

# Heartstrings

Fall/Winter 2019

*Hope Has a New Address!*  
*4223 Royal Pine Drive*



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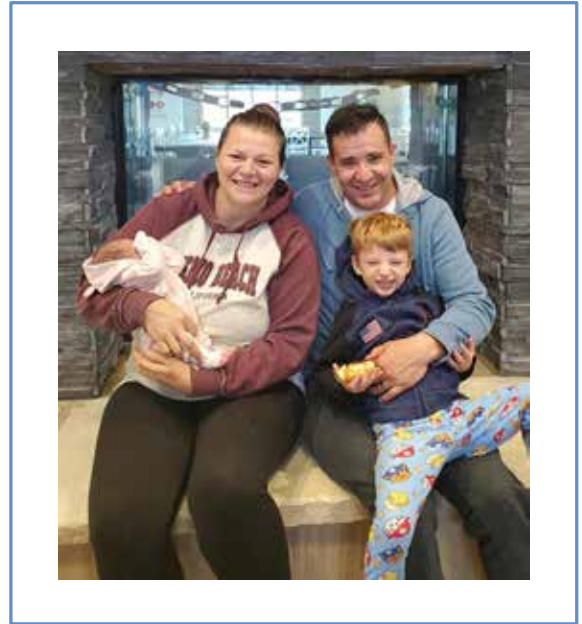
**Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®**  
of Southern Colorado

# Meet Our First Family

***"You need to go directly to the ER."***

These weren't the words Pamela or Justin Allaart thought they would hear at their routine midwife appointment in early August. At 31 weeks into their second pregnancy, everything had been unremarkable up to that point.

**The findings were that Pamela had a severe case of pre-eclampsia.** Admitted to UHealth, Memorial North, testing revealed that her liver was shutting down; her body was rejecting the baby's placenta. Further testing showed that her and Justin's baby hadn't grown since 29 weeks' gestation.



***An emergency C-Section was ordered.*** Pamela and Justin were made aware of possible outcomes - the baby might be stillborn, and/or Pamela might have kidney disease.



Together, this family held onto hope as they prayed for the best outcome. Jenny, Pamela's Mom, made plans to come from Iowa.

Born on August 16th at 33.5 weeks gestation, Uriyah weighed just 3 pounds, 9 ounces.

Jenny arrived while Pamela was recovering from surgery at UHealth. As no one predicted the Allaart's routine appointment would have them hospitalized and delivering their baby here - *in a city that wasn't their own* - they began to search for area hotels, knowing Uriyah would remain hospitalized for a prolonged period. They found the costs associated with lodging and food to be prohibitive.

***They didn't know what they were going to do.***

What they DID know is that they would find a way to remain by Uriyah's side while she was struggling to grow at Children's Hospital, Colorado, Colorado Springs.

The Allaart family leaned into one another and did what they do - they prayed. Within the hour, they learned that the new Ronald McDonald House was open for families starting THAT DAY. They learned they could stay there; that they would be within eyesight of their sweet baby girl.



Walking and rolling through the doors without fanfare, **Pamela, Justin and big brother Judah, along with Grandma Jenny, became the FIRST FAMILY to stay at the new Ronald McDonald House.**



"Finding this place and staying at your House was a Godsend." Jenny said. She was sure her prayers had been heard and were answered.

Justin agreed. Being differently abled, he said, "It's as if God designed every inch of this House for our family." Pamela was overwhelmed. "What a gift it is to stay in this House. And, for it to be ADA compliant is incredible." Justin added, "I can do everything here," he said, "Including taking care of Pamela and Judah while the hospital takes care of Uriyah..."



Pamela finished his thought, saying, "It has been such a blessing," she went on "Having just had surgery, I would not have been able to get Justin's wheelchair in and out, do our laundry or even be much of a help with food."

One month in to their stay at the House, Uriyah is thriving – and so is their family. Feeling at HOME, Grandma Jenny wanted to help organize the kitchen. Three-year-old Judah 'cleans' the small children's kitchen at meal times, telling others, "Watch out for my pile of dirt" while he

sweeps. He makes and serves delicious pretend food. While lingering at the fish tank, Judah picked out his favorite, informing others, "He's the biggest because he eats everyone else's food!"



***When you're only three and you've stayed in the same place for a month, it begins to feel like home.*** His Mom and Dad agree.

"Everybody is so nice here. Everyone is comfortable getting real with people in real situations." Justin said. "I don't have to tread lightly." He went on, "*The staff and volunteers, you can tell that they want to be here.* It's not just their job." Pamela agreed. "***We've experienced real compassion and caring from the hearts of everyone here - including other families.***"

Closing her eyes, Pamela said, "There is SO MUCH PEACE here. *Your House allows us to take a much needed breath.* When we're not with Uriyah, we can even relax, knowing she's continuing to grow and to thrive, and is just a minute away." Looking at Judah, she said, "And, he loves it here." Justin smiled and said, "***We just can't thank you enough.***" With that, he and Judah wheeled outside, racing down the ramp and to the sidewalk 'track'.



