



45 Years of Providing Families a Place to Call Home

In 1974 the first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia. The idea of the House was initiated by Fred Hill, a Philadelphia Eagles player, and his wife whose daughter had leukemia. Following many nights of sleeping on waiting room couches and eating from vending machines, they realized a need for a “home-away-from” not just for them but for so many other families as well. Through the help of the Philadelphia Eagles organization and regional McDonald’s office, the Hill’s dream became a reality.

In Pittsburgh, Dr. Vincent Albo, a pediatric hematologist and oncologist at Children’s Hospital, recognized the need for these same services for his patients’ families. While his patients were receiving treatment in the hospital, Dr. Albo noticed many parents sleeping in the halls and in their cars with nowhere to shower or change their clothes. He knew something needed to be done.

Through the efforts of Dr. Albo, the McDonald’s Corporation, the Pittsburgh Steelers and a group of parents whose children were battling cancer; Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh opened its doors on July 10, 1979. It was the seventh house established in the country. Today, there are over 380 around the world.

The first House in Pittsburgh opened with ten sleeping rooms. A few years later, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh launched the first pediatric bone-marrow transplant unit, and the Ronald McDonald House was faced with a new challenge. There were more families to serve, and they stayed longer. Twelve years after the first House opened, a second was purchased next door. This House was known as the apartments and was designed for families who needed to stay longer and be isolated from public spaces.

For the next 30 years, thousands of families walked through the doors of the Ronald McDonald House at its original location. However, the organization was once again faced with the challenge of not having enough space to help the many families in need

of its services. In 2009, Ronald McDonald House Pittsburgh moved to its current site in the city's section of Lawrenceville. The new facility tripled in size and connects to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh UPMC through the third-floor bridge, allowing families to only be an elevator ride away from their children.

In the 1980's, Dr. William Neal, a pediatric cardiologist at WVU Hospital in Morgantown West Virginia, recognized a need for the families who traveled from across the region and state to access the hospital's pediatric cardiac program. Through Dr. Neal's encouragement, the Morgantown community rallied and began a plan to bring a Ronald McDonald House to the Morgantown area. This Houses opened on October 9, 1990, serving families whose children were being treated at WVU Hospital and Monongalia General Hospital.

In 2018, Ronald McDonald House Pittsburgh and Ronald McDonald House Morgantown merged, creating Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh and Morgantown, two Houses with one mission. Today the Charity provides 90 family units, 74 in Pittsburgh and 16 in Morgantown.

Embarking on another new and exciting chapter at the Charity, Ronald McDonald House Morgantown is expanding. The project will add 11 rooms, providing 4,000 additional nights of stay, renovate the current rooms, and redesign communal spaces for increased accessibility.

From the Houses into the Community

In 2002, partnering with UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile rolled into Pittsburgh to bring vital pediatric medical services to underserved communities. It was the second in the country to provide this service. Over the decades, families who have difficulty accessing medical care due to financial and transportation issues, have had this resource to ensure their children are getting the care they need.

After logging 162,000 miles to hundreds of locations of schools, communities and clinics, with the funding of the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation and other supporters, a new Ronald McDonald Care Mobile was unveiled in 2019.