In the spring of 2016, Lora and Phil Falvo received the happy news that they were expecting an addition to their family. Soon after, their happiness changed to surprise and excitement as they learned they were expecting not one baby, but three.

“Already four, my wife Lora, stepson Nickolas, stepdaughter Julianna, and I didn’t know what to expect when we found out we were nearly doubling the size of our family,” Phil recalls. “Needless to say, our home was filled with all the love and joy of any family expecting a new baby, we just had it times three.”

On September 8, 2016, the Falvo family’s lives changed forever when Salvatore, Carmella, and Luca were born—eight weeks early. As with any high-risk case, Lora and the triplets were closely monitored throughout the pregnancy. And, as preemies, it was expected that the tiny siblings would stay in the neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) for a time before being discharged to go home.

Carmella and Luca were able to go home after five weeks, but Salvatore, who was diagnosed with aortic stenosis and chronic lung disease, would remain in the NICU. In the ensuing months, Sal would endure two surgical procedures, chronic hospitalizations, and two hospital changes—each one taking the family farther from their Mechanicsburg home: from Harrisburg to Hershey to Philadelphia.

At the same time, Luca began having his own challenges. He had a seizure on New Year’s Eve, and it was followed by months of daily seizure activity that would worsen with viral infections and also result in chronic hospitalizations. Sometimes Sal and Luca would be in the same room next to each other, sometimes a room or two apart. Two weeks after Sal’s transfer to Philadelphia, Luca joined him there. It was then that the family learned about the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House.

“Shortly after Sal was transferred to Philadelphia, a social worker came to see my wife and me,” Phil recalls. “She was a wonderful lady who obviously had a difficult job. As she walked us through the hospital’s amenities, she asked how far from Philadelphia we lived. When we told her two and a half hours away, her eyes lit up. I’ll never forget her telling us that the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House was a great charity that helped make stays for families like ours as comfortable as possible. As stressed as we were about our boys’ health issues and trying to keep our home lives moving forward, her words were so reassuring.”

Sadly, on April 25, 2018, Luca’s neurologist informed the Falvos that there was nothing more he could do to stop the baby’s seizures. On April 29, Luca passed away in his father’s arms.

“After spending time mourning Luca and saying goodnight to Sal, we returned to the House to try to sleep before we went home,” Phil remembers. “When we woke up, we showered and went to the kitchen to grab a quick bite, not realizing a volunteer group had made breakfast. The looks on our faces must have told our entire story. A kind volunteer asked if we were ok. We immediately began crying. Then, other families, volunteers, and employees came to hug us and share their sympathy.”

The Falvo family has spent more than 175 days at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House over the past 18 months, and with Sal’s ongoing complex health issues, they expect there will be more nights to come. It’s challenging for their family, but through it all, they are steadfastly grateful for their “home away from home,” full of friendly faces and truly incomparable support.

Phil says, “Their efforts, compassion, and philanthropy are the reason families like mine are able to lay down their head peacefully at night after a long day of advocating and fighting for their child.”

Today, Sal is doing well and can be found smiling from ear to ear at all those around him. Phil and Lora are hopeful that with continued therapeutic exercises, Sal will one day be able to walk—something they did not know would be possible months ago. The Falvo family is looking forward to time with family this holiday season and a new year of possibilities ahead.
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

This time of year, I often find myself reflecting on the people and things for which I am most grateful in the passing year. At PRMH, we are nearing completion of the largest building project we have ever undertaken, and we are in the home stretch of the most ambitious fundraising campaign in our history, Room in Our Hearts. There is so much for us to be grateful for in those two historic endeavors!

First, we received a $12.7 million gift this summer for our expansion project from AbbVie, a research-based global biopharmaceutical company. We also received $1 million from the Pennsylvania State Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). Taken together, these two gifts have bolstered our momentum as we close the calendar year and round the corner into the final phase of our $55 million fundraising effort.

