



Ronald McDonald
House Charities
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

From the Heart

Winter 2026

Stories of how you keep families together when it matters most



United In Care

As we begin a new year together, I am filled with gratitude and pride as I reflect on what your support makes possible for families every day at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts. This edition of *From the Heart* beautifully captures the compassion, resilience, and community that define our mission—and I hope it leaves you feeling as inspired as I am.

In these pages, you will meet Chloe's family, whose journey brought them to three Ronald McDonald Houses during an unimaginable time. Their story is a powerful reminder that while each family's path is different, our mission remains the same: to keep families together and supported when it matters most. Because of you, families not only find a place to stay, but a sense of stability, care, and connection when their world feels uncertain.

You will also read about an exciting milestone for our New Haven House—the opening of 11 new guest rooms made possible through our Mission Expansion Campaign. This expansion allows us to serve up to 30 families each night and ensures that more parents can remain by their child's side during long hospital stays. From volunteers who helped prepare the rooms to donors who made the project possible, this achievement reflects the collective spirit of our community at its very best.

This issue also celebrates the many ways individuals continue to lift our families—from teen led initiatives like Lace Up For Kids, and peer to peer fundraising through Raise Love, to the volunteers who serve in our Houses and Family Rooms each day. Many will come together again this spring at signature events like Dancing Under the Stars and our annual Golf Tournaments—another powerful reflection of our community in action.

As we look ahead, I am excited to share that on May 20th, we will be launching a refreshed brand for Ronald McDonald House Charities of CTMA. Our look may be new, but our mission, services, and unwavering commitment to families will never change. Day in and day out, we will continue to provide daily care, compassionate support, and critical resources to families who need us most.

Thank you for being part of our journey—past, present, and future. Your kindness, generosity, and belief in our mission are what allow us to grow and continue serving families. I am deeply grateful for all the ways you stand with us and with the families we serve.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Michelle D'Amore
Chief Executive Officer



Michelle with Chloe and Layla Capra during their recent visit and wish list drop-off.

Dancing Under
the Stars

March 27, 2026 Aqua Turf Club



Save the Date!

Annual Golf Tournaments!

May 18, 2026 | The Farms Country Club
Aug 3, 2026 | Twin Hills Country Club

One Family, Three Houses, Four Grateful Hearts

Ronald McDonald House supported our family through the most frightening experience of our lives. We took Chloe to the hospital for what we believed would be a simple MRI. Her eye doctor had noticed a swollen optic nerve and we thought she might need glasses. She had been having headaches and trouble seeing the whiteboard at school, but nothing prepared us for what came next.

After the MRI the wait for results fell unusually long and then the team said we need you to come with us to a family room. We felt our world shift. In that room we were told our five year old daughter had a baseball sized tumor in her brain and ependymoma—brain cancer. That moment shattered us. We were caught completely off guard, blindsided by information no parent is ever ready to hear. One moment we're worried about glasses, the next we're being told our daughter needed emergency brain surgery within days.



Chloe and her sister, Layla, dropping off their 2nd annual wish list drive donations for the children staying in the House just like they did!

Our time in New Haven became one of the toughest chapters of this journey, not because it was the longest, but because it was the beginning—the chapter where everything hit us. We were overwhelmed, lost in trying to make decisions while barely able to think. And that's exactly when the Ronald McDonald House in New Haven stepped in and held us up.

The House gave us more than a place to sleep. It gave us stability when everything felt unstable. It gave us a safe space to breathe, cry, think, and pull ourselves together. It allowed us to stay close to Chloe at all times. It gave us clean beds, warm meals, laundry machines, and the essentials we were too overwhelmed to consider. The staff welcomed us with compassion when we could barely function. They checked in on us. They made sure we ate. They supported us without ever making us feel like a burden, and they cared for our daughter, Layla, who was also scared and confused by everything happening around her. The New Haven House held us together during the chapter of shock—the chapter that felt impossible to get through.

After Chloe's surgery she lost movement on her entire left side and needed intensive rehabilitation. That brought us to Blythedale Children's Hospital in White Plains New York, and during those weeks the Ronald McDonald House in White Plains became our home. Our days were emotionally heavy, watching Chloe struggle to take steps or lift her arm again. It was heartbreaking, but she fought every day, every night. The House gave us comfort and stability. They provided meals, snacks, laundry rooms, activities, and a place to recover emotionally after long days of therapy. They helped keep us grounded during a chapter filled with physical and emotional rebuilding.

When it was time for radiation we moved again, this time to Manhattan for 33 proton treatments at the New York Proton Center in Harlem, and the Ronald McDonald House in Manhattan became our home for months. This House supported us in tremendous ways as well. Every night a different restaurant donated dinner so we always had a hot meal after long days of treatment. Their pantry was stocked with snacks, drinks, and essentials, which meant we never had to worry about food when Chloe didn't feel well enough to leave the room.

Throughout this journey each Ronald McDonald House became such a big part of our lives that we began giving them nicknames. The House in New Haven became Ron Don and the House in White Plains became Rhonda and the House in Manhattan became Ronita. These names may sound playful but to us they represented comfort, familiarity, and the feeling of home no matter how far away we actually were.

Continued on page 3

We served 429 families!

70% of our families were from CT and MA.

In our Houses

8,296 nights provided.

350 meals served.

265 activities held.



In our Family Room

Parents and caregivers visited **1,812** times!

3,724 meals, snacks, and beverages were served.



56% of families had children that were **0-12 months old**

1 out of 2 families stayed for over a week.



Families saved \$2,725,000

in lodging, meals, and daily necessities by relying on our programs.

Continued from page 2



Jessica and the girls in the Resource Center.

And that's truly what Ronald McDonald House gave us—a home during fear, a home during exhaustion, a home during healing, a home during uncertainty. New Haven held us through the shock. White Plains supported us through recovery. Manhattan carried us through radiation.

Three Houses, one organization, one mission, keeping families close and supported during their darkest moments.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. Thank you for caring. Thank you for supporting both our daughters and for giving families like us the strength to keep going. - Vincent, Jessica, Layla, and Chloe

Opening 11 New Guest Rooms in New Haven



A construction overview of our 11 new guest rooms.

In early March, Ronald McDonald House New Haven proudly unveiled 11 new guest rooms made possible through our Mission Expansion Campaign. With these additions, the House can now serve up to 30 families each night—ensuring more parents and caregivers have a safe, welcoming place to stay close to their children during long and often stressful hospital stays.

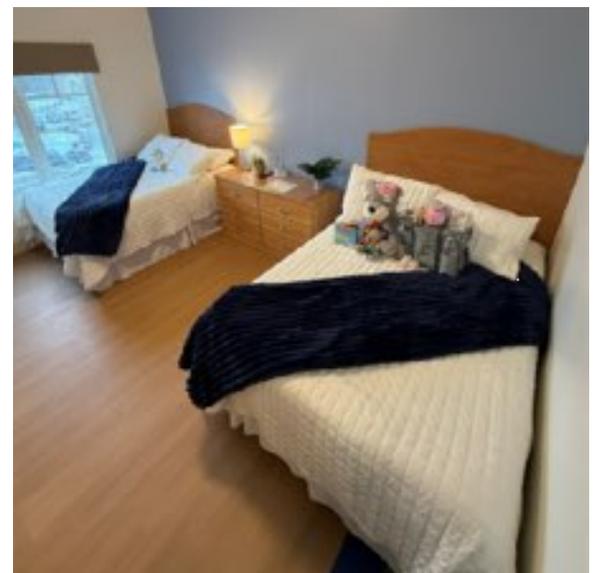
The expansion focused on bringing previously shelled spaces to life and transforming them into private guest rooms. Construction included building walls to separate each space, installing plumbing and ensuite bathrooms, completing painting and flooring, and furnishing each room with thoughtful touches that help families feel at home. Every detail was considered with families in mind, creating a calming environment where parents can rest, recharge, and focus on their child's healing.

In addition to the guest rooms, the project included important improvements that strengthen how we support families throughout the House. All staff offices were relocated to the main floor, ensuring staff members are easily accessible and able to provide assistance, compassion, and comfort. The lower level was also reconfigured to include a new board room and a dedicated staff break room to support the wellbeing of those who care for our families every day.

Construction began in June and thanks to the collective efforts of our construction partners, staff, volunteers, and community partners, was completed ahead of schedule. Volunteers and community groups played a vital role in the final stages of the project, generously donating their time to clean spaces, install furniture and textiles, and add welcoming finishing touches to prepare the rooms for families.

These new guest rooms now allow us to serve 11 additional families each night and represent the direct impact of Mission Expansion Campaign donors. Their compassionate generosity has expanded not just our physical space, but our ability to ensure more families can access the comfort, stability, and support of Ronald McDonald House New Haven today and in the future.

To provide compassionate support and resources to an increasing number of families, we need your help. Make a gift, volunteer your time, or share our mission—every action helps provide comfort, care, and community when families need it most.



A newly completed guest room, ready for a family to call their home.

Raise Love

Sheri T.

I've always loved running road races, there's something special about challenging yourself while being part of a community event. Last November, when I signed up for the Western MA 10, I decided to take it a step further and turn my run into a fundraiser for RMHC CTMA. Setting up a fundraising page through the Raise Love site was surprisingly simple. Within minutes, I had a personalized page with links I could share through social media, email, and text. The platform handles donations securely, and I received notifications whenever someone contributed, making it easy to send personal thank you messages.

What I didn't expect was how fundraising would impact my training. Knowing that friends and family had invested in my race gave me extra motivation to push harder and aim for my best time. Their support meant something beyond the finish line.

If you're looking for ways to expand your support of Ronald McDonald House, I can't recommend Raise Love enough. You can find it on www.rmhc-ctma.org, under "Donate," then "Host a Fundraiser." Whether you're running a race, celebrating a birthday, or marking any special occasion, it's a meaningful way to make your moment matter for families who need it most.



Sheri with her medal after a successful road race.

Shane T. and Lace Up For Kids

Lace Up For Kids is a teen-run nonprofit I founded as a Teen Board member of RMH New Haven. I had the idea of bringing fundraising efforts and awareness of the House to my hometown of Guilford, CT.

We started with the simple notion of collecting and recycling gently used sneakers to raise funds. What began as a grassroots effort with sneaker collection bins around town, quickly grew as we looked for ways to increase our impact. We soon added online fundraising to our sneaker recycling efforts in order to expand our reach to the network of team members involved with Lace Up For Kids. Through our dedicated team members and their personal networks, donors near and far could easily contribute.



Shane and the local Lace Up For Kids members

This combined approach of online fundraising, in-person drives, and sneaker collecting has already raised over \$3,000 in just two months! We are thrilled with the amplification that online fundraising brought to our ability to support families.



Raise Awareness, Raise Funds, Raise Love!

For RMHC CTMA Families!

You can host a fundraiser, event, or even a challenge for your friends and family to raise money —all to support RMHC CTMA families!

Visit our website to learn more and make a difference for families today!



Helping from the Heart

Linda B.

I was searching online for volunteer opportunities that would allow me to interact with people and where I felt like I would make a difference. The Ronald McDonald Family Room seemed like the perfect fit.

Having a child in the hospital is very stressful. I help maintain a room that allows parents and caregivers to take a moment for themselves; they can grab something to eat or drink and even sit and enjoy the massage chair if they would like.

I ensure the room is clean, sandwiches are made fresh daily, and snacks and drinks are stocked. I offer an ear to any parent who just needs to talk, or just a quiet space for them to rest. I have heard first hand from parents how much they appreciate having this room available to them and for me, it makes it all worthwhile. We are all working towards the same goal- helping parents and caregivers during challenging times.



June L.

My friends and family have been long-time supporters of the House and its wonderful services and my husband, Larry, has been a major contributor, fundraiser, and advocate of the House's mission, which has inspired me to volunteer my time whenever possible.

Ronald McDonald House is truly a village of kind and passionate people that keep the House operating 24/7, every day of the year. The staff are committed to making families feel comfortable, cared for, and supported. Being able to connect in-person with families and provide an ear for them to share their stories is heartwarming and priceless. At the end of the day, it is all about human compassion and connection, which the House brings to life through their daily support for families in need!

Over the last several months, I have been volunteering my time helping with Bites-on-the-Go, a newer program established last year that provides quick and easy snacks, and one less thing for families to worry about during their day. In March, I will be supporting my husband as he co-chairs the 15th annual Dancing Under the Stars!



Frank S.

I knew about RMH from commercials growing up and when I worked at McDonald's through college. Then I became part of and led the volunteer activities for my former company, and the rest is history. The energy everyone brings is infectious and makes me look forward to doing whatever I can to help. It is a team effort and has allowed me to meet truly amazing people in terms of the staff, other volunteers, and families.

I volunteered at Trees of Hope in 2010 and continue to this day. I love a good challenge of fitting a 10-foot tree and all its prizes into a Toyota Prius without the hatch opening up! Since then, I have branched out to assist in the annual golf tournaments and most recently the Bites-on the-Go program at the House.

Volunteering allows me to be a part of a team that does amazing things for the families. Knowing that I can provide some small measure of normalcy and comfort to the families when their worlds are turned upside down, and maybe bring a smile to their faces, makes it all worthwhile.



To become a volunteer, call 203.777.5683 for New Haven and 413.271.5683 for Springfield!



**Ronald McDonald
House Charities®**
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

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www.rmhc-ctma.org

New Look, New Name, Same Mission



In keeping with the Ronald McDonald House global organization,
our Chapter is excited to be launching our new brand identity on May 20th.

Look for our new name and logo but please know, our mission has stayed the same: to provide essential services that remove barriers, strengthen families, and promote healing when children need healthcare.

Ronald McDonald House Connecticut & Western Massachusetts
Ronald McDonald House: New Haven, Ronald McDonald House: Springfield
Ronald McDonald House Family Room: Baystate Children's Hospital

Beginning in May, connect with us at [ronaldmcdonaldhousectma](https://www.facebook.com/ronaldmcdonaldhousectma) on our social channels
and online at www.ronaldmcdonaldhousectma.org.