Throughout our lives, we often hear the phrase “laughter is the best medicine.” For many people this is true, but this is not always the case for Cheyenne McConnell. Cheyenne has broken countless ribs simply by laughing too hard at a joke. She suffers from an extremely rare condition known as Osteogenesis Imperfecta (OI), a genetic disorder characterized by bones that break easily, often with no apparent cause. There is no cure for OI, but that does not stop Cheyenne from living her life to the fullest.

Cheyenne’s mother, Christine, thought that her daughter was small for her age, but she had no idea of the underlying cause. At age 9, Cheyenne underwent genetic testing to find out why she was not growing like other kids, but the results were inconclusive. After several frustrating years of unexplained bruises and weekly fractures, the McConnells finally had an answer. At age 12, Cheyenne was diagnosed with OI.

In April of 2012, Cheyenne and her mother began coming to Nemours Children’s Specialty Care and became a part of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville family. Cheyenne visits Nemours approximately every three months to receive an IV of pamidronate, which slows the release of calcium from her bones to lower blood calcium levels and help alleviate her symptoms. For three days, she must sit for 4 to 6 hours at a time, depending on the injection speed. Although the medicine does help Cheyenne, she suffers from side effects including nausea, aches, chills, weakness, and difficulty eating. The House provides a comfortable place for Cheyenne and her mom to stay so they don’t have to drive back and forth to Ocala during these treatment cycles. Cheyenne said she loves visiting Reed (our four-legged...
Dear RMHC of Jacksonville Family and Friends,

I can’t believe 2015 is over! What an amazing year for the Ronald McDonald House! Our primary goal for 2015 was to set the foundation for the next decade in executing our mission; “To support the health and well-being of children by providing lodging and other services for critically ill, chronically ill and seriously injured children and their families.” We were very successful in achieving this goal and look forward to implementing the strategic initiatives that will be so important in driving our future success.

As construction nears completion, we are working feverishly to prepare the Ronald McDonald House for the expansion from 30 rooms to 54 rooms, and more importantly, the capacity to serve over 1,500 families each year. Each day brings us closer to the fulfillment of our Capital Campaign, and we sincerely appreciate everyone who has participated in helping make our expansion a reality.

Our Ronald McDonald House employees and volunteers are serving our families under difficult circumstances around the construction of our new House and are doing so with positive enthusiasm. Their commitment and dedication to the Ronald McDonald House is truly inspiring.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of leading our Board of Directors in 2015. I appreciate all of your support and hope to see you around the House in 2016!

Sincerely,
Curt Cunkle
2015 BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of RMHC,

I am happy to report that the end is in sight and we are so excited that our beautiful new expansion is close to welcoming our new families. The anticipated completion date is June 2016. It has been 15 months since we broke ground to expand our House. We have now grown from 30 to 54 rooms, which will allow us to serve the many families who come to Northeast Florida seeking exceptional healthcare for their children. Research from Global RMHC has shown that the Ronald McDonald Houses’ proximity to hospitals provides important benefits for children and their caregivers, such as improved psychological well-being and better perceptions of their child’s recovery. We keep families together at this critical time.

Our new House will also provide a new Playroom, Volunteer Kitchen and a Rooftop Garden. The Rooftop Garden will be a scenic and serene green space where families can find a place of respite and calm. New to our programming will be an Education Initiative and a Health and Wellness Initiative for our families. We are excited about our growth and expansion and look forward to sharing it with you.

Please look for information in our next newsletter about our ribbon cutting in June. We invite all of you – our supporters, friends, volunteers and families to celebrate this historic opening of our new Ronald McDonald House of Jacksonville.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission. We could not create this very special “home away from home” without you.

Best regards,
Diane Boyle
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
star), seeing the same dedicated volunteers, and interacting with staff at the House. This past year, Cheyenne even had a piece of artwork, a mask she created via Art with a Heart in Healthcare, displayed at MOCA Jacksonville.

Despite her daily adversities, Cheyenne is one of the most inspiring and determined young women you will ever meet. She is graduating from high school this May as one of the first students to ever receive the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship through a medical homebound program. Cheyenne and her mom credit Mr. Anasco, a very special teacher from West Port High School, for spending the past four years making sure she received the same textbooks, lessons, and resources that her classmates were afforded. Cheyenne plans to attend community college in Ocala for her first two years. After that she plans to study Forensic Psychology at FIT in Melbourne, FL. Cheyenne is also a music lover; she has been playing guitar since she was 5 years old and previously played trumpet in her school band. She named Johnny Cash and Hunter Hayes as two of her favorite musicians.

Always looking for the next challenge, Cheyenne recently picked up a new hobby: horse cart driving. This past September Cheyenne began learning to drive through a program with Stirrups 'n Strides Therapeutic Riding Center. After just 4 months, Cheyenne took first place for Leisure Horsemanship at her first driving competition. She plans to compete again in March, and we have no doubt she will take another blue ribbon home.

While Cheyenne’s mobility can change sporadically, for the past 7 months she has been able to set aside the walker and wheelchair, marking the longest consecutive period of time over the last 6 years where she has been able to do so. If everyone could meet someone like Cheyenne in their lifetime, they would realize the meaning of true heart. The girl who started out small in life has never given up, and she continues to follow her dreams like the sky’s the limit. Optimistic, smart, and hilariously witty, Cheyenne embodies the love and hope found within the walls of the Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville. We look forward to watching her continue to overcome any obstacle in her way.

While our House is filled with love every day of the year, February is an extra festive month. To celebrate, I wrote a poem:

Roses smell good, violets do too –
But the best smell on Valentine’s Day is a biscuit or two!

The truth is there are wonderful smells everywhere in our House. My nose lets me know about the outpourings of love happening around here.

Every evening there are hundreds of wonderful scents that float around the House as our kind volunteers cook dinner. Every morning I can smell the sawdust on Mr. Walt’s jeans when he comes over from the construction site to tell us about their progress. Around the middle of the month Miss Donna bakes cookies for our families, and the glorious aromas of peanut butter, oatmeal, and chocolate chip waft through the House. Each day there is the fresh scent of orange cleaner as our house-warmers make everything sparkling for our families. Every week, Miss Phyllis comes to help the staff – as I mentioned in my poem, she has a dog bone stash right down the hall from my office and always makes sure I get an extra biscuit… or two.

Love – it’s the real deal here at Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville!

Woof, woof! 💖

(Love, Reed)
The support of our donors and community partners is vital to our existence. Throughout the year we are blessed by so many wonderful gestures of generosity. We are amazed each day at the creativity and thought that drives many of these initiatives. Here are just a few examples of how our fabulous supporters serve as champions of our mission.

**DURBIN CREEK ELEMENTARY**

Durbin Creek teacher Jenny Sparks has been a board member of the Red Shoe Crew for several years. Her enthusiasm spread to the entire school when she proposed “Red & Jeans Day” to support the House. Throughout the year, staff members contributed $100 to wear red shirts and jeans on Wednesdays. They have contributed a total of $2,385, and this initiative has also blossomed into a school-wide change drive that we will celebrate at their Winter Carnival.

**GIRLS ON THE RUN**

Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida chose RMHC of Jacksonville as their fall community impact project. Approximately 1,000 girls helped to collect supplies for the House and presented the donations at their End of Season 5K on December 5th. The girls, their families, and coaches also had an opportunity to purchase striped charity socks. They donated proceeds from the sales, totaling $1,736, at the end of December.

**LOIS SCHWINGER**

TPC Sawgrass resident Lois Schwinger invited guests to a special holiday tea and asked them to donate gift cards for RMHC of Jacksonville. Gift cards serve as extremely important resources for our families, as many of them come here without notice and do not have time to gather personal necessities. Lois’ holiday tea resulted in over $3,500 in gift card donations for the House.

If you’re interested in hosting a third party fundraiser with your civic group,
CSX visits once a month to cook a gourmet-style dinner for our House families. They put love and care into each meal they prepare. They cooked a delicious feast for our 2015 Family Christmas Party. We appreciate their dedication and loyalty to our family dinner program. Each dinner represents much more than a meal – it represents compassion and love.

The First Coast Car Council hosted its 29th Annual Cruisin’ to the Creek Car Show in October 2015 at Trout Creek Fish Camp. Despite cloudy skies, an estimated 5,000 fans turned out to view some of the coolest cars and trucks in Northeast Florida. The event raised $11,000 for RMHC of Jacksonville. The First Coast Car Council hosted three events benefiting the House in 2015 and donated a total of $20,000.

Friends of the House Ty and Lindsey Petway hosted a holiday party where they asked each guest to bring a toy donation for RMHC of Jacksonville. All of their guests were extremely excited to help out the families in the House. Large stuffed animals, games, arts and crafts, and tricycles were just some of the goodies their guests brought. This wonderful toy donation made the holidays extra special for our families.

If you're interested in hosting a third party fundraiser with your civic group, school, or business, please contact Taylor Belshause at 904.807.4669.
The Red Shoe Crew hosted the 7th Annual Fries With That Wine event on September 17, 2015. More than 325 guests gathered at the Terrace Suite at EverBank Field for an evening of networking, delicious wine, spectacular food and live music by Evan Michael and The Well Wishers. Guests enjoyed a photo booth and had fun using the hashtag #FriesWithThatWine to see their photos and tweets on the gigantic video boards. RMHC of Jacksonville friends and supporters enjoyed a short Q&A session with former Jacksonville Jaguar Jeff Lageman, and two current Jaguars, Clay Harbor and Arrelious Benn. The programming portion ended with a short video highlighting the children, families, and mission of RMHC of Jacksonville. More than $40,000 was raised to support RMHC of Jacksonville. This event would not be possible without all of our gracious sponsors. Thank you for your support.

