

LOVE NOTES

A Publication of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Tampa Bay, Inc.

Congenital Heart Disease Brings Mothers Together

Tanya Sanders is a beautiful and energetic young woman whose calm exterior belies the fact that she cares for a child with congenital heart disease. Her seven-year old daughter Haley skips into the room and Tanya quietly asks her to sit still while we converse. Her children, family, and the Ronald McDonald House all play a central role in her new commitment to raise

awareness for children's heart disease.

When Tanya gave birth to her daughter Sophie in September 2005 at her community hospital, she was told that Sophie's slight heart murmur was nothing to be concerned about. Two days later, they returned to the hospital because Sophie was not eating. A nurse practitioner with experience

in infant heart disease suggested an echocardiogram, which confirmed her suspicions that Sophie needed cardiac care. She was soon transferred to All Children's Hospital (ACH).

The Sanders made the trip from New Port Richey to ACH where frightening news awaited them. The diagnosis was multiple congenital heart defects (CHD) –tricuspid atresia (single ventricle), atrial septal defect and interrupted aortic arch which would involve three heart surgeries, all before the age of two. Each of these defects is severe on its own, but the combined effect of all three is enormous. In addition, Sophie's delayed diagnosis resulted in a severe staph infection requiring intensive medical care before she could undergo surgery. She was the first patient at ACH to undergo a hybrid procedure which involves putting bands around the pulmonary arteries to lessen the flow of blood to the lungs. A stent was also inserted to keep her ventricle open for the next surgery.

The severity of her illness extended her hospital stay to more than three months, during which time the family stayed at the Ronald McDonald House. They came to know and love their home-away-from-home, especially for five-year old sibling Haley Sanders who easily made friends with everyone. The support of volunteers and staff helped them through those first traumatic months. To the delight of the entire Sanders family, Sophie was finally

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Haley and Sophie Sanders

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Dear Friends,

As we begin this New Year, I'd like to welcome two new members to the RMHC Board: Brian Auld, Sr. VP of Business Operations for the Tampa Bay Rays, and Wendy Mickey, Managing Principal of HDR Architecture.

This is most timely for new board members as our fourth Ronald McDonald House is scheduled for completion at the end of the year. There are still room naming opportunities available and if you are interested in leaving a legacy for your family or loved ones, please contact me.

I am very pleased to introduce our partnership with Recycling Management Solutions, Inc. (RMS), who is launching a new recycling program in Tampa Bay to benefit the Ronald McDonald House. You may already be part of the greening of our planet by recycling paper and plastic at home, and this is how you can help us by encouraging your employer to allow RMS to place bins at your place of employment. RMS also specializes in on-site and off-site paper shredding, which can be recycled to benefit our charity. If you are interested in recycling that benefits RMHC, please contact Doug Fyvolent at (727) 823-0919.

With the addition of our fourth house, we must find new sources of revenue to keep our doors open and keep up with the growing needs of our Tampa Bay community.

Sincerely,

Janice L. Davis
Executive Director & CEO

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORYBOOK BALL 2008

A la Carte Event Pavilion, Tampa

May 17, 2008 - 6pm to Midnight

Allison & Robby Adams - Event Chairs

Wake your inner child and venture over to the wild side. Join us to support RMH families by attending our signature event, the Storybook Ball. Come party with King Max and his scary monsters and enjoy performances by Busch Entertainment, delicious food, dancing and festivities.

Prepare for a wild time. Share the fun of the silent auction, cigar and martini bars and be thrilled by the roaming entertainers. After the fabulous dinner, hit the dance floor for party time!

Each year, we present our annual Award of Excellence to an outstanding role model and community leader in Tampa Bay children's causes. This year's recipient, Mike Alstott of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, is idolized by the Tampa Bay community. We have all enjoyed his athletic achievements with our NFL team, but his dedication to our community and helping children is also exemplary.

Our annual gala raises significant funds to cover the costs of keeping our doors open to families at the three Ronald McDonald Houses, year after year.

Sponsorships for tables of ten range from \$3,000 to \$25,000; with tickets for two at \$600. For more information, please contact Janice Davis at 813.258.6430, ext. 1 or by email at jdprmh@tampabay.rr.com.

