



Akron
www.rmhakron.org

Care Cables

Fall 2008

Ronald McDonald House of Akron's Newsletter to Friends

Sara Watkins: Sowing Seeds of Kindness

What can you say about a woman who can keep a twenty bedroom home running and still have a smile and a gentle touch for everyone she meets? The problem I've found in writing this article isn't so much knowing what to say about Sara Watkins, as it is having enough room to say everything that must be said. I was surprised to find that she not only managed the house for almost ten years, but she



also functioned as electrician (rewiring lamps), plumber (unclogging drain traps), and general maintenance person (unstopping toilets). Oh wait, did I forget to mention that she did housekeeping chores, including the spring and fall cleanings?

As Kathy Seward told me, "One interaction or moment of a day could not encapsulate all her wonderful qualities. She showed great compassion and caring for our residents, volunteers and staff. She listened intently and with sensitivity to all as they shared their stories, sometimes stories with very sad endings. When a family was in crisis and needed a shoulder to lean on, she was there."



As Sue Stevenson puts it, "Sara is an understanding person who can listen to the residents and make them know that there is concern for them at RMH. She works hard and does whatever needs to be done. And I mean whatever!"

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Lend Your Support with *Share a night*

For almost half the families who stay at the Ronald McDonald House of Akron, even our nominal \$10 daily rate is more than they can afford. However, our doors remain open to everyone—regardless of their ability to pay. To help assist families who cannot afford the daily charge, our Share a Night Fund was set up to cover these fees.

We hope you will consider "sponsoring a night" for a family in need. *Every \$10 that you contribute will help underwrite the cost of accommodations and meals for one family for a day—and provide them with comfort and peace of mind knowing that their hospitalized child is only moments away.* Please see the Share a Night insert for details on how to donate.

A Difficult Stay Made Easy

Article written by Alan Doe

Laurie Allen and Alan Doe were residents at Ronald McDonald House from March 3 until April 23, 2008. Their twin daughters, Ellie and Meredith, were admitted to Children's Hospital on February 5, 2008, shortly after their birth at Akron General Medical Center. In his article, Alan Doe describes the events beginning with their daughters' births and through their stay at the House. Alan and Laurie live in Hudson, Ohio.

What began as a check-up turned into 80 days in the hospital.

The nurse checked Laurie's cervix and decided that she wasn't effaced at all, "unless it is the baby's head." She brought in a doctor to check. The next thing I knew, I had a gown in my hands and they were rushing Laurie down the hall. On February 5, after less than 24 hours in the hospital, the first baby girl was born

on the gurney and quickly snatched away to the neonatal intensive care team awaiting next door. Six minutes and one push later another girl was delivered and put in the care of a second neonatal intensive care team.

Hours passed before we knew the status of the twins. At almost midnight, the first baby came through Laurie's room in her transport isolette with her transport team. Then the second baby came through the hospital room followed by the neonatologist who gave us the stark statistics of being born at twenty-six weeks gestational age. But we knew the girls were in good hands and that the care they would receive at Akron Children's would be second to none.

At 2 lbs. and 1 lb. 15 oz., Meredith and Ellie looked like they would



beat the odds. They had Apgar scores of eight and were taken off the breathing tubes the next morning. We were able to return home each night after spending each day with the girls in the NICU at Children's Hospital and we began making the adjustment to our new life.

All babies lose weight after they are born, but we began to be concerned after two weeks had passed and Meredith and Ellie were not back up to birth weight. Along with the many families in the neonatal intensive care unit, we endured the alarms that signal low heart

Sowing Seeds of Kindness *continued*

When Sue was a volunteer she recalled that Sara would occasionally supplement dinner from her own home for the residents at the House.

Sometimes Sara's job required much more than being a house manager: she had to be the House "Mom", doling out both discipline and compassion. In some cases she would be compelled to enforce the House rules with guests, but she was also willing to go to the Board to ensure that we were always compassionate in dealing with those who came through our doors.