The evening featured McDonald’s favorites paired with wines provided by Riverside Liquors.

Our dedicated volunteers assisted with everything, including food service.

Guests posed with members of The Jaguars’ ROAR.

Jaguars players Clay Harbor and Arrelious Benn spoke to the crowd about the upcoming season.
For the second year in a row, the event took place at the Terrace Suite at EverBank Field.

2015 Fries With That Wine Committee Members: Jeannine Bytwerk, Ashley Helmick, Katy Hurtig
On October 26, RMHC of Jacksonville hosted its second annual Golf Classic. Friends and supporters enjoyed 18 holes of golf on the legendary THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass. Presented by Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., this exclusive event raised approximately $132,000 and featured 124 golfers. Top Sponsors included Conser Moving Solutions, Florida Blue and Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. Each player received a pair of Skechers shoes, a Bridgestone hat and balls and Kentwool socks when they checked in. Before hitting the links, players were invited to walk through the famous Tunnel of Champions, enjoy a delicious breakfast on the course and participate in a customized ball fitting courtesy of Bridgestone. After a picture-perfect day on the course, the event concluded with an awards ceremony and silent auction in the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. Thank you to our sponsors and the Golf Classic committee for all of your support.
THE PLAYERS Stadium Course provided a day full of fun and challenging shots.
The construction hurdles and limited space did not interfere with holiday cheer around our House! Our elves were resourceful, creating a festive environment for our families to enjoy. Every day is special at the House, but the holidays remind us all how important family and community are to our mission. From volunteers decorating our courtyard and trimming trees, to Santa Claus delivering a gift to each of our children during our Family Christmas Party, the spirit of the season resonated throughout our halls. Here are just a few examples of how we celebrated the holidays in 2015.

American Electric generously donated time and materials to light up our courtyard.

The ladies of Brownie Troop #1588 donated holiday items.

Employees of Marks Gray P.A. created gingerbread houses with our families.

Volunteers from Florida Blue decorated trees to display around the House.

Members of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church delivered their annual blanket donation to keep our families warm and cozy.

Santa delivered presents to all of our families.
Each day we see our expansion evolving, and we’re so excited to be getting close to completion. The new family kitchen has opened and everyone is enjoying being able to cook again! The inside of the expansion is buzzing as the construction crew diligently works to keep us on track for a springtime unveiling. We can’t wait to be able to welcome 24 additional families into our beautiful House. Stay tuned for details on our grand opening!

In Loving Memory

OF THE PRECIOUS CHILDREN WE LOST IN 2015. THEY WILL FOREVER BE IN OUR HEARTS AND A PART OF OUR HOUSE.

Shantel Thomas
Jakob Gulbrandsen
Mhairi Forbes
Daniel Alexander
Matthew Yarber
Luke Hernandez
Noah Wieland

Jayden Harwood
Ansley Smith
Jonathan Fluker
Sean McNeal
Anthony Rojas
Jadine Charles
Evelyn Wiedel

SAVE the DATE

McGALA

SATURDAY
May 21
2016

SAWGRASS MARRIOTT
GOLF RESORT & SPA
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLORIDA
Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Jacksonville needs many of the same items you use in your own home (and lots more of them) to successfully operate its Ronald McDonald House® and Ronald McDonald Family Room® programs. The items needed most are:

**FOOD**
- Individually packaged snacks & meals: cereals, chips, cookies, fruit, soups, breakfast bars, toaster pastries
- Coffee creamer
- White vinegar

**KITCHEN**
- Paper towels, cups, bowls, plates
- Large plastic containers with lids
- Plastic cutlery
- 1 & 2 gallon Ziploc bags
- Oven gloves & pot holders
- New non-stick pans
- Baking & frying pans
- Dish towels
- Kitchen cooking utensils

**HOUSEHOLD**
- Flashlights
- Bleach & detergent
- Lysol disinfecting spray
- Swiffer Dusters
- Swiffer Sweeper dry cloths
- Magic Erasers

**OFFICE SUPPLIES**
- 8.5 x 11 copy paper
- 1/3 cut manila folders
- Hanging file folders
- Legal size writing pads
- Post-it notes

**GIFT CARDS**
- Gas
- Walmart & Sam's Club
- Home Depot & Lowe's
- Target
- CVS & Walgreens
- Publix & Winn-Dixie

**MISCELLANEOUS**
- Garden hose sprayers
- Area attraction tickets

Please call 904.807.4663 (HOME) to schedule the delivery of your donation. Don’t forget to save your pop tabs too!

**Event Calendar**

**MAY 14**
CHARITY OF THE DAY

**THE PLAYERS**

**MAY 21**
2016 McGALA
Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa

**TBA**
FRIES WITH THAT WINE

**AUG**

**OCT 24**
GOLF CLASSIC
Timuquana Country Club

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**MAY 10-15, 2016**

**TPC SAWGRASS**

**PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL**