



Helping Families Feel at Home for 25 Years

Celebrating 25 years, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Indiana provides all the comforts of home to families of hospitalized children.

WORDS Jennifer Blomquist • PHOTOS Provided

"Welcome to our Home" is the sign that greets you upon entering the Ronald McDonald House of Northeast Indiana located inside Parkview Regional Medical Center in Fort Wayne, and it captures the special spirit of this place for many families.

"When a family steps into the Ronald McDonald House, they find a safe, comfortable respite that removes them from the hospital setting," says Jen Veatch, chief executive officer of Ronald McDonald House of Northeast Indiana.

With 16 private rooms, numerous community spaces to relax, a breakfast bar and evening meals, families have their physical needs met so their focus can stay on their child. All Ronald McDonald House services are provided free of charge, regardless of the length of stay, to eliminate additional financial burdens for families.

"We are the care team for a family. Just as doctors and nurses care for the child, we come alongside the rest of the family. Our Family Support Services team meets

with families regularly during their stay, offering encouragement and connection to professional and community resources as needed. Additionally, our Comfort Cart surrounds families with convenience and care by visiting the pediatric units of the hospital to bring snacks, drinks, toys, blankets and more to patients and families right in their room. In 2022, the Comfort Cart served 11,825 individuals. We look very different today than we did 25 years ago," reflects Veatch. "In 1998, we were simply a board that primarily raised funds through

the money canisters at McDonald's restaurants and granted the funds to other nonprofits in the area."

In addition to the Ronald McDonald House, there is also a Ronald McDonald Care Mobile – a doctor's office on wheels that launched in 2018. Because the organization believes that where a child lives shouldn't affect their ability to receive quality, convenient, preventive care, the mission of the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile is to provide medical care to underserved and uninsured children ages 0–18.

This state-of-the-art care mobile is one of only 38 in the world and features two patient exam rooms, a laboratory and a patient education center. Most importantly, Ronald McDonald Care Mobile services come at no charge to families without insurance.

Its newest program is the Ronald McDonald Family Lounge, which opened last August in the Parkview Women's and Children's Hospital Newborn Intensive Care Unit. The Family Lounge is a respite for parents with a baby in the NICU, giving them a place to recharge. In 2022, these programs combined served 895 families.

"McDonald's and our customers have been longtime supporters of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Indiana and the important care it provides families," says Jim Wong, a McDonald's Owner/Operator with restaurants in and around Fort Wayne. "Whether it's giving back with our Round-Up for RMHC campaign or our restaurants donating a portion of sales from the Shamrock Shake or Happy Meals, the McDonald's family takes great pride in supporting the mission of RMHC."

"As we celebrate the last 25 years of partnership between McDonalds and Parkview Hospital, we look forward to the next chapter," adds Wong. "McDonald's remains committed to helping RMHC in its efforts to support families with care and comfort when they need it most."



"We've also grown to a staff of 10 and have a rotating team of 75 volunteers with us every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.," says Veatch. "None of this would be possible without the tremendous support we receive from our community of donors and our thriving partnership with McDonald's and Parkview."

Veatch explains McDonald's has been a mission partner of RMHC since 1974. The local McDonald's Owners/Operators Matthew Ball, Dean DiMichele, Nicole DiMichele, Jon Lafontant, Jason Monfort, Jim Wong, Brian Hedrick, Bill Boldt and Estephan Awad have made that mission their own by supporting the programs and families year-round through event sponsorship, in-store promotions, through canister donations and Round-Up."

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"Round-Up can happen in so many forms," says Veatch. "Whether paying with cash or card at any McDonald's restaurant, you can simply ask to round up your bill and have a direct impact on families at your local Ronald McDonald House."

As Veatch and her team look back on 25 years of service to northeast Indiana, they are excited to see what the future holds. They invite you to help celebrate today and build for tomorrow by donating through Round-Up or online at rmhc-neindiana.org. No matter the size, the cumulative impact of the gifts you give is profound. [LIVING](#)

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