

# House Matters

Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Illinois



GWRRA participants at the first event in 1985.



GWRRA participants arriving at RMHCCI in 2006.

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## Gold Wings Riders Support RMHCCI for 28 Years

Before the Ronald McDonald House opened in 1986, another group of individuals was working to charter a new chapter of the Gold Wing Road Rider Association (GWRRA, a social organization for owners and riders of Honda Gold Wing/Valkyrie motorcycles) to be called Chapter D. Part of the process to charter Chapter D was to begin a community service project. GWRRA members contacted RMHCCI in 1985 about their interest in helping the kids and families staying at the Ronald McDonald House, and a partnership was formed that has lasted 28 years!

Chapter D's project initially began as a toy run with GWRRA members from multiple chapters coming together to donate toys to the Ronald McDonald House and area hospitals. Now the ride primarily focuses on collecting wish list items along with pop tabs and monetary donations for RMHCCI. Each autumn, members collect donations while making several stops along the way at McDonald's restaurants in central Illinois. The last stop is at a McDonald's in Springfield where the riders gather together before delivering their donations to the Ronald McDonald House.

Several people have helmed the event through Chapter D since 1985: Butch Brann, Tim & Sharon Hoge, John & Dee Graber, Kenny Downs, and then John & Dee Graber again. The Grabers are the current organizers of the event and volunteered to lead it after attending for the first time in 1999. Dee says, "We continue this event every year because we love the House. We've gotten to know over the years how many families have been helped. It's not a certain type of family—it's all families. The parents of these children have enough on their minds, and it eases their minds to be close to their children."



GWRRA participants at McDonald's during the 20th Ride in 2005.

In early 2013, Chapter D disbanded after membership declined. In the late 1980s, over 300 GWRRA members attended the event each year to support RMHCCI and socialize. Today approximately 175 GWRRA members attend the Gold Wing Ride. Dee shares, "Many older riders have passed away, and with the economy not a lot of people are buying luxury bikes. After deciding to close Chapter D, we immediately knew we wanted to give everything left in the chapter accounts to the House. Chapter D started and ended with the House."

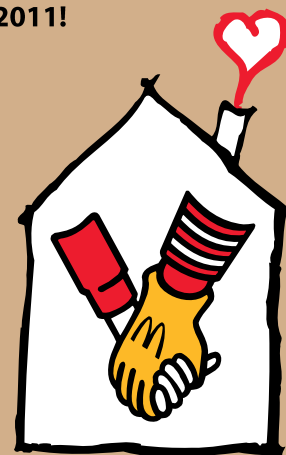
According to Kelly Thompson, executive director for Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Illinois, "While we are saddened by the closing of Chapter D, we are grateful for their generous donation, and thank all of the organizers and supporters of this event for the past 28 years. We are also happy to be able to announce that John & Dee Graber will continue to organize this event through another GWRRA chapter, Chapter D2 out of Effingham, in 2013! We are already looking forward to celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event in 2015."

*Editor's Note: The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Ride will be held on Sunday, September 22, 2013.*

## Our Impact in 2012

*Strength in Numbers*

- **407 families** were served!
- Average length of stay for families was **11 nights**!
- Families served came from **50 counties in Illinois, 21 other states, & 5 countries**!
- **1,279 volunteers** served for **7,960 hours** — double the number of hours served in 2011!



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## Message from the Executive Director

In November 2012, Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Illinois (RMHCCI) passed **its first ever three-year strategic plan** through our Board of Directors. This plan was developed with assistance from Memorial Health System organizational development representatives as well as a Strategic Planning Committee involving volunteers and staff led by our Board President Karen Jeffers. We truly appreciate the time these individuals dedicated to accomplish this goal. Our three-year plan is an opportunity for growth, and a plan to meet the continued and increased needs of the families and children we serve who are in medical crisis.

As we've grown as a chapter to assist over 400 families a year, we continue to review our charity operations. After carefully detailing our costs to operate the Ronald McDonald House program in 2012, our Finance Committee on the Board of Directors determined that **our average cost to serve a family for one night is now just over \$79**. As a result, this number will be reflected in our printed and online materials. You may remember that for numerous years we have communicated a cost of \$60 per night for a family. We will continue the 'Share A Night' program and invite individuals, groups, and companies to assist us with our charity operations but will now ask you to Share A Night at the \$79 level to accurately reflect our charity's assistance to sick children and their families. Our mission is to serve families each night they stay at our home away from home, and we need your help now more than ever to do so.

We have also recently launched **a major gift program**. We are asking each of you to consider to become a founding member of this giving society. Please visit our website at [www.rmhc-centralillinois.org](http://www.rmhc-centralillinois.org) for details.

