

RMHC Charlottesville

Ronald McDonald House Charities® Charlottesville



Executive Director, Rita Ralston, greeting a family at the front door of the Ronald McDonald House.

Ronald McDonald House Welcomes a New Executive Director – Meet Rita!

If you've had the opportunity to visit the Ronald McDonald House of Charlottesville in the last several months, there's a good chance that you've already met Rita.

Rita Ralston, our new Executive Director, brings to the House an important and exciting sense of direction. Her immediate embrace of the mission and purpose of RMHC is apparent, and she has jumped into her position with a high level of enthusiasm and a genuine compassion for the families we serve.

A long time Charlottesville resident, Rita has deep roots in our community. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia – with the distinction of being part of the first class of women admitted to the College of Arts and Sciences. She has held several positions in the local non-profit sector, providing her with extensive experience in finance, operations and development. While Rita and her husband Randy were raising their four children, she contributed her talents to school and community organizations as well as operating her own business.

Rita enjoys public speaking and relishes every opportunity to tell the story of the Ronald McDonald House. Since joining the staff in mid-March she has traveled quite a bit throughout central Virginia to share that story. "The mission of the House is so compelling," Rita states. "I know that once I tell folks what we do and why we do it they will feel as passionate about supporting the House as I do." Rita is also quick to offer a tour of the House to anyone who is interested. "I love to show folks through the House so they can see for themselves how we work so hard to create a home away from home for our families."

When asked to describe her experiences at the House over the last few months, Rita gave voice to what so many of our generous supporters must feel. "People need us to be here for them. We're the extended family they didn't know about before they arrived at the House. It's often hard to say goodbye when they leave, but I remind them that we're always walking with them."

By: Lynn Merhib
V.P., Board of Directors

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Visit our website to see our roster of Wish List Items.

Our Impact

In the year 2009 alone, we hosted **over 900 family stays**.

88% of our guest families were from **Virginia**.

9% of our guest families were from **West Virginia** and

3% of our guest families were from **other states and countries**.





Rita P. Ralston, Executive Director
RMHC of Charlottesville

As we enter this special time of the year I ask you to join us... Donate. Volunteer. Spread the word of our mission.

Message from the Executive Director

In my eight months at the House I have been so impressed by the number of volunteers and donors who share their time, assets, and treasures with us. Meals, food supplies, hand-made baby blankets, books, pop tabs – there is a wonderful band of faithful supporters who quietly deliver such items to our door each day. But, unfortunately, there is always a need for more.

RMHC-C was founded on the idea of strength in numbers. Families find strength from each other, and from RMHC-C staff and volunteers. Children heal better when they are surrounded by their families. We know that, thanks to our generous donors and volunteers, our families find the strength to surround their children with the healing power of hope and love that they so desperately need. All of these various hands – those of families, children, medical staff, RMHC-C staff, volunteers, and donors – join together to form a very strong and symbiotic circle of giving.

As we enter this special time of the year, I ask you to join us. Help us to gain more strength for our families by adding to our numbers. There are so many ways you can do this. Donate. Volunteer. Spread the word of our mission. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Staff

Rita P. Ralston – *Executive Director*
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Debbie McVey – *House Manager*
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Dwight Early – *Night Manager*
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From Our Families ...

... In Their Own Words

The Blessing

Hello,

My name is Katherine Sutton Pollard, and this is the story of my son, Keith Coles Jr., and his heart. On March 21st, 2010 I took my son to the hospital where we live in Lynchburg, VA. He was having stomach pains. As we were there I had a bomb dropped on me, that my son was fighting heart failure. My whole world went out the door that day. We were transferred here to the U.Va. Medical Center as we found out more bad news. My son's heart was so weak that he needed a new one. We were put on the transplant list.

On April 21st, 2010 God delivered my son with a match of a new heart. The surgery went great. So far, things are going great. We are staying at the Ronald McDonald House to complete his therapy, biopsies, and lab work and are going home June 5th. I would like to say staying here has been and is a blessing to my son and our family.

I want to thank everyone who played a huge part of my son's blessing! God bless the family that gave my son a chance at life...we love you! Thank you all here at the Ronald McDonald House for making us feel so welcome and comfortable. We love you all.

Yours truly,
Katherine Pollard & Keith Coles, Jr.



Katherine and Keith on Mother's Day, 2010, just after heart surgery in April.

We are pleased to report that Keith continues to do very well since his surgery. Katherine reports that Keith has put on about 40 pounds and is playing basketball every chance he gets.

Josie's Story

Hello!

My name is Laura and when I was 19 weeks along in my pregnancy I found out that my daughter was going to be born with gastroschisis – a long word that means she was going to be born with her intestines outside of her body. Through the rest of my pregnancy our fight was to keep her in me as long as possible. With these babies they are more prone to pre-term

5 ways you can help

Volunteer

We are always searching for more wonderful volunteers willing to donate their time and experience to RMHC of Charlottesville. Ask about our Master Volunteer program.

