

HEARTBEAT

A Publication of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Metro St. Louis, Inc.

Spring 2005

This time of year, many people may complain about the unpredictable weather outside -- but not baby Maisy Christensen and her family.

Just a few weeks ago, five-month old Maisy went outside for the very first time in her young life.

Maisy, whose parents are guests at the West Pine Apartments, was born October 8th, 2004, with a heart defect that required surgery. She was flown to St. Louis Children's Hospital, and had her surgery two weeks later. The Christensen's came to stay at the Ronald McDonald House on West Pine on October 11th.

After surgery, Maisy developed complications and a serious blood infection that forced doctors to place her on a ventilator to help her breathe. By the time Maisy was just fifteen weeks old, she had been in the operating room ten times for various procedures and surgeries.

Maisy's mother, Somer, became a fixture at the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), intent on helping with all aspects of Maisy's care. Dad Evan Christensen

Baby Maisy's Day Out



Five-month old Maisy Christensen enjoys the great outdoors and a little fresh air for the very first time, with her mom, Somer.

traveled back and forth from the Christensen's home in Joplin, Missouri, where he continued to work at his job, as well as to care for the couple's other children, Sadie, age four, and Ella, age two. Both Somer's mother, Gayla, and Evan's mom, Christie, were on hand to provide help in every way possible, spending months at a time with the family.

Grandma Gayla even took up a new hobby. Unimpressed by the plain "onesies" her granddaughter and other babies in the PICU were wearing, Gayla began making personalized t-shirts for Maisy and the other babies to wear while they were receiving treatment. "We're so grateful to our mothers and

(continued on page 7)



RMHC Launches Improved Website

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Metro St. Louis, Inc. announces the completion of our newly redesigned website, WWW.RMHCSTL.COM.

Launched February 14th, the new site provides our friends and donors the opportunity to make donations online with secure

encryption technology. You can now make your memorial and tribute donations, sponsor a family, or purchase a laser-engraved brick, all with the simple click of your mouse.

In addition, you can fill out a volunteer application, join our "Friends of Ronald" volunteer organization and register for

(continued on page 3)

Inside

Volunteers	5
Wish List	5
Heartbits	6
Event Calendar	8
Gifts From the Heart	Insert

FROM JOHN....

This is my last column as President of the Board. I have mixed emotions about finishing my two year term. I won't miss the many early morning meetings, and am glad to have more time for family, friends and fulfilling responsibilities at work. However, I will miss my regular contact with Dan, Lee and Lisa, the rooms full of smart, dedicated Board members and other volunteers at those early morning meetings, the letters I received from families telling me how the House helped save their child's life and preserve their sanity during their time of need, and the volunteers that regularly looked me in the eyes and told me how sincerely grateful they were for the opportunity to serve the House. It will always be a source of great pride for me to have served as the President of the Board of this outstanding organization. I want to again thank my good friend and predecessor, Jim Finger, for introducing me to the House many years ago. I have enjoyed my years of service, and cherish the many new friendships I have developed. I also want to thank Dan, Lee, Lisa and the other members of the Staff for all of their hard work and support during my tenure as President.



As I turn the reins over to my successor, Michael Long, I do so knowing that under his leadership, the House will continue to succeed. I look forward to contributing to this success during my final years as a Board Member.

John Riffle

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John Meara	Jimmy Williams

Growing, Growing, Growing....

- ♥ 1981 – FIRST RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE IN ST. LOUIS 8 ROOMS
- ♥ 1984 – SIX NEW ROOMS ADDED 14 ROOMS
- ♥ 1989 – SIX MORE ROOMS ADDED 20 ROOMS
- ♥ 1996 – SECOND HOUSE OPENS -- ELEVEN ROOMS ADDED 31 ROOMS
- ♥ 2003 – W. PINE APARTMENTS OPEN -- EIGHT ROOMS ADDED 39 ROOMS
- ♥ 2005 – FAMILY ROOMS TO OPEN AT ST. JOHN'S MERCY AND CARDINAL GLENNON
- ♥ 2006 – FAMILY ROOM TO OPEN AT ST. LOUIS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



“Thanks so much for keeping
 our family together”

-- The Eisenhower Family
 Iuka, IL

KSHE Rocks for the Ronald McDonald House

Fans of KSHE Radio and the Ronald McDonald House had a chance to “rock the House” on Friday, March 4th, when KSHE held its second annual Request-a-thon to benefit RMHC.

Listeners could request a song in exchange for a donation to the House. In addition, KSHE auctioned off some incredible items on their website.

Staff and volunteers of RMHC, along with Ronald himself, were on hand to help the DJ's keep up with the song requests from 9 a.m. to Midnight.

All total, this event raised over \$12,000!

Thanks to KSHE fans for all you do to help the “House that love built.”



Volunteer Rachel Eilbott takes a break with Ronald between song requests at K-SHE's Request-a-thon

They Shared the Love!



When it comes to giving a “Little Love,” nobody beats the folks at the McDonald’s in Vandalia, Illinois.

Led by a crackerjack team of owner/operator Marty Davis and his two star lieutenants, John and Marlene Hooper, they raised \$9,800 for the Ronald McDonald House.

The team, which included all of the crew members and managers, asked friends throughout the community to pledge their support by purchasing a pink (\$1), red (\$5), gold (\$10) or special (\$25-\$100) heart -- and buy they did, filling the

restaurant with wall-to-wall cut-out hearts.

The Give-A-Little-Love promotion is an annual Valentine fundraiser for the House, sponsored by McDonald’s Restaurants and Coca-Cola.

Vandalia featured signs at the register that indicated that they would offer a free dessert if a crew member failed to ask a customer if they wanted to purchase a heart. In over two weeks, not one free dessert was owed, as the staff asked one hundred percent of customers to help.

Vandalia McDonald’s...we’re loving them!

....TO MIKE

To be the new Chairman of the Ronald McDonald House Charities Board of Directors is a challenging prospect. The growth and



accomplishments realized by the House during John Riffle’s term inspires all of us to continue to work to provide the best possible experience for the families that we serve.

At our December Board meeting we honored three members of our Board who retired after serving for six years: John Dubis, Teesha Hernandez and Todd Sklamberg. Each made a significant contribution to the success of the House and all will be missed. We also welcomed to the Board Velinda Block, Larry Carrico, Mike Murphy, David Ott and Karen Rewerts, all of whom are dedicated and committed to furthering our mission.

This year we will take on a new challenge. We will open two Ronald McDonald Family Rooms, one at St. John’s Mercy Medical Center and one at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital. For the first time we will be able to serve families from the St. Louis community by offering an oasis in the hospital; complete with a laundry, a small kitchen and shower facilities, to ease the strain of long days of caring for ill children. We are able to do this because of the help of our capable staff, an involved Board of Directors, a supportive group of local McDonald’s owners/operators and a growing group of dedicated volunteers, all of whom are always willing to give of their time, money and care to support the very special families who count on the House to be there for them in their time of need.

The future is exciting; I look forward to working with all of you as you as together we meet the daily challenge to better meet the needs of our families. Thanks to all of you who have established the wonderful history and tradition which we intend to enrich by meeting new challenges and extending the good work we do.

*Michael E. Long
Chairman of the Board, RMHC*

**Ronald McDonald House Charities
of Metro St. Louis, Inc.**

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Website, cont’d from page one

certain special events. We’ve added more photos and information about our programs and the services we offer, and about all of our special friends who help keep our Houses a “home-away-from-home” for those families of seriously ill children being treated at hospitals in St. Louis.

On the site, you’ll get the latest info on our special events, and even the opportunity to meet some of the “special heroes” of the House.

While you’re browsing the site, be sure and sign up for our brand new e-newsletter, “House Happenings,” delivered straight to your inbox.

“House Happenings” is just one more way we here at Ronald McDonald House Charities are trying to keep you, our friends and donors, up to date with all that’s going on in our Organization.

We encourage you to visit our site today!

Winning On and Off the Court



SIU Carbondale Basketball Coach Chris Lowery and his wife Erika, pictured here recounting their stay at RMH, at the taping of RMHC's new informational video.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Basketball Coach Chris Lowery knows a little something about success on the basketball court. But his winning attitude goes far beyond the realm of sports.

Lowery and his wife Erica found themselves in the fight of their lives in July of 2001, when their son, Kahari, was born almost three months premature.

Diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Kahari underwent numerous surgeries to relieve swelling on his brain.

At age 3, Kahari was scheduled to under-

go shunt revision surgery at St. Louis Children's Hospital. The Lowery's, who already had one son, C.J., were expecting another child when they came to stay at the Ronald McDonald House on West Pine.

