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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES AWARDS
MARY PENDLETON VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AWARD**

AUSTIN, TX (June 5, 2014) -- Throughout National Volunteer Month in April, Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Texas (RMHC Central Texas) celebrated their volunteers with small gifts and treats. To cap off the month, RMHC Central Texas held a celebration at The Thinkery in Austin to thank their volunteers for generously donating their time and caring for the families who rely on their “home-away-from-home.”

At the celebration, RMHC Central Texas presented the first annual Mary Pendleton Volunteer Appreciation Award to **Elizabeth Williams**, a longtime volunteer who helps at the Ronald McDonald Family Room®. The Mary Pendleton Volunteer Appreciation Award was named after Elizabeth’s mother, a longtime volunteer who graciously gave her time and faithfully brought home-baked cakes every week for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House®.

Elizabeth started volunteering at RMHC Central Texas after she and mother, Mary, stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Dallas while Elizabeth’s daughter was in the hospital. After they returned to Austin, Elizabeth began donating her time in several capacities including serving as a board member, helping with special events and volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House and most recently, supporting the families who visit the Ronald McDonald Family Rooms.

The Mary Pendleton Volunteer Appreciation Award embodies everything Mary brought to RMHC Central Texas -- loyalty, selflessness, positivity and going above and beyond for the families. Her energy, passion for RMHC and zest for life gave families hope and energized the volunteers around her. She affectionately became known as the “cake lady” by RMHC staff, volunteers and guests because of the delicious cakes she baked for the families. The Austin American-Statesman even featured a story about how her cakes brought cheer to the RMHC families.

“At the Ronald McDonald Family Rooms, we rely on our volunteers to help families who need a quiet place to rest and regroup while their children are healing in the hospital,” says Paula Duke, family room manager. “Elizabeth has been very involved at RMHC Central Texas and we are so appreciative of all her efforts to make our families comfortable. Our families not only appreciate her help but also the smile she always has on her face.”

RMHC Central Texas has three Ronald McDonald Family Rooms located in local Austin-area hospitals. The Family Rooms, typically located near the pediatric or neonatal intensive care units, provide families a quiet space to rest and regroup. In 2013, the Family Rooms had over 31,000 visits.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Elizabeth Williams (center) with Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas, Executive Director, Carolyn Schwarz, (left) and Family Room Program Manager, Paula Duke, (right) family room program manager, received the Mary Pendleton Volunteer Appreciation Award for her unwavering support and generous gift of time at the Ronald McDonald House Family Room.

About Ronald McDonald House Charities of Austin & Central Texas

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization, creates, finds and supports programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children. Through its Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Room programs, RMHC Central Texas provides stability and resources to families to keep them together as their critically ill or injured children receive treatment in Austin-area hospitals. The Ronald McDonald House is a 30 guest room, nurturing home-like environment and the Ronald McDonald Family Rooms are located within three Austin hospitals. For more information, visit www.rmhc-austin.org.