Jim Stroble was the president of Ronald McDonald House when Sara was hired. At her interview,

he recalled that he was impressed not only with Sara's resilience as a person, but with her sense of humor as well. Lauri Esposito expanded on this theme, relating a story in which Sara had to confront an overflowing toilet: "She would go in with full body armor—rubber gloves, gas mask, wading boots, hair net, apron with all the necessary items in the pockets (plunger, Lysol, scrub brush and her all-time favorite cleaner, Greased Lightning!) Just to see her ready to go into battle would put a totally different spin on it. She had more guts (and a cast iron stomach) than most of us who would rather quietly close the door and leave the mess for the next shift."



and breathing rates, multiple IV lines, feeding tubes, and hard news. Meredith had to have emergency surgery for a bowel resection. Ellie followed with surgery to close a vessel leading to the heart. By the beginning of week four, we found ourselves inaugural guests of the newly opened Reinberger Family Center. Cindy and the staff took care of us like family.

Living down the hall from the NICU was a great convenience, but there was little rest. Every hospital-wide announcement heightened the senses as we waited to hear whose name would be called. On the morning of March 2, 2008, it was ours. After so many heroic methods and so much expert care, Meredith's lungs could not keep up any longer and she passed in the arms of her mother. Now a mother's second

battle began. Laurie would not go home until she could take Ellie with her.

Laurie and I had never been inside a Ronald McDonald House or known anyone who had, but from the day we first entered, it was a familiar place. The constantly available coffee and home-made goodies kept us going. A full dinner was always available in the evening thanks to many family and business donations. Leftovers in the refrigerator, laundry service and machines, good books and good company made the stay easy. The many families grew closer through the struggles and triumphs of shared experience. We rejoiced with each family as they left the hospital until April 23, when it was our turn. Alicia, one of Ellie's primary nurses, walked with Laurie, Ellie

and me over the bridge from the hospital to the parking garage—a wonderful metaphor to the life that was to begin. We have been back to the hospital many times for check-ups, but have yet to stop in to see Mary, Sara, or Kathy at the Ronald McDonald House. It is all too fresh and bittersweet still. One day we will return, bearing baked goods or toys for siblings. One day we will return like so many of the volunteers we met – giving of their days with a knowing smile that everything will be alright. We send our love and thanks to all.

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A few characteristics that have marked Sara's tenure at RMH have been her creativity and public outreach. "Sara is a wonderful speaker and shared our House's story and mission to many groups and organizations. She created a computer presentation of snapshots and a few words to help others learn about the house," said Kathy Seward. She also wrote songs and poems to honor the volunteers at their yearly luncheons. She wrote an essay in nearly every "Care Cables," but in many cases she wrote the articles as well.

In reviewing the "From the Resident Manager's Notebook" essays Sara wrote in each issue of "Care Cables," one stood out for me. She recounted

how she had taken seeds from the dying daylilies at the House and planted them one autumn. The next spring the new seedlings appeared, and by August they had produced beautiful young flowers on the back patio area.

Sara's own words say this best: "Life is sometimes like those small seeds. 'Small seeds of kindness,' like brownies baking in the kitchen or cookies brought in by a Girl Scout troop can make all the difference in the world to someone who is in pain or experiencing a great loss.

"This fall, I went outside and repeated my actions of last fall with those dried-up seeds. This time, however, I kept one of those seeds to remind me that sometimes very

small things can make a world of difference."

The seeds of kindness, humor, hard work, and hope are what Sara has sown for the past ten years at Ronald McDonald House. Kathy summed up the emotions that we all feel the best: "[Sara] had the gift of problem-solving and there were many days when the problems just wouldn't quit, but she didn't either. She saw the problems through to the end. [She] took great pride in her work and always aimed to do her best. We will miss Sara's hearty laugh and wonderful smile. We wish her well in all her future endeavors. Bless you, Sara."