Donate items

Donations literally keep this House running and we're always in need of more. We can always use the "Wish List" items provided on our website.

Financial support

RMHC of Charlottesville needs your support for our Annual Fund, dollars critical to our on-going operations.

Matching gift programs

When making a donation, remember to check with your company's corporate headquarters to see if a Matching Gift Program is offered.

Estate planning

Remember RMHC of Charlottesville in your will. Please contact the Executive Director for more information regarding this opportunity.



Josie's Story continued

labor. When I was 32 weeks along I started to dilate. I was on bed rest for 2 weeks, then I went to U.Va.

Three long days of hard labor and my daughter, Joselyn Ann Skiles, was born on August 25th, 2010. But the hardest part was just beginning. We waited and waited and when our Josie (her nickname) was one week old they took her to surgery. It all went perfectly! She came out of the OR with a very funny looking belly button, but all of her was inside where it was meant to be. In total, Josie spent the first month of her life in the NICU learning to eat and keep her food down.



I stayed at the Ronald McDonald House from the time I was discharged from U.Va. until the day my baby went home.

I cannot say thank you enough to the staff and everyone that puts all of the hard work into keeping that house going! I was a scared 19 year old mom who had never lived in a city, but everyone there made me feel so at home. Josie is now home and happy with no health problems, and I cannot thank U.Va. and the Ronald McDonald House enough for all of the support and help.

God bless you all,
Laura and Josie Skiles

Hardin's Story

Debra,

Attached is a picture of Hardin Copeland. Hardin visited the RM House in March. Hardin is 7 years old and was born with microtia, the absence of an ear. He had four reconstructive surgeries in Atlanta and spent lots of time at their wonderful RM House, as well, in 2008.

Hardin had atresia repair this past March at U.Va. and he can now HEAR out of his right ear! They repaired his middle ear bones which were fused together, and built an ear drum out of his own tissue and also made an ear canal for him from a skin graft.

He now hears in "stereo". The best way to explain his improvement is that he listens to a *Star Wars* record (it was his daddy's as a child) each night before bedtime. He always listened to this at volume level 10. He now listens to it at a volume level of 1 and the rest of the household can get some sleep! He also no longer has to turn his good ear to you to understand what you are saying. And, in his words, it sounds like they have "turned up the volume" at school.

Thank you for your availability. I do not have any idea how we would have covered the expenses of seeking medical treatment for him over the past 3 years without the assistance of the Ronald McDonald House. These surgeries are stressful; so any financial relief helps us to focus on him and his recovery rather than how we

will cover our expenses to conduct these surgeries away from our home outside of Jackson, MS.



Your service is WONDERFUL. I pray that one day we will be able to repay RMH Charities for all they have done for our family.

And DON'T let Ronald McDonald retire!

Wendy H. Copeland

*Be gentle with the young.
Juvenal*

Financial statements for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Charlottesville, Inc. are available upon written request from the Office of Consumer Affairs, Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218. A copy of our most recent 990 is available for review at the House.

Major Fundraising Events Meet with Great Success!

Vegas, Baby, Vegas!

The 2010 Charlottesville Texas Hold' Em Poker Tournament and Party took place on a perfect spring evening in May at the picturesque Westover estate. The poker tables were full with both seasoned and amateur players, all of whom seemed to enjoy the challenge and the camaraderie.



The organizing committee took great pains to make sure everyone in attendance had a fabulous time. The event – a wonderful mixture of down-home fun and upscale ambiance – netted almost \$18,000 for the House. Those in attendance agreed it was a great way for everyone to participate (and up the ante!) in raising funds for a deserving cause. Special thanks go to the Butlers, Parrishes, and Mullens for their energy and commitment to this event.

THANKS TO OUR EVENT AND PRIZE SPONSORS

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THE 2010 "ALL IN" POKER HANDS

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2010 Golf Tournament brings together a cross-section of the community in support of the House

Twenty-seven teams surged onto the Spring Creek Golf Course with great gusto on a picture perfect day in October to take part in this year's annual golf tournament. Golf Pro Kevin Haney had the course, carts, and club house in tip-top shape for all to enjoy. Each golfer received a boxed lunch and a goodie bag filled with a variety of food and fun items to start their play; each also received a Callaway gift card as a thank you for participating in the event. Executive Director, Rita Ralston, opened the event by thanking everyone for their role in the nexus of caring we try to create for the House. Once the teams moved onto the course, the enthusiasm level for the day was heightened by a roving cart of jokesters from the Charlottesville Newsplex and the by the very talented U.Va. Cheerleaders.

Once all returned to the club house they were greeted by a huge assortment of door prizes, including wine, clothing items, car washes and oil changes, golf clubs, restaurant meals, and stays at wonderful inns in the area. The players also enjoyed numerous refreshments and a marvelous buffet meal that offered something delicious for everyone's taste buds. The day culminated with prizes going to the winning teams and to those who had brought in the various qualifying scores for each category. There were drawings for two major door prizes, including a 52" Sony flat screen TV and a handsome outdoor grill. Also, there was a special award presented to the Martin-Brower Company for its faithful and generous support of the RMHC-C Annual Golf Tournament.

The 2010 Golf Tournament Committee, led by DiAnne Hendricks and Norma Miller, deserves an extra pat on the back for the fabulous work it did in planning and executing this year's event. The tournament netted in excess of \$72,000 to benefit the House. Like the Poker Tournament, this level of successful outcome is directly related to the commitment, energy, and detail-oriented organizational efforts of those who plan it. These efforts are then matched by the generosity and caring of those in the community who participate. Thank you to all of the individuals and businesses who responded so unselfishly to our call for support.

Ronald McDonald House® of Charlottesville
would like to thank all of our sponsors for making our October 11th, 2010 Annual Golf Tournament at Spring Creek Golf Club such a big success!

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A wise woman once said, “The world is hugged by the faithful arms of volunteers”. How true. Nowhere is that more poignantly demonstrated than at the Ronald McDonald House.

We are looking for a few “Master Volunteers”

Are you looking for a rewarding volunteer opportunity?
Do you enjoy making a difference?
Do you have a few hours each week you could devote to volunteer activities?

If so, then we want you to contact us! We are hoping to build a small cadre of Master Volunteers who, like docents in a museum, can become a valued and valuable part of House operations. Like our good friend Joan Forrest, highlighted below, we are in need of volunteers who could come to the House at a regular time each week for just a few hours. We are looking for individuals who would feel comfortable helping around the House in various ways – answering the phone, taking messages, assisting with mailings, answering the door bell, interacting with guest families, folding laundry, keeping the dish brigade going, writing thank you notes, and helping with yard work. Having knowledgeable volunteers on a consistent basis frees up the full-time staff, who can then plan to tackle special projects. If you think you might be interested in such an opportunity please call Debbie McVey at 295-1885 or visit our website at www.rmhcharlottesville.org and download our Volunteer Form. If you join us we can assure you that the families we serve here at RMH will fill your heart and warm your soul.

Volunteer Spotlight – Joan Forrest

Joan Forrest is not only an angel in disguise but also a real tour de force when it comes to her volunteer time at the House. She can do it all. Each Wednesday afternoon Joan arrives like the ‘Energizer Bunny’, prepared to do whatever needs to be done. She can do – and does – it all.

Our Evening Manager decided she needed to know more about the volunteer lady who greeted her so warmly when she arrived for her Wednesday shift. The interview below is a result of their exchange.

How long have you been a volunteer at RMH? When did you start? I started working at the Hearthstone Children’s House (the precursor to RMH) around 1979. I worked with the first director, Dan Casey.

What contributed to your decision to volunteer at RMH? I had read about the House and was impressed with the help it provided to families who needed to stay in Charlottesville to be near their hospitalized child. It touched my heart and I knew I wanted to contribute in any way I could.

What type of volunteer work do you perform here? I usually work an afternoon shift, 3 to 5 pm. I answer the phone, empty the dishwasher, put away donations and write thank you notes to donors. I am open to doing anything to facilitate the staff in doing their jobs.

RMH was really a “home”.

Please tell me a little bit about yourself – your work, hobbies, self-history... We have our own business, an air freight company, and I am the business manager. We have been in business for 32 years. I have worked at the company for the last 20 years or so. Prior to that, I was a travel agent with Murphy Travel, which used to be on the Downtown Mall. In my spare time I enjoy traveling, reading, having dinner out, listening (and sometimes playing) Irish fiddle music, and spending time with friends. My husband, Bob, and I have two children, John and Madeleine.

Do you have one memory from your time here that stands out the most? I remember at Hearthstone [the original House] we had a family who was from Ireland. They owned an Irish pub/restaurant and the mom and dad had to take turns coming over to the States with their sick child because they had other children at home and had to take care of their business. The dad was a big, jolly guy and I remember thinking how hard it must be on the whole family to have to split up and be apart for so long. Yet the mom and dad were always so upbeat and so thankful to be able to stay at Hearthstone whenever they came over for treatments. It truly was a “home away from home” for them.

Is there anything about RMH that surprised you on your first visit? It surprised me that RMH was really a “home.” It wasn’t just the physicality of the place, but also the warm, encouraging staff that helped to run the House as a place filled with love and caring.



Joan on one of her travel excursions.

Joan Forrest is not only an angel in disguise, but also a real tour de force when it comes to her volunteer time at the House.

Special thanks to those below who gave to the House during the first six months of 2010. Thank you!

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