Stories of Hope. Created by You.
2019 Gratitude Report
Every family that relied on Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas in 2019 had their own story. And although the details of each family story are unique, there is always one common element—hope. That came from you. Your kindness gave our families hope—for a positive recovery, for seeing their child smile, for taking their child home.
Thank you for giving our families hope.

Without question, 2019 was an impactful year for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas. Your generosity and support helped nearly 3,000 families with sick children. Your kindness kept them together close to their children and their medical care. You gave them a comforting place to stay, nourishing meals, and support services they needed so they could focus on their children. But most of all, you gave them hope.

This past year RMHC CTX began to feel the impact of the growing pediatric medical community in Central Texas. Many families traveled to Austin for their children’s medical care and we experienced a tremendous increase in demand for help. We provided a record 13,420 overnight stays and 1,437 meals at the House and Family Rooms. In 2019, our occupancy at the Ronald McDonald House was 90% and nearly 500 families were placed on a wait list. To accommodate families that were waitlisted, RMHC partnered with Airbnb Open Homes to provide alternative housing while their children were hospitalized or in treatment. As the demand is not waning, we are actively addressing how to continue to help more families. Your continued support is more important now than ever.

Throughout this report, you will read stories and quotes that center around hope. All these stories were created by you and your kindness. YOU keep our families together where they are the strongest. And being strong together fills them with hope.

We are deeply grateful for your support. Thank you.

With sincere appreciation,

Patrick Ley  Carolyn Schwarz
Board President  Chief Executive Officer
How you made a difference

2,959 families served by Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas

2,770 families served by Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

1,750 families served by Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Room sleep rooms

13,420 overnight stays provided

1,437 meals provided

8.5 average overnight stays (House & Family Rooms combined)

79% occupancy rate of rooms (House & Family Rooms combined)

Saved families $2.6 million in lodging and meal expenses

Ronald McDonald House - Top Diagnoses:
- Neurological
- Cardiac
- Premature Birth
- Cancer
- Respiratory
Serving 95 Central Texas counties and beyond

- Bell: 6.4%
- Williamson: 14.4%
- Burnet: 1.6%
- Hays: 6.3%
- Brazos: 3.4%
- Travis: 26%
- Fayette: 1%
- Bastrop: 2.6%

14 Other States
3 International Countries
Ronald McDonald House

A Journey of Blessings

After discovering a problem with their baby boy’s heart at a routine ultrasound, Krystal and Colton Stabeno were blindsided and unprepared when they were told Krystal needed an emergency c-section. Emmett Stabeno was born 16 weeks early, weighing only 1 pound 14 ounces. Krystal delivered Emmett at St. David’s Women’s Center of Texas and he was then transported to Dell Children’s Medical Center where their renowned cardiac team could monitor him. Emmett would eventually need open heart surgery, but first, the most important thing was for him to get stronger.

Traveling to see Emmett at the hospital from their home outside of Bastrop, Texas was more than an hour for Krystal and Colton. When the hospital staff told them about the Ronald McDonald House, they were relieved. They didn’t have to spend time traveling and could be right there, across the street and a moment’s notice from their baby. With the long road ahead of them, staying at the House was a blessing.

Knowing that Emmett was going to be in the hospital for months, Colton’s employer, Sabre Commercial, transferred him to work on a construction project at Dell Children’s Medical Center. Being able to work and be close to his baby made this personal experience even more meaningful.

Emmett got stronger and was discharged from the hospital and less than a year later, it was determined he would need heart surgery. Krystal and Colton immediately thought of RMHC CTX and wanted to stay at the House again. Unfortunately, the Ronald McDonald House was full but because of a partnership with Airbnb Open Homes, RMHC CTX was able to secure a home for them less than a mile from the hospital. Being close to their son again was another blessing for Krystal and Colton.

The RMHC CTX staff, volunteers, generous donors and Colton’s employer, Sabre, who recently built guest room kitchenettes at the Ronald McDonald House, surrounded Krystal and Colton with amazing support and care. At every turn of their journey, they found blessings.
The Ronald McDonald House is much more than a house with guest rooms. It’s a welcoming home that keeps families together and close to their sick children. It’s a place that surrounds families with care so they can focus on what’s important – their children. It’s a House filled with hope.