Moving forward, 2013 will also be a time of change for our staff at RMHCCI. A long-time employee, Shi Lynn Coleman, will be embarking upon a new journey to attend graduate school at the end of May. She will be greatly missed, and we appreciate her dedicated service at RMHCCI. We also have the addition of one new full-time staff member, Brian Replogle. Some of you may have met Brian over the past year while he worked for us part-time. Effective June 2013, Brian has been promoted to our Volunteer & Charity Operations Coordinator, and will be managing volunteer and recycling programs. Finally, we will also be moving to third shift coverage at night by year's end, helping to increase the safety and security of our guests, while at the same time providing more efficient mission to our charity operations.

This is an exciting year as we continue to seek new and more effective ways to expand RMHCCI. We truly appreciate your support of the families and children we serve, and couldn't do it without each and every one of you!

With warm regards,

*Kelly A. Thompson*

P.S. If you haven't been over to the House lately, be sure to stop by & see the major facelift to our landscaping, thanks to the generous donation from Dave Pence (pictured here with me) and the team at **Green View Companies!**



### Board of Directors

#### Executive Committee

**Karen Jeffers**, President  
McDonald's Owner/Operator

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Brown, Hay & Stephens, LLP

**Megan Mitchell**, Treasurer  
Memorial Health System

**Evan Westlake**, Vice Treasurer  
Illinois National Bank

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**Aruna Mathur**  
Asian Indian Women's Organization

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Springfield

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**Cheri Plummer**  
Lee O'Keefe Insurance

**Rob Robinson**  
Busey Bank

**Rick Roth**  
Southwest Airlines

**Jeremy Ruppel**  
Niemann Foods

### House Staff & Contact Information

#### Full-Time Staff

**Kelly Thompson**, Executive Director  
217-528-3314 x145  
kthompson@rmhc-centralillinois.org

**Margaret Pike**, House Manager  
217-528-3314 x146  
mpike@rmhc-centralillinois.org

**Megan Mueller**, Development  
& Communications Coordinator  
217-528-3314 x148  
mmueller@rmhc-centralillinois.org

**Brian Replogle**, Volunteer & Charity  
Operations Coordinator  
217-528-3314 x147  
br@rmhc-centralillinois.org

#### Part-Time Staff

**Carol Walls**, Housekeeper

**Dennis Woolsey**, Maintenance

Overnight/Weekend Relief Managers:

**Sherri Howard**  
**Martha Goodwin**  
**Nell Collins**  
**Julie Spier**  
**Charlotte Gallagher**  
**Menelle Pickett**



#### Special Thanks

to **Shi Lynn Coleman**, who has served as Resident Manager at RMHCCI for the past 5 years! Shi Lynn is departing RMHCCI & completing a Master's degree in Public Administration & Non-profit Management Certification. **Thank you for your service & best wishes Shi Lynn!**



## Welcome to RMHCCI 'Ronnie'!

The twenty-three members of the Asian Indian Women's Organization (AIWO) hosted the 8th India Night on September 21, 2012, and **\$50,011** was raised for Ronald McDonald House!!

A portion of the proceeds from the 8th India Night were used for a Ford Transit Connect Wagon, or 'Ronnie' as RMHCCI House Staff affectionately coined the vehicle. The van has become an asset to RMHCCI, and is used by staff for errands such as picking up a weekly milk donation, for fundraising events, meetings, fairs, and presentations in central Illinois.

Thank you to the members of AIWO & supporters of the 8th India Night!!



Members of AIWO



'Ronnie' in front of RMHCCI

# Volunteer Spotlights

## Rita, Guest Services Volunteer



I started volunteering at RMHCCI in February of 2012. There were two reasons I decided the time was right to give back. The first is that a few years ago, my husband underwent a liver transplant and our family, friends, and community were very supportive and giving to us—it was inspiring! The second reason was having a milestone birthday. My birthday goal was to find more ways to show how grateful I am for things I appreciate, like the health of my family. I don't take that for

granted, and if I can help ease some of the stress families at RMHCCI are going through, it's all more than worth it!

I volunteer once a week for a few hours, and really enjoy being a Guest Services Volunteer. I've made some great friends here! I'm proud to be a part of providing families with a home away from home during a crisis in their lives. I also appreciate my husband and son understanding my desire to volunteer, and supporting me so I can help others.

## Samantha, Special Projects Volunteer



I began volunteering at RMHCCI in early 2013. I'm involved in athletics at the University of Illinois at Springfield, and decided to volunteer here after hearing such good things about RMHCCI from teammates who had volunteered at the House. I visited RMHCCI and enjoyed the atmosphere—everyone is so kind!