Love Notes is published twice per year for families and friends of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Tampa Bay, a not-for-profit organization that provides comfort and care to children and their families by supporting local Ronald McDonald Houses, its cornerstone program, and by making grants to other local not-for-profit organizations that help children in need. The Ronald McDonald House of Tampa Bay provides a home-away-from-home for families of pediatric patients at area hospitals. Comments and questions may be mailed to Ronald McDonald House of Tampa Bay's three locations:

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay, Inc., 28 Columbia Drive, Tampa, FL 33606
(813) 258-6430

702 8th Ave. South St. Petersburg West (727) 821-8961

401 7th Ave. South St. Petersburg East (727) 821-8961

35 Columbia Dr. Tampa (813) 254-2398

rnhctampabay.com

Written & designed by Alison Barrick



Haley, Eric, Tanya and Sophie Sanders

discharged right before Christmas, and they were able to celebrate her first Christmas together at home.

Three months later, the Sanders returned to ACH for two more complex open heart surgeries. The family once again stayed at the now familiar Ronald McDonald House for two and half months while Sophie's body was being repaired by experts in CHD.

Tanya felt overwhelmed and reached out to others who could help her through the maze of CHD. She found comfort and friendship with Stephanie Pablo whose child has CHD. Parents of children with CHD are thrown into a new world of medical terms, treatments and surgeries, and dealing with medical personnel on a daily basis. Stephanie had undergone a similar experience with her child, and had recently begun researching groups that help families

Cardiovascular disease ranks as the No. 2 cause of death for children under 15.

of children with CHD. In 2005, she opened a local chapter of the national organization Mended Little Hearts and enlisted Tanya's support.

Tanya and Stephanie, along with Jamie Masengale (whose two-year old daughter has CHD) dedicated their efforts to getting Mended Little Hearts off the ground. Each woman stayed at the Ronald McDonald House during their ordeal, and Stephanie just recently left the house for the second time after her second child was born with CHD. Even though each one of these remarkable women has a sick child at home, they focus their energy on

supporting families and caregivers of children with heart defects and heart disease. The women provide care packages to new families of CHD patients when they first arrive at

cardiovascular ICU in ACH. They also hold meetings once per month at ACH for families to share information and gather new insights into CHD.

Although Mended Little Hearts is only a little over two years old, this organization has made a significant impact in the community. The three women and helpers (including Jamie's husband Rodney) work closely with the hospital staff and cardiac surgeons to provide a complete support system to the bewildered families of newly diagnosed children. They encourage families to join their group and work to raise awareness of CHD.

This motivated group fundraises all year long to underwrite the cost of care packages provided to families. They donate funds and make meals for Ronald McDonald House in St. Petersburg. Their generosity doesn't stop there – they also donate to All Children's Hospital and to the Children's Heart Foundation for research.

Tanya Sanders describes her experience as a mixed blessing. While Sophie's health has been a roller coaster ride for her family, Tanya has forged incredible friendships and holds a deep gratitude for the Ronald McDonald House and ACH. She is now wise beyond her years, and is eager to help others through their difficult and anxious times.

Sophie Sanders is now two years old. Her mom and sister Haley describe her as energetic, playful and bossy. She is a sweet little girl who likes to dance, play with Haley, and go to the park to swing. She is not yet talking and is

undergoing therapy to help her progress developmentally, yet that doesn't stop her from making her opinions known.

The Sanders family realized the need for family support on a continual basis, prompting their move from New Port Richey to Zephyrhills where Tanya can be closer to relatives. Her mother helps out, as do her two aunts, Heather Vitrano and Dawn Babbitt, ironically both long-term weekend managers at the Tampa Ronald McDonald House.

Only half of Sophie's heart works, therefore she takes six medications and has a G tube for liquids. Her immune system is compromised, so Tanya limits

her exposure to crowds during cold and flu season. She will require further surgeries as she grows. Tanya is optimistic that with time and research, a cure may be found that can help her daughter whose long-term prognosis is uncertain. Currently, the oldest living single ventricle patient is 47 years old, and many with this condition don't live past childhood.

