The Case for Maryland’s New Ronald McDonald House
“Your child is critically ill.”

Five terrifying words that spark fear in a parent’s heart. It’s a nightmare made worse when they learn their child’s best hope for survival is hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles from home.

In Baltimore, we are truly blessed. Home to six world-renowned pediatric hospitals, our community offers access to some of the most cutting-edge pediatric treatment medicine has to offer. Because of this, each year thousands of children are referred here for life-saving medical care. They come with their families from all over Maryland, the United States and even the world, for the one thing their own communities cannot offer – hope for a future.

Alone and in an unfamiliar city, these families find physical and emotional refuge through Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore. But the numbers who need us far exceed those we can accommodate. For every family we help dozens more are turned away.

After extensive strategic planning, the Board of Directors of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore has determined an urgent and compelling need to build a new Ronald McDonald House to meet the growing demand. The Board is preparing to launch a capital campaign with an estimated need of $25 million that will drive The House That Love Built, ensuring Baltimore continues offering not only the best pediatric care, but the most effective and compassionate family-centered care in the world.

Background

There is no denying the critical role family plays in the healing of a child. Research shows that children thrive on positive energy from parents, relying on their love and strength to help them manage what is often debilitating pain and suffering. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “The health and well-being of children are inextricably linked to their parents’ physical, emotional and social health, social circumstances, and child-rearing practices.” While doctors and nurses are busy caring for the child, who is caring for the emotionally drained family?
Fortunately, for those families who find themselves in our community facing unimaginable circumstances there is Ronald McDonald House. Since 1982, Baltimore’s Ronald McDonald House has been a home away from home for more than 36,000 families and their seriously ill children. Not only do we offer families a safe place to live during their child’s medical treatment, but we also provide proven programming that revives the spirit and builds emotional strength that allows parents to focus on their child’s recovery.

In addition to the basic amenities one might find at a hotel, Ronald McDonald House provides indoor and outdoor play areas, laundry facilities, computers and Wi-Fi. Staff and volunteers provide home-cooked meals, organized recreational activities, and support groups that enhance the atmosphere of love and hope.

Families are asked to donate up to $15 a night when they stay at Ronald McDonald House, but no family is ever turned away because of an inability to pay. The average room rate paid in 2013 was $7.94 per night and the average length of stay for a family was eight nights, but some stay much longer.

Increased Need

As the only Ronald McDonald House in Maryland, we are an extension of care for six hospitals: University of Maryland Medical Center; R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center; Johns Hopkins Hospital; The Rubin Institute at Sinai Hospital; Kennedy Krieger Institute and Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital.

Hospital staff members consider us a trusted partner, referring with confidence children and families facing the most complicated medical diagnoses. While we are often praised by hospital staff for offering a therapeutic environment that promotes high-quality patient outcomes, we also share their frustration when we are forced to turn away their patients due to a lack of space.

Every night, 365 days a year, 36 families call Ronald McDonald House home. There is always a waiting list. Most recently it has been as high as 35 families a night who had to be given the heartbreaking news that we had no rooms available. In 2013, 1,473 families relied on Ronald McDonald House for help during their child’s medical treatment in Baltimore, for a total of 13,140 nights.

Commitment

“Our Strategic Plan is guided by our Vision to accommodate and help every family that needs the services of our House.”

Chuck Langmead
Board Chairman, 2014
Unfortunately, over 550 additional families who needed our comfort and care were forced to **either cancel or postpone their child’s treatment** or find other accommodations, which are always more expensive and lack the evidenced-based practices offered by Ronald McDonald House.

Additionally, as medical care advances, many children are well enough to be discharged, but not yet well enough to travel far from the hospital. Treatment plans for a variety of conditions, especially oncology and organ transplant, require patients to return daily to the hospital for additional care and monitoring. These families require specially appointed rooms to meet the child’s medical needs, which can be difficult to accommodate in our current facility with only two long-term suites.

In recent years, Baltimore has seen the opening of a brand new pediatric hospital as well as significant growth in several others. The Board of Directors of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore has also learned that at least two more hospitals have approved plans for expansion. As a trusted partner for all of these hospitals, last year alone we served families from 44 states, including Alaska and Hawaii, and 13 international countries. These numbers are expected to increase along with the proficiency and capacity of our partner children’s hospitals.

Baltimore’s reputation for highly specialized and effective pediatric care is a source of pride for our community, but it is also leading to a dramatic increase in the need for the programs and services offered by Ronald McDonald House. Despite our best efforts, demand for services already outpaces the resources of our current house. This is why we must take action now. Our families need us and we need your help.

**The Solution**

Over the past several years, under the passionate leadership of the Board of Directors, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore has engaged in a series of community needs assessments that solicited input, feedback and guidance from partner hospitals, community leaders, children and family members, and key staff and volunteers. The process inspired a five-year plan to rally Baltimore around a common vision to improve our ability to serve families with children facing devastating life-limiting illness or injury.

At the heart of this vision is the new 60,000 square-foot Ronald McDonald House. The goal, however, is **not just to be bigger; we intend to be better** at serving critically ill or injured children and their families. In addition to building a new house, the $25 million campaign will also support programming that will improve the individual experience, and ultimate health outcomes, for each family we serve.
The new Ronald McDonald House will reflect a commitment to incorporate best practices into all of our programs and services. Each amenity included in the design of the new house was carefully selected through input from staff, volunteers and families as an important component to successful outcomes. The new House will serve approximately 55 families daily and 2,200 families annually through:

- 10 two-bedroom suites specifically designed for bone marrow and transplant patients
- 45 rooms that sleep four guests each and allow for larger families through adjoining rooms
- Strategically designed gathering spaces that promote interaction among guests (family room, playroom, kitchen and full-size laundry room)
- A “quiet” kitchen for children whose special needs require a calm area for mealtime
- A Meditation Room for solitude and respite
- A state-of-the-art Family Business Center with computers, printers, and internet for parents who must continue work
- A fully accessible outdoor playground with an adjacent picnic and dining area for outdoor meals and special events
- The Teen Room – for older children, allowing them to have private time alone or with peers who are experiencing similar situations
- A Student Classroom – allowing educational instruction in a normal classroom environment for students experiencing extended stays

**Campaign Impact**

Philanthropic leadership from those who know us best and trust us most will send a clear signal to our community that Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore is uniquely positioned to execute our strategic plan and improve the quality of life of sick children and their families. We invite you to help build a legacy of care in Baltimore and transform Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore for generations to come.
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