On a Friday evening in January 2017, Alex’s family was sitting down to dinner at their home in Olympia. They’re a family of four: Jerry and Mary, the parents; and Darnell and Alex, who were eight and two at the time.

Over the past few months, Alex had often been sick: fevers, colds, ear infections. It worried his parents, so they had recently taken him in to see their long-time pediatrician.

Just as the family was sitting down to dinner, the phone rang. It was the doctor, and she had bad news: she suspected that Alex had leukemia, and they needed to take him to Seattle Children’s Hospital right away.

Dinner was forgotten. The family packed a few things in a bag and got in the car. They didn’t know it at the time, but they wouldn’t move back home for almost a year.

As Alex started his treatment, the family moved into the Ronald McDonald House in Seattle. At first, they were nervous about the transition to a communal lifestyle.

In the end, though, it was the community that helped them feel comfortable at the House. “The other families help to ease you into it,” says Jerry. “That’s one of the best resources this House has: other people who are in our shoes.”

Over time, the family settled into a routine. Jerry went to Olympia for work during the week. Darnell attended a local elementary school during the day, while Mary and Alex went to appointments at the hospital and played in the parks around the House.

After months of treatment, the family got the news they were hoping for: Alex was well enough to go home! The family moved back to Olympia just in time for Christmas.

In some ways, leaving the Seattle House was bittersweet. Alex didn’t have many memories of home and Darnell had grown close to his teachers and classmates in Seattle. Mary also had to get used to leaving Alex in the care of family and friends during the day, while she was back at work.

But mostly, the family just felt a sense of relief to be back in their home after such a long absence.

Before coming to Seattle, Mary and Jerry didn’t know much about the Ronald McDonald House. But they both say that they don’t know how they would have gotten through the treatment without it.

“The House allowed us to be a family as much as possible,” says Mary. “We didn’t want to be here, but I don’t know what we would have done otherwise.” ♥
A Year of Helping Families in Anchorage

Emily and Paul Joe came to the Anchorage House in the late summer of 2017. Emily was pregnant with twins, and soon after arriving in Anchorage, Emily gave birth — several weeks before her due date.

For the first month of her sons’ lives, Emily lived at the Anchorage Ronald McDonald House. Every day, she would cross the sky-bridge into the Alaska Native Medical Center and watch her sons grow stronger in the neo-natal ICU.

After staying at the Anchorage House for over six weeks, Emily and Paul Joe were finally able to take their twins home in October. They named the boys Sunrise and Sunset.

Since our Anchorage House opened in January 2017, hundreds of expectant mothers, pediatric patients, and their families have stayed in its 34 rooms. The Anchorage House has hosted bingo nights, arts and craft activities, therapy dog visits, dinner nights, and more.

“During its first year, the Anchorage House provided a comfortable home-away-from-home for so many expectant mothers, pediatric patients, and their families,” says Dianna Finnerty, RMHC Executive Director. “This partnership with ANMC has been a huge success, and we’re looking forward to adding more programming and volunteers to the Anchorage House in 2018.”

Do you want to help us provide new parents with the essentials they will need when they take their baby home? Check out the Anchorage House wishlist at rmhceattle.org/donate/wishlist.

The Holidays at RMHC

The holidays are a tough time to be away from home, but thanks to our incredible donors and volunteers, the families at our Seattle and Anchorage Houses were able to make the best of it. Here’s a peek at what our families have been up to.

Left middle: Siblings Kalena and Gracie went trick or treating at the Seattle House on Halloween.
Left bottom: A resident visits with a therapy dog at the Seattle House.

Center top: Volunteers from local Macy’s stores decorated the Seattle House for the holidays.
Center middle: Volunteers from Wizards of the Coast hosted a game night for children at the Seattle House.

Right top: Mariners pitcher Kyle Lewis visited the Seattle House with Toys for Kids, which donates toys to RMHC every year.
Right bottom: Katrina’s family on Santa night.
What will your legacy be?
A bequest to RMHC may be the most important gift you ever give. It allows us to provide an open door for families with a child facing cancer, hot meals for exhausted parents, and so much more.

Contact Heather Bauer for more information about bequests at 206.838.0614 or heather@rmhcseattle.org.

Join the RMHC Running Club!
The RMHC Running Club is a group for runners, joggers, and walkers of all skill levels who want to support the mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western Washington & Alaska.

Membership in the RMHC Running Club comes with an annual fee of $50, which will be credited to your personal fundraising page. In addition to your registration fee, we ask that you raise a minimum of $250 at the race or races of your choice. In return, you’ll receive the following perks:

• Personal fundraising page
• Custom t-shirt
• Access to closed Facebook group, where you can share your progress with other members
• Discount at Super Jock ‘N Jill
• Personalized training schedule
• Discounts on registration at select local races

To learn more or to join, visit rmhcseattle.org/runrmhc!

The 2017 Annual Gala
Thank you to everyone who helped to make our 2017 Annual Gala such a success! It was a night of lively bidding and heartwarming generosity.

The Wylam family represented the families at the Seattle and Anchorage Houses. Their daughter, Ireland, stayed at the Seattle House for most of 2017 while being treated for a brain tumor. We played an incredible video highlighting their story — find it on rmhcseattle.org/ireland.

Special thanks to our chairs, Manny Chao and Roger Bialous of Georgetown Brewing, and to our generous sponsors!

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Upcoming Events

2018 RMHC Hockey Challenge - February 24
Get ready to cheer for your favorite hockey teams as they face off in the 20th RMHC Hockey Challenge presented by the Seattle Thunderbirds! Local hockey teams will play all day and that evening, the Seattle Thunderbirds square off against the Everett Wingtips.

Visit rmhc-wwaak.org/events to purchase tickets. Tickets will also be available day-of at the door of the ShoWare Center in Kent.

Shop & Dine to Make a Difference at University Village — March 9-11
Treat yourself while making a difference! Shoppers who pre-purchase a $25 discount card will receive 25% off at participating stores at University Village in Seattle.

Men in Kilts - April 11-27
Vote for your favorite local guy in a kilt with a $10 donation to RMHC! Who’ll be crowned king of the kilt this year? You’ll decide!

Visit rmhc-wwaak.org/events to learn more!