MISSION: Accomplished

Providing a “home away from home” for the families of children who are being treated at Akron Children’s Hospital is our mission. When we receive words of thanks from grateful families, it helps affirm that we are fulfilling our objective. If you would like to share your personal experiences at Ronald McDonald House of Akron, or a picture of your child, please send your letters and photos by email to Kathy@rmhakron.org



1

1. Dustin, Melissa and NICU alumnus, Dalton, pose with Ronald.



2

2. Miriam, Richard and Paul (center) come to the house for a well-doctor visit.



3

3. The Lautzenheiser family comes back to RMH for a visit with Ronald.

The 24th Annual Golf Classic

One hundred golfers and 45 volunteers gathered under a threatening sky on June 30 to help out the Ronald McDonald House of Akron (RMH). They dodged raindrops at Portage Country Club to participate in this year’s Ronald McDonald House Charity Golf Classic, an annual event that raises funds for the “House That Love Built”.

Presented annually by the Junior Women’s Civic Club (JWCC), this year’s event took in approximately \$56,000. Chair of the Golf Classic was Donna Pulling-Nelson of Cuyahoga Falls, assisted by co-chair, Beth Leipold of Copley.

Seventy-five percent of the Golf Classic’s profits go to pay for housing for parents of critically ill and terminally diagnosed children who are patients at Akron Children’s Hospital. Those parents are able to sleep, rest and eat at Akron’s Ronald McDonald House, only a block away from the hospital. The other 25 percent of funds raised are distributed by JWCC to local non-profits.

This year’s Golf Classic featured 10 members from the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the NFL Retired Players

Sheldon and Phyllis Barlette, Paul Bonard, and Joe Lahovich at the RMH 2008 Golf Classic



Association who not only competed against each other in a Long Drive Playoff, but golfed 18 holes with the foursomes.

At the evening’s dinner program, a memorial tribute was presented to the family of Richard L. Heidman, a long-time supporter of the Golf Classic and of Akron’s Ronald McDonald House.

Underwriters for the Golf Classic were the Junior Women’s Civic Club, KeyBank, Akron Children’s Hospital, Rubber City Arches (McDonald’s), and RMH Charities of Northeast Ohio.

The Junior Women’s Civic Club is a service organization whose members volunteer within the community and work to make the Greater Akron Area a better place to live. The group is looking for women who are interested in joining and volunteering. If you have questions about the club, contact this year’s president, Cathy Buschko at 330-928-2779.

