

# THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

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The Ronald McDonald House Charities is a nonprofit organization that is near and dear to my heart, due to the assistance they provided to my family over this past year. Their mission is to support families with the added expenses, travel, and family concerns that arise when a child is hospitalized, especially one hospitalized in a different city. There are approximately 368 Ronald McDonald Houses that serve as a “home base” for parents and allow them to be much closer to their hospitalized child than their own homes would be. Similarly, they also have 252 RM Family Rooms, which are living facilities that are connected to hospitals and allow parents to stay with their child in the hospital. Additionally, they have 50 care mobiles that travel around to provide basic medical care to children that may not otherwise have access to those services.

In December of 2018, my son was unexpectedly born two months early. As a new parent, I had no idea what was to expect with a new baby, let alone one that was born two months premature and required significant medical attention. Due to my rural medical facility not having the capabilities to deliver a 32-week baby, they had transferred me to St. Luke’s hospital in Cedar Rapids, IA, where my son was born and admitted into the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Being unable to hold my baby for a few days after he was born and not being able to see him for about 12 hours after he was born made me feel like a failure as a mother. All we could do as parents was to sit in his room and hope that he would feel us present enough to help him get better – we felt helpless.

This hospital was an hour away from our residence and we incurred many expenses from increased travel, eating, and additional medical complications of mine that spurred throughout this experience. To our benefit, St. Luke’s Hospital just happened to have a Ronald McDonald Family Room attached to the NICU that our son was staying in. They provided us with showering facilities, a warm meal every night at 6:00 PM, activities to help take our minds off the hardships that were happening with our children, and even sleep rooms for us to stay in so we could take a break from sleeping on the chair and/or couch in our son’s room. They gave us a safe space to reside when we needed the break; they provided gift cards for us to go on a date when they saw our mental states disintegrate. We had to watch our child go through multiple medical treatments that I would never wish upon anyone’s child and that was a hard situation to cope with. The volunteers and employees in the RM Family Room became our family and knew how to take care of us when we didn’t know how to take care of ourselves. Not only were they part of the family, but they provided our basic needs so we could entirely focus on doing everything we could do to bring our baby home.

I will never be able to repay them for the assistance they provided my family and I during those two months. For this reason, I would like to nominate them for a jeans day in 2020. If possible, I would love for the donation to go specifically to the Ronald McDonald Family Room for families with children in the NICU or PICU at St. Luke’s in Cedar Rapids, IA.