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### Wish List

- ♥ Gift cards in any amount (i.e. Meijer, Sam's Club/Wal-Mart, Martin's, Target, Office Depot or Office Max)
- ♥ Pop Tabs – Save pop tabs for recycling. For more information contact the Family Room – 574-647-3020.
- ♥ Pantry Food: individual snacks (i.e. chips, pretzels, etc); individual size cereals; tuna, easy mac and cheese, coffee (regular); canned fruits and vegetables, apple juice, pasta sauces, spaghetti sauce; ketchup, jelly, syrup, crackers, granola bars, cheese and crackers, cake or dessert mixes

- ♥ Refrigerator/perishable food: lunchmeat, hot dogs, hamburger, individual cheese slices, cheese sticks, individual cream cheese packets, butter or margarine
- Please call regarding the need for: buns, bread, eggs, milk
- ♥ Office items: HP 92 black ink cartridges, postage stamps, copy paper (white, pink, yellow, green, blue), AA batteries, post it notes
  - ♥ Personal Care Items: (sample sizes) mouthwash, toothpaste, toothbrushes
  - ♥ Kitchen & Bathroom items: paper towels, toilet paper, air freshener, trash bags (small and tall),

Clorox wipes, bed pillows, styrofoam cups.

- ♥ Individually wrapped items are best.
- ♥ We regret we are unable to accept any used items, including toys, clothing or appliances.

### Wish List items may be dropped off at:

Ronald McDonald Family Room at Memorial Hospital (3rd Floor)  
615 N. Michigan St.  
South Bend, IN 46601  
574-647-3020

Visit our new Web site:  
[www.rmhcMichiana.org](http://www.rmhcMichiana.org)

## Become a Friend of the Family Room ...

At RMHC of Indiana, Michiana Chapter, our goal is to continue providing services that meet the growing needs of children and families in our community. Opportunities are significant and your support would be greatly appreciated.

\$2.74 per day for the next 5 years would result in a donation of \$5,000!

\$1.40 per day for the next 5 years would result in a donation of \$2,500!

\$ .55 per day for the next 5 years would result in a donation of \$1,000!

When you consider making a pledge, you may also have a unique idea to share with us that could benefit our families. If you do, please let us know that you would like to be contacted. ☆

*Room in Your Heart* is published two times a year by the Michiana Chapter of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Indiana and is devoted to the families, donors, volunteers and communities served by the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana.

**Ronald McDonald House Charities of Indiana – Michiana Chapter**  
P.O. Box 1274, South Bend, IN 46624  
574-647-3020

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### Save the Date!

**McDazzle**

September 25

Hilton Garden Inn, South Bend, Ind.

Dimples ~ A Golf Outing

Sponsored by Martin's Supermarkets

May 19

Juday Creek Golf Course, Granger, Ind.

Volunteer Training Classes

May 6 • August 8 • October 10

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rmfrdirector@memorialsb.org

615 N. Michigan St.  
South Bend, IN 46601



# Room in Your Heart

At Memorial Hospital of South Bend

Spring 2009

Issue 1 Volume 3

## McDazzling Night of Entertainment Benefits Community

The third annual McDazzle celebration was held November 14, 2008, in the Fleur De Lei Ballroom of the Hilton Garden Inn Gillespie Conference Center and what a spectacular night it was. Michiana-area entertainer Jill Hillman brought together wonderful local talent for an evening of Musical Theater. Over 280 guests attended the signature fundraising event that benefits the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Memorial Hospital.

The Gensic and Whiting families, Family Room guests while their children were being cared for in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Memorial Hospital, shared their heartwarming stories. Erik, Ruth and Titus Whiting joined us via videotape as they are currently stationed with the U.S. Navy in Virginia. John and Jenna Gensic were able to personally tell us about their experience while their son, Mikan, was being cared for at home by a nurse – a rare night out for this young couple.

