

Ronald McDonald House

Charities of Western Washington & Alaska

Family Meal Program

Families staying at the Ronald McDonald House often experience stress due to the illness or health status of their child. The Family Meal Program offers groups of volunteers the opportunity to extend needed support to these families by providing and preparing a meal at the House.

Family dinners are served at both of our Houses on Sunday through Thursday at 5:00 PM. At House A, groups plan to serve 70-80 family members. On occasion, we also schedule weekday lunches and weekend brunches. A group size of 6-15 volunteers is appropriate. At House C, groups plan to serve 20-25 family members and a group size of less than 6 volunteers is ideal. We ask our volunteers to understand that these numbers are strictly estimates. The actual number of people attending a given dinner varies greatly, even when the House is full. This is due to a number of factors, none of which are predictable. We are therefore unable to give a more accurate estimate. Bear in mind, that whether the food is eaten at mealtime or as leftovers, it will be eaten and very much appreciated.

Most meal preparation is done on-site. Options also include ordering takeout or having food professionally delivered. Feel free to be creative or bring your own family favorites! Anything that can be stored and reheated easily is best. An on-site orientation prior to your dinner will provide instruction on our food handling/food safety guidelines.

As you plan your menu, please keep in mind:

- The number and cooking experience of those in your group
- The size and layout of our kitchen, oven and refrigeration space, and time constraint
- The logistics of getting the food to the House in a safe manner (especially on a workday)
- The fact that you may be sharing the kitchen space with other family members
- Meals are served buffet style

We ask that volunteers and volunteer groups **not solicit donations on behalf of Ronald McDonald House Charities to support /fund their meal.** It is acceptable to ask for a donation from someone you know with whom you have a personal relationship. The donation would be to your group for the purpose of providing a meal to the families living at the Ronald McDonald House.

We ask groups to arrive at 3:00 (House a) and 3:30 (House C) to begin food preparation. If you want to arrive earlier or later than this, please arrange in advance.

Our kitchen is equipped with electric residential ovens and everything you will need for preparing, cooking, and serving your meal. We provide steam tables, coolers, and ice for

maintaining proper food temperatures. **We ask that you bring paper plates** if serving at House A. This is not necessary at House C.

Both Houses A and C have BBQ grills that may be used (with advance notification) by our Meal Program groups. However, a group that chooses to use a grill is then responsible for thoroughly cleaning it when finished (the cleaning procedure is posted). We realize this is not an easy task, and as well is time-consuming. Some groups choose not to use the grill for these reasons.

The final task of the evening is cleaning the kitchen. Family members clear and clean their own tables. However, the volunteer group is responsible for everything else including packaging leftovers, washing all dishes, cleaning counters, sweeping floors, and emptying the garbage (unfortunately, it is the same everywhere, isn't it?). Most groups require at least an hour to clean up after dinner and are ready to leave the House by 7:00.

Scheduling Your Dinner

- Once you decide that you would like to host a dinner at the House, contact Eleanor Garrison, Activities Coordinator at eleanor@rmhcseattle.org or by phone (206.838.0621) for available dates and to confirm the date that works for your group.
- Decide which House suits your group best.
- An **on-site orientation** (lasting about one hour) prior to your first scheduled dinner is mandatory. We encourage all members of your group to attend however only the designated group lead and a back-up for the lead is required to do so. The lead also has the responsibility of providing and reviewing our *Meal Program Handbook* with all group members not attending the on-site orientation. **All members of your group must carefully read and be familiar with our *Food Handling, Preparation, and Storage Guidelines* prior to coming to the House on your scheduled date.**
- Children in your group must be a **minimum of 13 years of age** and have had chickenpox or been vaccinated for chickenpox.
- Whenever possible, a kitchen supervisor will be assigned to oversee and assist your group on your dinner night.
- A tour of the House for interested members of your group may be arranged in advance, to take place at the House on the date of your dinner.

On Your Dinner Night

Make sure that no one in your group has any symptoms of illness, has recently been exposed to a disease or has a communicable disease. If this applies to anyone in your group, they should stay home and not participate in any food preparation.

For further information, please contact:

Eleanor Garrison, Activities Coordinator

eleanor@rmhcseattle.org

206.838.0621