2008 Meal Donors

Many thanks to the following dining establishments, organizations and individuals who have provided meals to the Ronald McDonald House of Akron this year:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| ♥ Agape Christian Fellowship | ♥ Jesse Neidert & friends | ♥ Friends Church |
| ♥ Altrusa International | ♥ Junior Women's Club, Stow, Munroe Falls & Silver Lake | ♥ Sally Casenhiser |
| ♥ Amelia Malek | ♥ JWCC | ♥ Scorchers |
| ♥ Amy Geiser & friends | ♥ Kathy Dieckman, Connie Moyer, & Peggy Tobias | ♥ Sharon & Mark Kohler |
| ♥ Atlee & Martha Miller | ♥ Kirbie Family Meats & Catering | ♥ Shisler's Cheese House |
| ♥ Berlin Northeast Church | ♥ Lea Heidman | ♥ Stephanie Allen & Family |
| ♥ Beta Sigma Phi | ♥ Little Caesars Pizza | ♥ Stow-Munroe Falls High School, Key Club |
| ♥ Bobbi Krannich | ♥ Maria Plouse | ♥ Stutzman's Bi-Rite |
| ♥ Brenda & Alex Mathers | ♥ Maureen Vastagh | ♥ Subway |
| ♥ Buca di Beppo | ♥ Melissa & Dustin Beattie | ♥ The Tangier's |
| ♥ Buffalo Wild Wings | ♥ Menches Brothers Restaurant | ♥ Temple Israel, 8th Grade |
| ♥ Capri Pizza | ♥ Mickey Whitehurst | ♥ The Spaghetti Warehouse |
| ♥ Catering by Culinary Duet | ♥ Moe's Restaurant | ♥ Todaro's Party Center |
| ♥ Christ Child | ♥ Mt. Hope New Order Fellowship | ♥ United Automatic of Ferguson |
| ♥ Crooked River Grill | ♥ Mustard Seed Market & Café | ♥ University of Akron - Biomedical Engineering Society |
| ♥ Crown Plaza, Quaker Square | ♥ National Society of Collegiate Scholars | ♥ University of Akron - Football Coaches & Wives |
| ♥ Daughters of Penelope | ♥ Nick Triola Family | ♥ Vikki & Rodney Shadie & family |
| ♥ DeVitis Italian Market & Deli | ♥ Pizza Hut | ♥ Vinceen Davis & Jen Hajdu |
| ♥ Diamond Marcum & family | ♥ Ravenna Church of Christ Youth | ♥ Waterloo Restaurant |
| ♥ East Berlin Church | ♥ Rhodes Catering | ♥ White House Chicken |
| ♥ East Elm Grove Church | ♥ Rizzi's Ristorante & Pizzeria | ♥ Windemere Elementary School |
| ♥ Elaine Hawthorne | ♥ Rocco's Pizza | ♥ Yocono's Restaurant |
| ♥ Ellet High School - FTA | ♥ Sadie Byler | |
| ♥ Emma Yoder | ♥ Salem Southeast | |
| ♥ Giant Eagle (Fairlawn) | | |
| ♥ Greystone Catering | | |
| ♥ House of Hunan | | |
| ♥ Islamic Medical Association | | |
| ♥ Jennifer Kupiec & friends | | |

A Beacon Of Hope

Jenna and Ben Mate

My son was born March 7, 2006. When I gave birth to Mason his clavicle bone broke, he was jaundiced and had extremely high sodium levels. They kept him at the local hospital for 2 days, then decided to send him to Akron Children's because he was getting worse. I was terrified. I could not feed him and had barely held my son since he had been born - now he had to go to a hospital that was over an hour's drive from our home.

I hadn't slept a night or had a break since he was born, and my feet were so swollen I couldn't wear shoes.

None of this mattered to me. I just wanted my son to be healthy. We were lost and didn't know what to do. We couldn't afford to drive back and forth from Akron and couldn't be so far away from our son. The Ronald McDonald House saved us. We could be close to our child. We had hot meals, a place to rest and a lot of friendly people who were also going through tough times. RMH was a comfort to us during a time that having comfort seemed impossible. All of you who donate your time and money to this establishment should be so proud, because this place truly helps

people. The Ronald McDonald House is a beacon of hope to parents who are going through such trying times. We just wanted to say thank you to everyone who helped us. It meant more to us than words could ever express. Our son just had his second birthday in March and is healthy and happy - not to mention cute as can be. Thank you, Ronald McDonald House. You truly saved us.



Our Wish List

Please check this list of items and foods that we so often need at our House. We're thankful for all the businesses, groups and individuals who refill our pantry and storerooms.

Before making a large donation, we ask that you call 330-253-5400 to set up a delivery time.

Stouffer's or Lean Cuisine entrees
(individual servings)

Juices
(individual servings)

Cheese
(shredded, slices or blocks)

Fresh fruit

Potato chips, pretzels, etc.
(individual servings)

Green beans

Corn

Salad dressing
(Ranch, French, etc.)

Hellman's Mayonnaise

Miracle Whip

Baked beans
(Bush's, etc.)