An event of this magnitude cannot be successful without a cast of many. We would like to extend our thanks to Lou Behre for his time and talents as well as the many volunteers, workers, and those who donated and/or sponsored the evening so the Ronald McDonald Family Room can continue its mission to provide a “home-away-from-home” for families who find themselves with a seriously ill or injured child in the hospital.

We would especially like to thank our major sponsors – the Michiana McDonald's Family, Villing & Company and Memorial Hospital – for their generous donations. We also want to extend our thanks to our raffle prize donors, including Gogi's Fine Jewelry, Bonefish Grille,

Salon Nouveau, and Blackthorn, Juday Creek, Knollwood, Morris Park Country Club, Signal Point, South Bend Country Club and Swan Lake Golf Courses. And a special thanks to the donors of the American Idol Package that included two show tickets, hotel accommodations and airfare provided by Southwest Airlines. ☆



Ronald McDonald joins members of the Michiana McDonald's family at the 2008 McDazzle: (left to right) Mark Klinker, Dave Miller, and Karen and Jay Okayama.

## Views from the Room

Children play a role in everyone's lives. In turn, you play a significant part in every child's life as a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor or friend. Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Indiana, Michiana Chapter (RMHC) creates, finds and supports programs that directly improve the health and well being of children in our community. The charity's major program, the Ronald McDonald Family Room® (RMFR) at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, operates 365 days a year. In September of 2008, nearly 1,000 guests used the Family Room, an increase of 300 percent from the first half of the year.

This trend is likely to continue.

Many of us are wondering what 2009 will bring. Will the stock market recover? Will gas prices go up? Will groceries and utilities bills soar? I don't have the answer to any of these questions. What I do know, however, is that regardless of the answers, children will continue to be hospitalized and their families will continue to need our services on a daily basis. Without these services, some families will not have a place to sleep, eat or spend a quiet moment to gather their thoughts while their children are seriously ill. Your donations help families like this one who said, “I heard about this

service but never understood what a fantastic program it was until I needed it! Thanks for being there in our time of need.”

The need is indeed great, but if everyone helps even just a little, our local Family Room can continue to be a respite for families going through a very stressful time in their lives. Your donation, no matter the amount, will make a difference! As always, we are sincerely grateful.

**Shelley Lesniewicz**  
*Executive Director*

## A Mother's Story



Mom and Mikan.

Jenna and John Gensic are the proud parents of Mikan, born three months prematurely and weighing 1 lb. 8 oz. when born. They have gone through a great deal in the first year of Mikan's life – a large portion of it spent at the Ronald McDonald Family Room. As our special guest at McDazzle this past November, the Gensics shared their story. Jenna Gensic once again shares that experience in the following letter.

"One year later and we're still thankful for the Family Room. After our son, Mikan, was born twelve weeks early in March of 2008, we spent six months in the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Memorial Hospital. Mikan ended up needing seven surgeries and breathed with the aid of a trach and a ventilator. The RMFR made our seemingly endless stay tolerable by restoring a shred of normalcy to our lives. Because our closest family lived two hours away, and our own residence was in New Carlisle, the RMFR provided a much needed place of respite and became our second home. Staying each night at the RMFR allowed me to always be within



Jenna and John Gensic are the proud parents of their son, Mikan.

walking distance of my son, frequently dropping off breast milk to the NICU in the middle of the night, and my husband was allowed to hold Mikan each day before he left for work. Furthermore, the RMFR erased the stress of worrying about meals for ourselves. Instead, I could spend my day learning Mikan's complicated care, and my husband and I could share a warm meal together when he came back home (to the hospital) from work.

The Ronald McDonald Family Room takes care of parents so that the parents, in turn, can take care of their kids. The volunteers indirectly nourish each young patient with the service they give to his or her parents. We are confident that our opportunity to use the RMFR helped Mikan develop his full potential during those six months. Today Mikan is thriving. He

is weaning off his ventilator nicely, and we are hoping to get rid of it completely by spring or early summer. He is expected to make a complete recovery, and we are forever grateful for the services of the RMFR."