# Seven Questions For Beth



## What brought you to Ronald McDonald House Charities?

After working with at-risk and incarcerated youth for 12 years in the Colorado Springs community, I was in need of a change. Still wanting to work with children, I was drawn to the Ronald McDonald House when I saw they were looking for an Executive Director. From the moment I walked in the doors to the House on Logan Street, a beautifully kept 100+ year old House, I knew this was a special place, a place I wanted to belong. Nearly 18 years ago I said "yes, please" when being offered the position; a decision I have never once regretted.

## Where was the Charity in terms of the House, staff, volunteers, families served when you began?

There is a certain energy that resonates within the walls of the Ronald McDonald House; a warmth, an embrace. The House on Logan street immediately welcomes you and draws you in. When I joined the team in 2001, the House had a total of 8 bedrooms for families. We had 2 full-time staff, 1 part-time staff, a night manager who lived on site and weekend managers. We had about 50 volunteers and meals were provided to families a few times a week. The Ronald McDonald House was the core program for our Chapter, and we served about 300 families a year within the walls of the House.

## What drove the need to expand?

During the economic downturn we witnessed a growing need within our community. Many families were without insurance and dependent on emergency rooms to treat their children's illnesses. Our local hospitals experienced an influx of hospitalized children, often with RSV or Pneumonia, or with illnesses that with some prevention or early intervention, could have been treatable without hospitalization. It was a time where budgets were tight for families, and health was impacted. I was so proud of our Board who, at the time, agreed we needed to expand our services to address the growing needs our community was facing. Thus, in 2007 and 2008, we opened the first two Ronald McDonald Family Rooms in the State of Colorado (rooms within the hospital walls designed for families to receive respite steps away from their child's hospital bed), and Colorado's first Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, a traveling mobile unit supporting the health and well being of children who for numerous reasons had barriers to accessing health care. We went from serving 300 to 5,000 children and families per year in a short amount of time.



A few years later, Children's Hospital entered into our community with a relationship with UC Health, which the City had contracted with to take over the operations of Memorial Hospital. Children's Hospital's presence in Colorado attracted more children and families in need from Southern Colorado to Colorado Springs for their medical treatment. It was only a matter of time, we knew that Children's Hospital would need to expand their system to address Southern Colorado's need, and doing so meant RMHCSC would also need to expand.



## In the process to expand was the intention always to build?

We knew that we needed to have our services wherever the children were hospitalized. Families needed to be in eyesight and walking distance to the hospital. So, in 2016, when Children's Hospital announced they were building a hospital in northern Colorado Springs, we knew we would need to move to northern Colorado Springs as well, remaining as close as possible to the



families in need. Understanding where Children's was building the hospital, we knew that we were going to need to build a new facility. And doing so, gave so much opportunity for our House! For decades we worked within the walls of a beautiful old home that we modified to best work for our families, but it was far from perfect. Building a new House allowed us to put into action all the amenities we dreamed of having for our families – it would be ADA compliant with a game room, a play room, a movie room, a reading nook, tucked in alcoves for quiet moments, bedrooms with their own bathrooms, a beautiful big kitchen and dining area, amenities for local families, the sky was the limit!

### **What, in your mind, were some of the hurdles, highlights and milestones from the time the commitment to build was made to the day RMHC opened it's doors on Royal Pine Drive?**

Creating and building a new Ronald McDonald House that was 4 times the size of our previous House, and with a goal to raise the funds to open the doors of the new House as close as possible to the new Children's Hospital's opening was a CHALLENGE. We were overwhelmed with the thought that within a few years, we would need to raise enough funds to begin building and complete the project, quickly. Doing such a task required the right team, and we were blessed beyond belief with having RTA Architects and Colarelli Construction take on the project – willing to work within the time limitations and without sacrificing quality in constructing a most perfect House for our families, where every inch was thoroughly thought out with our families in mind. We were further blessed when a most wonderful gift was delivered to all of the Ronald McDonald House chapters that were facing expansion. In 2018 with Abbvie Pharmaceuticals gift of \$4.8 million to RMHC of Southern Colorado, our goal of opening alongside Children's Hospital was made possible! And then, watching our community in action with so many coming to see if they could be a part of opening the new House, gifts small and large, new faces ready to volunteer and help out – it was, and is, incredibly magical to experience. Our community understands the crises our families face, and they have rallied in such wonderful ways to meet their needs. Truly, this Charity is blessed beyond measure.



### **But moving in is a beginning to a process not an end?**

Very much so. Having a new and much larger House with more amenities to broaden our scope of services to families with seriously ill children is the beginning of a new chapter for RMHC of Southern Colorado. With the House placed in a more prominent location, and a growing need of pediatric services in Southern Colorado, we are quickly understanding the new House brings new reach and we are identifying ways to best serve the families while being a true partner to not only others that serve children, but our community as a whole. We are here to help in meaningful ways to better children's and families' lives.