- 30 private guest rooms • 8 rooms with private kitchenettes
- Open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day
- 701 families served including 39 Brazos Valley families
- 9,694 overnight stays provided • 13.2 nights average length of stays
- 90% average occupancy • 37 families stayed 30+ nights
- 161 families stayed 2+ weeks • 11 families stayed 100+ nights
- Longest stay was 199 days
- 168 families served with children in outpatient treatment
- 259 returning families • 1,052 meals provided

Families saved $1.9 million in lodging and meal expenses

The Growing Demand for Support:

- 489 families placed on wait list
- 354 families on wait list for 1+ nights
- 5.2 average days families stayed on wait list
- 20 families served through Airbnb Open Homes partnership*
- 194 families unable to stay due to wait list

*August-December 2019
Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

The Ronald McDonald Family Rooms are a warm, cozy place for families to rest and regroup at the hospital. Once families walk into a Family Room, they’re immersed in a comfortable environment where they can simply exhale while always being close to their hospitalized child.

Surrounded with Care

When Danielle Dickey gave birth to her second son, Declan, at CHI St. Joseph Health Regional Hospital in Bryan, Texas, she didn’t know he would have a month long stay in the neonatal intensive care. Declan was kept in the NICU for issues related to his breathing.

Danielle was aware of Ronald McDonald House Charities through her college sorority, Alpha Delta Pi, but she never realized that one day she would use the Ronald McDonald Family Room at CHI St. Joseph.

It was a difficult time for Danielle as she was balancing her own healing, taking care of her 4-year-old son, Tatum, and dealing with the stress and anxiety of having a baby in the NICU. Having the Family Room was a welcome reprieve that gave her a private space to rest and relax while always being close to her baby. And although Danielle only used the sleep rooms a few nights, she relied on this comforting haven everyday that her baby was in the hospital. In addition to being close to Declan, it was all the little things at the Family Room, from the snacks, meals vouchers and even the toys and books for Tatum, that made the Family Room an extended home where Danielle felt surrounded with care and support.
Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

6 Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

- CHI St. Joseph Health Regional Hospital, Bryan, TX
- CHI St. Joseph Health College Station Hospital, College Station, TX
- Dell Children’s Medical Center, Austin, TX
- St. David’s Medical Center, Austin, TX
- St. David’s Women’s Center of Texas, Austin, TX
- Seton Medical Center Austin, Austin TX

2,069 families served
3,827 overnight stays provided
1,049 families utilized sleep rooms
3.9 nights average length of stay
35,961 day visits
385 meals provided
Healing Hearts

Healing Hearts supports families who have tragically lost children by providing financial assistance for burial services and bereavement support.

Healing After Loss

Monica and Erik Velez were ecstatic to be expecting twin boys, Elias and Andrés. At 33 weeks, Monica had an emergency c-section and after delivering the boys, Andrés was sadly stillborn.

Monica and Erik were celebrating both the birth of their baby boy, Elias, and mourning the passing of Andrés at the same time. It was a period of conflicting emotions for them. As they began to navigate this difficult time, they learned about the Healing Hearts program at RMHC CTX. Healing Hearts supports families who experience the loss of a child. The program supported Monica and Erik with burial assistance for Andrés and they also participated in the HOPE Support Group, a complimentary bereavement support program led by a licensed counselor.

While participating in the HOPE Support Group, Monica and Erik connected with other couples experiencing similar situations. They also found something they weren’t expecting — a new community of support. Everyone in the group experienced a similar loss and this comforting, safe environment allowed them to begin the journey of healing and hope.

The Velez Family

189 families served
150 families in Austin received burial assistance
25 families in the Brazos Valley received burial assistance
14 families attended the Hope Support Group, bereavement support services
Happy Wheels Carts

Every week, the Happy Wheels Carts travel the hallways of four Central Texas hospitals delivering small items of comfort to families and children. The Carts, designed to bring smiles from a small toy or a chance to savor a warm cup of coffee, bring RMHC CTX directly to families so they never have to leave their child’s bedside. In 2019, families received thousands of items from the Happy Wheels Carts which were all donated by you, our generous community.

Simple Comforts, Making an Impact

Shortly after moving to Austin, Andrew Vera got involved with RMHC CTX and Friends of the House, the young professional group that supports families and their sick children. He began cooking meals for families at the Ronald McDonald House and in 2019, he volunteered to push the Happy Wheels Cart at Dell Children’s Medical Center. Navigating the cart through the hospital hallways immerses Andrew in the mission and drives home the impact of how RMHC helps families.