~ Jenna Gensic

You can follow Mikan's progress in the Gensic's Web site blog at [www.babyinthebend.blogspot.com](http://www.babyinthebend.blogspot.com). ☆



South Bend Silver Hawks visit Mikan and Jenna.

### Cuddle Blanket Project to Begin in Spring



Family Room is providing knitting and crocheting supplies for those interested in making blankets. These blankets will then be donated to the newborn and pediatric units in Memorial Hospital. The blankets will be distributed in three sizes: snuggles for the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), and blankies and cozys for the pediatrics (Peds) and pediatric intensive care units (PICU).

"Take home" kits will be distributed to those Moms interested. And for beginners

– those Moms who would like to learn to knit or crochet – we will be offering knitting lessons.

We send our sincere thanks to the Plymouth Yarn Company who provided us with a case of baby yarn, and to Erica's Craft and Sewing Center who donated size 13 knitting needles that will be used in our classes.

If you're interested in helping us with this new project, we're looking for a donation of knitting needles and crochet hooks sizes 6 – 10, as well as cotton and other yarn appropriate for children's blankets. Please contact us at (574) 647-3020. ☆



## Community Opens Its Heart...



Anna Garatoni shows the money and soaps she collected for the Family Room.

**Martin's Supermarket** selected Ronald McDonald Family Room as the benefactor for the second annual "Dimples ~ A Golf Outing". The event was rained out in early September when flooding closed the course. But, **Juday Creek Golf Club** rescheduled the event allowing golfers and Ronald McDonald to enjoy a wonderful day that raised over \$3000.

"I started raising and collecting money and soap for the Family Room when I heard that my Nana was working there. I love infants and children so I thought that this was a great way to help someone and it turns out that I did!" **Anna Garatoni** is nine years old. In addition to her personal efforts, Anna's Girl Scout Troop is working on a two-year badge with the Family Room as their designated project.

When all of our rooms are occupied and the call comes that another family needs accommodations, we often wonder "what can we do?" This question has been answered by locally owned hotels, the **Inn at Saint Mary's** and the **Hilton Garden Inn** on S.R. 933. They have generously opened their hearts and made room for our families.

**McDonald's owner/operators** in our area have made a long-term commitment to help insure that a Ronald McDonald House will someday become a reality. When you purchase a Happy Meal or Mighty Meal at any participating stores, five cents of every purchase goes directly to the local Family Room.

Meals are provided several nights a month by local restaurants. A special thank you to **Applebee's**, **Between the Buns**, **Beef 'O'Brady's**, **Hooters**, **Papa John's** and **Papa Murphy's**.

Children and books are a great combination; add the community's support and the result is an outstanding donation from the patrons of **Border's Books**. Twice this past year Border's held a book drive collecting over \$5,000 worth of books. Thank you to all who participated in this wonderful project. There were many happy faces in the Family Room when we told the children they could pick out a book for themselves and their hospitalized sibling.

Employees make a difference! **RSM McGladrey** employees once again reached out to the community by voting to forgo their holiday bonus and made a donation of \$4,500 to the Family Room. This brings their four-year total contribution to \$15,650. Another very special thanks to all of you.

**Lochmandy's Suzuki of Elkhart** recently announced the "We Care Program" that company officials said "is designed to give back and support the community that has allowed Lochmandy to grow and prosper." When you purchase a new or pre-owned vehicle, a donation of \$200 will be made to the Ronald McDonald Family Room. Please call Jeff George, program director, at either 574-364-0847 or 574-304-0650 for details. ☆



Titus Whiting

We are the Whiting family – Erik, Ruth and Titus. While on vacation and visiting the South Bend, Ind. area, Ruth gave birth to Titus two months premature. Since I am currently serving in the U.S. Navy, I eventually had to report back to my command. The Ronald McDonald Family Room made me feel at ease knowing my wife was safe and comfortable during this nerve-racking time in our lives.

It was nice for us, and especially for Ruth, to be able to stay in the Family Room while Titus was being cared for in Memorial Hospital. My wife liked that she was able to have a kitchen to make a meal of her choice, as well as have a cooked or catered meal every evening for dinner.

