Cancer does not define me

Cancer is defined as a malignant and invasive growth or tumor that tends to return after excision and as it metastasizes to other sites. To people who have never dealt with cancer, many define it as a scary disease that can take a person’s life. When you ask Ansley Jones, a two-time cancer survivor, she defines it as a disease that made her the person she is today, and it’s something she is thankful for.

At just 14 years old, on October 10, 2013, Ansley was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML), a primary cancer of the bone marrow and lymph nodes. “When I first heard the news that I had cancer, I was in shock and in complete denial,” said Ansley. “I had never thought something like this could happen to me, but I knew that God had a plan and from that point on, I had to leave my trust in him.”

As an eighth grade cheerleader for her school and a competitive team, Ansley never thought about the symptoms she was having — always tired, short of breath and bruising. “Since I was so active, I just pushed these symptoms to the side,” Ansley said. Eventually, Ansley developed a fever that would not go away. Her parents insisted on having bloodwork done, and that is when doctors noticed her blood levels were extremely low, confirming Ansley had AML. AML is a rapidly progressing disease that calls for fast and aggressive treatment, which Ansley endured for four months straight with a week break in between.

After what felt like eternity, Ansley finished her treatment and went into remission. Life seemed to slowly return to normal as she went back to finish school. During the summer, she enjoyed being with friends and family. Ansley began to play golf, and she joined the high school team when she started her freshmen year. As time flew by, everything seemed to be perfect, until halfway through her sophomore year. She began to have the same symptoms prior to being diagnosed. “This time around, I noticed the symptoms that
MESSAGES FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear RMHC of Jacksonville Family and Friends,

I look forward to introducing the Jacksonville community to a new Ronald McDonald House. This House was built over the years with love by our advisory board members, associates, volunteers, board of directors, corporate donors, healthcare partners and individual donors. We are extremely proud to continue the focus of helping families in medically challenging situations feel safe, loved and socially connected. By expanding our capacity to support families with traditional values, we are continuing to serve the needs of our guests and their families in the 21st century healthcare environment.

Our family was impacted by medical challenges when our daughter was 3 years old, and they continue to do this today. In our most desperate moment God brought us to the Ronald McDonald House. It was the Ronald McDonald House where we connected with families having similar or more challenging medical conditions. The House was warm, engaging and supportive. It was our network to a caring, loving and supportive community. We hope families feel this same support when they visit. It defines us, inspires us and clarifies our values as human beings.

The Ronald McDonald House of Jacksonville’s fundamental values are community based, and this is where we need your time to support our cause. If you have an opportunity, we need your talents to support the long-term sustainability of funding and supporting our programs. We also need your resources to continue the notable impact we have on the children and families that stay with us. Jacksonville residents have tremendous heart, and we thank you for your continued focus in supporting the House by contributing your time, talents or resources.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Anderson
2016 BOARD PRESIDENT

ANSEL AND JOSEPH WITH THEIR DAD ON HIS BIRTHDAY

I had not recognized before,” said Ansel. “I went to the gym, and five minutes after I got there, I fainted, and that was when I knew something was wrong.”

Ansel was taken to Wolfson Children’s Hospital (WCH) to have bloodwork done and that is when life turned around again. Her blood test showed 35 percent leukemia cells, confirming the AML had returned. Ansel started treatment immediately. This battle could be different for Ansel because a relapse meant she needed a bone marrow transplant.

After a three month cycle of chemotherapy to reduce leukemia cells, she received the transplant. Ansel’s perfect blood match turned out to be her brother, Joseph. “Having him as a brother is already a blessing, but it means even more now because he literally saved my life,” said Ansel.

Ansel celebrated her transplant birthday on February 15, 2015. Throughout her transplant days, Ansel experienced many emotions. In March, Ansel was diagnosed with Hepatic Veno-Occlusive Disease (HVOD), a disease of the liver that is uncommon for bone marrow transplants. As a result of HVOD, Ansel also had portal hypertension which increased the possibility of additional bleeding. Slowly, Ansel’s body began to heal on its own and things turned in the right direction. Though it was rough, her spirits continued to stay positive as she pushed through it all. “As hard as my transplant was,” Ansel says, “I came out stronger than ever before.”

