

the **Hearth**

July 2011



RONALD McDONALD
HOUSE CHARITIES
WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA

Celah's story



Celah's family is glad to be in a place with other families facing the same challenges

Age: 6 months old
Hometown: Salcha, Alaska
Diagnosis: Acute Lymphoblastic
Leukemia (ALL)

AS THE OLDEST of eight children, Celah's mom, Tia, was well-prepared and very excited to welcome her own children into the world. She laughs to remember finding out she was carrying not only twins, but a boy and a girl. "It was a surprise!" After a healthy full-term pregnancy, Jacob and Celah quickly became the center of Tia and Daniel's lives.

Three months later Tia was alarmed to notice Celah appearing listless and pale. After running a low-grade fever for three days, the parents were instructed to bring Celah to the emergency room of the hospital one

hour away. In 40-below degree weather, the family set out, never wanting to guess what the next hours and days would hold.

Celah was severely dehydrated and a node was discovered behind her ear. Several hours after arriving at the hospital, blood work revealed the need for an immediate transfusion, after which her parents were told Celah must be medevaced directly to Seattle Children's Hospital. At 4:30 am, the parents had 30 minutes to pack what they could. "I arrived in Seattle with an extra pair of jeans and a toothbrush," remembers Tia.

After two days without sleep and not knowing how long they would be in Seattle, Tia and Daniel learned they could move into the House. "The House is an amazing place," Tia says. "There is such a community of support here. It feels like such a safe place." Besides being close to the hospital, Tia is quick to acknowledge other advantages of staying in the House. "I don't know what I'd do if it weren't for the House. If you were to live in a hotel, you'd still need all the pots and pans...all our baby items were left behind. The cribs, clothes, everything..."

Fortunately, a treatment plan was put immediately in place for Celah, though it includes a full year of rigorous chemotherapy and possibly a bone marrow transplant. Tia affirms the challenge, noting "I just had three months to adjust to being a mother, and now I've had to adjust to being the mother of a baby with Leukemia." One of the biggest surprises about the House for Tia has been what an uplifting place it can be. "Everyone here is facing tremendous trials, but the staff and volunteers are always so positive. Everyone recognizes the children as just normal kids. I was on an outing with Celah and Jacob after Celah got her NG (nasogastric) tube inserted, and it felt weird for the first time, being out in public with people who don't understand."

The family has been able to cope with their situation through the generosity of Daniel's benefits as an Air National Guard and the kindness and contributions of the whole Fairbanks community. In the thick of what will surely become a family legend, Tia pragmatically admits that the chemo makes Celah really sick, and tired. "I just keep telling myself she won't remember this when she's older. We'll get a fresh start."

“

One of the biggest surprises is how positive and uplifting it can be here.

– Celah's mom

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LIFE AT THE HOUSE

Families Cook Up Some Love in the Kitchens

The kitchens and dining rooms of the House are where families convene throughout the day, sharing their trials, lending an ear and just getting to know each other. As in any home, the kitchen is the place that brings families together, and never more so than when the delicious smells of baked goods beckon.

Right now, the House is fortunate to welcome a kind man who is also a true artisan baker of Mexican pastries. His ability to fashion an empanada into a giant alligator is surpassed only by his generosity in sharing the delicious results of his efforts with everyone nearby.



Mario makes dough for his delicious empanadas

Mario, the baker in question, is here caring for his nephew, Gerardo, who has undergone surgery to treat his esophagus. He learned to bake as a boy in his parent's bakery in Mexicali, Mexico. When his parents died, he

inherited the bakery and also taught his brother to bake so they could open a second bakery.

Now Mario lives in Burlington, WA and picks cauliflower and strawberries. But, putting a twist on an old saying, you can take the man out of the bakery, but you can't take the bakery out of the man.

Asked whether it is difficult to bake in the House kitchen compared to a bakery, Mario laughs and says, "No – it is easier here because it is just for fun, a hobby." He is used to baking 40 large pans of bread at a time in a wood-fired oven. Kids at the House favor his leaf-shaped cookies with honey while the adults savor the meat and vegetable empanadas. Almost every day brings another batch of homemade goodies from Mario. Tapping his chest he says with sparkling eyes, "it is from my heart."

The kitchens at the House may be bigger than most, and a bit industrial looking to newcomers, but whether it's a can of ravioli warmed up for a finicky toddler or a delectable empanada specially baked by someone's uncle, love is always on the menu.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Behind the Scenes Scheduling Helps Keep the House Humming

One of many imperative staffing needs at the House is maintaining a consistent presence at the front desk, 12 hours a day, 365 days a year. The front desk can be a fun and busy place, so ideally there are always two people on shift should an emergency arise and to handle necessary tasks like greeting visitors, answering phones, receiving packages and donations, answering questions, and even just enjoying some friendly conversations with families. Add to this the challenge of an all-volunteer effort and one begins to suspect some unseen and magical force at work making it all happen.

