

the **Hearth**

APRIL 2009



RONALD MCDONALD
HOUSE CHARITIES
WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA

Sydney's story



To support Sydney, left, Mom and Dad got their heads shaved. Upper right is Brock, 4.

Age: 11 years old

Hometown: Oak Harbor, WA

Diagnosis: Osteosarcoma
(bone cancer)

MIKKI HAS BEEN putting her spare change into canisters at McDonald's restaurants since she was a kid. But it wasn't until recently – after her daughter was suddenly diagnosed with cancer – that she understood where the money went.

“It really hit me after I walked through the doors in need of services for my family,” she said.

Sydney, 11, began complaining of knee pain last summer. Doctors initially suspected growing pains but grew concerned when the pains

didn't go away and she developed flu-like symptoms through much of the fall. Finally, in January after an MRI, X-rays and blood work, a CAT scan caught a tumor in her left knee. Doctors at Seattle Children's quickly diagnosed her with osteosarcoma, bone cancer.

The family went home for the weekend then returned to Seattle, checking into the Ronald McDonald House on Jan. 31. “It was such a relief to know we had a place to stay through all of this,” said Mikki.

The House has been a support for the family in multiple ways. Proximity to Seattle Children's has been of the utmost importance – at one point, Sydney was in the emergency room eight times in 13 days. Brother Brock, 4, has made lots of friends, which has helped him cope with the situation. Also, the family's many visitors have been able to stay with Brock at the House while Mikki and her husband, Chad, are with Sydney at the hospital.

For Chad and Mikki, both physical education teachers, the House has helped them stay afloat financially. “Without the House and the generosity of our community in Oak Harbor (which has held fundraisers for the family), we would have had to start liquidating our assets and take out additional loans,” said Mikki.

And, of course, there is the supportive community made up of folks going through similar very difficult experiences. This part surprised Chad.

“I thought it was going to be dreary,” he said. “In fact, I stayed in our room a lot when we first got here. But now, I appreciate the community more than I could have imagined. It is very therapeutic to share our daily experiences with other families. And all the services the House provides are a huge help – shelter, food, education for the kids, computers, entertainment ... we are so thankful for all of these.”

“

It is very therapeutic to share our daily experiences with other families.

– Sydney's dad

”

Subscribe by e-mail



Help us reduce our mailing costs. To receive this newsletter by e-mail, please let us know at: news@rmhcseattle.org.

LIFE AT THE HOUSE

Therapy dogs bring bit of “normalcy” to kids going through a tough time

THE PET THERAPY PROGRAM had just been launched back in 2005. Week one had gone fine and the second week was about to begin when Judy Adams, Manager of Volunteer Services, got a phone call. Louisa Malatos, who helped create the program, and Fenway her golden retriever would be a few minutes late and she wanted Judy to tell the kids not to worry.

Judy didn't think any kids would be waiting but, just in case, decided to walk out to the front desk. Boy, did she get a surprise.

“A dozen kids were eagerly waiting,” recalls Judy. “It caught me totally off guard but it was right there that I started to realize that the Pet Therapy program was really going to be valued by our families.”

Now coordinated by Judi Anderson-Wright, the program consistently is rated by families as one of their favorites. For many of the kids staying at the House, spending quiet time with one of the dogs lends a sense of normalcy to a life often filled with hospital visits, tests and treatment.

“When I'm away from my dog, I'm very sad,” said Emily, 8, of Miles City, Montana, as she recently spent time with Opie, Judi's 12-year-old Jack Russell Terrier. “When I see a therapy dog it makes me very happy.”

The program continues to grow – with more than 60 two-hour visits from 15 trainer-dog teams during the month of March – and rarely do the dogs go lonely.

Opie is just one of the many stars. “I've never seen a pet therapy dog do tricks,” says Emily, laughing as she puts Opie through his paces. Other dog-trainer duo favorites include Louisa and Fenway (our first Pet Therapy team, who have been coming weekly since May 2005); Jessica and Maverick (who have been visiting House C every Wednesday for the past year); Patricia who brings Libby and River (alternating them the past year and a half).