“While volunteering, a father at the hospital walked up to the Happy Wheels Cart. He looked tired and distraught. I could tell he was simply overwhelmed. He asked what he could have and I told him to take whatever he needed. He took a toothbrush and toothpaste -- simple things that we have every day but don’t think about when facing a medical emergency. His eyes filled with tears and he thanked me. He told me that I had no idea what it meant to have these things. That was a huge moment for me and one example of many stories of hope that I’ve experienced. Even if it’s one parent, one child, my time and the Happy Wheels Carts truly make a difference.” - Andrew Vera, Happy Wheels Cart Volunteer

14,565 individuals received snacks, beverages, toiletries, small toys and books

5,491 individuals in the Brazos Valley

9,074 individuals in Austin

1,311 times the Happy Wheels Carts were pushed
Our Volunteers

The volunteers who help our families, whether it’s at the Ronald McDonald House, at a Ronald McDonald Family Room, pushing a Happy Wheels Cart, making Lunches with Love, assisting at a special event or providing meals for our families are simply invaluable. Nearly 6,000 generous, kind-hearted volunteers gave their time and talents to care for our families and most importantly, to give them hope.

5,942 volunteers donated their time

4,960 volunteers prepared meals at the Ronald McDonald House

5,942 volunteers donated their time

34,820 total volunteer hours given to RMHC CTX

238 weekly volunteers helped at the Family Rooms

151 volunteers pushed a Happy Wheels Cart

128 volunteers prepared 1,383 Lunches with Love*

“As someone who stayed at a Ronald McDonald House years ago when my daughter was hospitalized, I know personally how important it is to be close to your sick child. When I volunteer in a Ronald McDonald Family Room, I know that I’m surrounding families with the love and support they need during a very difficult time.”

- Elizabeth Williams, RMHC CTX Volunteer

*started in July 2019
Our Community

Hosting a Facebook fundraiser, gathering friends for a wish list drive, organizing a golf tournament and donating a vehicle are just a few examples of how our amazing community helps our families. Their thoughtfulness and time, and of course the funds they raise, make a difference, but their efforts to inspire others to get involved, to help and to give back, expands the hope that’s provided to our families focusing on their sick children.

McDonald’s, Our Mission Partner

One of our largest supporters is the Central Texas McDonald’s owner/operators who have generously helped thousands of families since we opened our doors 35 years ago. Their support happens in many ways including hosting restaurant campaigns, serving on our board of directors and committees, donating and preparing meals for our families and sponsoring special events. In 2019, McDonald’s unveiled Round-Up for RMHC where patrons can support families with sick children by choosing to round up their total at the counter or drive-thru. Through their time, talent and treasure, McDonald’s and their patrons have comforted thousands of Central Texas families with sick children.

77 McDonald's restaurants

23 McDonald’s owner/operators, together with their managers, crew and patrons
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Molly Sherman
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Anne Smalling
Jeanie Smith
Chris Szeliga
Garry Wiseman
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Special thank you to our 2019 Board Members whose terms ended:
Kaeley Benson
Brad Knippa
Jordan Mullins
Kim Rose

RMHC CTX Staff

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Megan Brown, Development Manager
Gina Brazzle, Guest Services Manager
Kristin Campbell, Chief Development & Communications Officer
René Carlin, Volunteer Manager
Shannon Cashion, Hospital Programs Manager
Sylvia Castro, Administrative Assistant
Kelsey Daubner, Communications Coordinator
Paige Deegan, Director of Development & Communications
Paula Duke, Hospital Programs Director
Hannah Hartung, Hospital Programs Coordinator
Margaret Kelbaugh, Guest Services Manager
Derrick Lesnau, Chief Operating Officer
Jessica Lewis, Donor Database Manager
Amanda Maicach, Guest Services Manager
Andres Reyna, Guest Services Manager
Nick Reyna, Guest Services Manager
Molly Sandlin, Hospital Programs Coordinator
Jane Santos, Guest Services Manager
Elizabeth Sizemore, Guest Services Manager
Nellie Smith, Guest Services Manager
Hilary Stingley, Communications Manager
Sarah Tacker, Chief Financial Officer
Jason Thomas, House Operations Manager
Tanner Williams, Development Manager

“The on-site room at Dell Children’s while our grandson was in the NICU, including the waiting area, the warmth of the staff and volunteers, allowed us to gather and support our Elliott and his parents in his fight for survival. We are forever thankful.”

“Our twins were in the NICU at St. David’s Women’s Center of Texas and having the Family Room was a blessing during this difficult time.”

“While my granddaughter was in the hospital, my daughter and I were fortunate to stay at the Ronald McDonald House. It was a blessing to both of us and the rest of our family.”
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