"Anything you asked, (the staff and volunteers) would get it for you," Erika says.

Kahari, who, along with big brother C.J. and his parents, is now back at home and doing well, welcomed a baby sister, Jazmyn, not long after his stay at the RMH.

Best of luck to this wonderful family!

IN LOVING MEMORY

The Ronald McDonald House extends its deepest sympathy to the families of these very special angels:

Nathane Oliver
Bailey Johnson
Marcellous Gant
Gabrielle Wallace
Anthony Edwards
Kadean Lee
David McNicholas
Jake Varnell
Bryce Ferro
Robert Southwell
Micheal Barton
Cody Ring
Joshua Koepke

“ Great facility....

Many thanks to the organizations who provide meals ...

Thanks for everything you do! ”

The Lupacchino

Family

Sparta, WI

Extra Special Wish List

Van
Car (new)
Caterings for meetings
Exercise equipment
(nothing older than 2 yrs. old)
Carpeting (new)
Flooring for kitchen (new)
Furniture for two living rooms
(purple/pink--new)
Couch (new)
Family room furniture (new)
Three furnaces
Dishwasher
Playground w/rubberized mat
and fencing
3- Tub liners

Tab Top Winners Recognized

Winners of RMHC's 2004 "Tab Top Pandemonium" were recognized Saturday, February 26th, with an award ceremony held at the Ronald McDonald House on Park Avenue.

The President of Cash's Scrap Metal and Iron, Stuart Block, and his wife, Maria, were present for the event, and also provided four Cardinals baseball box seats for the top winners present.

Awards were given to the top three tab top collectors in three categories -- individuals, groups, and organizations.



The money raised from the recycling of tab tops in 2004 was over \$13,000.

A very heartfelt thanks from RMHC to all of you collectors, as well as to our very good friends from Cash's Scrap Metal and Recycling. See you at next year's pandemonium!

Volunteer Spotlight



When a family arrives for a stay at the Ronald McDonald House, it's because they have traveled here seeking medical treatment for their child. In doing so, these families are often forced to leave their family and friends back at home. This separation affects more than just parents and the patients, it affects siblings, too.

Brandon McVey is the older brother of one of our patients staying here at the Ronald McDonald House. Fifteen-years old, Brandon moved from Kansas to be with his family. After settling in at RMH, Brandon found that he had a lot of extra time on his hands, and he soon asked about "helping out" around the House. With the support of his family, we quickly filled Brandon's time!

He now volunteers two days a week at our West Pine location. Brandon has become a handyman apprentice to three other volunteers who do repairs around the House as well as assisting our inventory and supplies volunteer. Brandon has become such an asset to the House; he has filled in when volunteers are unable to show up, and is always willing to lend a helping hand. Brandon has shown much responsibility and maturity. As much as his mom says he loves to help, we love having him more.

Thanks Brandon!

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are the key to the sustainability and future growth of Ronald McDonald House Charities. For this reason, we are always looking for new volunteers to add to our team. Because everyone's time is valuable and schedules are busy, we offer opportunities to accommodate all who want to give.

HOUSE VOLUNTEERS:

House volunteers are able to devote their time weekly or bi-weekly as well as on a substitute basis. When families come to the Ronald McDonald House, some of the first faces they see are those of our volunteers. There are many ways in which volunteers take care of the everyday ins and outs of the Houses. Some deal one-on-one with the families: checking them in, showing them around and making them feel at ease. Others maintain the bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens and living areas to sustain the "home-away-from-home" feel that is so important to the families that stay with us. There are also others who assist staff with special needs as they arise. All of these contributions show the dedication and caring that are

inherent in our volunteers.

SPECIAL EVENT VOLUNTEERS:

Our special event volunteers may not have as much time to give on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Ronald McDonald House Charities holds several special events throughout the year. This allows those with less free time the chance to participate in one or all of our events when they occur. From golf tournaments to auctions, our special event volunteers are behind the scenes making everything run smoothly. These events are very important to our organization, and our special event volunteers are essential to their success.

We have other volunteer opportunities as well, so please contact us if you are interested.

For more information on how you can become a volunteer, please call (314)531-6601, ext. 250, or visit our website at WWW.RMHCSTL.COM.

Wish List

Memberships To Area Attractions, Zoo, City Museum or Science Center
Movie Theatre Passes
Sony PS2 Games (age appropriate)
Special Events Tickets (concerts or shows)
Sporting Events Tickets
VCR Tapes (newer releases)

KITCHENS: PER MONTH

Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil/Plastic Wrap
Cereal
Canned Goods
Fresh Fruit
Cases-Snacks-All Kinds (brownies, cookies, trail mix, chips)
Trash Bags (kitchen waste cans)
Zip-Loc® Bags (sandwich, quart, gallon)

LAUNDRY FACILITIES: PER MONTH

Detergent
Fabric Softener sheets
Laundry baskets (rectangle)
Liquid Bleach

CLEANING SUPPLIES: PER MONTH

Glass Cleaner
Dish detergent
Furniture Polish
Swiffer Refills and Pads
Air Fresheners
Febreze
Liquid Hand Soap in the pump
Hotel size tolietry items
Bathroom Cleaner
Liquid Abrasive cleaner (Soft Scrub)

BEDROOM ITEMS:

Alarm Clocks w/Radios
Flashlights
Baby Crib Sheets
Baby Blankets

MISCELLANEOUS:

Digital Camera
Polaroid Camera
Polaroid Film
Phone Cards to give out to families

OFFICE SUPPLIES: PER MONTH

Copier Paper 8.5 x 11
Colored Copier Paper 8.5 x 11
2-Heavy Duty Shredders with can attached
Paper Clips (Small and Medium)
Binder Clips
Masking Tape
Avery 5160 Labels

OFFICE EQUIPMENT:

Color Copier
Large Shredder
Laser Printer

TEEN ROOM:

3-Play Station 2
PS2 Controllers (12 total)
DVD player
Teen Board Games

HEARTBITS.....

PLEASE UNDERSTAND! We apologize, but it would be next to impossible for us to list all of the wonderful acts of kindness and generosity shown to the Ronald McDonald House. Please know that the families, volunteers and staff at the RMH are very appreciative of your incredible friendship and support.

Relatives and friends of **ALEX RUSSELL** collected 27,000 pennies and donated them to the Ronald McDonald House. Alex had a liver transplant in August of 1997 and his family stayed at the RMH. We are pleased to report that Alex is doing great!

Last fall the divisions of **ARAMARK** joined to work two St. Louis Cardinal Baseball games and donated the money to the Ronald McDonald House. They had lots of fun while doing something great for RMH families.



Thanks to the fundraising efforts of **JOE LAPINSKI**, (pictured above) the residents of Herrin, Illinois donated enough money for four washers and four dryers and a dishwasher for the RMH! Joe (PaPa) is the grandfather of Jarret Coleman, whose family stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in December. Thanks also to Maytag and Helleny's Furniture of Herrin, IL and to Joe's friends who helped deliver the appliances. We are most appreciative!

Once again our friends in **KEHRS MILL ESTATES**, led by Katie and Steve Reed, held a Luminaria Fundraiser on our behalf.

Over \$2,800 was raised! You certainly helped light up the lives of our families!

In 2003, **STAMPIN' UP** became a national sponsor of Ronald McDonald House Charities. In addition to tremendous financial support, they also donate cards created specifically for use by our families. Thank to all for helping to provide a fun creative outlet!



The Biochemical Pharmacology group from **PFIZER GLOBAL RESEARCH** in Chesterfield, MO (pictured above) presented a check for \$2000 to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Metro St. Louis.

The **U.S. SUBMARINE VETERANS** of World War II stopped by the West Pine Ronald McDonald House to bring in the tab tops collected by their group. While at the House, several made personal donations, one in memory of the 52 Submarine Crews lost in World War II. Thanks for your support of Ronald McDonald House and your service to our country.

Coldwell Banker Gundaker Auction

A wonderful time was had by all at the 19th Annual Coldwell Banker Gundaker Dinner Auction on November 6th, 2004. Held at the Executive Beechcraft Hangar at Spirit of



Photo courtesy Blacktie.com

St. Louis Airport, the theme of the evening was "A Night at the Oscars," and was emceed by Mark Klose of KHITS-



Photo courtesy Blacktie.com

FM. Guests strolled down the "red carpet" and enjoyed an evening of fine food, wonderful music, and the opportunity to bid on some amazing auction items.

This event raised over \$135,000 for the Ronald McDonald House -- thank you Coldwell Banker Gundaker!

The following children staying at the Ronald McDonald House have received transplants since the last newsletter:

- Charles Kiefer
- Adison Creason
- Tucker Anderson
- Ashley Hood
- Britney Cooper

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun!

Ladies--do a little something for yourself and do a lot for RMHC

- ★ The "Friends of Ronald" invite all ladies 21 and over to join the fun at the **St. Louis Marriott West**
- ★ 600 Maryville Centre Drive
- ★ **Friday, April 29, 2005**
- ★ 7p.m. to 11p.m.

Enjoy cocktails, hor d'oeuvres, and music from the Joe Taylor Band, then pamper yourself with mini-manicures, chair massages, psychic readings, shopping, image consulting, workout demos and much, much more!

Tickets are just \$60 each, and only \$30 for ladies ages 21-29!
 For more information, contact Kathy Naughton, 314-773-1100, ext. 416,
 or purchase your tickets online at WWW.RMHCSTL.COM

RMHC Welcomes New Staff



From left to right: seated, Volunteer Coordinator Alison Kaspar; House Manager Amanda McCrady, Ronald McDonald, and, standing, Development Coordinator, Kathy Naughton

If you've visited any of our Houses lately, you may have noticed some new faces. Amanda McCrady joins the West Pine Staff as House Manager, filling the post left by our Jen Stephens, who has become the new RMHC Director of Family Rooms. Alison Kaspar has taken on the position of Volunteer Coordinator, and Kathy Naughton is RMHC's new Development Coordinator; both work out of our Park Avenue House. Be sure to give each of them a warm welcome the next time you're at the Houses!

House Homework

How thoroughly did you read this issue of Heartbeat? The answers to all of the questions below can be found on these pages. Good Luck!

What is RMHC's web address?

In what year did the second Ronald McDonald House open?

What sport does Chris Lowery coach?

What organization became a national sponsor of RMHC in 2003?

What is the name of our new House Manager?

Where is the Christensen family from?

Who is the Vice-Chairperson of RMHC?

Maisy, cont'd from page 1

their sacrifice to help us," wrote Evan in his regular e-mail updates to friends and loved ones.



Shortly before Christmas, the Christensen's moved into one of the apartments at the House on West Pine, where they were able to accommodate Sadie and Ella for overnight visits. The privacy and comfort of the apartments provided so much needed family togetherness. "It's the most normal we've felt in eleven weeks," Evan wrote.

Sadie and Ella have adjusted to their "home-away-from home" very quickly.

"Sadie asked why every time we go to get the mail they get a beanie baby. She thought someone was mailing them to us," says Somer. "I told her that the Ronald McDonald House just loved them, because they were so strong for letting their Mommy take care of Maisy."

Christmas came and went, with Maisy still fighting to overcome the obstacles she faced. Despite the ups and downs, Maisy's family has remained optimistic.



That's why, on a spring-like day in early March, there were smiles all around when Maisy ventured outdoors. Maisy, in a



wagon with an oxygen tank and med pump, along with two nurses, a respiratory therapist and Somer, seemed to understand that this trip was special.

"Everyone was so happy to see her go for a fun walk instead of an O.R. walk," writes Somer.

Our love and support go out to Maisy and her beautiful family. May you enjoy more sunny days ahead!

Calendar of Events 2005

Volunteer Appreciation Night Wednesday, April 20th

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun 2005 Friday, April 29th
Marriott West

CTMT Dinner Auction & Golf Tournament Sunday, June 12th
Monday, June 13th
Forest Hills Country Club

HealthLink Sporting Clays Dinner Auction & Tournament Friday, July 22nd
Saturday, July 23rd
A.G. Edwards and Nilo Farms

McDonald's Scramble for Charity Friday, September 23rd
The Landings at Spirit

Friends of Ronald Membership Luncheon Friday, October 21st
TBD



RMHC President Dan Harbaugh and St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay, pictured at the cocktail reception for major donors and supporters of the Ronald McDonald House, held March 1, 2005, at the A.G. Edwards Training Center.



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE
4381 WEST PINE
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63108
WWW.RMHCSTL.COM

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CHECK IF APPROPRIATE:

- My name is misspelled
- My address is incorrect
- I received more than one copy
- I no longer wish to receive Heartbeat

Please clip your label and mail it to us, noting your request.