Barbecue sauce

Durkee's French fried onions

Parmesan cheese

Beef broth

Cream of chicken soup

Boxed potato mixes *(scalloped, au gratin, etc.)*

Napkins

Cream of celery soup

Crackers

Bread crumbs

Noodles

White vinegar

Corn muffin mixes

Boxed stuffing

Boxed cereal

Onion soup mix

Canned cranberries

Canned fruit

Cooking oil

Sugar

Nuts for baking

Frosting *(canned)*

Brownies

Cake mixes

Paper towels

Dish soap

(Dawn, Palmolive, etc.)

Laundry detergent

Grocery store gift certificates

B J's gift certificates

The Spirit of Community

The Ronald McDonald House of Akron has been truly blessed by the generosity of many individuals, organizations and businesses from Akron and the surrounding communities who have given donations of food and materials, as well as their time. These are pictures of just a few of the generous people who donate to our House.

Below is a list of just some of the groups and individuals who have supported our House in the past few months. To them, and the countless others who have also lent a helping hand to our House, we offer our heartfelt thanks.

- ♥ AAA - Akron Auto Club
- ♥ Akron Beacon Journal
- ♥ Akron Fraternal Order of Police
- ♥ Akron Zoological Park
- ♥ Alpha Delta Pi
- ♥ Ann Mayberry
- ♥ Becky Misenheimer
- ♥ Betty Cline
- ♥ Brownie Troop #1437
- ♥ Carol & Kevin Burke
- ♥ Carroll Barrickman
- ♥ Chuck Myers
- ♥ Cintas
- ♥ Coca Cola Bottling Company of Akron
- ♥ Dan Winkler
- ♥ Deeper Life Full Gospel Ministries
- ♥ District 5 Volleyball Coaches
- ♥ Doylestown United Methodist Church VBS
- ♥ Dunkin' Donuts
- ♥ Eastern Buckeye Porsche Club
- ♥ FedEx, Akron Tech Center
- ♥ Fur, Feather n' Fun 4-H Club
- ♥ Gale Betterly
- ♥ Great Lakes Baking
- ♥ Jamie Iceman
- ♥ Jeff Hawk
- ♥ K.I.S.S. Quilters
- ♥ Krispy Kreme Donuts
- ♥ Lafayette United Methodist Church
- ♥ Larry & Marcia Tarbet
- ♥ Mark & Frieda Troyer
- ♥ Martha Mary Guild
- ♥ Nancy Richardson
- ♥ Nestlé
- ♥ North Akron Kiwanis
- ♥ Oak Grove Mennonite Church
- ♥ Patricia Lawrence
- ♥ Portage Lakes AARP #2213
- ♥ PPG Industries Foundation
- ♥ Randy Newsom, Akron Aeros
- ♥ Rita Caruso
- ♥ Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeastern Ohio
- ♥ Ross & Karen Farr
- ♥ Rubber City Arches
- ♥ Ruth Averill
- ♥ Ruth Circle, Johnson United Methodist Church
- ♥ Sam's Club
- ♥ Sheri Whitlow-Metheny
- ♥ St. Anne's Society, Saints Cyril & Methodius Church
- ♥ Stand Up With Style, Inc.
- ♥ Steve Emerick
- ♥ Stuver Auto Spring Co.
- ♥ Summit County Prosecutor's Office
- ♥ Susanna Circle, First United Methodist Church
- ♥ Talane & Tom Daniels
- ♥ Temperature Control
- ♥ Terri Fisher
- ♥ The Giving Doll
- ♥ TNT Exterminators
- ♥ William Bebb Family
- ♥ WKDD
- ♥ Zeta Tau Alpha, Akron Alumnae

Mt. Zion United Methodist women of Minerva bring blankets for our families.



Sara Watkins accepts check from students in Builder's Club.



University of Akron Football Assistant Head Coach Bill Bleil cooks chicken.



Children of University of Akron football coaches visit with Ronald.



Akron University Football coaches & wives prepare a cookout for our families.



Lisa Musser and daughter deliver wish list items from Immaculate Heart of Mary's first grade class.