I have learned it takes a lot to keep RMHCCI up and running. I took an accounting course on government and nonprofit accounting regulations. Being able to relate that class with volunteering here helps me to understand more about the fundraising and donations that are so important to functions around the House.

RMHCCI is such a family-oriented place. The staff members and volunteers really get to know each other and the guests. I've never felt so welcomed in a new place, and I am so grateful for my experience and look forward to other opportunities to assist at RMHCCI!

# How can you help Ronald McDonald House Charities®

Donations can be dropped off at RMHCCI, 610 N. 7th Street, Springfield, IL from 8am—8pm daily!  
Please visit our website at [www.rmhc-centralillinois.org](http://www.rmhc-centralillinois.org) for more information on these opportunities to help!  
Call 217-528-3314 with questions!

## Contribute

**RMHCCI Events**—see page 6 for more information

### Giving

- A donation to RMHCCI in memory of or in honor of someone is a wonderful way to support the families we serve while acknowledging the loss of a loved one, or recognizing a special occasion.
- Share A Night: sponsor a one night stay for a family through a \$79 donation.

### Corporate Giving

- Event Sponsorships: see page 6 for more information.
- Matching Gifts: Many companies match gifts made by employees—ask your employer if you have a charity donation match program.
- Auto-withdraw donations: Donations can be made each paycheck through workplace giving programs. RMHCCI is a member of Community Health Charities & can be selected as a charity designee.
- Jeans/Casual Days: Please consider selecting RMHCCI for your program!

### Small Giving—can make a big difference for RMHCCI

- McDonald's donation boxes: visit McDonald's restaurants in central IL to donate your change.
- Newspapers: Purchase USA Today or local newspapers at participating McDonald's locations.
- Coinstar: visit locations in central IL & select RMHCCI as recipient for your change.

### Tix4cause.com

- Tix4cause is a secondary ticket exchange website
  - Purchase Tickets: For sporting events, entertainment, and other events, a portion of ticket purchases can be designated as a donation to RMHCCI.

### Planned Giving

- Planned Giving allows you to incorporate charitable intentions into long-term financial planning.

### Major Gift Program

- This program will be launched in 2013! Please visit our website or call 217-528-3314 x145 if you would like to become a founding member.





# of Central Illinois (RMHCCI)?

## In-Kind Donations

In-Kind Donations: contributions of materials, goods & services. They allow us to provide a home away from home for families!

### Wish List Items—see the back cover

- Amazon.com List

### Recycle! Become an ambassador for recycling & ask your family, friends, school, church, or company to get involved.

- Pop Tabs: Each year, over \$10,000 is raised for RMHCCI through pop tab collections—every pop tab counts!
  - Pop Tab Challenge: RMHCCI hosts an annual contest for schools to collect pop tabs.
- Ink cartridges & old cell phones

### Tix4cause.com

- Donate Tickets: Tickets can be donated to RMHCCI if you can't use them.

### Vehicle Donation

- Donate your car, truck, boat, RV, or farm equipment to RMHCCI—your vehicle doesn't even need to be running in order to donate it—we'll even come pick up your vehicle at no charge. Not only will you be helping RMHCCI, you might have a nice tax deduction rolling your way too!



*Volunteers from Benedictine University in April 2013*

## Donate Time

### Volunteer

**Please call 217-528-3314 x147 for more information**

- Group Opportunities: Guest Chef, Events, & more!
- Individual Opportunities: Guest Services, Guest Chef, Events, & more!

### Fundraise for RMHCCI

**Please call 217-528-3314 x148 for more information**

- Host a Party: Ask guests to bring cash donations or wish list items to support RMHCCI.
- Host a service/product promotion: Designate a day at your business to support RMHCCI.
- Group Give: RMHCCI is launching a new online donating platform in 2013! Participants will be able to customize their own fundraising pages for the House.
- Host a Fundraising Event: Help the House by leading & organizing a fundraising event. Contact us to get started!

### Collect Wish List & Recycling Items

- Groups/Businesses/Individuals: hold wish list & recycling drives for RMHCCI.
  - Collect items for birthdays or in honor of someone!

### Support RMHCCI Online

- Visit our pages & interact with us online!
  - Facebook: [www.facebook.com/rmhcci](http://www.facebook.com/rmhcci)
  - Twitter: @RMHCCI
  - Pinterest: [pinterest.com/rmhcci](http://pinterest.com/rmhcci)
  - YouTube: search for the RMHCCI channel

# 2013 Events benefiting RMHCCI

Please visit our website at [www.rmhc-centralillinois.org](http://www.rmhc-centralillinois.org) for more information on events & how to register!

