

*Dear Supporters of
the Ronald McDonald House.*

I was 35 weeks pregnant when we were told the baby was losing weight and would have to be taken by an emergency c-section. Dawson, our second son, was born weighing only 3 lbs. 9 oz. He was flown by helicopter from our hometown of Jamestown to Children's Hospital of Buffalo, where he spent two weeks in their neonatal unit.



We learned that he had been born with a severe urological genital defect called hypospadias. In order to correct this condition, Dawson would need several surgeries over the next few years.

Still in shock and trauma over our son's early birth and low birth weight, we began to wonder: Where would we stay? Would we have to travel back and forth from our home in Jamestown, an hour and a half away? Where would we find the money to make all of this happen?

God bless the person who told us of the Ronald McDonald House.

At first, we didn't know what to expect, but from the first step through the big front door, we felt at home! If we had to describe our feelings about the Ronald McDonald House, the words warmth, generosity, and unconditional support come to our hearts.

Over the course of four years, we have been back and forth

through hospital visits and four surgeries, with overnight stays from 1 to 10 days for each.

Each time we are at the Ronald McDonald House, we see familiar faces and meet new people. The people you find at the House are not just staff and volunteers. They are the ears that will listen to your troubles and concerns, the arms that will hug you, the voices that tell you they will say a prayer. They are our extended "family," open and warm.

I have caught myself saying to the nurses at Children's that "We're going home to grab a bite and a shower." They ask, "All the way to Jamestown?" I tell them that the Ronald McDonald House is our home away from home.

Without the Ronald McDonald House, there with its doors wide open, our family would have been lost in the fear and worry of what to do and where to go. We have watched the remodeling of the kitchen. A lot of thought and planning was put into it. Whether it's donations from local businesses, or community groups preparing food that we as exhausted parents can't find the time to do, everything is appreciated.

We have realized that without the generosity of thousands of donors and volunteers, there would not be a house on West Ferry Street to rest in, to feel loved in and to be welcomed in. Life was made bearable by your kindness. You have been the support beams in the strong foundation of the House.

Thank you for giving us the Ronald McDonald House.

Michael and Lisa Gustafson