Meet Nathaniel, Madelaine, Doug and Tammy to learn about their journey and how RMHC keeps them together. Page 4

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Nathan embraces the Magic Room

RMHC Eastern Wisconsin
PROVIDES COMMUNITY
family is not an important thing. It is everything.” These words from Michael J. Fox ring true at the Ronald McDonald House (RMHC) as we continually witness the importance of family togetherness. Once a family settles into their “new reality” and temporary home at RMHC, they experience firsthand the special support the House provides the entire family while their child battles a serious health challenge. Comfortable beds and Hospitality Bag supplies, a beautiful Secret Garden, fresh fruit, snacks, the Lunch-2-Go program, and volunteers who provide a home-cooked meal each evening - all of these programs and services help our families stay together. RMHC provides a supportive community for families with sick kids. As you read the stories and examples of how so many in our community help support the 2,300+ families we will serve in 2017, we thank you for your commitment to the RMHC mission.

Dr. Jack Alstadt and his wife Terry, a retired teacher, have been married for 60 years; they have three children, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. If you count all of the children they have loved and influenced during their lifetimes, the number would be staggering. If you are lucky enough to spend a few minutes with the Altstadts, you will witness their devotion to each other, their family and Ronald McDonald House Charities. Jack was the first Medical Director at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, an RMHC board member for 17 years, and still serves on committees for the House. His passion for the mission grew as he witnessed the commitment of the volunteers, the staff and the important role the House served in supporting families being treated “across the street from the House.” Years ago when they were reviewing their family trust, the Altstadts decided that part of the money should be given to charity. Given their dedication to “helping people in their time of need,” the House was included in their estate plans. With this gift, their legacy of love, their passion for helping others and their commitment to the Ronald McDonald House Charities Eastern Wisconsin will “give on” in perpetuity.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can provide a legacy of support for the families we serve please visit our website www.RMHC HOME.org or call Bridget Kesner, Director of Development at 414-935-6511.
The Ronald McDonald House keeps the Martin family together through any challenge that comes their way.

Nathaniel was three, hospitalized again, in rough shape with no clear treatment plan. His parents, Tammy and Doug, were worried, worn down, and without direction. Then Tammy was approached by a friend with urgent encouragement: Don’t give up.

Looking back, pregnancy was not easy for the Martins. Their daughter, Madelaine, was born with the cord wrapped around her neck. Despite subsequent medical concerns, Doug and Tammy were simply grateful Madelaine survived. They weighed the risks of another pregnancy, but moved forward with the blessing of their medical team. When Tammy got pregnant, she knew something was wrong. At 37 weeks, after nearly 6 months of bed rest, Nathaniel was born and required resuscitation. Again, the Martins were grateful to have their child alive. They hoped they could all recover from the birth trauma and move forward as a new family of four. But Nathaniel never bounced back.

Tammy and Doug describe Nathaniel’s issues as “Madelaine’s times ten.” It was exhausting and often felt hopeless when they couldn’t get in front of the medical concerns. But an unexpected connection brought Nathaniel’s records into the hands of a physician at Johns Hopkins. Tammy and Doug remember the exact day when a doctor they had never met diagnosed Nathaniel with mitochondrial disease.

Mitochondria are in every cell in the body, producing 90% of the energy needed to sustain life. When mitochondria
fail, cells are injured and die, and then organ systems fail. Tammy likens mitochondrial disease to a power outage. When the power plant fails, the stove may not turn on. But calling an appliance repairman is useless – the stove isn’t broken; its source of power doesn’t work. With mitochondrial disease, the source of power for cells is the problem, and the damage done cannot be reversed, just slowed down.

It would take more time to recognize that Madelaine’s difficulties, long attributed to birth trauma, were also due to mitochondrial disease. The Martins found themselves staying at the Ronald McDonald House in Cleveland putting together a care team across many specialties. The outlook was grim: Nathaniel would be old if he lived to be ten.

Eventually, the Martins transferred care to Milwaukee. Before the expansion in 2014, RMHC Eastern Wisconsin was at capacity and was not an option. Soon, the family gave up trying to get a room. Then five years ago, Nathaniel was facing a difficult hospitalization and the family needed to stay close. The Martins have been regulars at the House ever since: “We go to this place that is amazing. The people driving by on Watertown Plank, in their routines, have no idea what is going on in this House on the hill. Because they don’t need it. But if you need it - all the things that are supplied by strangers who donate - it’s amazing. This is what you want to do in your life: you want to contribute something. That’s what we appreciate about being here - the hearts of so many people, the volunteers, the staff. It’s incredibly encouraging. And it makes our life easier.”

The Martins never hesitate to take advantage of every day. Both kids continue to surpass expectations, but as they get older and their disease progresses, it gets more complicated. Attending State Fair (a family favorite) means carefully planning transportation of wheelchairs, service animals, coolers of medication, fluids, and oxygen. But these challenges don’t stop the Martins – they have hope, they have each other, and they never give up.

“I WOULD NEVER IMAGINE MY KIDS WOULD BE 17 AND 20,” SHARED TAMMY. “WE KNOW WE DON’T HAVE FOREVER WITH OUR KIDS, SO EVERY DAY WITH THEM IS A GIFT.”
Happy Wheels Hospitality Cart

Ronald McDonald Houses work hard to help families cope with long days at the hospital. Whether a family lives near the hospital or is far from home staying at RMHC, they face the same struggles of trying to stay close to their child. So we asked ourselves—how can we help?

