



Ronald McDonald House
BRITISH COLUMBIA



A Letter From Home

Newsletter January 2010

Family Dinners with SOS

by Cara Roth, SOS Ronald McDonald House Liaison.

Wednesday is my favourite night of the week! Wednesday night means grocery shopping, cooking together, visiting with friends and finally sitting down with a group of people and enjoying a home cooked meal. The faces at the table may change from week to week, but there is one sure thing: the chance to relax with a good meal and even better company.

Smiling Over Sickness (SOS) is a student club at UBC. We are committed to helping sick children smile by volunteering throughout the community, organizing fundraising activities, and promoting awareness about local and international charities for children. Much of the fundraising done by SOS goes directly to Ronald McDonald House® BC in the form of grocery money, and the hard work of the members allows for an amazing meal to be made each week.

The Ronald McDonald House BC dinner program is the most popular in the entire SOS club, and for good reason. Each week the volunteers create a meal from an inspired menu, share it with the

families and House volunteers, and, after dinner, run activities for the children.

Our menu is ever changing—in four years no two meals have been the same! We try to provide healthy, home cooked meals that everyone can enjoy, and of course, indulge in. We hope that our SOS dinners not only provide sustenance, but also a chance to relax and enjoy the evening and company present. The most rewarding thing for us is seeing the smiles along with empty plates at the end of the evening.

Last October brought about a fresh set of volunteers, and Jacqueline Luk and Cara Roth in the SOS Liaison positions.

Enough thanks cannot be given to everyone at the Ronald McDonald House BC for allowing us to invade your home every Wednesday, and letting us share something with you. Connie Clark, an energetic, compassionate, and amazing woman, makes SOS dinners a reality by communicating with the SOS liaisons, informing us what's going on in the House, and most importantly welcoming us with a smile and hug each week. Dinners together are important in any family, and that's a little bit of "home" that we try to bring into the House each week!





A Message from the CEO

What an incredible year we had in 2009. We are thankful for all the wonderful support we received from donors, volunteers, and members of the community. We were able to help so many families in their time of need and were inspired by their strength and resilience.

We are continuing to develop plans which will allow us to serve more BC and Yukon families who must travel to Vancouver to be treated at BC Children's Hospital, and we look forward to announcing these exciting plans in early 2010. Please contact me to set up a tour of our existing house and to discuss how you can get involved in our exciting new developments.

As you embark on this new year, I encourage you to support our families by making a donation online or becoming involved as a volunteer at the House that Love Built.

I wish you all the best in the upcoming year and look forward to seeing you in the near future. For more information on Ronald McDonald House BC developments, please contact me at rpass@rmhbc.ca or 604-736-2957.

**Sincerely,
Richard Pass
CEO**

Molly's Story

My name is Molly. In September 2008, I may have seemed familiar to you because I was very much like most other 14 year old girls, and my family was like many other families that you may know. My older brother Kevin had just started his first year of university (we were so proud of him) and my younger brother Alex was very excited to finally be one of the big kids in his elementary school, as he was starting the seventh grade. Mom and Dad were doing what they always do: coming home from work, asking if we had any homework, planning tomorrow, next week and even next month.

I was starting grade 9, confident and excited. Coach was getting ready to start the new basketball season, but I thought that my knee was quite sore. No surprise, I had been playing basketball all summer for our junior girls zone team. We had been doing a lot of running and jumping. Still, we thought that we should go and get it looked at. My doctor knew that there was a problem when he saw the tumor in my x-ray and on the day of my school's Terry Fox Run, he called Mom. I needed to be put on crutches right away. Within days I was sent to Vancouver, had a biopsy, and was diagnosed with bone cancer – the same type that Terry Fox had. I went from planning a year of schoolwork and basketball to planning a year of surgeries and chemotherapy. We were all very scared.

Our first month in Vancouver was spent mostly in hospital rooms and hotel rooms. Mom and Dad promised we would find a place that we could call home, but I didn't believe them. Home was in Grand Forks. On Halloween day, when I was discharged from the hospital, they took me to visit Ronald McDonald House. I didn't want to go. I was tired and not feeling very well when Connie met us at the front door. Standing behind her was a boy dressed as a six foot tall kissing booth, and his mom was dressed as a red Lego piece. I could also see that there were a lot of little princesses running about. We could hear the laughter and feel their joy as we toured the house. The last room that we looked at that day was the TV room.

I sat down on the big couch, looked up at Connie, and burst into tears. She might have thought that I was a crazy person, but I was just so relieved to have found a place that we could call home, where we could finally unpack our bags.

The little boys in the house always made my heart do a little flip-flop whenever they talked to me, and the little girls in the house were so much fun to play with. Best of all is that I've always wanted a little sister. Jessica is 8 years old and I found her at Ronald McDonald House. While I was going through treatment the other kids were my inspiration. Many of us were there for different reasons but if they could be strong and brave, then maybe I could be too.

Ronald McDonald House is a very special



place. It makes it possible for families like mine to stay together, and that was the most important thing in the world to me. I also met some of my very best friends there. We understand each other because we are all in the same boat. The staff and volunteers of the house understand too, because they are there with us each step of the way. There was always someone that I could turn to for advice or for a hug.

All of the friends of Ronald McDonald House try to make bad days good again, because they know that every day is special and that happiness is the best medicine of all.



Hollywood Comes to Ronald McDonald House BC

This past October, the families of Ronald McDonald House BC were treated to a visit from High School Musical star Zac Efron. Zac spent an evening at the House and was able to meet each of our families one-on-one for a special visit with his fans. His enthusiasm, positive attitude, and great rapport with the kids made his visit a hit for everyone at the House. Thank you, Zac, for thinking of us and for taking time to brighten the lives of our families!

Amazing Journey

This fun-filled contest, held on July 18th, 2009, pitted teams against each other in Amazing Race-style challenges. The brave teams collected pledges, and then matched wits all the way from Granville Island to the House, where they were welcomed with a BBQ. The glorious weather and the enthusiastic participation of House families made victory even sweeter. This year's event raised \$53,000, and we look forward to a bigger, better, and wackier event next year!

A Home for the Holidays

Santa was good to us this year at Ronald McDonald House BC! The children woke up on Christmas morning to presents and treats galore, and enjoyed a home-cooked turkey feast. We would like to thank our generous supporters for making this special day possible, and for giving our families a loving "home away from home" for the holidays.

Special thanks to the following groups and individuals who helped us to spread Christmas cheer:

- Remcan Projects
- Dave Sidhu Family
- Tsawwassen Business Ladies
- Church of Scientology (Erika Knapil)
- Cossette Communications
- Leah Byron
- Kitsilano Secondary
- US Consulate General
- Ernie and Luz Elena Fleischer
- Sauder School of Business
- Lord Tweedsmuir Secondary
- Golden West Bakery
- Rachel Campbell, Julia & James Smith



Staff Announcements

Please join us in welcoming Natalie Code (Manager of Finance), Robyn Corson (Administrative Assistant), and Michelle Hannigan (Night Manager) to the RMH BC family.

Dorothy Marshall and Erica Paras have moved on to new homes and new opportunities, and we wish them all the best for the future.



A Magical Evening

The stars came out on October 3rd for the 2009 House of Stars Gala! This event, held at the Four Seasons Hotel, was a tremendous success and raised a record \$125,000 to benefit families with seriously ill children staying at Ronald McDonald House BC.

The deliciously sweet evening featured performances by the Surrey Youth Orchestra and vocalist Angela Kyjanka, with **Global TV's** Steve Darling and Kristi Gordon as emcees. The 380 guests dined and danced in style, and learned firsthand the impact they make on the lives of families in need through a heartfelt presentation by the Wilcox family.

We would like to thank our many sponsors for making this event a success, including our presenting sponsor, **Freedom 55 Financial**.

We are also very pleased to thank **McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd. and its lower mainland Franchisees** who donated an additional \$45,000 raised from McHappy Day® and Coin Box proceeds which was announced at the Gala by Regional Vice President Rob Chiasson.



Halloween Cheer: **Not** Your Average Holiday

Pumpkins and costumes and treats, oh my! The holy trinity of the Halloween season was not forgotten at Ronald McDonald House BC as volunteers, family and staff members alike left no stone unturned in their preparation of another successful Halloween week.

"Halloween, just like all the other holidays, is very special at Ronald McDonald House BC," said Richard Pass, CEO. "It's very important that we make these times very memorable and special by doing all we can to facilitate the holiday spirit."

This past Halloween offered many opportunities for spooky fun, from pumpkin carving with the ADPi Sorority to a haunted house tour with the BC Ambulance Service to

a ghoulishly delicious Halloween luncheon. Most importantly, the kids had a chance to dress up, eat candy, and just be kids.

For this reason, holidays at RMH BC are treated with reverence; they are perfect opportunities for families to enjoy the present and not worry about the next treatment or operation. Celebrating holidays like Halloween helps children's lives continue as normally as possible amid trips to the hospital. And by all the accounts of the smiling faces, it is easy to see the necessity of the holidays, especially in creating a home away from home for so many of these families.



Lending a Helping Hand

We are so thankful for the wonderful support that we received from many caring organizations and individuals, including the following:

We would like to thank **the Szego family** for becoming our newest Adopt a Room sponsors.

Special thanks to **Trevor Linden**, who recently paid a visit to the Williams family. His ongoing support to the House is greatly appreciated.

We are also very fortunate in our dedicated volunteers who devote their time and energy to organizing fundraising events:

The Cadillac Club of British Columbia raised funds for us in August through the 5th Annual Cadillac Car Show, a fascinating showcase of classic cars.

On December 23rd, **Venue Nightclub** partied for a cause, with all door ticket sales to their "Wicked Christmas" event going to RMH BC!

We would also like to thank all the organizers and participants who took part in the 11th Annual **TD Financial Group Dunk Tank**, which raised over **\$81,000!**

True Consulting recently presented us with \$13,680, raised at their annual hockey tournament. We would like to thank the organizers of this event for their continued support.

We would also like to acknowledge **Mike Millions**, organizer of the 8th Annual Ronald McDonald House BC Charity Golf Tournament in Fort St. John, which raised over \$18,000 this summer.