### **Where would you like to see the Charity go moving forward?**

There are multiple programs that fall under Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado. For our cornerstone program, the Ronald McDonald House, I truly foresee all focuses on best serving the families who walk through the doors, and developing strong relations with our surrounding community being our top priority. We want



our neighbors to know we are here to support and better our community as well.

For our other programs, I foresee additional expansion. We placed our Care Mobile program on pause last year and are looking closely at a new operating partner to broaden our reach throughout Southern Colorado. We also want to explore the possibility of additional needs in the Pueblo community and if RMHCSC is a match to help address those needs.

Ultimately, we are here to serve and support children and families. Purposeful growth to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve will always be a part of who we are and what we do.

# A Look Inside Our New House





# Cornerstone Programs

## Ronald McDonald House®

We believe that when families are together, they are stronger. We believe in keeping families near the care and resources they need to thrive. We believe that seriously ill children should have their parents and families close by.

Our Ronald McDonald House offers a warm, safe, nurturing environment for families of seriously ill and injured children. Many families travel far from home to get specialized care. Our House serves as a home base for families whose children are receiving critical treatment at nearby medical facilities.

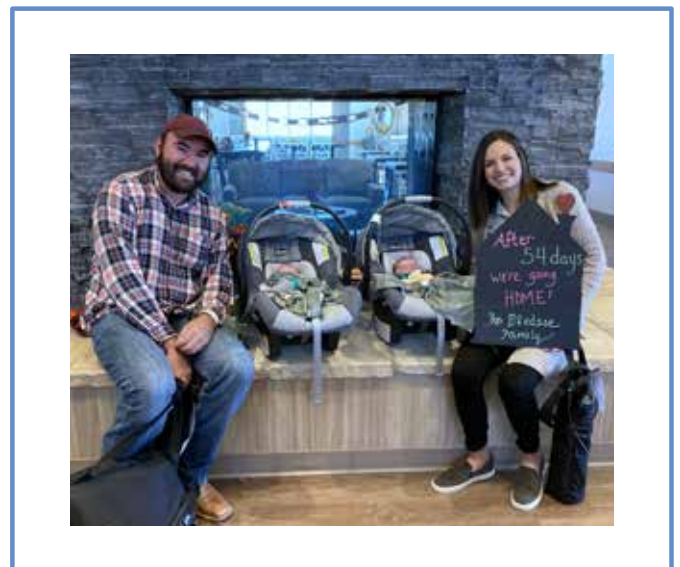
By staying at our Ronald McDonald House, parents remain close to their children, providing the support and care their child needs, in addition to better communicating with their child's medical team and keeping up with complicated treatment plans. Parents can focus on the health of their child, while having a place to stay that is within eyesight and walking distance, at little or no cost.

All guests enjoy private bedrooms, home-cooked meals, play areas for children, gardens, laundry facilities, and friendly, caring staff and volunteers.

Our Ronald McDonald House is more than just a House. It provides comfort, support and resources to families facing the stress, fear and hardship of having a seriously ill child.

## Ronald McDonald Family Room®

When a family enters a Ronald McDonald Family Room, they forget they're in a medical setting. Moments away from their child's bedside, the rooms are designed as a refuge for families to rest and recharge, keeping them strong for their children. These comfortable spaces provide a variety of homelike amenities, and can be found in St. Francis Medical Center and Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs



## Ways to Support

Host a "Wish List" House Party or conduct a "Wish List" Drive at your school, church or with your civic organization.

To See the full list go to:  
<https://rmhcsoutherncolorado.org/get-involved/wish-list>





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# Volunteer Information

A strong foundation of volunteers support Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado. *Our volunteers' gifts of love and compassion make our House more than just a place to stay, they make it a home.* The House provides volunteer opportunities for individuals, pairs and groups, while the Family Rooms are supported by individual and paired volunteers. Our volunteers help with office work, preparing and setting out snacks and drinks, greeting guests, housekeeping and a host of other activities.

All volunteer positions require a RMHC volunteer application, and most also require a background check. Some, like Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, may require additional applications and background checks.

## Meals That Mend

You can also help by contributing meals for families staying at our House through our *Meals That Mend* program. There are a variety of ways to participate.

- Prepare a meal in our kitchen on a one-time or recurring basis
- "Freezer Edition"- Cook a freezer meal that we can use later
- "Adopt a Meal" - With your monetary donation, we will plan the meal, shop for the ingredients and make the meal
- Donate gift cards from local grocery stores
- Pick up a pre-made meal from a grocery store or order a meal from a local restaurant



To volunteer or find out more, please visit our website at [rmhcsoutherncolorado.org/volunteer](http://rmhcsoutherncolorado.org/volunteer)

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