Enter Sherri, our volunteer front desk schedule coordinator. Sherri has volunteered at the House since 2004 and was a front desk volunteer herself until she was recruited to take over the scheduling. Thanks to her great communication and organizational skills, families at the House are now the beneficiaries of 55 regularly scheduled front desk volunteers and 30 more to work as fill-ins for the inevitable illnesses, vacations and other scheduling issues.



Sherri volunteers between 10-15 hours a week on scheduling but enjoys the chance to fill-in on an as-needed basis. "My job is made easy by an amazing group of dedicated volunteers who are always willing to put in extra time when needed," Sherri says. "Their reasons for volunteering here are so varied, whether they've had a personal experience, want to give back to the community, or they know someone else who volunteers here."

From everyone at the House who appreciates seeing the friendly face of a volunteer at the front desk, thank you Sherri, for working so hard to make it all happen. We couldn't do it without you!



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 \$108 a night.

Yes! I want to help. Use the attached envelope to pay for a family's stay at the House.

Many thanks to Georgetown Brewing Company and their customers for raising a glass and more than \$50,000 in the 6th Annual Bob's Brown Beer Fundraiser



Each year, Georgetown Brewing Company releases the limited edition Bob's Brown Beer in celebration of the life of former House resident, Bob Hirsch. Bob battled cancer for two-thirds of his life and was known for his positive attitude. Distributed to many area bars and restaurants on May 14, Bob's birthday, the limited edition brew doesn't last long! Since it was first brewed in 2006, Bob's has helped raise more than \$215,000 for the Seattle Ronald McDonald House.



We Love Your Helping Hands...and Feet!



Sporting smiles and a well-deserved sense of accomplishment, a few marathoners pose for a post-race photo

CONGRATULATIONS TO TEAM RMHC who hit the pavement on June 25 in the 2011 Dodge Rock 'n' Roll Seattle Marathon & ½ Marathon benefiting The American Cancer Society. Team RMHC was comprised of half and full marathoners, walkers and runners, and included RMHC volunteers, families, staff, and many House supporters. In addition to months of hard work and putting in hundreds of miles, all participants raised funds for the House throughout their training for the race. We are delighted by the many generous donations in honor of team members. Thank you for supporting the House!

A special thank you to Brooks Sports for their many contributions that included hosting a carbo-loading pasta dinner for team members and families prior to the race.

Save the date! The 2012 race is scheduled for June 23, 2012. If you are interested in being part of the RMHC team or would like more information, please contact Ellen Sontra at (206) 838-0629.

"I signed up for this event for one reason and one reason only... I want to give back to a place that has given our family so much recently."

- Debbie Turk, RMHC Parent and Team RMHC Member

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 nearly 28,000 nights of lodging and comfort per year for families with seriously ill children.

DONORS:

- **Mount Vernon High School DECA,** \$797
- **Lions Foundation District 49A,** \$1,000
- **Good Sams of Puget Sound,** \$1,005
- **Cooley Smiles Family and Cosmetic Dentistry,** \$1,080
- **Immaculate Conception Church and Our Lady of Perpetual Help,** \$2,856
- **Shamrock Charities,** \$3,000
- **Yakama Nations Legends Casino,** \$4,500
- **Muckleshoot Indian Tribe,** \$5,000
- **Puyallup Tribe of Indians,** \$10,000
- **The Pete and Wilma Olsen Foundation,** \$15,000

Additional donors are listed online at www.rmhcseattle.org/content/thank-you and in our annual report.



"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

- Pericles

Please consider leaving a lasting legacy by including Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western Washington & Alaska in your estate plans. To learn more, please contact Dianna Finnerty at (206) 838-0623.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST

21—5th Annual Wyatt Wilson Memorial Ride,

Motorcycles and bicycles are welcome for this loop from Bellevue to Enumclaw.

28—Wyatt's Ride for the House, Motorcycle ride

beginning in Rochester, WA and ending in Toledo, WA.

SEPTEMBER

4—DirectBuy Charity Ride, includes a scenic motorcycle ride with post-ride barbeque.

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

Top 5 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:

- Food for pantry*
- Travel-sized hand sanitizer
- Hotel-sized shampoo, conditioner and lotion
- 5 dozen teaspoons
- Quart size Ziploc bags

*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!

Save the Date! You're invited to the 23rd Annual RMHC Gala October 15, 2011



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.

Please plan to join us at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel as we support "The House That Love Built". This year we are privileged to announce Chef Thierry and Kathleen Rautureau as our Honorary Auction Chairs. Proceeds make a difference in the lives of the seriously ill children and families that call the Seattle Ronald McDonald House their home-away-from-home. For details, please contact Vanessa Kirk Briley, Co-Director of Development, at 206-838-0613.

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

“What the House provides allows us to do what we need to do, which is care for our child.” – Matti's mom

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



WESTERN WASHINGTON & ALASKA



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