

# Ronald McDonald House Provides “Home Away from Home”

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*

*Lawrenceville* – The Pittsburgh chapter of Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) provides a “home away from home” for families whose children are receiving treatments and procedures at local hospitals, including Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, Magee-Women’s Hospital of UPMC, Children’s Home of Pittsburgh and The Children’s Institute. Founded in 1979, RMHC moved to its current location at 451 44th St. on the Children’s Hospital campus in 2009 to meet growing demand for its services.

“We’re unique,” Eleanor Reigel, executive director of RMHC, explained. “Most Ronald McDonald Houses just provide bedrooms.” The Pittsburgh house, on the other hand, provides apartments, each with a bedroom with a queen-size bed, living room with a TV and a pull-out sofa, full bathroom, and kitchen with a refrigerator, microwave, dishwasher, toaster and coffeemaker.

Families also have access to a full common kitchen as well as a laundry room, computers, a Wii system, play area, and library on the penthouse floor. This setup gives the families the option to stay in the privacy of their apartments or to interact with other families and the staff in the common rooms as needed.

“There are only two requirements for families to stay here,” Reigel said. These are they have to live more than 40 miles away and the child receiving treatment must be under the age of 21. While many of the families who stay at the house are from Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia or New York, families come from all over the United States and from other countries attracted by Children’s Hospital’s specialty areas. Rent is only \$15 a night and financial aid is available for those who need it.

Elaine Dulaney from West Virginia has been staying at the house since December 2011, while her youngest son, Owen, who turns 1 year old this month, received two bone marrow and core blood transplants. She said they hope to return home this

month. Dulaney explained, “If we had to find someplace else to stay it would be impossible to pay \$100 a night. Here they never say, ‘Hey, where’s your rent?’”

Dulaney said the best part about staying at the house is sleep. While Owen was inpatient, she and her husband took turns staying one night in Owen’s hospital room and the next night in their apartment at the Ronald McDonald House. “Every other night we got a good night’s sleep,” Dulaney said. She also said the staff is very helpful. “They provide everything you need, so you don’t have to worry about it.”

RMHC has space to serve 60 families a night. In 2011, more than 2,000 families were served. “We’re always full,” Reigel explained. “There’s a waiting list every day, but families are usually able to get a room within 24 hours. The longest wait for a room has been 48 hours.”

While the average length of a stay is one week, some families stay as long as three, six or nine months. Those who stay longer often “start to pitch in; they feel this is their home,” Reigel said. She described one family who volunteered to make dinner for the house one week after their daughter underwent a transplant. They also volunteered to wash up the dishes and clean the common areas. Reigel said that families like that are “why I have the best job in the world.”

To run the house costs \$1.2 million annually, including the cost of leasing the space from Children’s Hospital. This money is raised in large part through fundraisers, individual donations and corporate fundraisers and donations. Individuals and groups also donate items to make the families’ stays more comfortable. After naming recent donations of toys and blankets from La-Z-Boy, MetLife, a local quilting group and others, Reigel said, “This place reminds you there are good people doing good things.”

To learn more about RMHC and ways to become involved, visit <http://www.rmhcpg.org>. ♦



ABOVE: Elaine Dulaney, Owen Dulaney, and “Nana” Pam Enoch. Photo by Carolyn Ristau

## Grocery Store from page 1

begin boarding at the BGC Community Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific Ave., at 8:30 a.m. on Aug. 2 and return to the center around noon.

“It’s vital that people attend this meeting to understand how the City will arrive at the decision to permit a store at that site,” said

Aggie Brose, deputy director of the BGC. “This is the neighborhood’s best chance in 25 years to get a grocery store.”

Residents with questions about the store or the hearing can call Brose at 412-441-6950 x 15 or email [aggie@bloomfield-garfield.org](mailto:aggie@bloomfield-garfield.org). ♦



## Back to School... Already!

It’s hard to believe that in a few weeks school will begin again. Before sending your children off, stop and read the following tips.

### Young Students

Pedestrian injuries are the second leading cause of unintentional death among children ages 5 to 14. So make sure that children:

- Look left, right then left again before crossing the street.
- Always try to cross a street when a crossing guard is present.
- Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it’s okay.

### High School Students

Statistics show that teen drivers are four times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than more experienced drivers. If your children drive to school:

- Teach them, as well as, all passengers to buckle-up.
- Remind them to obey the speed limits
- Enforce no-drinking-and-driving rules.

### College Students

The number one crime on college campuses is theft. One-out-of-every 10 college students will be robbed while away at school.

- Remind students to always lock dormitory doors.
- Tell students not to keep large amounts of money in their rooms.
- Have students mark personal property with identifiable marks.



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