

## What The Ronald McDonald House Means to Me

In April 2002, my wife and I had no idea what the Ronald McDonald House was, much less what role it would play in our lives. What had been a normal and nearly full term pregnancy, became an emotional roller coaster when our daughter Jillian was born by emergency c-section. Upon transfer from Pella Hospital to Blank Hospital in Des Moines, we learned of her extensive heart condition and other syndrome associated anomalies. We were also told that her immediate transfer to the University of Iowa Hospital or Mayo Clinic was imperative. We were crushed and heart broken when we were also told not to expect her to live through another month. Added to this was the fear of the financial impact and draining emotional toll that the unknown takes on all of us who experience life changing or threatening conditions in our children. The Ronald McDonald House and all of the many volunteers and workers made and make our situations easier. When it feels that all is against us, we meet the people who work and reside there, people who openly express their willingness and personal commitment to help. Even though we might not be on a first name basis or even know each other's names, I feel that somehow we are all partners and it makes our situation easier. No matter how many sad or tragic cases, there is always an earnest and sympathetic listener. I can't express how much easier this makes things for me, knowing that a complete stranger cares enough to lend us this support and share our pain. After changing residences from our home in Pella to the RMH several times due to the treatment of our daughter, it has become natural to refer to the Ronald McDonald House as "home". I can't imagine what my wife and I would do if this opportunity wasn't there for us. It is our refuge, a place to collect our thoughts and to regain our strength. A simple "thank you" can never be enough. In fact it can't begin to describe the gratefulness that I feel. I will be forever indebted to the Ronald McDonald House and all of the fine people there who have shown their concern and provided care for my family and a safe place for us to call "home" for as long as we need it.

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