Connie (left), Marty and Marty deliver frozen meals from Zeta Tau Alpha, Akron Alumnae.



Tray Kauffman presents a check for \$750 from WKDD KIDZ DAY fundraiser to Don McCardle (left) and Kathy Seward (right).



Oak Grove Mennonite Vacation Bible School.



Setting A Course For The Future Of RMH

There are many words to describe feelings about the Ronald McDonald House of Akron. One of those words is passion. The Board of Trustees of Children's Family Care and The Ronald McDonald House of Akron met on September 20th to share that passion. The Boards met to form a strategic plan to ensure the continued mission of the House. Elaine Woloshyn from the Center for Nonprofit Excellence facilitated the group for the day.

The dedication, ownership and commitment of the attendees quickly became apparent. The foundation of the House has many times been referred to as a triangle: the Hospital, the McDonald's owner/operators and the community. Two sides of the triangle were discussed. The morning was filled with personal stories. Bill Considine told the story of the beginning of the House. Upon arriving in Akron, he quickly became aware of the need for

housing for parents of sick children, and with the help of the hospital and the community, began to plan for the House. The Akron House is blessed to have a wonderful relationship with Akron Children's Hospital. John Shaffer, the first president of the Board of Children's Family Care, described the early days of planning, and the miracle of the community commitment and involvement which has continued to this day. Board members shared their stories, many of which showed strong emotional ties to Children's Hospital. There were many special moments of shared sorrows and joys. There were many 'a ha' moments for the attendees as they came to understand the dedication of the original members of the Board. As an added bonus, the Trustees got to get to know each other on a different level than just board involvement; they began to understand the wonder of the House.

The afternoon was dedicated to investigating the House's mission, the families we serve and their needs. We evaluated our overall successes and failures. The attendees were guided into group discussions regarding many facets of the House. The importance of understanding the financials was stressed, as were board governance issues. As a group there were many discussions regarding the future of the House and the need to adapt to a changing world.

This journey will continue on Saturday October 18th. That meeting will look at the third part of the triangle that is the support and involvement of the McDonald's area owner/operators. We seriously examined what the future holds for the House. At the end of the day, there was an energy, commitment and a passion to continue the work of the House with excellence into the future.

The RMH Website Becomes A Reality - Thanks To A Special Volunteer

Since 1985 families have been finding their way to Akron's Ronald McDonald House to stay while their children are hospitalized. As times change the ways families learn about the House have changed too. The most recent information source for our families is on the Web. The board of trustees and staff recognized that as families anticipate their children's surgeries or upcoming treatments, looking on the internet has become the way to access information. Thanks to a donation of time and talent by Anne Raynor of Silver Lake, Ronald

McDonald House of Akron has its own Web site.

As a high school student at Walsh Jesuit, Anne volunteered at the House. Anne is a 2005 graduate of Denison University where she majored in printmaking and digital arts. For the past two years she has lived in Columbus and worked as Visual Arts Coordinator for the Worthington Arts Council. This fall she moved to Savannah, Georgia where she is working on a masters of fine arts degree at the prestigious Savannah College of Art and Design.

Visit us at:
www.rmhakron.org

Last spring when Anne learned that Akron RMH needed a Web site, she expressed interest in volunteering again, this time to design the site. Her efforts have been outstanding. Her home page design captures the heart of the house and welcomes families. Lots of information is included on the Web site, including how to register, how to volunteer and how to donate. Thank you, Anne!





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Who to Call

For **volunteer opportunities** – either on a regular basis or for special needs – call Kathy Seward at 330.253.5400.

For information on organizing a **fundraising event**, call Sheldon Barlette at 330.253.5400.

If your group or organization needs a **speaker** to discuss our mission, call Kathy Seward at 330.253.5400.

Mission

The Ronald McDonald House of Akron was founded by families for the purpose of providing a temporary house for those who have loved ones at Akron Children's Hospital. Our home provides emotional, spiritual and mental support to all who live within these walls.