

A Perfect Memory

by *Sammy's Mom - Sally Joy Rubin*



Sam Rubin with Ronald McDonald

My eight-year-old son, Sam, has been undergoing IV infusions every six weeks for an immune deficiency condition. We live in Oakland, California and have to travel to Orange County for the treatments. The Ronald McDonald House of Orange County has become our home away from home.

We scheduled one of the infusions so that Sam could go to a party that Ronald himself was going to attend at The House, but we had to delay the infusion until late in the day. So, Sam was going to miss the party. I (Mom) called The House and asked if Ronald could come to the infusion center for a private visit with Sam. A wonderful woman Virginia, agreed to bring Ronald after the party. Sam was of course both surprised and ecstatic when Ronald himself came to visit him personally.

Ronald mentioned that he was going to be in the Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City because that is something that he does. We just happened to be planning to go to New York for the parade that following week. So, Ronald (who, we did not realize at the time was a "West Coast" Ronald) said, "Well, we are taking pictures today. Be sure to bring the picture and hold it up in the crowd so that I can find you. I will be riding in a big red show and I will be looking for you, Sam." We agreed to remember to do just that.

On Thanksgiving Day, we walked through Central Park and came out just where the floats were staging to enter the parade. There it was - the big red shoe! We started waving the picture. Sam's Dad and I recognized that this was not the "same" Ronald. "Oh, Oh," I thought to myself. Ronald's handler came over to us. We said, "Ronald came to visit Sam in the hospital last week and said to say 'Hi' when we came to the parade." The handler, holding the photo, looked at it and remarked, "L.A.?" We nodded. He took the photo to the (New York) Ronald who, without missing a beat, jumped up enthusiastically in his car seat, looked right at Sam and said, "Sam! How're ya' feeling?"

Sam, beaming, called back, "Thanks, Ronald. I feel so much better!" What an incredible moment and perfect memory for a little boy. Thanks to both "Ronald McDonalds!"

Ronald McDonald Houses ("RMH") provide a "home-away-from-home" for the families of seriously ill children receiving treatment at nearby hospitals.



The first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia in 1974. Fred and Fran Hill's daughter Kim was undergoing treatment for leukemia. During Kim's three years of treatment, the Hills grew tired of sleeping in the hospital waiting room and eating meals out of vending machines. Fred, who was a player for the Philadelphia Eagles at the time, rallied the support of his teammates and General Manager Jim Murray; Dr. Audrey Evans from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; and, local McDonald's franchises to create Ronald McDonald House.

Twenty-five years later, there are now 206 Ronald McDonald Houses in 19 countries.

RMHC's global office provides each House seed, expansion and emergency grants, as well as in-kind goods and services. However, each House relies on the people and businesses in its own community to provide additional funds, goods and services necessary for operations.

The Houses are supported by nearly 25,000 volunteers who donate one million hours of their time annually. Families staying at Ronald McDonald Houses are asked to make a donation ranging from \$5 to \$20 per day; if that is not possible, their stay is free.

Founders of the first RMH in Philadelphia selected the name "Ronald McDonald House" because this beloved clown is a symbol of happiness to children around the world. Since the opening of this first house, the name "Ronald McDonald House" has become synonymous worldwide as a home away from home for families with seriously ill children.

Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) has a network of over 174 Local Charities serving in 32 countries. RMHC awarded \$1 million to the American Refugee Committee (ARC), plus additional emergency grants to ARC to support refugees in Kosova, Macedonia and Albania. ARC works with uprooted people to help them rebuild productive lives of dignity, purpose and self-sufficiency while always striving to respect their cultures and values.

<http://www.rmhc.org>