

MESSAGES OF HOPE

VOL. 4 2012



The Gift Of A New Heart

At first, it seemed like Duwayne just had a typical stomach bug. The second-grader—a running back on his football team who was usually full of energy—had started vomiting and feeling run down. However, after a few weeks and several doctor visits, Duwayne was still not feeling like himself and was losing weight. One night in April, Duwayne woke up with his stomach swollen. His mother Angela took him to the hospital where a chest x-ray showed that his heart was not only enlarged and surrounded by fluid but also had developed a large, life-threatening blood clot.

The nine-year-old was transferred from his local hospital in Red Bank, NJ, to Beth Israel in Newark. From there, Duwayne was flown by helicopter to The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia where Angela and her husband Robert learned that Duwayne would need a heart transplant to survive—all the result of a viral infection.

While at CHOP, the staff told Angela and Robert about the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. "We were upset about where we were going to stay," explains Robert. "We found out that the House was the place to come." Since April, they have spent every night at the Chestnut Street House. "You can't beat this place," says Robert. "They take care of you like you are their own children."

Both Robert and Angela appreciate all of the amenities as well as the support of the staff and volunteers. "You certainly don't have to worry about starving here. You have volunteers that come in every day and prepare food for the families. You don't have to worry about transportation because you have the van," says Angela. "If there is anything that you need, they have it for you. The staff is wonderful. If we ever have a problem, the social worker helps us." Robert agrees. "All you have to do is ask," he says.

They also especially appreciate the support of the other families staying at the House. "You come to a place like this where you meet people you never knew and everyone is here to uplift one another. You think you've got it bad—there is someone you can talk to," says Robert. "There are people from all around the world and they are so friendly. Everyone just seems to get along."

After six long months of waiting, Duwayne finally received his heart on October 5. "He just broke down in tears when we told him they had a heart for him," says Angela. "All of the time he had been in the hospital he never complained about what he was going through—no tears or anything. He's been brave."

Duwayne was discharged from the hospital for outpatient care at the end of October and joined Angela and Robert at the House, where he was happy to receive a special check-in treat. "For kids, the first time you are here, they give you a toy," Duwayne explains. Since coming to the House, he has also enjoyed playing video games, trick or treating in his Ironman costume, and making friends with the other children in the House. "When they are having fun, they don't think about their sickness," says Robert.

Duwayne and his family are expecting to head back home by the end of November and will return once a month for follow-up care. Both Robert and Angela are so grateful that the House was there for them during their more than eight-month stay. "I don't know what we would do without it," says Robert. "It's so wonderful to be here; it's a wonderful place. The House became a part of me here."

If you would like to support families like the Sheard-Powells this holiday season by helping to cover the cost of their nightly stays, please complete and return the enclosed envelope or give online at www.philarmh.org/shareanight.



Marlene Weinberg,
President of the Board

Message From The President

Dear Friends,

What did you do in the past 30 days?

For many of us, over the course of the past month we've gone to work, made trips to the grocery store, seen a movie, and perhaps had a holiday meal with family and friends over Thanksgiving.

For 15 families at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, their last 30 days were spent far from home, staying close by their child's side in the hospital. In fact, 131 families over the course of this year have stayed with us for over a month. One family, the Chengs, has spent the past seven months at the House while their 10-month-old daughter Chaya receives treatment for pulmonary hypertension. Another family, the Blascos, has spent nearly five months with us while their infant daughter Kaitlyn is in the intensive care unit. And the Sheard-Powell family, as you read about in this issue's cover story, has already spent eight months at the House while their 10-year-old son Duwayne waited for and finally received a heart transplant.

It is hard to imagine spending that many nights away from home, not only coping with the stress and uncertainty of a child's illness but trying to manage a household from miles away.

While we only ask for a donation of \$15 per night to stay at our Houses, that really adds up for families staying for a month or more. So far, the longest length of stay for a family in 2012 was 235 days. That comes to a total of \$3,525—a tough amount to pay when you're already dealing with growing medical costs and time away from work.

That's why your gift to our Share A Night campaign this year is so important. When you give a donation to cover a family's nightly stay that makes things so much easier for families already facing a host of other challenges. Your support also makes it possible for us to never have to turn a family away due to inability to pay. That means families can stay as long as they need to—whether that is one night, one month, or one year—without worrying about the cost.

By mailing back the enclosed envelope with your donation, you'll help make the holidays a little brighter for families and their seriously ill children this season. While your gift of \$15 will cover the cost of one night for one family, I hope you will consider giving even more to help our most long-term families like the Sheard-Powells, the Blascos, and the Chengs. You can also give online at www.philarmh.org/shareanight.

Thank you so much for your support. We are blessed to have so many volunteers, staff, board members, and donors like you that help us help our families. I hope you and your family have a happy and healthy holiday season and a joyful new year.