With these gifts—and many others from generous individuals and organizations—we are on track to open the Jill and Alan B. Miller Tower for occupancy in January and complete the full renovation of the Chestnut Street House by the third quarter of 2019. But we still have much more to do to cross the final finish line, and your support helps make it possible.

If you have already made your gift to the Room in Our Hearts campaign, we thank you. If you have not yet participated, I hope you will join us in this historic endeavor for the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House.

As we celebrate these successes, I would be remiss if I didn’t also thank our incredible expansion project team. P. Agnes, Watchdog, Ewing Cole, and all of our subcontractors, along with our staff, have kept our expansion project on budget and on time.

I am also very thankful to Philadelphia Eagles Head Coach Doug Pederson and Former Head Coach Dick Vermeil, who partnered with us to create some external marketing and the very fun Coaches’ Challenge social media campaign. The Coaches’ Challenge has helped reinforce all of our efforts, generating awareness of all the important things we do and attracting donations. If you haven’t already done so, visit www.CoachesChallenge.org and take the Challenge!

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to you—the volunteers, neighbors, donors, families, and friends, who make everything we do each year possible. We are so grateful for your continued commitment and support, now and always.

With great appreciation,

Peter J. Degnan
Board President

PS: If you are interested in helping us finish our construction work, visit www.PhilaRMH.org/MakeRoom or contact Lawrence Jacobson at lawrence@philarmh.org.

SAVE THE DATE

10th Annual Change the Luck of a Child Telethon

March 26, 2019 from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The 10th Annual Change the Luck of a Child Telethon will air live from the CBS 3 station on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Funds raised will help Ronald McDonald House Charities further its mission to support seriously ill children throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania, Southern New Jersey, and Delaware. During last year’s 14-hour televised fundraiser, more than $1.1 million was raised to benefit local children. Due to the tremendous outpouring of support from our sponsors and donors, the 2019 Telethon will again be on-air all day.

To learn about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Chris Callanan at chris@philarmh.org.

Guest family at last year’s Change the Luck of a Child Telethon
Our Houses, Family Rooms, and Camp are all powered by the kindness, warmth, and spirit of our dedicated volunteers. Over the last 10 years, Chris Heine, has been one of these individuals who give so much of their time to help our guest families.

“The first time I heard about the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House was through Katie’s Krusaders, working at their golf outing and Bowl-A-Thon,” says Chris. While helping Katie’s Krusaders, he met the mother of a child named Georgiana, who attended the school where he used to teach. Georgiana was in the first grade and was being treated for leukemia at a local hospital.

“I asked her mom if I could come down and do some science with the kids in the ward,” says Chris. “While there, her mom said to me that one of her fears was that her daughter might be forgotten. When I got back to school, we organized the Georgiana Committee. We hosted our first Georgiana Walk and continued until we made the $30,000 needed to underwrite the construction of room 206 at the Front & Erie House. Georgiana will never be forgotten!”

Chris and the Georgiana Committee organized a Cornwells Elementary Guest Chef group at the Front & Erie House and to this day, they still cook on the first Tuesday of the month. In addition to serving as a Guest Chef, Chris helps families when they arrive, gives tours of the House, drives families to and from the hospital in the van, and helps with any other needs that may arise. Chris will go above and beyond for the guest families. “I even drove a family to the airport in a snowstorm so they could make one of the last flights out of Philadelphia,” says Chris.

Chris is also a proud PRMH Ambassador and has helped out with the Read for the House program and other fundraisers, including the Philalympics. PRMH Ambassadors help raise awareness about the House and its mission and Chris is always happy to share his knowledge. Chris says, “I love telling the story of the first Ronald McDonald House to Guest Chefs and giving tours!”

All of our volunteers have favorite moments at the House. For Chris, it is watching families meet other families. “There are 3 little girls who fly in from 3 different states and their moms make follow up hospital appointments on the same day so they can all see each other.” says Chris. “The girls have become close friends.”

If you would like to become a volunteer for PRMH, visit www.PhilaRMH.org/Volunteer.

