

the **Hearth**

April 2010



RONALD McDONALD
HOUSE CHARITIES
WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA

Jordan's story



Age: 18 months old

Hometown: Rainier, Wash.

Diagnosis: Atypical Teratoid Rhabdoid Tumor

WITH HER BRIGHT eyes sparkling, little Jordan offers a series of heart-melting smiles, punctuated by the occasional giggle. One would never guess she finished a four-day intensive round of chemotherapy just yesterday. Her doctors note she handles the chemo treatments exceptionally well, which is good news considering she is fighting one of the rarest and deadliest types of tumors. "She is a one in a hundred million kid," her father Brent proclaims, and

Jordan's mother appreciates the support from volunteers and other families.

from the love in his voice it is evident he is talking about her just as much as the rare cancer that lives in a tumor on her spine.

The Longnecker's were enjoying their growing family (Jordan has a 14-year-old half sister, Nicole), working at their jobs, and putting money away for their children's college educations when Jordan suddenly began waking up with dry diapers. After she then lost the use of her legs practically overnight, tests revealed a large mass on Jordan's spine and the family was on their way to Seattle Children's Hospital.

"Since then, our treatment plans have changed about 300 times," Brent says tiredly. The parents were at the hospital around the clock for three days before learning about the Ronald McDonald House. "The people here make you feel at home and comfortable," explains Brent.

Jordan's mother, Brenda, is thankful for the chance to be around other parents going through similar situations. "When you first get your child's diagnosis, you think you're all alone," she reflects, "but then you get to the House and find there's a whole community of parents and support."

As part of Jordan's treatment, the young parents have had to learn to administer a number of medical procedures themselves, as well as advocate for Jordan's care, navigate the complicated insurance system, foster Nicole's well-being and try to manage their own fears and worry. "The dinners by the volunteers are really special," Brent says. "With everything else going on, those dinners are usually the only meal I eat all day. If there wasn't food already prepared, I probably wouldn't eat at all."

The family expects to stay for Jordan's treatments for up to another 12 months, and have already adopted a nickname for the House they gratefully call home for now. "Jordan, what do you call the House?" asks Brent. "Ron Don!" says Jordan, her grin lighting up the entire room.

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*Just when you
feel so alone, the
House provides a
whole community
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– Jordan's Mother

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LIFE AT THE HOUSE

Friendships Provide Vital Support

"Value your relationships over everything else" is commonly heard advice from those who have survived a life-changing event or serious illness. Families staying at the House understand this very well, yet each family arrives here having left their entire support network behind right at their time of greatest need. Creating opportunities for connection is how the communal areas and planned activities of the House really provide support to families, often in the form of lifelong friendships.

"The House is our home-away-from-home, and Theresa and Jade are our family-away-from-family," jokes Amelia, who juggles her baby and her toddler, Sydney, here for prolonged treatment for her eyesight. The families live across the hall from one another. "They have given the biggest support. It's nice to have someone to eat meals with, and if the kids are screaming over here, Theresa will knock on the door to see if she can help."

Teens can be particularly hard-hit by being away from home, school and all their friends and activities. In spite of their illnesses, Kacey, 17, and Josh, 14, have been fortunate in forging a strong friendship. They get together

as often as possible, playing video games, watching movies and just hanging out.

This kind of shared experience helps even the very young. Activities hosted by various volunteer groups are always popular and a chance for children in wheelchairs or with feeding tubes to feel at home. "Out in public, people might stare, wondering what's wrong with your child, but everyone here understands. Walker can see other kids here with tubes too," relates Maddy, the mother of 17-month-old Walker.

Meeting by chance at the hospital introduced Brenda to Tessa, both mothers with a child in treatment. Living at the House provides them a chance to regularly connect. "We bring each other up," Brenda relates. "When one of us is down, the other is up, and vice versa."

Angel, 16, and Angel, 8, first met in the dining room and like to play Wii, meet in the play room for foos-ball matches, and just clown around. What is the best part of making a friend while staying at the House? "Having someone who understands what I'm going through and doesn't judge."



Friendships offer a welcome dose of fun and understanding.



We ask families to pay **\$25*** a night to stay at the House. However, no one is ever turned away due to an inability to pay. Most families are struggling financially and often stay for several months or longer.

* Actual cost is \$80 a night.

Yes! I want to help.

Use the attached envelope to pay for a family's stay at the House.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Mending Group Makes Riches From Rags

Once a month, the upstairs conference room at the House hums with the rumble of sewing machines and sergers. It's a welcome sound to the facilities team because they know the worn bath towels they hand over will be transformed into sturdy, functional rags, something often in short supply within the hardworking environment of the House.

"We first came to Ronald McDonald House as part of a national service project proposed by the



Chicago chapter at our national meeting," Paula Matthews explains, referring to the Seattle chapter of the American Sewing Guild. "We started out making pillowcases for the children, but when the House told us they really needed help with mending and finding a use for old towels, we said sure!"

So now, on the first Tuesday of each month, seven women spill out of the elevator with their machines in tow and get to work mending bed spreads, protective covers and pillows. They turn unusable towels into absorbent rags and contribute colorful flannel pillowcases to the children staying at the House. "The kids love those pillow cases," says Manager of Volunteer Services, Judy Adams.

"We hope other chapters located near Ronald McDonald Houses will be able to contribute in the same way," Paula says. Everyone at the House agrees this group is leading by example. Thank you Mending Group!