The solution we found is red, white, and striped all over! Thanks to the generosity of our partners at Kohl’s Cares, a big, bright Happy Wheels Hospitality Cart is on a mission every Tuesday to bring cheer throughout Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. The Happy Wheels cart delivers snacks, toys, books and other treats directly to families along the route, providing a bright spot on what can often be a long day.

Miles of Smiles Mobile Dental Clinic

An unanticipated estate gift provided the resources needed for RMHC Eastern Wisconsin to invest in Columbia St. Mary’s Foundation’s Smart Smiles Program and the Miles of Smiles Mobile Dental Clinic. The clinic will provide dental care, education and dental supplies to children in Milwaukee. Through this partnership, RMHC’s commitment to children moves beyond our four walls into the city of Milwaukee. We are proud to be a part of this program that will positively affect the health of children served by the clinic.

Fox Valley and Green Bay

Did you know that 44% of the families served by the Ronald McDonald House in Milwaukee are from the Fox Valley and Northeastern WI? Just as our mission serves families to the North, our friends to the North provide resources to support our operations. Strong relationships with key businesses, foundations and individuals like the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, the George Kress Foundation, Masters Gallery Foods, Menasha Corporation Foundation, Oshkosh Corporation Foundation, Schreiber Foods, Valley Management, and others help us continue to keep families together when they need it most, when their child is being treated at an area hospital.
Winter Services makes our winters warmer

Winter Services began in 2006 in Milwaukee, WI. From their humble beginnings, Winter Services has grown tremendously to become an industry leader in the snow and ice removal industry throughout Wisconsin. Their success and growth in the Milwaukee area led Winter Services to the Ronald McDonald House. In the Spring of 2015, Winter Services toured the House and quickly realized that there was a way that they could help us. They graciously offered to take care of our ice and snow removal needs at no cost. We are grateful for the incredible care they take of our property to ensure that all of our exterior surfaces are safe for our families. But their giving doesn't stop there! When there is a large project that we need help with, the team at Winter Services steps up to the challenge. In 2017, they helped swap out old mattresses for new ones, built new shelving units for storage rooms and even made lunches for our Lunch-2-Go program. Company President and CEO Jay Felton shared, “Winter Services couldn’t be happier about finding a way to serve a cause as important as RMHC and would encourage others to do the same.” They truly are an industry leader who is committed to partnering with the communities in which they serve.

The Tolly Family Story

When Leanna and Chris Tolly came to the Ronald McDonald House, they were expecting a 50 day stay. Several weeks prior, when they went to their 20-week ultrasound, they were expecting it to be routine. In both cases, the Tollys realized that their third child expected them to expect the unexpected.

Liam and Braddock had been typical pregnancies - healthy boys, no surprises. This time around, the Tollys found themselves pulled into a whirlwind as they learned of their baby’s hypoplastic right heart syndrome. As Chris noted, “They had seen all of these different things, just not all in one heart.”

The first heart surgery for Aaron took place at six days old and went well. Yet as weeks went by, the Tollys started to wonder if they had “false hope” about getting home soon.

Some days seemed great, but others found Aaron backsliding with the unanswerable question: when will we go home? After pushing further, a leaking valve was identified as a bigger issue but could be corrected during a second surgery once Aaron had grown more. Until then, the Tolly’s would continue their RMHC stay, or as four-year old Liam reminded them, “Our home until baby Aaron gets better.”

126 days and two surgeries later, more than twice as long as anticipated, the Tollys waved goodbye to the House and looked forward to home, truly hopeful with four-month old Aaron tucked into the car with them.
3 Ways to Donate

- Go online - www.RMHCHOME.org
- Call Bridget - she’d love to talk to you! (414) 935-6511
- Clip it - send the form below to: RMHC Eastern Wisconsin Attn: Jerry Ryack 8948 Watertown Plank Road, Milwaukee, WI 53226

Enclosed is my gift $500 $250 $100 Other: _____

Name: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Telephone: ________________________________
Email: ________________________________

By giving your email address you will receive occasional e-newsletters. We do not sell or share information.

Credit Card: □Visa □AmEx □MC □Discover  Security Code: _____

Name on Card: ________________________________ Exp. Date: ________
Signature: ________________________________

Please make checks payable to Ronald McDonald House Charities Eastern Wisconsin.

Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Save the Date!

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<tr>
<th>OCTOBER 14</th>
<th>BLACK TIE GALA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 14</td>
<td>The Pfister Hotel - Milwaukee, WI</td>
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<th>NOVEMBER 4</th>
<th>HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE &amp; LUNCHEON</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, November 4</td>
<td>Country Springs Hotel - Waukesha, WI</td>
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<th>NOVEMBER 8-12</th>
<th>CHRISTMAS FANTASY HOUSE</th>
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<td>Wednesday, November 8 through Sunday, November 12</td>
<td>Muskego, WI</td>
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It costs $90 per night for a family to stay at RMHC, yet we suggest our families make a donation of just $20 a night. No family is ever turned away for their inability to pay. Your ongoing support is a major reason why.

Thank you for your generosity!

Our Mission: Ronald McDonald House Charities® Eastern Wisconsin keeps families together while their children are receiving medical treatment at local hospitals.