We are thrilled that new passenger vans will be coming soon to both the Chestnut Street and the Front & Erie House. These vans will be used primarily to transport guest families to and from local hospitals. An anonymous donor provided funds for a new large passenger van at the Front & Erie House and Central City Toyota will once again be donating two Toyota Sienna vans at the Chestnut Street House. Central City Toyota has been a long-time partner of the House, donating vans since 1985. We are very grateful for both contributions, which will allow us to keep moving as we get closer to the opening of our new tower.

Our dedicated and friendly volunteers will be driving the vans and ensuring that guest families make all their appointments. If you would like to volunteer to be a driver, contact Linda Parry at linda@philarmh.org.
WE’RE ALMOST THERE!

After years of planning, budgeting, demolition, and building, the largest construction project in our history is finally nearing completion, and we expect to officially open the Jill and Alan B. Miller Tower to guest families in January.

Once complete, the newly expanded Chestnut Street House will include: a stunning new family welcome center; a state-of-the-art cooking and dining center with seating for up to 175 people; 104 additional family bedrooms, including eight fully wheelchair-accessible bedrooms, and a patient-protected guest bedroom floor; quiet lounges, workstations, and indoor and outdoor play areas for children of all ages; and so much more!

The last few months have seen these spaces begin to take shape as we finished drywall and flooring in guest rooms and common spaces; installed doors, bathroom fixtures, thermostats and electrical devices; began painting finished spaces; and made final furnishing selections. With much of the inside work near completion, we also have begun restoring and rebuilding outdoor spaces, starting with the excavation of the basin at the front of the mansion and the pouring of new sidewalks on Ludlow Street.

This exciting work has been made possible by Room in Our Hearts—the most ambitious fundraising campaign in our history. We have been fortunate to receive tremendous support for Room in Our Hearts, but there is still more to do—and there is room for you! PhilaRMH.org/MakeRoom.

IRA ROLLOVER GIFTS BENEFIT THE HOUSE AND YOU

As 2018 draws to a close, we hope you are considering a gift to the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. And, if you are 70½ or older, we want to be sure you know the tax benefits of supporting the House through your traditional IRA account.

Annual withdrawals from traditional retirement accounts are required* after age 70½ and are subject to income tax. By donating money from your IRA directly to Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, you can avoid paying income tax on required withdrawals.

What Do I Need to Know?
- Must be at least age 70½ at the time of distribution
- Max distribution is $100,000 total each year
- Gifts must be made by December 31 to receive tax benefits that calendar year

What are Benefits of Giving through an IRA Rollover?
- Avoid taxes with this type of gift
- Satisfy required minimum distribution without incurring income taxes

To initiate your gift, please contact your IRA plan administrator or your financial advisor today.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

For more information on the Chestnut Street House expansion project, or to discuss additional ways that you can help, contact:

Lawrence Jacobson
lawrence@philarmh.org or 267.969.6201

For further information about supporting the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, contact:

Lawrence Jacobson at 267.969.6201 or lawrence@philarmh.org.

The Federal Tax ID for the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House is 23-7377505.

*The penalty for skipping a required minimum distribution is 50% of amount that should have been withdrawn.
IN-KIND CONSTRUCTION DONATIONS

THANK YOU TO OUR IN-KIND PARTNERS

As construction comes to a close over the next year, we look forward to highlighting the partners who have helped us greatly during construction by donating in-kind materials and labor behind the scenes. There are many moving parts to any construction project, and the following companies have helped in various ways, always keeping our guest families in mind.

Kisses for Kyle
Michael’s Way
Sheraton Philadelphia University City

Over the last 18 months, we were committed to maintaining our occupancy of 45 guest bedrooms during construction. To accomplish that goal, we had to house families off-site, and we thank the following partners for helping us make it possible: Kisses for Kyle, Michael’s Way, and Sheraton Philadelphia University City.

Penn Power Systems

Thank you to Penn Power for donating a temporary power generator on-site for emergency preparedness during construction.

Penn Power Systems

FROMM Electric Supply Corp.

Thank you to Fromm Electric Supply Corp., and their vendor partners for the discounted lighting and guest room refrigerators.

