



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Connecticut &
Western Massachusetts

From the Heart

Stories of how you help keep families together when it matters most

Fall 2024



Cenk and his Aunt Berivan

Cenk's Journey of Perseverance

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Looking Back, Thinking Forward

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the RMHC global system, our Chapter is proud to honor the past and embrace the future by focusing on how we can better serve families today, tomorrow, and in years to come.

This summer, members of our RMHC CTMA team travelled to Chicago to participate in the RMHC International Conference. Our week in the Windy City was spent building connections and relationships with colleagues from Chapters across the globe, and learning from experts how we can better serve the families who need our help.

Much of the Conference celebrated RMHC's 50th anniversary in 2024. This is an extraordinary milestone marking our organization's growth from one House to a worldwide system of support for families of ill and injured children. During her opening remarks, RMHC Global President & CEO Katie Fitzgerald asked us to imagine how RMHC might grow in another 50 years and beyond. She declared that RMHC is "50 years young, and the work has just begun!"

In our own local areas, it is clear that the need for RMHC programs is growing every year. That is why, at the beginning of this year, we announced our Mission Expansion Campaign—a journey to expand capacity of our Connecticut House, revitalize our Springfield House, and construct a new Family Room in Baystate Children's Hospital—all in the name of better serving more families.

We rely on help from friends in our community to make our programming possible. You are an integral part of our work each and every day. We thank you for your continued support of our mission and families. As long as they need us, we need you.

With gratitude,



Michelle D'Amore
Chief Executive Officer



RMHC CTMA team members attended the RMHC International Conference in Chicago this summer.

Celebrating Our Success



Michelle D'Amore (far right) and leaders from our partner Chapters received recognition.

RMHC of Connecticut & Western Massachusetts was honored to be a finalist for the RMHC Global Impact Awards in the Enhance Collaboration category at this year's RMHC International Conference.

Over the past few years, RMHC CTMA partnered with RMHC New England, RMHC Burlington, VT and RMHC Maine to strengthen fundraising efforts with our founding partners McDonald's, pool resources as a region, and most importantly, to impact RMHC families across Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

We are proud to be acknowledged by RMHC Chapters and our peers from around the world for these accomplishments.

Cenk's Journey of Perseverance

"Hi, My name is Cenk. I am 18 years old and I am from Antakya, Hatay, Turkey. The earthquake that occurred in Turkey in 2023 fundamentally changed my life. During that major earthquake on the morning of February 6, 2023, I lost my mother and my stepfather. I was rescued after being trapped under the rubble for 60 hours, resulting in the decision by my relatives to amputate my right arm to save my life.

After two months of hospital treatment and following a visit from the Turkish professional sports club, where my late mother served as the Vice President, the highly esteemed BJK Kabataş Foundation Schools honored me with a full scholarship to finish my high school education in Istanbul. After the earthquake, I moved to Istanbul with my aunt, who has been my greatest supporter in every aspect of my life and has become my legal guardian.

Despite the condition of my right arm, I developed new hobbies such as swimming and tennis, and I am very happy and healthy since sports have become an important part of my new life. One of my greatest achievements during this time was strengthening my left arm and starting to perform tasks that I used to do comfortably with my right arm.

I arrived in the United States for the first time in June 2023. I went to Boston and stayed at the hospital for one week. Then, I travelled to Springfield, to the Ronald McDonald House, and stayed for three months while I received a new prosthetic right arm.

I want to tell you about RMH. It was big and clean, and the staff were helpful and friendly. The staff listened patiently to our challenges and helped us find solutions. They did everything they could to help us have a good time while we were away from our home. We met other Turkish families from the community and spent time with them. We made friends with other families staying at the House. I enjoyed Waffle Wednesday and loved Nutella on my waffles. I ate a lot of waffles when I stayed!

The staff contacted a local organization and arranged for me to try adaptive rock climbing and sled hockey. I enjoyed learning and climbing the tall rock wall, leaving me feeling confident, determined, and powerful. While at RMH, I also studied for the university exam I would be taking when I returned to Turkey. I sat upstairs in the oasis to study. It was quiet up there. After receiving my new arm, I returned to Turkey and resumed my studies.

I returned to the House this year to get another prosthetic arm and ensure I can do everything I want to do with my life. Continuing my education with the scholarship provided and carrying with me all my aunt's contributions to my life, I graduated from high school this year with a score of 95 out of 100, ranking first in terms of my school's academic ranking.

Since childhood, I always wanted to become a doctor, but due to my personal trauma during the earthquake, I no longer think it will be possible to pursue that goal. One of the main reasons I wanted to become a doctor was to help people. I have decided to study computer engineering, where I can still help people without recalling my traumatic memories while establishing a strong connection with medicine.

Thank you to each of you for supporting families like mine at the Ronald McDonald House."

-Cenk O.



Cenk and his Aunt Berivan with his diploma.