Bringing families together is something Ronald McDonald House does best. In the case of Mended Little Hearts, bringing three families together resulted in a group effort that will help families for years to come. For more information on Mended Little Hearts visit www.mendedhearts.org.

CHD affects 36,000 babies each year in the United States.

American Heart Association 2006



Jamie, Olivia & Rodney Masengale of Mended Little Hearts

FIRST EVER HOLE-IN-ONE AT GOLF CLASSIC



Fred Scarcelli Jr. proudly displays his official Hole-in-One card from Innisbrook Resort & Golf Club

Sunny and cool weather greeted players for the 19th Annual Ronald McDonald House Charity Golf Classic on November 16 & 17. Nearly 200 players took part in the two-day tournament that raised close to \$200,000 for the operations of our three bay area Houses.

The buzz surrounding Fred Scarcelli's hole-in-one spread quickly. His lucky shot was on Highlands North #16 (165 yards) and likely contributed to his team's win as First Place Gross.

This is the second hole-in-one for Fred, having scored his first many years ago in Crown Point, Indiana. An avid golfer for more than 40 years with a handicap of seven, he describes the playing conditions as challenging - windy, slightly uphill and cool. His lucky 6 iron landed his ball five feet away from the pin and then rolled in. Although he didn't see it himself, his team members were standing next to the pin and gave him the good news. Congratulations, Fred!



The Martin-Brower team celebrate a great round

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Tampa Bay Buccaneers/

Brian Ford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Baby Faith Lives Up To Her Name

Family ordeal brings new outlook on life



Noah & Charlie Williams with baby Faith

Sheila Williams wished for a little girl. In her words, “a shopping buddy, a best friend, someone to get a manicure with...a beautiful daughter.” Her dreams came true when she became pregnant with her third child Faith, who was born in October 2007. In some ways, her nightmare was just beginning.

Sheila’s pregnancy was anything but easy. She was diagnosed with polyhydramnios, a condition that causes excessive amniotic fluid. Amniocentesis was performed to drain the fluid, but the condition continued. She became increasingly concerned that she would go into labor early. Already an ambulance had rushed her once to Tampa General Hospital (TGH). Her local doctors referred her to TGH to receive specialized care. Reluctantly, Sheila and her husband Benjamin left their 11-year old son Noah with family while they stayed at a Tampa hotel, waiting for the birth at TGH. They didn’t know about the Ronald McDonald House.

Sheila and Benjamin didn’t have to wait long as Sheila was soon scheduled for a C-section. Unfortunately, the neonatologist also gave them bad news. Their baby girl was diagnosed with fetal hydrops, a serious condition defined as abnormal accumulation of fluid in two or more compartments, skin edema (water under the skin), and the rare condition of congenital chylothorax, defined as excess fluid that accumulates in the fluid-filled space that surrounds the lungs. Excessive amounts of such fluid can impair breathing by limiting the expansion of the lungs

during inhalation.

The doctor told them that their baby girl’s lungs may collapse and they might never hear her first cry. This was a crushing blow to the Williamses, who had been hoping and praying that their daughter would be fine once she was born. Sheila describes this as “the worst day of any mother’s life, to be told that the baby you had waited so long for and felt move inside you was already sick.” She knew one thing: she had to have faith, and Faith became

They were shocked to see someone taking their truck. It had been repossessed. Financially they were drowning.

their child’s name.

When baby Faith first appeared, she gave a little cry before being whisked away. Sheila was weak and tired, and having undergone two blood transfusions, was too exhausted to even ask about her daughter. By the third day, she was desperate to see and hold Faith. During a shift change and while her husband slumbered nearby, she snuck out of her room to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), but passed out before getting there.

On day four, Benjamin wheeled Sheila to the NICU. She was so excited, and wanted to know who the baby looked like. Upon her arrival, she got the shock of her life. She couldn’t believe that the lifeless-looking bundle with tubes and wires everywhere was her little baby. She says, “Nothing could have prepared me for that. I couldn’t touch her, much less hold her. The only thing that kept me from screaming was the huge lump in my throat.”