Regards,

Marlene Weinberg

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235 days
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Giving Back By Making Meals



Families often tell us that the complimentary meals provided by our Guest Chef groups are one of the most helpful aspects of staying at our houses. Because they know firsthand just how important these meals can be, families sometimes decide to come back as Guest Chefs themselves once their child is finished treatment.

After spending more than two months at the Front & Erie House in 2010, Tom and Heather Auchenbach knew they wanted to give back in some way. "I think we knew as soon as we stayed here that we wanted to do something," says Heather. Today the family makes dinner at least once a year for other families staying at the House. Their most recent menu included sundried tomato turkey meatloaf, roasted red potatoes, glazed carrots, salad, and red velvet cupcakes.

The Auchenbachs stayed at the House while one of their newborn twins—Lily, now two—received treatment for intestinal atresia at St. Christopher's Hospital. With four other young children including Lily's twin sister Daisy, the Auchenbachs found the meals to be invaluable. "In terms of eating with a bigger family, it was so nice with people donating and coming to make dinner," says Tom. Heather agrees. "The meals were so helpful. They were one of the best parts about staying here," she says. "I never had to take time out of the crazy day to figure out what I was going to feed my kids and family. At the end of the day when you are emotionally spent it makes a huge, huge difference."

Now the Auchenbachs appreciate being able to help other families. "It is nice being on this end and giving back to people who can't control what is happening with their kids," says Tom. Heather thinks so, too. "It is such a small piece of everything that the House does to provide for all of these families," she says. "It is at least nice to feel like cooking dinner for one night can at least make a dent. If everyone feels that way and everyone plans dinner, then every meal will be covered every single night."

If you and your group would like to become Guest Chefs and help make sure meals are provided every night for the families who stay at our Houses, please visit www.philarmh.org/guestchef to learn more information and to sign up, as well as to view a complete list of previous Guest Chef groups.

Chestnut Street Kicks Off Healthy Breakfast Program

Families staying at our Chestnut Street House will now have access to a wide range of nutritious breakfast options as a result of our new Chestnut Street Healthy Breakfast Program. The continental breakfast program kicked off at the end of November thanks to a generous grant from Ace Charitable Foundation and will at first offer healthy selections once a week on Wednesdays. By the end of next year, the goal is to expand to offer continental breakfast provided by Guest Chef groups—nicknamed our Breakfast Buddies—and in-kind donors five days a week.

Would you like to be a Breakfast Buddy? Here's how it works. You and your group of up to six friends can sign up to come to our Chestnut Street House on available evenings from 7pm to 9pm to prepare, individually package, and stock the next morning's healthy breakfast options for approximately 40 to 50 people. Breakfast Buddies are responsible for purchasing and/or preparing all of the items that will be available at the next morning's breakfast. Items will be kept in our Healthy Breakfast Nook refrigerator and bakery cases until the next morning when families can grab items on their way to the hospital. Sample items to provide include:

- low-fat yogurt cups, yogurt parfaits, pre-packaged yogurt smoothies, and cottage cheese cups
- whole fruit, fruit slices in cups, fruit salad cups, applesauce cups, and raisin boxes
- whole wheat bread, English muffins, and bagels
- whole grain muffins
- sliced breakfast breads (such as banana, apricot, or zucchini bread)
- single serve oatmeal and whole grain cold cereal cups
- hard-boiled eggs
- breakfast burritos
- granola and oatmeal bars



ACE
Charitable
Foundation

Don't have time to be a Breakfast Buddy? We are also accepting ongoing wishlist donations of breakfast items from the list above to be dropped off at the House. For more information or to sign up today, contact Lori-Anne Miller at lori-anne@philarmh.org.

A Board Member's Perspective

Since 1993, I have been a member of the board of directors and it has been a wonderful experience in every way. It has been a privilege to represent an organization that helps families cope with life changing events as a result of their child's illness. As a board member, I have served on many committees throughout the years and the one that stands out for me most is my position as the co-chair of the Ronald McDonald Camp (RMC) program.

This year, nearly 200 campers attended RMC. This traditional overnight summer camp in the Poconos for children with cancer and their siblings takes place for one very special week in August. For that week I become part of a community that is truly remarkable. The campers forget about being sick and participate in all the activities available to them. The counselors leave behind their busy lives and focus fully on ensuring the campers' safety, well-being, and happiness. It is truly magical to witness! The love, the beauty, the caring, the friendships, and all the fun makes RMC such a special place. I look forward to many more years of being part of it.

To find out more about the RMC program, please visit www.philarmh.org/Camp.



Salli Mickelberg,
Board Member and Ronald
McDonald Camp Co-Chair

ConKerr Cancer And The Philadelphia Eagles Visit The Ronald McDonald Family Room

On Tuesday, September 18, ConKerr Cancer hosted a pajama party at the Ronald McDonald Family Room on the Oncology Floor of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia with some very special guests from the Philadelphia Eagles. Conkerr Cancer volunteers and Eagles players helped children sew beautiful, colorful pillowcases to brighten their rooms. Thank you to Conkerr Cancer and Philadelphia Eagles players Dominique-Rodgers Cromartie, Colt Anderson, David Sims, Kurt Coleman, and Curtis Marsh (and, of course, mascot Swoop!) for the great party.