Emily, 8, enjoys time with Opie and Judi during a recent visit to the House.

Judi says all of the dogs are what she calls “bullet-proof” dogs, which is essential for the program. Pet therapy dogs must be “absolutely predictable,” able to handle anything, from being poked in the ear by a curious toddler, to staying

calm during sudden loud noises such as luggage carts being pushed across a hard floor, and remaining cheerful in the glare of a photographer's flash bulb.

For Opie, it's all in a day's work and he loves it. “He doesn't care if it's rainy or cold outside,” says Judi, “just as long as he gets a chance to make people smile.”



We ask families to pay **\$25*** a night to stay at the House. However, no one is ever turned away due to an inability to pay. Most families are struggling financially and often stay for several months or longer.

* Actual cost is \$80 a night.

Yes! I want to help.

Use the attached remittance envelope to pay for a family's stay at the House.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Eileen brings a “friendly, calm” presence to the front desk

EILEEN POWELSON was volunteering at the front desk recently when a mom told her she had lost her cell phone earlier that day at a Seattle restaurant. The mom was thinking through ideas for how to get her phone back when Eileen came up with one.

“I'll have my husband pick it up on his way home,” she said in typical plainspoken Eileen fashion. A few hours later, Wally, her husband of 29 years, cheerfully dropped off the phone.

“That's what we love about Eileen,” says Judy Adams, Manager of Volunteer Services. “She just stays calm, has great ideas and is willing to help however she can.”

Another recent example has helped save the House money. Eileen, who recently celebrated her four-year anniversary with us, came up with the idea of her taking over maintenance of the House's indoor plants.



Eileen

A short time later she was trained by the professional service we previously used and now tends to the plants every other week.

Judy says Eileen has the perfect disposition for working the front desk – she is friendly, calm and a good listener. “All of these

attributes are important because the front desk volunteer usually is the first person from the House to meet our families – and it's often during tough circumstances.”

Eileen, who was born in England but lived in Australia from 6 months to age 27, is the mother of three grown daughters. She said the most important thing she has learned while working at the front desk is to listen and check things out before diving in with families.

“You just never know how things are going with people here – they are going through such tough circumstances,” she says. “I enjoy meeting them, great families from all sorts of different places. And I always try to meet them where they're at.”

Interested in becoming a Front Desk volunteer?

Call Judy at (206) 838-0606.

Ronald's happy return



The House was a place of celebration on March 6 when a new Ronald statue was installed, replacing the one that had been stolen and damaged beyond repair. The Seafair Clowns (above) showed up in large numbers as did our walking-talking Ronald (above, right). Special thanks go to Paula Platz who donated her Ronald statue, and members of Our Gang Racing, who did repairs and brought one of their hydros for kids and parents to check out.

First Hockey Challenge at ShoWare Center is a huge hit



Players and fans gather for the ceremonial puck drop before the 11th annual event.

THE 11th ANNUAL RMHC Hockey Challenge was a huge success, raising \$110,000 for the Seattle Ronald McDonald House. Local hockey players, celebrities and former NHL players delighted a sell-out crowd at the first Hockey Challenge held at ShoWare Center in Kent – the new home of the Seattle Thunderbirds.

Special thanks go to the Thunderbirds for once again partnering with us, giving generously of their time and resources for the Feb. 28 event. Local hockey teams from Microsoft competed during the day, including teams from E&D, Exchange, Mobile Services,

MS IT, SQL Server and Windows Live. The competition was a fun and rewarding conclusion to months of fundraising and hard work by the players, all to support the children and families who stay at the House.

The day concluded with an All Star game and action-packed shootout. All Stars included Brian Basset, Ian Furness, Paul Guilfoyle, Michael Rosenbaum, Jason Thompson, Kelly Tysland, Bill Wixey and numerous NHL and T-Bird alumni.

Thank You

We couldn't do it without you!

Thanks to great community support, we're able to provide 28,000 nights of housing per year to families caring for seriously ill children. Here's a snapshot of what a few wonderful community groups did for the House over the past quarter:

Hoss Mortgage Investors Inc., Playtime LLC, Mendenhall Flying Lions Charities, Lions Foundation District 49A, Tom Destefano Enterprises, Truline Construction Company Inc. and **CollinsWoerman:** Donated money, time, work and materials to give us our fantastic newly remodeled playroom, complete with climbing toys, padded carpet and other kid-friendly touches.

Marriott SpringHill Suites Downtown Seattle: Donated \$5,000 worth of white wash cloths, hand towels, bath towels and bath mats. In the process of changing out its bath linens, the hotel didn't toss its gently used towels and other items, instead donating them to us.

Bonneville Seattle and Snoqualmie Entertainment: Donated \$2,000 and, along with the Seattle Seahawks, named us their Charity of the Month for February. As part of the donation, Bonneville, which owns KIRO 97.3 FM and KIRO 710 AM, featured the House in a news story and public service announcements.

Washington DECA: Donated \$2,282.42 raised during its "Miracle Minute," a frenzied event during its statewide conference in which 3,100 student attendees have a minute to empty their pockets of change and small bills in support of the House.

Sponsors

APC
Arvato Digital Services
EMC²
Harte-Hanks
Lionbridge
Microsoft Online Services
Moravia
Nortel
Siemens
VMC

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY

9—Drive For Your School, Bothell High School, Bothell, WA

14—Bob's Brown Beer Release Party, Nickerson Street Saloon, Seattle

16—RMHC "Day at the Races," Emerald Downs, Auburn, WA

25—Anchorage Corvette Assoc.

Car Show, Anchorage, Sam's Club
JUNE

10—SPORT Restaurant Bob's Brown Beer event, Seattle

JULY

25—Wells Fargo Torchlight Run at Seafair, Qwest Field, Seattle

AUGUST

16—Fourth Annual Wyatt Wilson Memorial Ride, Bellevue, WA, to Mud Mountain Dam Park, Enumclaw, WA

30—First Annual "Wyatt's Ride for the House," Toledo, WA

Top 5 Wish List

At the Ronald McDonald House, we need the same kind of items you use at home—only more! Here's how you can help:

- Elliptical machine (new or gently used)
- Spoons, forks, knives (new or gently used)
- 4 blenders (new)
- 3 crock pots (new)
- Cleaning products such as antibacterial hand soap, liquid dishwasher detergent, liquid dish soap

Before donating an item, please contact:
kaarin@rmhcseattle.org
or call (206) 838-0609.

Thank you
for your generosity!

For event details, visit www.rmhcseattle.org/news, email vanessa@rmhcseattle.org or call (206) 838-0613.

Almost time for another exciting "Day at the Races"

ENJOY A DAY of horse racing and spring weather – all while supporting the Ronald McDonald House – by attending the third annual RMHC "Day at the Races" on May 16 at Emerald Downs.

Last year's event attracted hundreds of guests who helped raise nearly \$10,000 for the House. Don't wait to reserve your tickets, which include admission, indoor seating in the Emerald Room, a buffet lunch, silent auction and more – all for

just \$40 per person! Races begin at 2 p.m.

You'll also be able to see the renowned Preakness Stakes, which will be simulcast live from Pimlico Race Course in Maryland beginning at 3 p.m.

For more information about sponsoring a race or reserving tickets, contact Vanessa Briley at vanessa@rmhcseattle.org or (206) 838-0613. Please RSVP by May 6.

WWW.RMHCSEATTLE.ORG CALL (206) 838-0600

“Right now this place means everything to us. Without it, I don't know where we'd be.” – Sam, Elijah's dad

Families often arrive at the House suddenly, their lives having been turned upside-down by the illness of a child.



WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA

RONALD McDONALD
HOUSE CHARITIES



5130 40th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105
www.rmhcseattle.org
(206) 838-0600

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 2573