Faith’s doctors did what they could to help the newborn. They drained excess fluid several times to help her lungs expand. Sheila was released from the hospital while Faith was still in the NICU. She had no idea how she

was going to stay near her baby, so far from her Lakeland home. Her husband had already spent the past four months driving her to Tampa three times a week for tests, and the financial strain was beginning to show. She promised baby Faith she wouldn’t leave her side, but she didn’t know where to turn. It was in one of those moments, as she was lying in her hospital bed crying about her situation when “lo and behold, in walked an angel by the name of Robin.” Robin is a NICU social worker sent to counsel Sheila on her options, one of which was the Ronald McDonald House. After calling the House, Benjamin left the hospital to investigate. He returned a short while later with a huge smile on his face, and announced that the House was “practically in the parking lot.”

When the Williamses arrived, they were a little scared. They didn’t know what to expect, and were pleasantly surprised. It took a huge load off their shoulders to realize that they would have meals, other families to share their worries with, and best of all, their other children could stay with Sheila. This was an answer to their prayers.

Baby Faith continued to improve, and by the 8th day, the Williamses were told the medical team was going to tube-feed her, a very good sign. Their relief was short-lived, as fluid began to build up once again in Faith’s little chest. Although the doctors drained it, things didn’t look good. By the 12th day, they began treating Faith for her very rare condition of congenital chylothorax with Octreotide, a man-made hormone used for treating a wide variety of adult-related conditions. Sheila and Benjamin were told that the odds were not good, and chances of a successful surgery were even less.

Given the choice between going to Disneyworld or RMH, Sheila would choose RMH.

At first, it appeared that the drug was working and Faith began to recover. The tubes in her chest were removed and she seemed to be getting better each day. Sheila and Benjamin celebrated Faith’s progress. A week later Faith stopped breathing and had to be reintubated to help her breathe with a ventilator. The doctor was not convinced that the drug was working, and was unsure about what to do next.

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RMH Needs List

While out shopping, why not pick up a few much-needed items for the House? They include, but are not limited to:

Chicken, beef, ham, hamburgers
Breakfast & lunch meats
Dairy (butter, cream cheese, margarine, cheese)
Vegetable oil & salad dressings
Sugar, sugar substitute, coffee creamer
Mayo
Snacks: chips, cookies, crackers, individual puddings, jello, fruit juice
Pop Tarts
Icing & paper baking cups
Fruit juice - individual size
Instant tea, hot cocoa, Koolaid
Cookie dough
Cakes & pies

Kitchen & Cleaning

Electric knife
Stainless steel & plastic forks & spoons
Hot & cold 12 oz. cups
Paper plates & bowls
Paper towels & toilet paper
Napkins
Ziploc freezer bags (1 & 2 gallon)
Clorox Ready Mop pads
Clorox Disinfectant Wipes
Lysol Disinfectant Spray
Bleach and X14 cleaner
Dryer fabric softener sheets
Powdered laundry detergent
Scotch Brite scour pads
Dreft baby soap
Soft Scrub, tub & basin aerosol cleaner
Furniture polish

Miscellaneous

Black felt-tip markers & Whiteout
Copy paper - white, colored & photo paper
Postage stamps
Masking tape & clear packing tape
Clock radios
Port-a-crib sheets
Toothpaste (trial size)
Dish cloths
White pillowcases (standard)
White towels (bath, hand, washcloths)
DVD movies
4 ft. fluorescent bulbs
60 watt light bulbs
Compact fluorescent bulbs (100 watt equivalent)
Commercial coffee grinder (St. Pete)
Prepaid phone & gas cards
Gift cards for: Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Target, Sam's Club

Please check our website for updated lists for the individual houses: www.rmhctampabay.com

St. Pete Happenings



Savannah's Donation

6-year old Savannah Taylor attends the gifted program at Pasadena Fundamental Elementary School. For a school project she asked her neighbors to help her by donating household items and funds for our St. Pete House. She's realized how lonely it would be if her Mom & Dad weren't close by if she was in the hospital. Well done, Savannah!



Bunco Fundraiser

Guests and volunteers enjoyed the Bunco fundraiser held in St. Pete on Oct. 17 to benefit the RMH Food Fund. Stay tuned for the next Bunco event this fall.