Volunteering Together

The Biller Family

"My husband, David, and I originally began volunteering at Ronald McDonald House in 2020. The plan was to prepare a meal for guests staying at the house. Upon our arrival, we were greeted by the most wonderful and appreciative staff and we met families who were so grateful to be returning from a long day at the hospital to find a warm meal waiting for them. I instantly knew I wanted to get more involved with this amazing organization.

Almost immediately after that first visit, I was picking up regular volunteer shifts at the front desk. Every day offers new and unique responsibilities. Distributing mail, receiving donations, answering phone calls, and tending to the needs of families are typical responsibilities. By far, my conversations with the families are what I value most. Over the years they have entrusted me with their personal and heartfelt stories. I don't take any of our conversations for granted and treasure each relationship made. My goal is always to make their stay at RMH as comfortable as I possibly can.

Dave and my 22 year old son, Nate, are also very involved. Usually, every couple of months their services are requested to help clear out pop tab donations from the basement. You would be amazed to know how many loyal and generous people save and donate tabs! It is not unusual for my husband and son to make two or three trips in their pick-up truck to the recycling center to exchange tabs for money. If you are ever looking for an easy way to make a difference, donate your tabs!

My 19 year old daughter, Drew, and 16 year old daughter, Paige, are also very involved. This summer, Paige began a Wednesday night ice cream sundae social to coincide with Wednesday night bingo. It has been a huge hit at the house which the families have loved. Paige provides the ice cream and every candy topping you can imagine!

Drew goes to college out-of-state but always comes back during her winter breaks to wrap holiday gifts for the families. Along with her brother and sister, they spend a couple days wrapping all the amazing toys, clothing, and other fabulous items that are donated to the House. I would argue that my kids get every bit as excited wrapping the gifts as the children who unwrap them do.

It warms my heart to know that we have found an organization as special as RMH for my entire family to be involved with.

**It has brought us closer as a family and
I would encourage other families to consider getting involved as well.**

You will love it and we can't wait to meet you!" -Lauren



The Biller Family.
Clockwise from bottom left: Nate, Drew,
Paige, Dave, and Lauren.

Making An Impact Through Giving



Avangrid Corporate employees cooked and cleaned for families during a recent volunteer day.

Avangrid Foundation

The Avangrid Foundation has supported RMHC CTMA for eight years in different capacities with one common thread—making a long term impact on the families we serve. Through capital projects during the build of our current Connecticut House and the Springfield Room Makeover campaign, the Foundation ensured our facilities would include the resources, common spaces, and amenities our families use daily during their stay. Most recently, they have supported our families with a \$20,000 grant to ensure our House kitchens are well stocked with fresh food, as well as pantry items that are the staple of many meals. Volunteers from their corporate offices spent time in RMH of Connecticut cooking a fantastic meal and making sure our House was spotless for our guests.

The Teich Family

“Providing families with a place to stay near their hospitalized children can make a huge difference in their overall well-being. The Ronald McDonald House offers not just a roof over their heads, but also emotional support and a sense of normalcy during incredibly tough times. Our donations help ensure that families can focus on what really matters—being there for their kids—without the added burden of worrying about where to stay or how to afford it. It’s wonderful to see how thoughtful donations help create a more supportive and comforting environment for those who need it most.”

Thank you for making the
5th Annual Unitex Matching Challenge
a huge success!

We received 104 gifts to give families
192 nights of care, comfort, and kindness!



Join Us for our Trees of Hope Celebrations



Ronald McDonald House of Springfield's
4th Annual Trees of Hope

NOVEMBER 8-22, 2024
150 WHITING FARMS RD, HOLYOKE, MA

PRESENTED BY **GARYROME
HYUNDAI**



Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut's
**35th Annual
Trees of Hope**

December 7-15, 2024
10 am to 5 pm daily

Maritime Center
555 Long Wharf Drive, New Haven, CT

Get to Know our Families

Dahiana

How long have you been coming to RMH Springfield? I have been staying at the House each year since I was 3 years old. I have been coming for 16 years.

What's your favorite activity? I like painting and crafting.

What do you like to eat? I enjoy dumplings, pizza, and donuts.

What part of the world would you like to visit? Korea.



Dahiana and her Aunt, Ana Daisy.

Trang

Where do you live? I live in Vietnam.

What's your favorite activity? I like painting and being creative.

What do you like to eat? I enjoy eating Oreo Cake.

Do you have siblings? I have a brother. He is 19 years old and very tall.



Nhi and Trang.

Nhi

What's your favorite activity? I like to play and eat cake.

What do you like to eat? I like everything. I like sugar!

Do you have siblings? I have two brothers and one sister. They are 15, 14, and my baby brother is 2 years old. He is so cute.

Going Home!



From left to right: The Wolfe family, The Tran, Van, and Le families, The Sanchez-Cruz family, and The Appiah family.



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Did you know ?

You can support RMHC families
right from your smartphone!



We need your help to support families!



Make a
donation



Make dinner for
our families



Volunteer



Send wish list
supplies



Attend/
Sponsor an
event