## Thank you for your support!

Tuesday, June 25, 2013 from 10:30am—8:00pm

### 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic

Piper Glen Golf Club in Springfield, IL

19th Annual Ronald McDonald House  
**GOLF CLASSIC**

## Eagle Sponsors:



## THE GOLD CENTER

3000 West Iles • Springfield, IL 62704  
217-793-8000

Saturday, July 13, 2013 from 6:30am—10:00am

### Women's Distance Festival & Children's Fun Run

Washington Park in Springfield, IL

*Hosted by the Springfield Road Runners Club*



Saturday, July 20, 2013 from 4:00pm—midnight

### Nate Cornell "We Got This" 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fundraiser

The Alamo in Springfield, IL

*Hosted by family & friends of Nate Cornell*

NATE CORNELL  
**"WE GOT THIS"**  
2nd Annual Fundraiser



Monday, September 9, 2013 from 11:00am—9:00pm

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dave Cope Swing for the Love of It Memorial Golf Outing

The Den Golf Course in Bloomington, IL

*Hosted by Peoria/Bloomington McDonald's Owner/Operators*



Saturday, September 14, 2013 from 8:00am—12:00pm

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Brooklynn Cox Memorial 5K Run/Walk

Manner's Park in Taylorville, IL

*Hosted by family & friends of Brooklynn Cox*



Sunday, September 22, 2013 from 12:30pm—3:30pm

### 28th Annual Gold Wing Charity Ride for Ronald McDonald House

RMHCCI in Springfield, IL

*Hosted by Gold Wing Road Rider Association Chapter D2 of Effingham*





# Brooklynn's Story



*Story told by Brooklynn's mom, Brandi.*

I was raised in Taylorville, so the central Illinois community is important to me. After what my family & I experienced with our daughter, we knew we wanted to give back to the Ronald McDonald House.

I went into labor four weeks early in September 2011, and we went to the Carol Jo Vecchie Center in Springfield where I was admitted into labor & delivery. At 11:14 a.m. on Sunday, September 25, 2011, I gave birth to our adorable little girl, Brooklynn Kay Cox. She weighed 6 lbs 14 ounces and looked amazing! The initial exam went great, and everything seemed to be picture perfect despite being four weeks early.

When it was time for Brooklynn to start eating, she wouldn't at all. I then noticed that she was turning a little blue. After a follow up exam, she was taken to the neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) for a few hours to "jump-start" her lungs into doing what they needed to. After about 8 hours in the NICU, the neonatologist informed me that they found a heart murmur and sent for an echocardiogram to rule out a heart disease or defects. When Brooklynn was just 10 hours old, I was given the scariest news of my life: they found that she had a congenital heart defect called TGA (Transposition of the Great Arteries) and that she would need to be transferred immediately to St. Louis Children's Hospital for open heart surgery.

TGA is a heart defect where the heart is unable to pump the oxygenated blood from the lungs to the rest of the body. At the hospital, they performed a heart catheterization in order to allow her blood to "mix" to allow some oxygen to reach throughout her entire body. I was offered a room at the Ronald McDonald House when we arrived in St. Louis. Because Brooklynn's condition was so critical after her surgery, I declined the room because I wasn't ready to leave her side.

Over the next couple of weeks, she battled through severe lung problems. When she was just 8 days old, she underwent an 8 hour open heart surgery. Even though her arteries were comparable in size to angel hair pasta, Brooklynn did great during the surgery. As we were warned, the next few days were VERY rough but she continued to fight through them. I continued to sleep in her room, but the representative from Ronald McDonald House checked in with me daily to see if there was anything more they could do to help. She offered "meal tickets" to help take some of the financial burden of eating 3 meals a day at the hospital off of my shoulders. I also utilized the Ronald McDonald House Family Room that was located at the hospital. I was able to get some snacks and do laundry and be just a short elevator ride away from Brooklynn at any given time. I was just floored that these services were free because of donations by other people. I felt like the Ronald McDonald House was there to care for me and my family since we were so focused on caring for our little girl.

When Brooklynn was 2.5 weeks old, I was told that they discovered that she had an extremely rare genetic defect. It is so rare that it doesn't have a specific name. We were given some information, but since there were only 10 other cases reported in the world, we were going into this completely blind. We were told that there was a strong chance she would have developmental challenges, she would look just a little different than everyone else, she may not be able to hear or see, communication would most likely be difficult, and she may never walk.