Coast Guard Helps Families

YN2 Michele Serrano and OSI Kathryn Warnecke from the U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg showed their holiday spirit by bringing bags of toys and cleaning supplies to our St. Pete East House in late December. Michele stayed at the House while her son was hospitalized and wanted to give something back.



Superhero Teens

You might not guess that this group is the FPSA Club (FL Public Service Club) from the Criminal Justice Academy at Pinellas Park High School. They got into the spirit of Halloween by dressing up to prepare dinner for our families.

Tampa Happenings

BINGO

Long-time volunteer Barbara Wolfe celebrates her win at the Volunteer Bingo Night on September 11. Volunteer Emily Parmer graciously offered the social room at Harbour House on Bayshore for the potluck dinner and bingo evening.



Tampa House Gets a Facelift

The Tampa chapter of the International Association of Home Staging Professionals gave a whole new look to the Tampa House. They painted the house in warm colors and rearranged furniture and decorations to make the house more inviting and homey.



Pillows for Sick Children

The Benjamin Smiles group donated many beautiful child-size pillowcases. All we needed were the pillows to fit inside, and that's where Boy Scout Pack 108 helped out. They made 50 pillows, with donated materials from Wal-Mart and Southwest Airlines. Our families love them!



Christmas Dinner at RMH

Thanks to our faithful volunteers and donors, the families at RMH never spend a Christmas without a special meal to celebrate the occasion. Nancy Pacini (at right) gathered her own cooks to prepare a delicious feast donated by St. Gerard Circle. L-R: Lynn, Ree, Jeanne and Nancy.



House Support Needed

Sponsor a Meal

- ✓ Create a casserole supper, cook on our gas grill, order in pizza, make breakfast, stew, soup or chili.
- ✓ Bring in a prepared meal for RMH volunteers to set up and serve, prepare and serve the meal yourself or "break bread" with our families after your "chef" work.
- ✓ Contract with a restaurant to deliver meals, pizza, sub sandwiches or send a restaurant or grocery store gift certificate.

Sponsor Fresh Foods - help fund a delivery of fresh fruit for a week with a donation of \$50. This provides a quick & nutritious snack for families to eat on the go.

Arts & Crafts Supplies - Fund supplies for our Arts and Crafts program with a donation of \$50 or \$100, or provide us with supplies that the kids can use.

Share a Night Program - help underwrite a family stay for \$10 per night, \$70 a week or more (no family is ever turned away because of an inability to pay). Our actual costs are \$50 per night per family.

Hold a Pantry Drive - collect canned goods, paper products, cleaning and other household supplies - we've got 66 bedrooms, 70 bathrooms & four kitchens!

Be a Volunteer - Looking for a new way to show your community how much you care? Have some spare days, evenings or weekends? All three Houses need volunteers for four-hour shifts, once a week or twice a month, to help support this "home-away-from-home" for families with children in area hospitals. Training is provided. Please call:

Lise Fields in St. Petersburg at (727) 767-7679 or

Laura Wright in Tampa at (813) 254-2398 ext. 317

All volunteer opportunities are listed on our website at www.rmhctampabay.com.

Friends helping friends

The Ronald McDonald House of Tampa Bay is a not-for-profit-organization that provides a "home-away-from-home" for families whose children are undergoing medical treatment at bay-area hospitals. The House relies on the support of individuals and organizations in the community to provide services to families in need. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups who have demonstrated their support in many ways. This list represents contributions received from **August 1 through publication date**. If we have erred or omitted anyone, we apologize.

CORPORATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & FOUNDATIONS

\$15,000

Eleanor M. Beyer Foundation

\$11,000 - \$11,999

St. Petersburg Times

\$10,000 - \$10,999

Carlton Fields, P.A.

Hobbs Foundation

United Way CFC

\$5,000

Tampa Chapter of Credit Unions

Walter & Edith Loebenberg Family Foundation, Inc.

\$3,000 - \$3,999

McDonald's "Bubbler" Promotion

\$2,000 - \$2,999

Acts of Love Christian Fellowship

Ballard Designs

The Bradenton Herald

Dillard's, Inc. Holiday Promotion

USA Today

\$1,000 - \$1,999

ALPHA DELTA PI Gamma Gamma Ch. Borders, Inc.