Bob's Brown Beer Promotion Brews Fun and Funding for the House

100% of proceeds donated to the Seattle Ronald McDonald House

Each year Seattle's own Georgetown Brewing Company releases the limited edition Bob's Brown Beer in celebration of the life of Bob Hirsch, a former Seattle Ronald McDonald House resident who fought cancer for two-thirds of his life. Even throughout his valiant battle with cancer, Bob was known for his positive attitude. Join us at the Nickerson Street Saloon in Fremont on May 14, Bob's birthday, for the release party, raffle prizes and of course, a pint or two! The kegs will be tapped at 3:00pm...be sure to arrive before they run dry!

Bob's Brown Beer will be distributed to many local restaurants and taverns on May 14. For a complete listing, please visit www.georgetownbeer.com. Since Bob's Brown Beer was first brewed in 2006, more than \$113,000 has been raised for the Seattle Ronald McDonald House. Thank you Georgetown Brewing!



2010 Hockey Challenge Raises \$140,000 and Counting!

The 12th Annual RMHC Hockey Challenge, presented by the **Seattle Thunderbirds** was a grand success this year, raising \$140,000 and counting! Local hockey players, celebrities and Thunderbird alumni all came out to delight the crowd at ShoWare Center in Kent and raise much needed funds for the **Seattle Ronald McDonald House**.

Special thanks go to the Seattle Thunderbirds for their continuing partnership and generous donation of time and resources for the February 27th event. Thanks also to the local hockey teams who competed during the day. Teams of players from Microsoft included Microsoft **Exchange Women** and **Windows Women**, **Entertainment and Devices**, **Microsoft Spartans**, **The Microsoft Mystery Team**, **MS IT**, **Windows Live/Azure**. **Team Amazon.com** also hit the ice. The competition was a fun and rewarding conclusion to months of fundraising and hard work by the players and captains, all to support the children and families who stay at the House.



The day concluded with an All Star game and action-packed shootout. All Stars included actors **Cameron Bancroft**, **Michael Rosenbaum** and **Jason Thompson**; comic strip artist, **Brian Basset**; local media personalities **Paul Silvi**, **Bill Wixey** and **Ian Furness** and retired Mariners catcher, **Dan Wilson**, plus numerous Thunderbirds alumni. We gratefully acknowledge our valued Sponsors:

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Thank You

We couldn't do it without you!

We rely on volunteers and donors to help us provide a warm and welcoming home-away-from-home for families. Your fundraising efforts and donations provide more than 28,000 nights of lodging and comfort for families with seriously ill children.

EVENTS

- Packaging Specialties, Bake Sale, \$300
- Redmond High School DECA, \$653
- Washington State DECA, SCDC "Miracle Minute" \$1,822

SPECIAL GIFTS

- Western Washington McDonald's Owner/Operators and Alaska McDonald's Operator's Association, \$53,402, as part of their amazing ongoing annual support of the House

WISH LIST, FOOD & TOILETRY DRIVES

- St. Charles Borromeo School, books
- ConKerr Cancer, Seattle Chapter, handmade pillow cases
- Select Comfort, Bellevue, pillows and mattress pads
- CTI, gift cards
- Bissell Home Care, cleaning supplies
- Grendel Sweets, Wii accessories and chocolate rabbits for Easter
- Pay it Forward, toiletries
- RE/MAX Realty, pantry items
- La-Z-Boy, furniture
- Microsoft LCA Operations, various wish list items
- Premera Blue Cross, various wish list items
- Ferris and Lorraine Dracobly, linens
- David and Mary Helen Young, hand sanitizer and antibacterial soap
- Washington State Patrol Toxicology Laboratory, kitchen and personal care items

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY

14—Bob's Brown Beer, Nickerson Street Saloon, Seattle. Enjoy a pint of limited edition brew. All proceeds benefit the house. See page 3 for details.

JUNE

26—Seattle Rock 'n' Roll Marathon, See below for details.

OCTOBER

16—RMHC Annual Gala, Seattle Sheraton Hotel

WANT EVENT DETAILS

and/or a way to keep up on other news at the House?

1. Visit www.rmhcseattle.org
2. Email ellen@rmhcseattle.org
3. Or call Ellen at (206) 838-0629

5

Top Wish List

At the Ronald McDonald House, we need the same kind of items you use at home—only more! Here's how you can help:

- 2 Chef knife sets with blocks
- 2 Electric knife sharpeners
- Bus Passes
- 8 Twin-size sleeping mats*
- Cleaning supplies (antibacterial hand soap, hand sanitizer & more)

*Item details available at rmhcseattle.org under "How to Help/Donate/Wish List"

Before donating an item, please contact: kaarin@rmhcseattle.org or call (206) 838-0609.

Thank you
for your generosity!

Seattle Rock 'n' Roll Marathon – Calling All Runners and Walkers!

The marathon is closed to new entries, but if you are already registered, our team is open to anyone who would like to join! **Call Ellen at 206-838-0629 for further details on how to join us in the marathon or find a participant to support.** We will be running and walking in honor of the House and the hundreds of families we serve each year, fundraising for our mission along the way.



Become a fan on facebook today!

Simply log on to www.facebook.com, search for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western Washington & Alaska and become a fan. It's a great way to receive brief updates on everything at the House, including volunteer opportunities, special events, needed donations and other interesting news.

WWW.RMHCSEATTLE.ORG CALL (206) 838-0600

“The only thing getting me through this is the outpouring of support from the House.” – Jessica's mom

The House provides about 28,000 nights of housing per year.



WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA



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