This was a very hard reality to face. I had gone from that picture perfect dream of taking her home to her nursery done up in ladybugs to being told

that it may be a long time before she'd be going home. I quickly learned how "trivial" the things I dreamed about were—all that truly mattered to me is that she gets better. All of the other obstacles we would figure out later and conquer them the best that we could. We had some good days...and we had some downright nightmares. There were a few nights that I didn't sleep because they weren't sure if she'd pull through and make it through the night. As scared as I was, I just knew that I had to let her know that I wasn't going anywhere. I was with Brooklynn when she passed away at 32 days old.



I only got 32 days with her...and I'm so glad I could spend that time with her instead of having to leave the hospital to do laundry. The Ronald McDonald House means a HUGE deal to me. It was everything from the snacks on the counters to the laundry detergent, soaps and shampoos for the families. I knew how much of a "life-saver" it was to have help with my meals at the hospital. Ronald McDonald House takes a huge amount of stress off of the family so that the family can focus on helping their sick child get better. The realization of knowing how helpful that was to me, and then knowing that it was all possible because of donations just made it a top priority to give back to an organization that helped me through the hardest month of my life. I wanted to give back to the places that touched our hearts so much through Brooklynn.

Every day is hard to get through without Brooklynn, but it helps me to do something in her honor and focus on helping the organizations that helped us. If she was here, I would be planning her birthday party for September, so what better way to celebrate her birthday than planning a 5K and raising money to give back to those organizations that played such a huge part in her life, so that they are able to help more families just like us?!

My son, Logan, and his best friend have been on "pop tab patrol" since the 5K last September! These boys are just amazing! They have an unbelievable amount of baggies stuffed full of pop tabs and are SO excited to donate them for "Brooklynn's Birthday!"

We are SO excited to be able to hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Brooklynn Kay Cox Memorial 5K Run/Walk again this fall, and hope to see you there!!



*1st Annual Brooklynn Cox Memorial 5K Run/Walk in 2012*



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YouTube: search for the RMHCCI channel

If we need to correct or update your mailing address, or if you know someone who would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Megan at [mmueller@rmhc-centralillinois.org](mailto:mmueller@rmhc-centralillinois.org) or call 217-528-3314 x148. Thank you!

Please visit [www.rmhc-centralillinois.org](http://www.rmhc-centralillinois.org)

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## RMHCCI Wish List

Collect & donate items to Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Illinois (RMHCCI)!

Items can be dropped off daily from 8am to 8pm to the House at 610 N. 7th Street in Springfield, IL.

These donations help us to provide a home away from home to families while their children are seeking medical treatment. We believe our families shouldn't have to worry about anything except caring for their child, so we provide food, toiletries, and other items for our families with the help of donations from the community.

Please call 217-528-3314 if you have questions or would like to hold a wish list drive!!

### Household Needs

AA, AAA, C, & D Batteries  
Clorox/Lysol Wipes  
Converter boxes for televisions  
Dish Cloths  
DVD Players  
Queen Sized Pillows (new)

### Office Supplies

Postage Stamps  
8½ x11 White Paper  
HP Ink #21, #22, #60

### Guest Needs

Bus Passes  
Combs & Brushes  
Travel Sized Hair Product (gel, mousse, hair spray)

### Fun Things for our Guests

Local movie passes  
Local restaurant coupons or giftcards  
Passes for other local activities & events

### Kitchen & Pantry Needs

Aluminum Foil  
Breakfast Items: waffles, breakfast bars, oatmeal, etc.  
Cellophane  
Frozen Pizzas  
Individual Sized Snacks  
Juice/Juice boxes  
Meats for the Freezer  
Microwavable Meals  
Non-stick skillet  
Paper Plates  
Sugar  
Ziploc Bags (all sizes)

\*Gift cards for local grocery stores: Sam's Club, County Market, Shop 'n Save, Walmart, Schnucks, Meijer  
(To purchase items as needed)



### Donate to RMHCCI on Amazon.com!!!

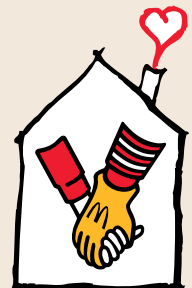
Access our Amazon Wish List through this link:

<http://goo.gl/KgZq9>

Or find it by searching:  
'Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central IL' on Amazon's Wish List registry

### Check online for updates to the Wish List!

We post a Top 10 list & an updated list each month on our website ([www.rmhc-centralillinois.org](http://www.rmhc-centralillinois.org)) & our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/rmhcci](http://www.facebook.com/rmhcci))!



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