

Ronald
McDonald
House.

FEBRUARY 14, 1987



RMHC®

of Southern Colorado



Spring/Summer 2026
Heartstrings
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado

Sierra and Juliana

Sierra was just seven years old when she knew she wanted to take to the skies.

“I wanted to be an astronaut,” Sierra said. After becoming active in Civil Air Patrol, Sierra’s goal evolved into wanting to become a fighter pilot.

Time has proven that some dreams are so profound they are worth the chase.

Over the next 11 years, Sierra’s laser focus had her working toward the goal of serving in the military. Learning all she could from those who were already serving, assuming leadership roles and taking part in Civil Air Patrol on a national scale, Sierra was determined.

Even when she met with obstacles.

“Throughout her teen years, Sierra was plagued with pain in her head and eventually in her ears,” said Sierra’s mom, Juliana.

“Something was wrong, but we just couldn’t get answers,” Sierra added.



Living in Truckee, California (near Lake Tahoe), Sierra and her Mom met with countless local doctors and specialists, none of whom could provide relief—or a firm diagnosis. Even treks to specialists in San Francisco gave no clear direction.

But Juliana wouldn’t give up. She met her daughter’s determination with her own, continuing to seek the medical care Sierra needed.

That search eventually led them to a specialist at Children’s Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, who had written a case study on a boy with symptoms nearly identical to Sierra’s.

Juliana called Dr. Thomas Ridder’s office and learned they could be seen with a referral. Mom and daughter flew out to meet Dr. Ridder, who diagnosed 17-year-old Sierra with Geniculate Neuralgia, a rare condition that can irritate the nervus intermedius, a small branch of facial nerves that supplies sensation to part of the ear canal. Arteries can slide onto cranial nerves, causing excruciating pain and various other symptoms.

Juliana was relieved to finally learn what had been afflicting her daughter for years. A few months after learning Dr. Ridder specialized in the corrective surgery needed, Juliana and Sierra loaded up for a 16-hour drive to Colorado.





Staying at our Ronald McDonald House® while awaiting a craniotomy and microsurgery to alleviate the pain in her left ear, Sierra said, ***“It’s really special to be able to stay at your House and know we don’t have to worry about a thing.”***

While recovering from her five-hour operation, friends and family came to support Sierra. She enjoyed visits with those she hadn’t seen for a long time and was grateful for the treatment she and their guests received from the House.

“Your staff and volunteers were so kind and compassionate. They even provided snacks for those who had traveled great distances to be with us, knowing they had a long drive back home,” Sierra said. Juliana added, “It was so thoughtful. The hospitality of the House comes from the team of friendly and caring people who strive to make a challenging situation easier. They really think of everything.” She paused and said, ***“You made sure that the things we needed most were available, especially a quiet place to recover.”***

Six months later, the mother-daughter duo was back. This time for corrective surgery that would alleviate the pain in Sierra’s right ear.

While healing from her surgery, Sierra was thinking forward. “Now there’s nothing holding me back,” she said. “As a senior, this is it. I’ve got to wrap it up.”

Taking a minute to reflect on the years when her condition held her back from the things she loved, Sierra shared that when facing hardships, a person can lose hope or become discouraged. “Being sick prevented me from doing sports and even being in school.” She went on, “I longed to do the things I

loved—like skiing and practicing karate. Even mundane things like going to school.” She added, “I actually missed homework.”

Grateful for the care from Dr. Ridder and his team, they also couldn’t say enough about the support they received from Ronald McDonald House. “Staying with you both pre and post surgeries, we experienced such hospitality from your staff and volunteers,” Sierra said. ***“Everyone made us feel right at home.”***

“Whether it’s a friendly greeting upon returning from a long day at the hospital or someone serving up a delicious meal, you made it easier for families like ours,” Juliana said.

“When we came back for the second surgery, it was so comforting to walk through the doors and see familiar faces. To know we’re taken care of here. I didn’t have to worry about where I was going to stay while Sierra was hospitalized. You really made sure that all our needs were taken care of.”

Post Sierra’s second and final surgery, mother and daughter loaded up to head back to Truckee. Juliana

said, ***“I keep coming back to the word ‘comfort’. You and your team are like a big, warm hug.”***

Mom and daughter looked at each other and smiled. Squeezing her daughter’s hand, Juliana said, “I love seeing my girl soar!”

Now 18 and pain-free, Sierra is looking toward the future. Pressing on, she is back at school, working towards earning her black belt, and planning to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. “In a perfect world, I’d like to go for basic training with the Marines in October, looking to specialize in aviation ordnance.”

We wish her only the best!



**Scan QR code
to help support
our families**

More than just a House **2025 at a glance**



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Southern Colorado



10,248
daily guests at
Ronald McDonald
House®



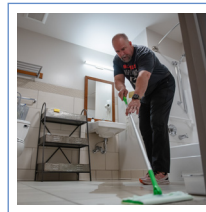
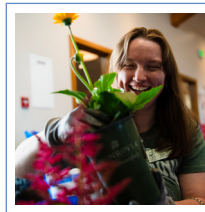
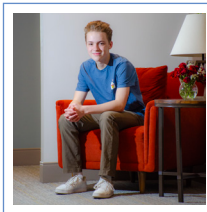
3,912
overnight stays
representing
701 families



10,448
guests visited the
Ronald McDonald
Family Room®
6,244 times



11,362
Ronald McDonald
Hospitality Cart
visits



No one who stays at our House ever receives a bill!