On April 13, 2015, Ansel took her victory walk around Weaver four after spending 65 days at WCH. This was also the day she moved to her new “home away from home”, the Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville. Ansel stayed at the House for approximately four weeks. Ansel and her family expressed how amazing the staff at the House were. They were always friendly and accommodating, and they always put the family’s best interest first. Ansel’s favorite part of being at the House was always having books to read, games to play and delicious homemade cooked meals to eat, something that reminded her of her own home.

Now in remission for the second time, Ansel feels as though she has conquered the world. Luckily, she was able to stay caught up with school work so she can graduate on time and continue to become a pediatric oncology nurse, so she can impact young like her WCH team did for her. Cancer is no longer seen as disease for Ansel Jones. Through cancer, she had more opportunities than she could imagine — hanging out with celebrities, speaking at special engagements and most importantly, meeting some of the most amazing people along the way. “Cancer is not just the simple definition of a disease. Cancer is something that so many, like myself, have to overcome by staying positive, remaining strong and keeping loved ones close,” said Ansel. “Doing this is difficult through hard times, but I was fortunate enough to have amazing facilities that cheered me on, especially the Ronald McDonald House, who made a ‘home away from home’ the best experience possible.”

I’m so thankful for the House because if saved my parents financially, it was a positive and uplifting environment, and I met so many families I got to share stories with.”

-Ansel Jones

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Dear Friends of RMHC,

Five years ago it was a dream. This Fall the dream comes true when we open the doors of our beautifully expanded Ronald McDonald House. Sitting just across the street from our pediatric healthcare partners Wolfson Children’s Hospital, Nemours Specialty Care, and a short distance from Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital and UF Health Proton Center, we are ready to support the many families who will temporarily call us their “home away from home.” We will deliver our mission of care and provide for our families as long as they need to be close to their children’s medical treatment.

It is with heartfelt gratitude we say thank you to our many supporters who have made this dream possible. Our vision has always been that RMHC of Jacksonville will be here to provide for all children who need medical treatment in Jacksonville.

By providing a “home away from home”, we support the emotional and financial burden of healthcare. Your generosity has made this possible, and we are grateful.

Although the children and families who benefit from your contributions may not know your name, they will always know how much you cared.

Best regards,
Diane Boyle
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REED’S REPORT

Woof!

Mr. Robert Falcon Smith, a famous human respected in his canine circle of friends, once said, “The dog lives for the day, the hour, even the moment.”

I can tell you, he’s right. As a dog, I don’t do much advance planning. Humans take care of that. Living in the moment is what I do best as I help families become comfortable in their “home away from home.”

It’s a good day when a kiddo stops by my office to relate with me. I don’t mind that we share my “pup test” while I get a few ear scratches and a biscuit or two. Visiting with a kiddo right before they go to an appointment is the best time to be spontaneous. It’s hard to feel them relax as I lean in with one of my big golden hugs. I can even get a smile from a tense mom or a concerned dad with a list bump or handshake. Knowing good memories in the moment is what I do best.

With love,
Reed

You can follow my “Woof Wednesday” posts on the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville Facebook page, or visit rmhjacksonville.org and click “Meet Reed.” When you visit, stop by the Program Services office for a signature trading card and a paw-some high-five

NEWS

SUMMER 2016

2 3
Three Cheers for THE PLAYERS

Each year, golf enthusiasts flock to Ponte Vedra Beach to watch one of the world’s most prestigious golf tournaments—the PLAYERS. According to Executive Director Matt Rapp, 2016 was the most successful tournament in history, “thanks to the great fans who came back year after year.” RMHC of Jacksonville participated in three separate programs this year: Chip in for Youth, THE PLAYERS 17th Hole Charity Challenge and Charity of the Day.

On April 4, Sports Director Brent Martinez from Action Sports Janx hit two shots for the 17th Hole Charity Challenge. The person landing closest to the pin secured $10,000 for their designated charity, with the second closest securing $5,000. RMHC of Jacksonville was honored to be one of the 16 Northeast Florida charities participating. We received wonderful support from Brent and our friends.

We are especially grateful to THE PLAYERS for inviting us to be Charity of the Day on Saturday, May 14—undeniably one of the busiest days of the tournament. RMHC of Jacksonville volunteers welcomed 20,000 attendees with fold-out fans distributed at three of the main gates. Thank you to THE PLAYERS for all of your wonderful support! ♥

Our families received a special surprise when members of the Jacksonville Jaguars stopped by the House on June 9 as part of their Community Day initiative. Instead of holding an on-field practice on day nine of Organized Team Activities, the entire team split into four groups and visited area healthcare facilities including Brooks Rehabilitation, Nemours Children’s Specialty Care, and Wolfson Children’s Hospital in addition to our House. The players had no idea what was in store for them when they arrived since Head Coach Gus Bradley informed them of the plan when they came in that Thursday morning. According to quarterback Blake Bortles, “Guys came in that morning and were fully expecting a normal day, to go into the team meeting and get ready for practice, and then Gus told us we’d be doing this. This is an unbelievable way to spend a day off that has given us a chance to make a difference in the lives of others.”

The teammates cooked breakfast, played basketball, blew bubbles in the courtyard, and signed autographs, generating big smiles all around. Cornerback Aaron Colvin summarized how the visit impacted him personally; “I didn’t have too many opportunities to meet people in the NFL or NBA or anything like that,” he said. “To be able to give back is a blessing. You can tell by the looks on their faces it’s a special moment for them. This is genuine. Just to be able to play basketball—something we all like to do. Guys are cooking…you can feel the love. It’s good to give it back to them.”

We are thankful for our home team and their never ending support. Go Jagi! ♥
Saturday, May 21, 500 supporters and community patrons celebrated the mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville at the 2016 Mardi Gras McGALA. Held at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, the evening included a delicious dinner, live entertainment by The Band Be Easy, a fabulous silent auction, dancing, and a heartfelt program highlighting the families served and the programs and services provided by RMHC of Jacksonville.

The 22nd annual event helped raise $275,000 for RMHC of Jacksonville. “We are grateful for the community’s generous support and we appreciate everyone who joined us to celebrate our mission as a ‘home away from home’ in the vibrant style of the Big Easy,” said Diane Boyle, Executive Director. “One hundred percent of the proceeds from this event support our mission of providing families of children receiving pediatric medical services in Northeast Florida with the care and assistance they need.” We’d like to give a special thanks to our 2016 McGALA Honorary Chair, Ryan Schwartz, and the fabulous McGALA committee that helped bring this magical event to life.

Executive Director Diane Boyle introduces the Pitts family to share their experience.

Guests had fun with their Mardi Gras fashion. From left to right: Donovin & Allyson Darius, Riona Soni, Linda & Vince Perrigno, Earl & Amy Evans, and Amal Soni.

Channel 4 news anchor Melanie Lawson-Miner served as this year’s emcee.

McGALA is supported by a grant from the Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund, est. 2015.

Presenting Sponsor Joe and Nan Ferrara and guests.

Dave Mullins Sr. with Development Director Carol Harrison and 2016 McGALA Honorary Chair Ryan Schwartz.

Sara Boyle, Peter Kuchera, Tyler Boyle, and Meg Kuchera.
RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE® PROGRAM IMPACT

MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ENABLING FAMILY-CENTERED CARE

Why do families stay at Ronald McDonald House?
Children whose families stay at Ronald McDonald Houses tend to be sicker, have traveled farther distances for care and spend the longest time in the hospital. The House allows families to accept the best medical care for their child and being nearby helps children heal and cope better together.

At least one RMHC care program provides care for families staying at
89% OF TOP PERFORMING HOSPITALS
RMHC is the world’s leading NGO supporting the accommodation needs of families with children receiving treatment at a hospital.

more than 40% of families served at Ronald McDonald Houses have children in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

94% of hospital administrators agree that Ronald McDonald Houses reduce parental stress and 93% agree they reduce costs for families.

more than 45 Ronald McDonald Houses worldwide help families stay close to their sick children when they need to heal.

$700 million saved Families saved an estimated $700 million in out-of-pocket lodging and travel expenses due to the presence of Ronald McDonald House® and Ronald McDonald Family Room® programs.

The Ronald McDonald House program, which is a care program of Ronald McDonald House Charities®, helps families worldwide stay close to their children while receiving hospital care, increasing the caregivers’ ability to spend more time with their child, interact with their clinical care team and participate in medical care decisions. It also allows siblings and other family members to be present and engaged.

Positive Overall Hospital Experience
In a study of more than 5,400 families with children in inpatient pediatric care and infants in NICU, those who stayed at a Ronald McDonald House reported a more positive overall hospital experience than families who didn’t. ²

Better Perceived Quality of Life
In a survey of 250 families, researchers found that children and their parents, who stayed at a Ronald McDonald House, had a better quality of life than expected for children with chronic diseases. ²

Proximity to Hospitals
The Ronald McDonald House® 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. ²

Strengthening Caring Abilities
27% of parents experienced post-traumatic stress symptoms several months after their child’s discharge from a hospital stay, but Ronald McDonald Houses help their guests strengthen caring abilities by keeping families together. ²

Higher Quality Sleep
Parents whose children have longer hospital stays benefit from higher quality sleep at a Ronald McDonald House compared to parents who slept at their child’s hospital bedside. ²

Provide Spaces to Play
Ronald McDonald Houses provide spaces to play. Playing with other children experiencing similar situations can help these children cope with trauma. ²

Provide a Lodging Alternative
Ronald McDonald Houses can provide an alternative for parents who need to remain close to the hospital for extended periods but do not require active daily medical care. ²

We are fortunate to have over 1,600 volunteers give their time to RMHC of Jacksonville each year. Angeliz Rodriguez has joined our team for the summer, but this isn’t her first visit to the House. In 2010, she stayed here with her mom, dad, and brother for over nine months when her younger sister, Laura, was at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. The Rodriguez family became a part of our family. Fast forward 6 years, and Angeliz has joined us once again via the Vision Education & Rehabilitation Center (VERC). VERC provides adjustment-to-blindness counseling and training in assistive technology, independent living skills, orientation & mobility, typing, job readiness, self-advocacy, communication skills, low vision training, and community integration. They also provide high school students hands-on job experiences, currently collaborating with approximately 30 community partners. The students who participate are able to learn things they could not without work experience, and gain an increased sense of self-confidence, maturity, and responsibility. Angeliz has already proven to be a great asset to our team, and we are so happy to have her here.

Ronald McDonald House BENEFITS & IMPACT

All of us in the BrightView family believe in giving back to our local community. With our professional relationship and partnership with Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville, it was an easy choice for us to choose to give back to their families. The dedication and commitment that our clients and business partners provide for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House is an inspiration to the BrightView team. We felt that if we could improve the landscape curb appeal to make the House that much more comfortable and inviting for the families staying there, then we were honor bound to do so. We were able to provide the labor, materials, and equipment necessary to complete a landscape enhancement project of the monument sign, tree trimming, mulching, irrigation revisions, and much more at no cost to the House. When we went over the project with our employees, we received an overwhelming outpouring of support for the project. So many of our employees wanted to work on this truly remarkable venture that it was humbling for us. BrightView family employees understood that we were giving so much more than time and materials — we were giving moments of comfort and rest for families that needed it most.

This project is one of many planned by our corporation throughout the country, not just with RMHC of Jacksonville, but with other worthy organizations annually. Our BrightView promise is to take care of each other, our clients, and our communities.

Scott Dalton
BrightView Landscape Services
**House Expansion Update**

Trim is being painted, curtains are being hung, and furniture is being delivered—all signs that we are moving closer to opening our brand-new beautiful expansion. With a late September ribbon cutting on the horizon, we are so excited to share our beautiful new space with our families, donors, and volunteers.

**Project Status**

- Administrative Area
- Laundry Room
- Community Room
- Family Kitchen and Pantry
- Secure Front Desk Area
- New Covered Parking Area
- Resurfaced Parking Lot
- New Building Sign

**Completed**

- Rooftop Garden
- Playroom
- Stair Tower
- Volunteer Kitchen
- Donor Wall
- Dining Room with Technology Bar
- Living Room & Loft
- Fitness Center
- Learning Center

**To Be Completed**

- Hearts in Action

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A BIG Thank You!

_Thank you to Mr. Tom DeGoey and Mr. David Valentine at the La-Z-Boy store at St. Johns Town Center for generously donating 26 sofa beds for our family bedrooms and a complete set of furniture for our brand-new living room. Each day we are reminded how wonderful and supportive the Jacksonville community is, and we could not do this without all of you._

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**Save the Date**

Local McDonald’s stores will be joining together again this year for the *Hearts for the House* campaign to raise money and benefit Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville. This campaign begins on **August 1** and runs through **August 14**. When you visit your local McDonald’s during this time, you may purchase a paper heart for either $1, $3, or $5 to hang in the store. Thank you for helping us Keep Families Close!

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**Fries With That Wine 2016**

Fries With That Wine 2016 will take place in the newly renovated East US Assurance Club at EverBank Field. Mark your calendars and join us for one of RMHC of Jacksonville’s most popular events. Presented by EverBank and hosted by our young professional group, the Red Shoe Crew, attendees will enjoy several new elements to this year’s event. Besides being in a brand new space, a VIP section has been added to provide a more extensive food and wine pairing experience. Sponsored by Florida Blue, the VIP section will welcome guests starting at 5:00pm, one hour prior to general admission, to sample premier wines from Riverside Liquors and special culinary treats from McDonald’s.

For sponsorship information, contact Taylor Belshouse at tbelshouse@rmhcjax.org or 904-807-4669.

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**Our 3rd Annual Golf Classic**

Our 3rd annual **Golf Classic** will take place at the beautiful Timucuan Country Club. Established in 1923, Timucuan is one of Florida’s premier country clubs and among the oldest in Jacksonville. The Club’s 290 acres are nestled on the western edge of the St. Johns River. Its famed Donald Ross 18-hole golf course has hosted numerous USGA events and is the course where PGA Tour golfer David Duval learned the game. We look forward to another great day of golf this year that will allow us to continue our crucial mission of providing a “home away from home” for children and their families during one of the most difficult times in their lives.

Please contact Carol Harrison at charrison@rmhcjax.org for sponsorship and registration details.
Event Calendar

AUG 6
HOKEY FOR THE HOUSE
Jacksonville Ice Sportsplex

SEP 23
FRIES WITH THAT WINE
East US Assure Club at EverBank Field

OCT 24
GOLF CLASSIC
Timuquana Country Club

MAY 2017
2017 McGALA

Wish List
ITEMS NEEDED TO SUPPORT OUR HOUSE:
• Paper bowls
• Liquid laundry detergent*
• Fabric softener sheets*
• Paper towels, plates & cups
• Large plastic cups
• Large Styrofoam cups
• 1 & 2 gallon Ziploc bags
• Food storage containers
• Brooms
• Swiffer Sweeper dry refills*
• Single bottles of liquid hand soap
• Disinfectant wipes
• AA, AAA & D batteries
• 8.5 x 11 pink copier paper
• Regular/decaf coffee & creamer*
• Breakfast cereals & bars
• Carnation Instant Breakfast
• Individually portioned snacks, soups & meals
• US & International phone cards
• Gift cards: grocery, gas, home goods, etc.
• Area attraction tickets: zoos, museums, movies, etc.

*Needed most often

DON’T FORGET TO COLLECT ALUMINUM POP TABS AND USED CELL PHONES FOR THE RONALD McDOALD HOUSE PROGRAM.

All donations can be dropped off anytime at 824 Children’s Way. Please call 904.807.HOME(4663) with questions.

Like RMHCJACKSONVILLE ON FACEBOOK
Tweet @RMHCJAX
Click RMHCJACKSONVILLE.ORG
Call 904.807.HOME(4663)

Purchase any Jaguars preseason or regular season home game ticket to automatically donate $10 to RMHC of Jacksonville. After 25 tickets are sold, your donation will be matched dollar for dollar via the WeGive.org project. After 100 tickets are sold, the match becomes 3-to-1 and could generate up to $30 per ticket!

TO PURCHASE TICKETS: www.bit.ly/GiveandGoforRMHC