



**Ronald McDonald House Charities®**  
One Kroc Drive, Oak Brook IL 60523  
630.623.7048 tel 630.623.7488 fax

[www.rmhc.org](http://www.rmhc.org)

## **Ronald McDonald House® Program Lets Families Spend More Time Together**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

### ***For more information contact:***

Jennifer Smith, 630.623.6875

Liz Keating, 630.623.3799

*OAK BROOK, ILL.* — When a child is ill, the family’s primary focus is the health and well being of their child. For nearly 35 years, Ronald McDonald House program has been providing families with a supportive, family-centered place to stay while their child receives treatment in a nearby hospital or medical facility

For families, a Ronald McDonald House is about more than lodging, it is about families being able to spend more time together, which helps children to heal better and faster. “All of the staff are extremely caring,” said Andrea, who stayed at a Ronald McDonald House in Augusta while her daughter Addison underwent treatment at the hospital nearby. “They check on us, see if there’s anything they can do to help.” For many families, a prolonged stay at a nearby hotel is both impractical and beyond their means. The Ronald McDonald House provides a sense of comfort and emotional support. “Here I’m surrounded with people who are going through the same thing with their children,” says Andrea.

What started out as one house in Philadelphia has now grown into a global community of more than 284 Ronald McDonald Houses in 30 countries around the world, with programs in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United States, and Venezuela. All told, more than 6,300 bedrooms are available for families every night.

The Ronald McDonald House program was the result of an unlikely partnership in 1974 between an NFL team, a children’s hospital and a restaurant chain; none of its members could have imagined that their dream of a “home-away-from-home” for families of seriously ill children would grow to become an international phenomenon. They simply wanted to create a place where parents of sick children could be with others who understood each others’ situations and could provide emotional support.

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The seeds of the partnership were planted when Kim Hill, the 3-year-old daughter of Philadelphia Eagles tight end Fred Hill, was diagnosed with leukemia. Hill and his wife camped out on hospital chairs and benches, ate food from vending machines and did all they could to keep Kim from seeing their sadness, exhaustion and frustration.

All around them, the Hills saw other parents doing exactly the same thing. They learned that many of the families had traveled great distances to bring their children to the medical facility; but the high cost of hotel rooms was prohibitive. They continued to think, "There has to be a happy medium."

Hill rallied the support of his teammates to raise funds to help other families experiencing the same emotional and financial traumas as his own. Through the Philadelphia Eagles' general manager, Jim Murray, the team offered its support to Dr. Audrey Evans, head of the pediatric oncology unit at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. It was Dr. Evans' dream for a house that could serve as temporary residence for families of children being treated at her hospital that led to the first Ronald McDonald House.

By 1979, 10 more Ronald McDonald Houses had opened. In the next five years, local communities founded 60 more Houses; then 53 more opened in the next five years. Across the country and throughout the world, people viewed Ronald McDonald House as a way for a community to band together for their neighbors in need of comfort and security during a particularly difficult time.

The Houses, which now number more than 284 around the world, are supported by nearly 30,000 volunteers who annually donate more than three million hours of their time.

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