Fishman Flooring Solutions
Div. of L. Fishman & Son, Inc

Thank you to Fishman Flooring for donating all of the floor base, floor glue, adhesive, and vinyl flooring in our tower. This donation was made in honor of a PRMH guest family who stayed with us in 2018.

Paul Rabinowitz Glass
Glass Enterprises Inc
Virginia Mirror

Thank you to Paul Rabinowitz glass, Glass Enterprises Inc, and Virginia Mirror for donating all of the guest bedroom vanity mirrors and installation.

US Roofing
Local 30

Thank you to our roofing partners for donating materials and labor to replace our existing roof and build our new roof. Our roofing partners: US Roofing, Firestone Building Products, Carlisle Roofing Materials, and Roofers Union Local 30.

Temporary power generator
New vanity mirrors
The roof in the new tower
WAYS TO HELP THE HOUSE

In 2019, we will open our new tower and with more families coming in, our operating costs will be increasing. There are many ways you can help us open the new tower and allow us to grow while making sure that we can accommodate as many families as possible.

DONATE TO OUR WISH LIST

We’ll need numerous items to fill the House, and with your help we will have everything ready to welcome more than twice as many families than we currently do every year. From silverware to cleaning supplies to basic comfort items, your contribution will make sure our guest families can focus on their children and not have to worry about items they could not bring with them from home.

Visit www.PhilaRMH.org/WishList to purchase items today.

ADOPT A ROOM

The Adopt A Room partnership program allows individuals, companies or organizations to sponsor one of the guest rooms at our two Houses, providing a warm place to sleep to all of the families who will stay in that room throughout the year. Room sponsorships can be split between two families or groups. Individuals can also adopt a family by sending in a donation that underwrites the family’s stay at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House for a specific time period. As we will greatly increase the number of guest rooms, Adopt A Room donors will be needed more than ever.

If you would like to adopt a room, contact Chris Callanan at chris@philarmh.org

PURCHASE A BRICK OR PAVING STONE

As part of the Room in Our Hearts campaign, the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House is offering a limited opportunity to engrave bricks and pavers with personal tributes. These special mementos, which will be placed in the outdoor common areas of the new ground level patio and dining area, offer a timeless way to recognize someone special, commemorate your time with PRMH, or acknowledge a place of business this holiday season.

There are three options available for purchase: 8”x24” pavers for $2,500, 8”x8” bricks for $1,000, or 4”x8” bricks for $500. Contact Laura Van Tassell at lvantasell@philarmh.org for more information.

STAY TUNED FOR PRMH’S 45TH ANNIVERSARY

Everyone at PRMH is excited that we will be hitting a big milestone next year. It will be 45 years since the first Ronald McDonald House in the world was founded—right here in Philadelphia. Today, there are 365 Ronald McDonald Houses all over the world, and they all follow the model that was established here with the vision of Dr. Audrey Evans and the help of Jimmy Murray. The event will take place in the fall and details will be shared as soon as they are finalized.

This year we celebrated our 44th Anniversary with the Show Your Stripes campaign, where supporters throughout the city wore red and white stripped gear, and at the Champions of Hope event at the Fairmount Water Works. We are grateful to everyone who attended and our sponsors, including our presenting sponsor, FirsTrust Bank.

At the Champions of Hope Awards, we took the opportunity to honor three outstanding individuals who have made substantial contributions towards the welfare of families and children:

Drs. Carol and Jerry Shields from Wills Eye Hospital and Pat Pasquariello, III, from P. Agnes.
PREMIER PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: DIETZ & WATSON

Our Premier Corporate Partners go above and beyond to support the House so that we can continue providing a community of comfort and hope to families of seriously ill children year round. We are truly grateful to these organizations for believing in our mission and for wanting to help our guest families. One of these companies, Dietz & Watson, is always ready to jump in and do anything they can.

