



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
Ann Arbor



HOPE AWAY FROM *Home*

Spring & Summer 2020

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Living at the House During COVID-19

Elizabeth and Tau M'Howell were experiencing a normal pregnancy, anticipating baby showers and enjoying time with their son after his birth in March, when at 34 weeks, everything changed. "I knew something was wrong when three doctors came in to check my belly and the ultrasound," said Elizabeth. The couple then learned that Baby Miles had Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) and Elizabeth would be induced on March 4.

The family lives in Troy, a long way from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital where Miles would be treated. The day Elizabeth was discharged, they learned that they could stay at RMHCAA's House Within the Hospital (the Mott House) on the 10th floor of the hospital, just steps away from Miles. "It was such a relief for us — it was so far away to go home and leave him, especially when things could change so quickly." After a few days there, and knowing that they would be staying for quite awhile, Elizabeth and Tau moved to the Main House.

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Our Mission

The mission of the Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor is to provide a "home away from home" for families of children experiencing a serious illness or injury requiring hospitalization.

Living at the House During COVID-19
(Continued from previous page)

Then, just as they were settling into some kind of routine, COVID-19 came on full-force. RMHCAA employees were moved to working at home and all volunteer programs were suspended, leaving only those directly serving the families in the House.

"It was a double whammy," Elizabeth comments. "We were trying to process all these changes with our baby, and then on top of that, processing the changes being made at the hospital and the House. It was overwhelming!" While at first all of the changes felt restrictive, both soon realized that the ultimate goal was keeping families safe and healthy.

The hardest part for both was the limitation on who could be bedside. Hospital policy at the peak of COVID allowed only one parent for a child; so for two months, Elizabeth stayed by Miles side while Tau stayed at the House. He became extremely helpful to the staff at the House, monitoring the parking lot for those parking without permission and even fixing a broken ice machine! "This is now our home, and we want to be a part of it." While Tau tried to keep busy, it was a sad and lonely time for him and for Elizabeth. Tau worried about Miles not seeing him, and then not recognizing him when he was finally allowed back in the hospital.

"Marcia and Nancy (House managers) were such an incredible support during that time," recalls Elizabeth. "My mom and family couldn't come. I was alone in the hospital and Tau was alone here... Marcia and Nancy became like our moms. We could talk about anything, and their support was incredible. They are our family now"

Miles still has a way to go, but he is a busy, happy baby who likes people, but doesn't like pokes. Says Elizabeth, "We are so grateful for the Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor — it really is a home away from home".



A Letter from the Executive Director



Kim Kelly

Dear Friends of RMHCAA,

In these unprecedented times, RMHCAA has been doing our best to keep our focus on our number one priority — **the families we serve**. In addition to keeping families close, our efforts have been focused on also keeping them safe and healthy. In the following

newsletter, you will read about what we have done throughout the health crisis to keep our families, staff and the House safe, and what we are doing to move forward and continue to serve families so they can focus on their sick child.

In addition to the health and safety challenges presented by the pandemic, there are financial challenges as well. As many of you know, we were not able to hold our annual fundraising event, the Red Shoe Affair that constitutes a large part of our annual budget. While we were able to hold a successful virtual event to help fill the gap, it obviously did not raise as much as the event would have. In addition, with the temporary cancellation of our popular dinner group program, we have been providing dinners for our families, an unbudgeted and unexpected expense. Your support is needed now more than ever.

Despite the many challenges and changes we have embraced, one thing has remained the same — our commitment and ability to deliver our mission and provide ongoing support to the many families who need us. Your generosity makes this possible. We are so grateful that we have friends and supporters who think about our well-being during times of hardship and hope.

I hope you and your family are safe and well. Thank you again for your support of our efforts to keep families close.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Kelly".

Kim Kelly
Executive Director

RMHCAA and the COVID-19 Health Crisis



Looking Back

During this unprecedented, COVID-19 pandemic, RMHCAA has taken a number of steps to continue to meet the needs of families while protecting their health and safety and that of our staff. Even before the State of Michigan's "stay in place" directive on March 23, we had discontinued our volunteer and dinner group programs in an effort to reduce the outside traffic in the House. In addition, we also discontinued the Hospitality Carte service in the hospital and the acceptance of wishlist item and pop tab donations.

When our occupancy dropped significantly due to restrictions at the hospital and the cancellation of surgeries and treatments, we were able to consolidate all families into the Main House. This allowed us to make our Mott House, a 12-bedroom facility located on the 10th floor of the hospital, available to the hard-working nurses, physicians, and staff at C.S. Mott working countless hours on the frontlines fighting the virus.

All non-essential RMHCAA staff have been working remotely since March 13. The House managers and the facility care team continued to work their regular shifts. These staff members implemented a new cleaning and safety protocols and did an outstanding job in the face of the disruption to our operations and mission to keep families close.

At one point in March, following RMHC Global guidelines, we were no longer allowed to accept any new families into the Main House. This was during the height of increasing COVID cases, and was done to keep our House a safe environment for the current families. Thanks to the Fellhauer Fund, a special fund set up to provide assistance to families during extenuating circumstances, we were able to place a number of families at area hotels to help keep them close to their hospitalized child.

Looking Forward

We are currently undergoing a phased in process of returning to our new-normal of operations guided by directives from RMHC's Global office. RMHCAA is once-again accepting new families into both Houses, using criteria focused on keeping families safe. New guidelines include a reduced capacity, signage at the House to remind families of social distancing requirements, 24-hour screening including taking the temperature of anyone coming into the House, staggering the usage of the kitchen and laundry facilities, and increased, ongoing disinfecting.

It will most likely be mid-August before all of the staff return to working at the House together. In addition, plans for reinstatement of the volunteer program and Wishlist donation collections, are tenuously planned for the fall.

The last few months have been challenging for everyone. However, the ability to adapt and pivot have been key to our success in meeting the challenges, and the support of the community and friends of RMHCAA has been instrumental to our mission of continuing to provide a *home away from home* for families of hospitalized children. We continue to navigate the COVID-19 situation and make informed decisions to ensure we protect the health and safety of the families we serve, the people who deliver our mission, and the communities in which we live.



"During these times of uncertainty and crisis, I couldn't be more humbled by our community partners who raised their hands to help the caregivers at CS Mott Children's Hospital. Our wonderful partner, Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor, was one of the first to step up to assist. Our priority is and will always be keeping our staff safe. When we opened the Regional Infectious Containment Unit to treat COVID-19 patients, the Ronald McDonald House converted the Mott House to a respite space for our physicians, nurses and care teams caring for COVID-19 patients. Many of our team members stayed at the Mott House for several weeks while caring for the most critically ill patients in our state. Thank you for your compassion and concern for our frontline superheroes."

- Luanne Ewald, COO of C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and Von Voigtlander Women's Hospital at Michigan Medicine

How You Can Help

Because of the restrictions put in place to help keep our families healthy and safe, we have had to pause our Volunteer Program, Wishlist item donations, and our Dinner Group Program. As a result, our staff is purchasing or preparing meals, an unexpected budget expense. By providing funds for family support, or purchasing a meal, we can continue to give families what they need during their most difficult time.

Now more than ever, we need the support of the community! There are many ways to get involved and support our families:

♥ **Meals Matter:** A gift of \$150 will help fund meals for the families staying at the House. Although we had to temporarily discontinue our dinner group program, we are committed to continue providing a dinner for families, as their feedback is that it is so much more than a meal during such a stressful time. Dinners provide a feeling of comfort and being cared for. We are working with local restaurants and also providing staff prepared, individual meals for each family. Donations to help provide a meal can be made [here](#).

For more information about sending a catered meal, contact Family Services Coordinator Stacey Laho, at slaho@rmhcannarbor.org.

♥ **Family Support:** It costs \$125 to house a family for one night and we need your support to continue to do so. Unrestricted donations help us to further our mission. You can donate to help provide a night for a family [here](#).

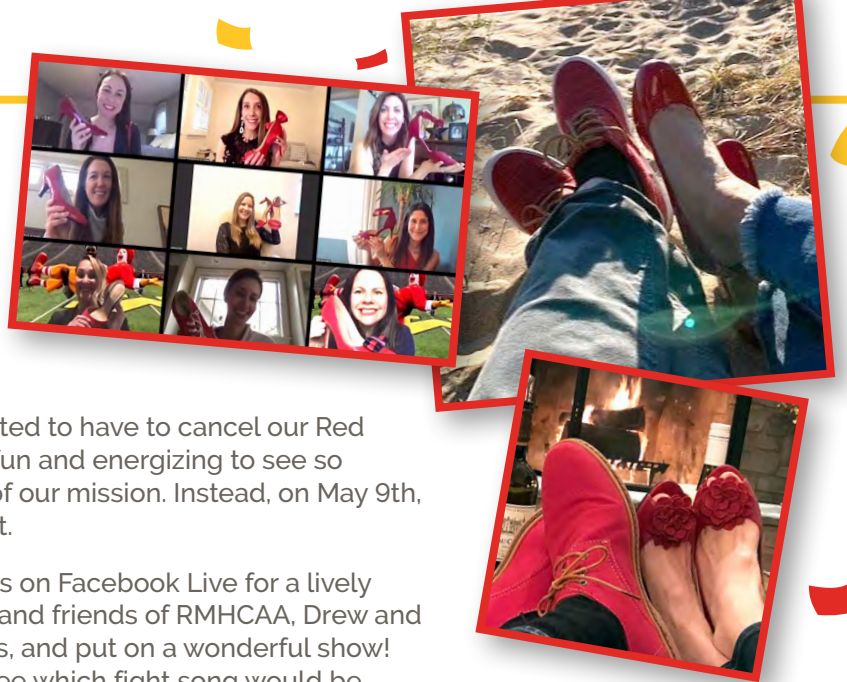
♥ **Host a Virtual Event:** Virtual house parties, socially distanced walks, races or rides... all are ways to enjoy the outdoors and raise needed funds for RMHCAA. Coordinate an event for your family, friends, or co-workers. For more information or help getting started, contact Development and Communications Manager, Mary Moffett at mmoffett@rmhcannarbor.org.

♥ **Host a Facebook Fundraiser:** Anyone with a Facebook page can host a fundraiser. It's easy and takes minutes to set up! **1)** Just click on "fundraiser" in the left menu of your News Feed **2)** Click on "raise money" **3)** Select non-profit or charity **4)** Select Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor (we are approved by Facebook) **5)** Complete the rest of the required information and click "create". Funds raised will automatically be sent to RMHCAA by Facebook, so no need to handle any money!

♥ **Donate Gift Cards:** Our families are strictly limiting outside visits, which includes going to stores to purchase needed personal items. Gift cards that can be used to shop online or that allow RMHCAA to purchase items needed for all families, are greatly appreciated! Please mail gift cards to RMHCAA, 1600 Washington Hts., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 Attn: House Manager.

The recently passed CARES Act, allows individuals to take a \$300 above-the-line deduction for charitable gifts made in 2020 and claimed on personal tax returns filed in 2021, regardless of whether or not the individual itemizes deductions. Donations to RMHCAA will enable you to lower your income tax bill.

Red Shoe Affair is a Virtual Success



What an unprecedented year! We were so disappointed to have to cancel our Red Shoe Affair event scheduled for April. It is always so fun and energizing to see so many community members together in celebration of our mission. Instead, on May 9th, we held a Red Shoe Affair Happy Hour, a virtual event.

People donned their red shoes at home and joined us on Facebook Live for a lively performance by Red Shoe Affair Afterglow favorites, and friends of RMHCAA, Drew and Colleen DeFour. They played and sang, took requests, and put on a wonderful show! The hour culminated with a spirited competition to see which fight song would be played, Michigan or Michigan State. Votes were made with donations to RMHCAA... and a rousing version of Hail to the Victors ended the virtual event.

The real winner was RMHCAA! Thanks to the many Red Shoe Affair sponsors and ticket purchasers who converted their payment into a donation, and all of the friends of RMHCAA and community supporters who donated online and purchased auction items, we raised \$245,000 to support our families!

As the Red Shoe Affair makes up a good portion of our annual budget, the dollars raised through the virtual event helped to fill this gap. However, while the COVID pandemic has put the world on pause and has hugely affected the economy, pediatric illness does not stop. Neither does the work we do to support the families of hospitalized children.

We are already planning for Red Shoe Affair 2021 and are looking forward to seeing everyone together again at the Big House!



A special thanks to all of our amazing 2020 Red Shoe Affair sponsors:

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In Memory of RMHCAA Staff Member

Jim Scriven



Jim Scriven at last year's volunteer recognition event joined by RMHCAA volunteers Lucinda Fleckenstein (L) and Mary Yoder (R).

It is with deep sadness that we remember long-time House Manager Jim Scriven. Jim joined the staff of the Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor in May of 2013, serving as a House Manager for 7 years.

Jim greeted everyone coming to the House with a big smile and a booming welcome. His kindness and compassion truly made the House feel like a home for our families. A Door of Hope will be hung in Jim's name, and he will live on in the hearts of his coworkers, RMHCAA families, and volunteers.

CHEERS to 35 YEARS!

This September, the Ronald McDonald House Charities Ann Arbor will be marking the 35th anniversary of the Main House's opening in 1985.

As part of our anniversary celebration, we are interested in hearing from former families who stayed at the House or volunteers who helped out. Do you have any favorite memories, fun facts, or stories you would like to share? We would love to hear from you!

Have a story or memory to share? Please contact RMHCAA's Development and Communications Manager, Mary Moffett at mmoffett@rmhcannarbor.org.

Due to COVID-19 related restrictions and an effort to ensure the health and safety of our families, RMHCAA's Volunteer, Hospitality Carte, and Dinner Group Programs are still temporarily on hold. In addition, we are not able to accept donations of Wishlist items. Please check our website periodically for any updates on these programs. Thank you for your patience and support!