12,000+
Healthy, nutritious meals served



Serving families from
41 Colorado counties
61 families from out-of-state



Average nights stayed
6

Caring for families since 1987

The image features a large, detailed mural of a Colorado aspen tree. The tree's trunk is thick and textured, with several heart-shaped carvings and a hollowed-out section containing an owl. The branches are adorned with numerous heart-shaped leaves in vibrant colors like yellow, orange, red, and green. Some leaves have names or messages written on them. A small butterfly is perched on one of the branches. The background of the mural shows a misty forest scene with evergreen trees and a path. The title "THE LEGACY WALL" is superimposed over the top part of the mural in a large, white, serif font.

THE LEGACY WALL

A warm and welcoming grove of Colorado aspen trees greets those who stay at our Ronald McDonald House®. The Legacy Wall reflects a shared truth: **"We are ALL connected, rooted in LOVE."**

Your support of the Legacy Wall ensures that the resources fragile families require will remain for years to come—allowing current families to receive care while also helping us plan for the future growth of this charity.

When you purchase a heart-shaped leaf, featuring your name or the name of someone you would like to honor, you're doing just that—ensuring that children and their families can remain together during times of unforeseen medical crises.

THANK YOU for partnering in this important work. Your leaf is a meaningful way to support those who we are privileged to serve.

2026 EVENTS

KIDS & CLAYS SPORTING CLAYS SHOOT

The 8th annual event on June 5th has sold out. Be watching for updates for 2027. Plan to register and book your sponsorship early. This fun event includes: breakfast and lunch; all field fees and gratuities; 72 clay targets; ammunition (12 or 20 gauge); gift bags; hearing and eye protection; silent and live auctions; cold beer (after you shoot) and more! Sponsorship opportunities range from \$300 to \$5,000.

To learn more, contact Doug Zurek at (719) 471-1814 | doug@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org.

At Kids and Clays, we will draw the winning ticket for our High Roller Raffle. Get your ticket **NOW** by visiting our website at www.rmhcsoutherncolorado.org.

HEART OF THE SUMMER: COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

Join us on August 15th from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a fun-filled afternoon with backyard games, a bounce house, petting zoo, balloon art and more! Purchase tasty eats from local food trucks, take a guided tour of our Ronald McDonald House®, and learn how we support families with critically ill children. You'll also meet our amazing community partners and discover ways you can get involved. This is a **FREE**, family-friendly event. Come celebrate summer, community, and connection with us—there's something for everyone! If you are interested in more information to include sponsorships, please contact Alex Lightfoot at (719) 471-1814 | alex@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org

CAMERON MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

You won't want to miss the 34th Annual Cameron Memorial Golf Tournament at Perry Park Country Club. Join us on October 5th, 2026 for one of the community's top rated golf tournaments. The day includes breakfast, lunch & golf. Come as a single or as a group! A variety of sponsorship and playing packages are available ranging from \$500 to \$10,000. For sponsorship information and participant packages, contact Beth Alessio at (719) 471-1814 | beth@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org





PLANNED GIVING

Creating a Legacy of Care

Planned giving is a meaningful way to support our Ronald McDonald House® for generations to come—while also aligning with your financial and philanthropic goals.

Including our charity in your will, trust, or other estate plans helps ensure families facing medical crises are supported while staying close to their hospitalized child.

Ways to Create Your Legacy

A gift in your will or trust, naming Ronald McDonald House® Charities of Southern Colorado as a beneficiary, creates lasting impact. We can help provide sample language for you to share with your attorney or financial advisor.

Other Giving Options

Explore charitable remainder trusts, stock gifts, donor-advised funds (DAF) giving, and other options that align with your goals.

Have You Already Included Us in Your Plans?

If you have already included Ronald McDonald House® Charities of Southern Colorado in your estate plans, we would love the opportunity to thank you and welcome you to our family.

When giving Legacy Gifts, you will:

- Be recognized for your enduring generosity (if desired)
- Know that your gift will continue helping families for generations to come
- Join a community of supporters who share your compassion and your values



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

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Colorado Springs, CO 80920
www.rmhcsontherncolorado.org

GIVING BACK



For more than 50 years, Ronald McDonald House® Charities' original founding partner has walked side-by-side, supporting this organization and the children and families it serves. Through in-store purchases and donations, sponsoring fundraising events, sustaining rooms/spaces in our House, providing Meals that Mend and encouraging customers to Round Up, we are **THANKFUL** for the commitment and care from the locally owned **McDonald's** stores.

We are **GRATEFUL** for the support from local Owner Operators, Larry & Maria Reinerth, Purvi & Nayan Naik, Jim Boselli, Mario Morales, Brett Bronson, Todd McMillan, Jenny Long-Walker, Jason Thompson, Scott Angelos, Dave & Kevin Napier, James Nelson, Gisela Phelan, Chad Furler, and the McDonald's-Denver Field Office. Anytime you visit one of their Southern Colorado McDonald's, please share your appreciation for all they do for "the House that Love Built". And, get some tasty fries, while you're at it.

We, like YOU, are LOVIN' it!