Our two Ronald McDonald Family Rooms located on the Oncology & Bone Marrow Transplant and Cardiology Units at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia create a respite space for families in the hospital.

To learn more about our Family Room programs, visit www.philarmh.org/FamilyRooms.

Adopt A Camper Donors

Adopt-A-Pig

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To see more photos from Ronald McDonald Camp 2012,
please visit www.philarmh.org/RMCphotos.

We're So Thankful For...



1 Walgreens Support

Thank you to Walgreens for supporting our organization with their scannable campaign that ran in Walgreens stores throughout the Philadelphia region from September 7 through September 14. The scannables raised over \$2,400 which will help strengthen our mission of supporting families of seriously ill children by creating a community of comfort and hope.

2 Great Urban Race

For the second year in a row, the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House was a beneficiary of the Great Urban Race. On Saturday, September 8, this exciting scavenger hunt had contestants endure exciting mental and physical challenges while discovering everything the city of Philadelphia has to offer. Our clue asked participants to buy a scannable as part of the Walgreens promotion mentioned above. We thank all of the contestants who participated in the Great Urban Race this year for supporting the House!

3 New Maintenance Van

Thank you to SunGard Data Systems for providing us with a 1997 Ford Aerostar van. This van will serve as a maintenance and delivery vehicle and will greatly enhance operations around the Chestnut Street and Front & Erie Houses.

4 Run for the House 5K

Many thanks to the Delaware County Bar Association for coordinating the second annual 5K Run for the House. The run/walk took place at Ridley Creek State Park in Media, PA on Saturday, September 22. In the end, the Delaware County Bar Association brought in over \$5,800 for the families staying at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. (Not pictured.)

5 2012 Philadelphia magazine's Design Home

Thank you to everyone who supported the Philadelphia magazine's Design Home 2012®. The five weeks of public tours raised over \$60,000 to benefit the families we serve here at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. Our sincere appreciation goes out to all of the volunteers who donated their time to make this event possible. Special thanks to Sherry Litwer, Project Manager of the Design Home; Connie Willson and Sue Wenger, the Design Home chairs, and to all the other members of the Design Home committee. (Photo courtesy of Neil Houing.)

6 Board Room Refresh

We would like to thank John Neill Painting and Decorating of Merion Station—a family owned business since 1975 comprised of John Neill, Paul Neill, David Neill, and Suhaiba Neill-Cannon—for donating their products and services to refresh our board room walls at the Chestnut Street House.

7 Ice Cream Truck Visit

Special thanks to 11-year-old Carter Strid—who with the support of his parents Karen and Erik Strid of Bryn Mawr, PA—organized an ice cream truck visit to our Chestnut Street House on August 13 so that all of the families could enjoy an evening of delicious summer treats.

Introducing Our New Adopt A Room Partnership Program

The Adopt A Room partnership is a new program allowing you, your company, or organization to be the room sponsor of one of the 63 guest rooms at one of our two locations. Your funding will sponsor all of the families who sleep in that room throughout the year.

By partnering with us on our Adopt A Room program, you are doing more than making sure families have a place to sleep each night—as important as that is. You are making it easier for children to get the treatment they need and have their families close by their side, every step of the way. You are eliminating many of the financial challenges that come with traveling long distances for medical care so moms and dads can focus on their child's treatment. You are also enabling parents to get the support and rest they need to be there for their sick son or daughter and their other children.

There are limited Adopt A Room partnership opportunities available, and donors will have the first right of refusal for the next year. For more information on participating, visit www.philarmh.org/Adopt.



With your help, we can have an even greater impact!

Donations From The Heart, 7/1/2012-9/30/2012

\$25,000 and above

Estate of Dorothy A. Fessler
Philadelphia magazine's Design Home 2012
Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Philadelphia Region

\$10,000 to \$24,999

Katie's Crusaders
Lehigh Valley All Star Football Game
McLean Contributionship
Mr. and Mrs. Mark D. Turner

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Johnson & Johnson Matching Gift Program
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\$1,000 to \$4,999

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Due to space limitations, we are unable to list donations of less than \$500. All donations are sincerely appreciated.



\$450 donation
covers a family's one month stay



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Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House

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**GIVE THE GIFT OF HOME AND PEACE OF MIND TO
CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

\$15 will support one night's stay for a family in need

Contribute to the annual Share A Night campaign using the enclosed envelope or by visiting www.philarmh.org/shareanight.



The Sheard-Powell family stayed at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House for more than eight months while Duwayne waited for and finally received a heart transplant.

Read more about the Sheard-Powells on the front cover.

Check us out on:

