return to Germany as a married couple, with twins Marla and Matilda in tow! Plus, they've gained quite the extended family of Floridians.

Our sincerest gratitude to the following teams who helped make this wedding possible by donating their services/products:

Venue/Spa- Shangri-La Springs

Food: Artichoke & Company

Flowers: Heaven Scent Flowers of Bonita Springs

Hair/Makeup: Brenna Bartholf, Bsquared Studio LLC

Photography/Videography: Jim Jett Photography

Groom's Suit: Nancy Boye + Staff, Macy's

Cake: RMHC SWFL

Media Coverage: WINK News



A Baby Shower for Moms in Need

The staff at Ronald McDonald House Charities Southwest Florida hosted a baby shower for guest mothers who did not experience that much anticipated celebration due to premature births and Hurricane Ian.

Hurricane Ian totally disrupted the community when it ripped through SWFL last month, and the families at the Ronald McDonald House were no exception. Golisano Children's Hospital sustained significant water pressure issues during the storm, and as a result, families' premature newborns had to be med-flighted to other facilities across the state.

While the families were beyond grateful to have a place to go, it was not easy for them to be away from the care teams at Golisano and the comfort of the Ronald McDonald House here in Fort Myers. "The famous quote, 'home is where the heart is,' has never felt so true to me than now. The Golisano and RMHC teams truly are like family to us, and we are so happy to be back." -Tameira, NICU Mom.

Because of the mothers' close bond, a few were hoping to plan a baby shower on their own, at the Ronald McDonald House. The team at RMHC was all too happy to take over and plan the baby shower the new moms truly deserved. Word spread quickly and community support followed with dozens of donated gifts and newborn necessities. Chef London, with Bento 2 Go, prepared a delicious and unforgettable brunch for the guest families. In addition, Twisted Trotter Mobile Bar Co. donated a champagne cart and champagne for a mimosa bar, and Balloon Elevation donated two balloon arches for décor

"You gave us something we thought we would never have. This day was truly memorable. Thank you for celebrating our babies with us!" -NICU Moms





DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Grampy's Charities

"At Grampy's Charities, we raise funds for and partner with a small group of nonprofits that have a proven track record of improving the lives of children and can show why they need our support to meet their mission. Supporting RMHC SWFL is an easy decision for us. Year after year, through their Ronald McDonald House, Ronald McDonald Family Room, and Ronald McDonald Care Mobile program, this wonderful organization invests in the health and well-being of children and their families and has a proven track record of success. Our relationship with RMHC SWFL matters greatly to us, and we celebrate their 25 years of providing impact in Southwest Florida." – Jim Castle, Founder of Grampy's Charities



FUNDRAISING
EVENTS SINCE 2017

8



TOTAL RAISED

\$500,000 +



Ronald McDonald House Charities
Southwest Florida®

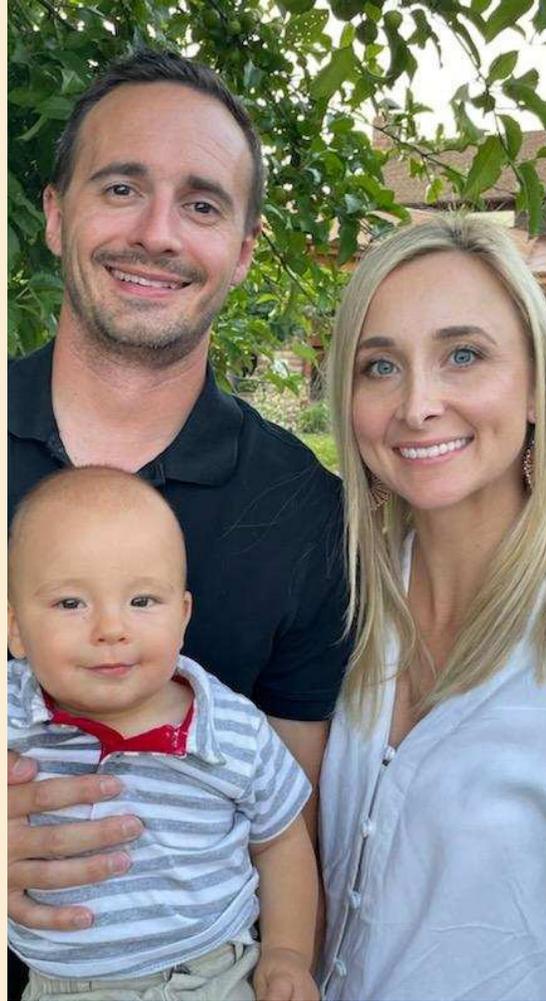
GRAMPY'S PRO-AM

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"When we were in a dry and weary place "the house" was an oasis for us. At first we saw it as a place to rest and clean up, but we soon learned that it was a place where love lives. The words of encouragement from staff and residents many times provided us with the strength and courage to keep moving forward. "– Billy, Harmony and Cooper Griffin (LaBelle, FL)



FAMILY STORY

Things happen for a reason...

"We think things happen for a reason. Back home in Ohio, we live far from a hospital (let alone one with a NICU). While on vacation in Florida, we were only 15 minutes away from HealthPark Medical Center. It was exactly one hour from when we got in the car that morning until Colt was delivered. We simply would not have made it in time if we were back home. Colt was taken to the NICU immediately after delivery. It was the only room left in the NICU. On top of all that, your facility took us in when we didn't know where we would go. We spent a month in the NICU before driving Colt home. The overall experience of bringing Colt into the world was an unforeseen blessing. You guys work miracles. Colt hit his first birthday on August 4th! He is the healthiest and happiest little boy. While Colt now lives in Ohio, where the sun doesn't shine nearly as much as in Florida, I think he kept his sunshine state tan. Thanks again for everything you did for our family." -Ryan and Allison



Gone but not forgotten...



CAROL RIORDAN

Carol and her husband George are long-time supporters of the Ronald McDonald House. We were so saddened to hear of the passing of Carol last month. George still continues to visit and help us out in Carol's honor. We are forever grateful for them.



CHEF BOB

One of our long-time beloved supporters, Bob Monastero, passed away this summer. Bob and his wife Julia always cooked dinner for our families. We are thankful for the memories and wonderful meals made with love.



AUDREY EVANS, MD

Dr. Audrey Evans, Cancer Specialist, was a prominent figure in the field of childhood cancer when, in 1974, she helped create the first Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia. She is the definition of a trail-blazer and we are honored to continue her legacy and mission.



JOE CALLAGHAN

Joe Callaghan was a part of our dear partner, Grampy's Charities. If there was a fundraising event that Grampy's had, you could count on Joe to be there. He was a very kind, giving, and happy man. We will miss him greatly.

"A life need not be long-lived for it to have been meaningful." To every parent or guardian who lost a child, our hearts are with you forever and always.





Together
WE CAN DO
BIG THINGS.



RMHC
Southwest Florida

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GIVE THE GIFT OF TOGETHERNESS BY VISITING
[RMHC SWFL.ORG/DONATE](https://www.rmhcswfl.org/donate)