“When we first started working with the Ronald McDonald House, we were just so impressed with the level of selflessness and care that the staff and all the volunteers show toward the children and families that use the facilities,” says Steve Riley, Communications & Partnership Manager at Dietz & Watson. “Once we saw that first hand, we knew we had to become more involved.”

Dietz & Watson staff have come to many of the House events to grill and provide food at no cost. This year they participated at the Front & Erie 10th anniversary, the Show Your Stripes Block Party, and the Chestnut Street House Lighting.

“We love doing all the PRMH events we can, like the Show Your Stripes and the House Lighting events,” says Steve. “We especially like events where we get a chance to see the kids and their families close up and give them a chance to enjoy some of our tasty Dietz & Watson foods. Talk about comfort food for people that really need it.”

Dietz & Watson will also underwrite the Grab and Go area in the new kitchen, so that families are able to pick up food quickly on their way to appointments and not worry about what they will be eating. Steve says, “We are looking forward to donating our meats and cheeses on a regular basis to the Chestnut House once it is all finished so families will have easy access to our food every day there!”

For more information on how your company can become a Premier Partner, please contact Chris Callanan at chris@philarmh.org

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

With so much space in the new Jill and Alan B. Miller Tower, we will have a lot of bare walls! We are holding a call to artists to help us fill up the tower with artwork from the community. We need your help to make our new tower feel just as warm and welcoming as our House always has been. The artwork on floors 2 through 8 of our new building will each have their own distinct theme. Choose a theme below and follow the instructions at the bottom of the page to submit your artwork! All winners will be invited to a special reception in late spring 2019 to see their art on display.

**OUR HEROES**
Everyone has a hero: someone they admire, respect, and whom they see as role models. For us, it’s our co-founders, Dr. Audrey Evans and Jimmy Murray. Who is your hero? Let your artwork show the world who you look up to.

**OUR FAMILIES**
At the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, we know the importance of family. Families come in all shapes and sizes. This theme of art should showcase the love and support that comes from family, no matter how you define it.

**OUR DREAMS**
Our dreams are the things we strive for, the hopes that keep us motivated, and the stories that we experience while we are asleep. They represent limitless imagination. Use your artwork to illustrate your dreams.

**OUR JOURNEY**
Some journeys are fun, others are incredibly difficult. We learn from every journey that we experience in life. This theme should illustrate a meaningful journey in your life, whether it is current or happened long ago.

**OUR CITY**
Philadelphia has always welcomed visitors with open arms and warm hearts. It’s no coincidence that the world’s first Ronald McDonald House opened here in 1974! Illustrate your love of Philadelphia or your home town.

**OUR WORLD**
The world is vast and full of diversity. When you think of our world, what do you think of? How can you define our world in your own unique creation?

**OUR UNIVERSE**
It is humbling to think how small we are in the vastness of our universe. Are you able to put into a visual image how you perceive the universe?

**SUBMISSIONS SHOULD ADHERE TO THE FORMAT LISTED BELOW:**

**Paper:** 11” x 11” Plain white paper (Since 11”x11” paper is not a standard size, you can start from an 11”x17” sheet and cut it down to size.) Contact Michael Kelly at mkelly@philarmh.org or 267.969.6211 if you need us to provide you with paper.

**Media:** All media are welcome.

Please submit an entry form with each piece, and include the artist’s name, title of piece and contact information. Existing artwork may be submitted. The form can be downloaded at www.PhilaRMH.org/EntryForm

Mail or deliver your artwork to:
Natalie Malawey-Ednie
2218 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

**QUESTIONS?**
Contact Michael Kelly at mkelly@philarmh.org or 267.969.6211.
Read for the House 2019

Children can significantly help families staying at the House by participating in the Read for the House program, presented by Kramer Kirsh insurance Group and Kramer insurance Center. By collecting pledges for their reading minutes during the month of February, middle and elementary school students can improve their reading comprehension, grammar, and critical thinking skills, and will hopefully develop a love of reading and community service that will last long after the program ends.

Sign up today at www.PhilaRMH.org/Read.

Prefer the newsletter electronically or have comments to share?

Let us know at enews@philarmh.org