Francis & Gertrude Levett Fdn.

Got Talent (Kaley Sweeney, Caitlyn Jackson & Friends)

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Ken's Beverage, Inc.

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The New York Yankees Fdn., Inc.

The VF Foundation

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ACH Guild St. Pete Branch

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Tim & Brittany Clark

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Teresa Galligan

Rick McLellan

William Perez

Mark Rodney

Carol Soto-Avella

Craig Spurlock

Karen Williams-Coke

Mrs. Sunshine State (All American Pageant)

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Up to \$99

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Christ United Methodist Women, Lakeland

Cub Scout Troop 303

Eagle Village Residents

GoodSearch

The Home Depot Foundation

Lodesterre Group

Marine Corps League Auxiliary Holiday Unit

Moms Club of Northside St Pete

Moms on the Go

Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church

Pasadena Fund. Elem. School

Point Brittany Bldg 2

SeaBees Island X-6 Auxiliary of Spring Hill

Spring Hill VFW 10209

Storybook Schoolhouse

Sunshine Heat & Air

Sunshine Ramblers RV Club

Weeki Wachee Aerie Eagles #4372

Women's Club of Mainlands No. 6

WMS Bethel AME Church Hattie

Lilly Unit

INDIVIDUALS

\$5,000

Heidi Hess (Dr. Gary Haas Heart Fund)

Gerald T. Vento

\$2,000 - \$2,500

Dr. Eric & Mrs. Shelly Arias

Shawn & Cynthia Nelson

\$100 - \$999

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Glemma McCray

Thomas & Arlene McHugh

Linda McLean

Walter Oliver Melvin

Lisa Morello

Ed & Trude Moyer

Mary Murray

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Juan Ramirez

Annie Ramsanahie

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Kathleen Grote

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Trevor & Teresa Harvey

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 Scott Turner
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 Gail Munoz
Benjamin Casper
 Kimberly French & French Family
Joe Casper
 Eula Freeman
 Robert Nimits
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Dr. C.D. Myers
Jill Ridgdill in memory of
Lela Hall
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William & Leona Rock
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John Roper
Sandy Ross, honoring
Marcus Compton, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Rothenberger
Herbert & Eleanor Rowley in
memory of
Kate & Ellie Flahart
Jaclyn Ruffino
Stella Rushlo
Paula & Joe Russo, honoring
Macy Russo
R.E. & Stefanie Schatzman
Joseph & Diane Schillace
Natalie Schmidt, honoring
Trevor Schmidt
Don Schreyer in memory of
Jon Tod Schreyer
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Schupmann
Lisa Elkin Schwartz
Andrea & Paul Scurti in memory
of **Addison Grace Scurti**
Kathy Sebzda
Ralph & Theresa Serpi
David & Kathleen Shields
J.D. & Robin Simmons
Gregory & Michelle Smith
Kathryn Smith, honoring
Tyson Rogers

Michael & Dawn Smith, honoring
Sarah Klein Malarik
Shirley A. Smith, honoring
Amanda Heimberger
Tamara Smith
Klair Snellbaker in memory of
Erin Michelle Mobley
Lauren Stephens
Joe & Fran Stevens
David & Liz Stone, honoring
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kartt
Joan Sullivan
Jill Taylor, honoring
Evan Taylor
Ann Thibault in memory of
Nathan Thibault
Anita Thompson, honoring
Tyler LeBlanc
Debora Thomson, honoring
Anna Grace Monahan
Stanislav & Irene Timofeev
Norma Tomkins
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Traiman
Tri Tech Construction & Design
Kathryn Tushaus, honoring
Aden McKinney
Anne & Evan Unger in memory of
Nolan Andrew Unger
Gabriel Vargo
Lisa Varillas
Peter Vercillo, Jr.
Jonathan Wall, honoring
Jake Michael Wall
Robert Warden
Mr. & Mrs. M. Burrage Warner
Melanie Weber, honoring
Britten Scout Weber
Tiffany Weber
Betty Wetherington
Dan & Isabelle White, honoring
Dylan George Opitz
Trisha Williams, honoring
Ryder Williams
Virginia Williams, honoring
Caleb Williams
Alice Wilson
Brooks Workman in memory of
Tomas Munoz Coryn
WMS Bethel AME Church, Hattie
Lily Unit
Marion Wood
James & Denise Woods
Jason & Christy Wozniak, honoring
Nicholas Wozniak
Chuck & Judith Wray
Patricia Wuchter in memory of
Jordan Alexander Bruck
William & Lois Zawislak
Michael & Barbara Zdziarski

Baby Faith continued

Meanwhile, Benjamin was driving an hour each way to work and back to support his wife and rock his baby girl to sleep. Financially, they were drowning. One night as they returned to RMH after an exhausting day at the hospital, they were shocked to see someone taking their truck. It had been repossessed. Benjamin felt like such a failure, not knowing what to do next. Sheila grabbed him and hugged him, saying, "If this is all we lose, then who cares." By the end of that week, their power at home had been shut off and their oldest son, Charlie had been in trouble at school. It seemed that one worry after another was being placed on their shoulders.

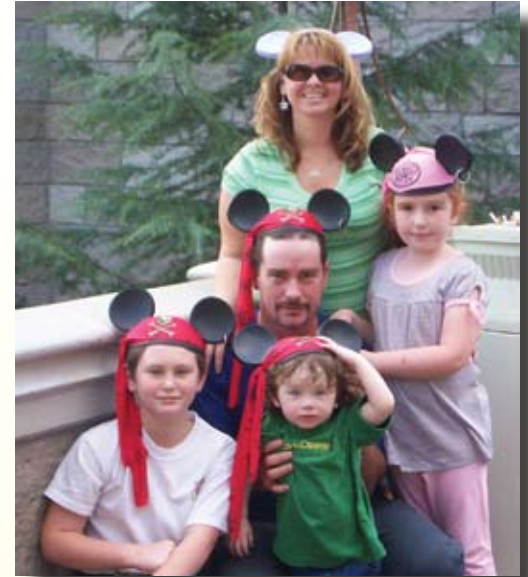
Sheila turned her energy to helping others at RMH. She became the unofficial "house mother", introducing herself to each new family, calling them for dinner, doing extra chores and making meals. She began to think of RMH as her new home and she wanted to give back. Faith began to improve once again, and Sheila finally got the good news that her little girl

would be released. She was flooded with a mixture of emotions: relief, homesickness, but also sadness at leaving RMH. She hated to leave the other families, whose journeys were not yet over.

The drive home seemed like a dream. Her boys would finally meet their little sister since they weren't allowed in the NICU. Her family would at long last meet her little angel Faith. Although there would be lots of doctor appointments, life seemed so much simpler. When they pulled in the driveway, Sheila was overwhelmed. She knew it would be a big adjustment living back at home and caring for three children, instead of just two. She was greeted by many family and friends who had taken up a collection. Sheila felt blessed.

Faith is now three months old and seems to have overcome her health issues. Sheila's outlook on life has changed. She doesn't get upset by the little things, and thanks God for her experience. As she says, "All that bothers me is seeing other people not appreciating what they have,

when their lives could be changed overnight." She still misses RMH and calls regularly, with hopes of one day being able to volunteer. If given the option of going to Disneyworld or RMH, she'd choose RMH. She loves it that much!



L-R: Charlie, Benjamin, Noah, Sheila & Paige Williams

Shelton Quarles Inspires Scholarship Recipients



McDonald's Owner/Operators JC Prado and Lanny Sumpter with Ronald honoring Jeremiah Skafec



Ronald McDonald, Shelton Quarles and Veronica Alfaro-Young pose with recipients

On November 29 at the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, 46 high school students from our 11-county area were honored at our annual Scholarship Luncheon. Eligibility is based on academic performance, financial need and community service. Each scholarship provides for two years of Florida community college tuition or an equivalent amount at other accredited colleges.

We were thrilled to present a scholarship to Jeremiah Skafec, whose story you may remember from our spring 2007 newsletter. Jeremiah and his brother were critically injured in a car accident in late 2006 and his family stayed at our

St. Pete House for many months. Jeremiah has been making amazing progress in his recovery and is now setting his sights on attending The Citadel Military College of South Carolina, a distinguished military school whose prominent alumni include Gen. William Westmoreland.

Veronica Alfaro-Young, WQYK radio personality, lent her talents as emcee, while Shelton Quarles, former linebacker and current scout for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers was the keynote speaker. Shelton credited his mother, who as a single mom helped him overcome many challenges growing up. Other mentors also inspired him along the way to his

success. He, in turn, encouraged our recipients to persevere and focus on their academic goals.

Most of our students are the first in their family to attend college. Even though their difficult circumstances might have dictated failure at school, they overcame huge obstacles to get to this point. Some of them have never been treated to a top-notch meal like the one funded by McDonald's owner/operators. Proud family members, teachers and administrators, and McDonald's owner/operators applauded each of these wonderful young people as they received their awards and had their picture taken with Ronald.

Light a Light & Share a Night



Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union's Executive Director Pat Marsh presents a \$10,000 check during the lighting ceremony at the Holiday Open House in Tampa.

Thanks to all of the many generous donors who supported our holiday campaign that underwrites family stays at our three houses.

A special thank you to **Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union, Tampa General Hospital and Cash Management Solutions** for their generous sponsorships.



Derek Yates of Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union and his family enjoyed the entertainment, gifts and photos with Santa.



Volunteer Kathy Robinson's daughters Bailey and Taylor couldn't resist the chocolate fountain provided by Ideal Events.

The annual Holiday Open House enjoyed record attendance, thanks to the warm weather. Carlo Lovasco brought his musical talents, Brian Ford and the Buccaneers provided an amazing feast, Ideal Events supplied a delicious chocolate fountain, while Mr. & Mrs. Bracewell made an appearance as Santa & Mrs. Claus.



Dr. & Mrs. Eric & Shelly Arias were presented with the 2007 Friends Award for their Smiles for a Great Cause program which has raised over \$10,000 for RMH.



Rachel Howell enjoys some one-on-one time with Santa and Mrs. Claus.



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Ronald McDonald House
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Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay

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(813) 258-6430
www.rmhctampabay.com

Ronald McDonald Houses

St. Petersburg East
401 7th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 821-8961

St. Petersburg West
702 8th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 821-8961

Tampa
35 Columbia Drive
Tampa, FL 33606
(813) 254-2398

Check if appropriate

- My name is misspelled
 My address is incorrect
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Please clip & mail to us or email jharmh@tampabay.rr.com

calendar of events

- Feb. 23 Run for Kids
St. Petersburg Baywalk
- March 1 St. Pete Volunteer Brunch
ACH Education & Conference Center
- March 8 Tampa Volunteer Brunch
Tampa Yacht Club
- April 20 Kimal Classic Car Show
Downtown Venice
- May 17 Storybook Ball
A la Carte Event Pavilion
- Nov. 14-15 20th Anniversary RMH Golf Classic
Innisbrook Resort & Golf Club
- Dec. 18 Holiday Open House
St. Pete East

For more information, visit rmhctampabay.com

**Happy 50th Anniversary
Caspers Company,
great friend and donor to RMH
for 28 years.**



Teens With Big Hearts



We were touched to receive a \$700 donation over the holidays from DeSoto County High School's JROTC. Upon further investigation, we learned that these wonderful kids had given up a trip to Busch Gardens in favor of giving their hard-earned money to Ronald

McDonald House in honor of John Taylor Yauilla.

John Taylor is in need of a heart transplant and being treated at All Children's Hospital while his family stays at the nearby Ronald McDonald House. Major Craig Burch explains

"since a family is asked for a \$10/night donation, this will pay for their stay for 10 weeks. This seemed much more important to the kids than going to an amusement park."

Major Craig Burch explains "our JROTC program's goal is to teach citizenship, as well as drug awareness, health, finance, politics and many other essential elements that make you a good citizen." This donation proves that he is doing a fine job of teaching his kids not only to be good citizens, but citizens with hearts.

Editor's note: John Taylor received a heart on Feb. 13, just in time for Valentine's Day. Busch Gardens was touched by this story; they have generously offered complimentary admission to the group.