When Titus was going through a difficult time, it was nice that the NICU could call us and we were just right around the corner and could quickly be with our son. It made us feel at ease. We were able to visit Titus at any time of the day or night.

## A Father's Story

The Family Room was a great place for friends and family to come and visit us and talk about our son's progress in a comfortable home-like setting. It was also very helpful to have the Internet accommodations for us to communicate with loved ones back in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

The rooms and the restrooms were like staying in a hotel. We were able to unpack our clothing into a dresser and it helped us feel a little like we were at home. It was also very nice to have the washer and dryer accommodations for us to use.

Having the Ronald McDonald Family Room in Memorial Hospital made our situation more peaceful. It is imperative that parents like Ruth and I have a place like the Family Room to help relieve them from stressful thoughts like where are we going to sleep? Or where can I get a hot meal? Or just to have a place where parents can go and relax and ease their minds a little.

The Ronald McDonald Family Room made us feel comfortable. The accommodations were wonderful and the staff made us feel at home. We are thankful and appreciative that the Family Room was in Memorial Hospital. ☆

~Erik Whiting

## Calling all Sunburst Runners

If you or a family member or friend are planning to participate in Sunburst on June 5 and 6 in South Bend, signing up sponsors can make a significant difference by helping to provide a special place for families going through one of the most difficult times in their lives. If you are not a Sunburst runner,

your participation as a sponsor would be greatly appreciated as well.

Just call our office and we can provide you with a sponsorship form. Then just bring your list of pledges and your donation to our table at the Sunburst Expo on June 5. Checks should be made payable to Ronald McDonald House Charities. After the race, pledges may be brought to the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Memorial Hospital or mailed to Ronald McDonald Family Room, 615 N. Michigan Street, South Bend, IN 46601.



For further information regarding this pledge drive, please call (574) 647-3020. Your donation, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated. ☆

## First Annual "Denim Day" Set for April

Area companies will have a chance to participate in the first annual Ronald McDonald House Charities of Indiana, Michiana Chapter Denim/Casual Day! In exchange for making a \$5 donation to RMHC of Michiana, employees will be allowed to wear jeans or to dress casually one day during any week in April.

This event is an easy way for companies to support the Ronald McDonald Family Room in Memorial Hospital. If your company is interested in taking part,

please call us for a Team Commitment form at 574-647-7711. Just fill out the form and fax it to 547-647-1077 by Friday, March 27. Your support is greatly appreciated. ☆



## How you can Sponsor a Family

Guests of the Ronald McDonald Family Room often stay with us for days, weeks, or even months. You can help ease their burden by sponsoring a family for:

- One night \$50
- One weekend \$100
- One week \$350
- One month \$1,500

The Family Room, a "home away from home" for families of seriously ill or injured children, is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 365 days a year to parents and guardians of children being treated in any of the pediatric units or newborn intensive care at Memorial Hospital. The families are welcome to enjoy a meal, have a cup of coffee, do a load of

laundry, take a shower or have a much-needed rest.

Located on the third floor of Memorial Hospital, the Family Room includes a common area, library, three bedrooms, two baths with showers, a laundry room and computer with e-mail and Internet access.

Overnight guests are referred to the Family Room by a hospital social worker. The decision is based on the critical needs of the child, the distance that the family is from their home, and the availability of transportation to the family.

Thanks to the generosity of our communities, the Family Room is

available to families at no cost. It is staffed by over 150 trained volunteers who welcome the families and keep the facility in "five-star" shape.

Each month the Family Room provides more than 1,500 meals, and 15-20 meals each evening. The families are grateful for the hot, delicious food at the end of long and often stressful days. Since opening its doors on November 5, 2002, over 6,000 families have visited the local Family Room including over 4,000 overnight guests.

For further information, call 574-647-3020 or email [rmfrdirector@memorialsb.org](mailto:rmfrdirector@memorialsb.org). ☆