



The JOURNAL

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Hunter, Robyn and Adrianna relaxing at the House.

The Cotton's Comfort Zone

In March of 2006, Robyn and David noticed a lump on the left side of their son's neck. When they asked Hunter about it, he told them that he was pushed down at school. Concerned that he had a pulled

muscle, the Cottons took Hunter to see a doctor. An ultrasound was done and the doctor told them it may be Hodgkin's disease (cancer of the lymph nodes) but to confirm more testing would be needed. A second opinion revealed that it may be a mono-virus. Concerned with the conflicting opinions, the Cottons took Hunter to a specialist. The third diagnosis was comforting; this doctor did not think he had Hodgkin's disease because it is so rare in a five-year old, and Hunter was showing no symptoms of Hodgkin's except for the lump on his neck. The Dr. put Hunter on antibiotics for two weeks, hoping it was an infection.

have Hodgkin's disease. The family would have to leave their home in Missoula Montana and travel to Spokane, Washington for treatment.

The Cottons commented that a person's home is their comfort zone. Because the Ronald McDonald House has provided them with that comfort zone, they have been able to focus completely on Hunter's recovery. The Cottons have been able to stay together as a family through their

ordeal. Without the Ronald McDonald House, they would financially not been able to stay together. "Allowing our family to stay together has made all the difference in Hunter's progress," notes Robyn.

The Doctor put Hunter on antibiotics for two weeks...

Hunter has been a real trooper through all of this. He has been just as energetic as before. Hunter always has a smile on his face and loves playing practical jokes on his nine year old sister Adrianna, staff at the radiation department of Sacred Heart Medical Center and everyone else he can befriend. However, he does get lonely for home and misses his dad, sister, and extended family in Montana when they can't be with him.

When the family is away and it is just Robyn and Hunter, they find peace within the walls of the House. Robyn reflects, "Ronald McDonald House has provided a home for us and an opportunity to talk with

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Easter Sunday Hunter ran a fever and the lump on his neck had grown to about the size of a softball. A CT scan was ordered and the report showed that Lymphoma was suspected. A biopsy was taken and on May 3, 2006, that day David received a call that his five year old son did indeed

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Mike Forness,
Executive Director

Each year brings new families to the Ronald McDonald House who are in the midst of very trying times. Some families return to our House because of long-term illnesses or new conditions. This was the case with Skylyer Baron, read more about him on page four. Most families are able to return to their home with their child holding the Ronald McDonald House close to their hearts.

This has been a record year for us. As usual, our twenty-one rooms were full; the difference this year was when our waiting list topped twenty families. We want to thank the two community minded organizations who stepped forward to help meet the need of our families. These two organizations are the Wolff Corporate Housing, who provided apartments for some of our families, and The Rypien Foundation, who also helped provide lodging off site for a few of our families.

In looking to the future, Ronald McDonald House Charities is securing additional property adjacent to our current facility to accommodate more families needing our services. Although there are many steps to take prior to increasing our capacity, securing property next to the current House is the cornerstone of meeting the rising demand for temporary housing for families with seriously ill or injured children. Watch for more details as we celebrate our twentieth anniversary in 2007 and take steps to expand our facility.

Each gift whether it be monetary or supplies helps make our home a home. Thank you for your continued support. We could not provide the comfort and encouragement to these families without your help.

THE JOURNAL

The Journal is published throughout the year by Ronald McDonald House Charities of Spokane. RMHC of Spokane, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, provides temporary housing for families who travel to Spokane seeking medical care for their children. Your comments and questions are welcome. Call (509) 624-0500, or fax (509) 624-3267.

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Spokane
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Newsletter Creator and Editor: Nickie White

Visit our Web site at www.rmhsokane.org

E-mail: info@rmhsokane.org

Upcoming Events:

Carousel on Parade

Throughout downtown

November 2006 - March 2007

Ronald McDonald House Gallop

Northern Quest Casino Pavillion

January 28, 2007

For information on these events visit www.rmhsokane.org
or call Nickie White at (509) 624-0500

Excited About Being A New Mom

Sophia Delgado is from Walla Walla, Washington and her baby daughter Loraine is two and a half months old now.

Loraine was born August 20, 2006, two months premature weighing only two pounds fourteen ounces. Sophia has been in Spokane Washington at the Ronald McDonald House since September 2006. Loraine is doing much better now and weighs a whopping four pounds. She has had a few problems here and there, like Apnea which is expected with preemie babies, as well as IP, a skin condition that Loraine will have for the rest of her life.

Being able to stay at the Ronald McDonald House has made things easier and allows Sophia to be with her daughter as much as possible. It has made it possible for Loraine's father to come and see her when he can, knowing that he has a place to stay.

It has been hard for Sophia not being able to take her baby home and being so far away from home and family. But being able to talk with other families at Ronald McDonald House gives her support and encouragement.

Sophia notes, "Everything that Ronald McDonald House has provided has been very valuable, and it has made it so much easier not having to worry about anything."



Sophia and Loraine.

Sophia is anxious to get home with her baby daughter. However, she will remember the families, the nice staff, and all the wonderful dinners that were prepared for the families. ■

Thank you
to the many sponsors, guests
& volunteers who made the
second annual Cobra Roofing
Polo Classic possible.



**Call (509) 624- 0500 to
reserve your seat for the
third annual
Cobra Roofing Polo Classic
on
Sunday, September 16, 2007**

Our Super Hero, Skyyer



Skyler in 2004 sporting his Super Man pajamas.

Skyyer Barron, age six now, was diagnosed April 1, 2002, with neuroblastoma, cancer of the nervous system. It is most common in the adrenal glands of young children. The first sign that something was wrong showed itself when Skyyer felt nauseated and started to limp. After being on medication for seven weeks, a CT scan was done and the results came back with neuroblastoma.

Skyyer and his mom Angie spent ten months, several weeks at a time, in Spokane for his chemo-therapy. During their stay, Skyyer wore only super hero outfits and all who met him soon learned that he was the real deal. Angie was relieved to hear that Skyyer was in remission, and they were able to return to their home in Missoula, Montana. Skyyer would have to come back to Spokane every three months for the next two years for a check up.

With each check up the hope built that Skyyer had beat his cancer. However, in September 2006, after two years in remission, tests results showed that Skyyer's cancer had returned. Skyyer and Angie have returned to Spokane to begin chemo-therapy treatments that will continue through February, 2007.

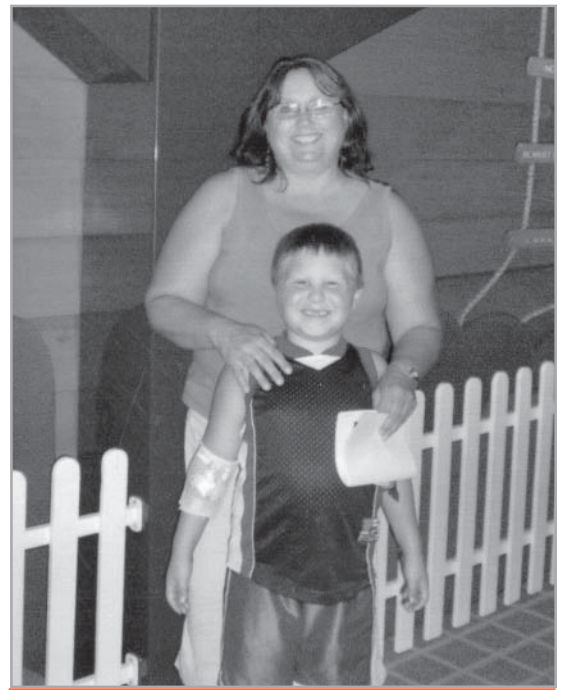
Once again the Ronald McDonald House has become the Barron's home away from home. When asked how the House eases her burden, Angie replies, "Being

able to stay at the Ronald McDonald House is one less thing to worry about. And being able to have Skyyer's sisters visit when they can means a lot. The House is nice and clean, and we feel totally at home here. We have privacy and can talk to other families for support."

The hardest part of this for Skyyer is having a Hickman line. Skyyer has become attached to the night manger Melanie's dog Peanut, and he spends many hours playing with him. It is hard for Angie to be away from her two daughters, her two month old granddaughter, and her three cats. But most of all Angie worries about Skyyer getting hurt and /or not getting better this time around.

"...you can see the cape that makes him Super Skyler."

If anyone can beat the odds, it's Skyyer. He may not wear his super hero clothes anymore but if you look closely enough, you can see the cape that makes him "Super Skyyer." ■



Skyler and Angie ready for round two.

The Long Wait Continues

Isai Hernandez, was born on April 6, 2006, at twenty-nine weeks gestation, two and a half months premature. Isai is now seven months old and still has not seen the inside of the nursery waiting for him in Sunnyside, Washington.

Cenovio and Maria are ready to welcome home Maria's first child and hope their dream of being a normal family will be realized very soon. It has been seven long months waiting for good news. This is Maria's first child and she never thought he would be born so small and early and with so many problems. "The doctor has told us that Isai may die," says Maria. "This news makes me very sad." Maria holds strong to her faith in God to pull little Isai through his troubles. Isai is receiving treatment for his lungs and takes many medications for his liver and intestines.

Maria and Cenovio are hopeful that one day they will be able to take Isai home with them. They long to introduce him to his four step brothers and his step sister. "We want to do normal baby activities with our son that a child his age should be doing."

They have made their home at the Ronald McDonald House now for nearly a year. When asked about their stay, they said, "The Ronald McDonald House has been really wonderful. The hospitality, the staff and all the other families have been invaluable to us by giving us support and encouragement." When asked what they will remember about the House, they replied, "We will remember the staff that supported and encouraged us; more specifically, Theresa, Kathleen, Melanie and the always smiling manager, Kathie."

This has been a long road for Maria and Cenovio with many ups and downs. They will continue to wait and pray for their son. Meanwhile, the staff and families at the House will continue to encourage and support them as best we can.



Cenovio and Maria next to "The Strongest Bond" statue by Dorothy Fowler.

Did You Know?

- ♥ **Over 30% of our families in 2005 had a premature baby and had no idea they would need our services.**
- ♥ **Most families staying with us arrive with no suitcase or supplies for their stay.**
- ♥ **The average stay in 2005 was 14 days.**
- ♥ **Cancer has quickly become the second most common diagnosis of the Ronald McDonald House children.**

Your Help is Needed in the Kitchen



The work has begun.

Our kitchens are receiving a face lift. Families will soon enjoy new appliances, tables, chairs and ambiance. We need your help stocking the cupboards with dishes, pots and pans, food and kitchen ware.

Please visit our wish list on-line at www.rmhspokane.org to view a comprehensive list of our needs. We are also registered at Target through their Bridal Registry under Ronald McDonald House. Just visit Target.com to help.

No need to mail the gift, area McDonald's restaurants will be conducting a wish list drive to help us provide for our families as part of their World Children's Day celebration. To participate, simply drop off your gift at a participating McDonald's restaurants between November 13 and November 20, 2006.

Contact Kathie Vlahovich for more information at (509) 624-0500. ■

Our Families Will Rest Easier Now

On October 19, 2006, Select Comfort delivered approximately 400 Sleep Number beds in a one day donation "blitz" in 15 cities across North America. Our House was a grateful recipient of twenty more beds. This donation assures every family who sleeps under our roof will be able to adjust their mattress to the sleep number that suits them best.

"When your child has a life-threatening illness and is being treated in a city far from home, getting a good night's sleep is next to impossible," explains Doug Collier, chief marketing officer for Select Comfort. "By donating Sleep Number beds to Ronald McDonald Houses across North America, we help provide the restorative sleep that is critical to maintaining a child's strength, spirit and determination to get well."

Thank you Select Comfort! ■



The Select Comfort volunteers.

It's All About Family!

Alexis Billedeaux, age five and a half years, came down with a high fever during Labor Day weekend 2005. The fever would not come down even when her parents gave her Tylenol. She wasn't feeling good, she had a bruise that covered her leg from her ankle up to her knee, and she was complaining that her ankles and joints were hurting. It took three visits to the doctor and two blood tests to determine the diagnosis. October 13, 2005, Alexis was diagnosed with ALL (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia).

Ann Lippis, social worker at Sacred Heart Medical Center, told Alexis's parents Susette and Eli about Ronald McDonald House. The House soon became their home, three hours away from Ronan, Montana, where they live.

The family is staying at the Ronald McDonald House for the third time now. Susette and Eli note that they are very comfortable here at the House. "It has been very helpful for us to have a safe, helpful and friendly place to stay. The other families have been very supportive. The Ronald McDonald House

"a place to sleep, prepare our own meals and privacy when it is needed."

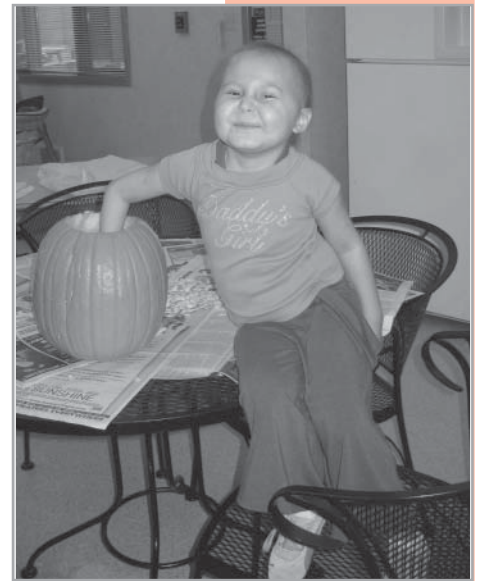
has all the conveniences of home, a place to sleep, prepare our own meals, and privacy when it is needed."

The hardest part for Alexis is being away from her large family. Alexis was looking forward to

Kindergarten this year and was only able to attend for one day before having to travel to Spokane for more treatments. Alexis makes friends with staff and other children and takes advantage of group activities like the pumpkin carving for Halloween.

The Billedeaux's note, "We will have many memories of the Ronald McDonald House and the lasting friendships we have made during our stays there." Alexis will be remembered most at the Ronald McDonald House for her brilliant smile and friendly disposition. ■

Alexis with her parents, Eli and Susette.



Alexis enjoying the pumpkin carving activities.





Robyn, Hunter and Adrianna carving pumpkins for Halloween

Continued from page 1:

other families who are in similar situations for support and encouragement.”

When Robyn can't find Hunter, nine times out of 10 he is sitting in the office chatting up a storm to whomever will listen. Hunter has

become very attached to his new home. His mother explains, “We decided one weekend to go home for a visit. Hunter was so excited to see everyone back in Montana, but he got worried that our room wouldn't be here when we returned. I tried to reassure him that it would but he wouldn't listen. Pretty soon we were on a quest to find Kathie Vlahovich, House Operations Director. He had to ask her for himself. Once Kathie told him that our room would, still be here when we got back, Hunter decided we could go home.”

This ordeal has been hard on the entire family. For Robyn and David it was devastating to hear that their child had cancer. Robyn said, “It has been really hard coming to terms with the saying ‘A mother's kiss and a Band-Aid does the trick for all injuries,’ but I can't kiss this one away. It is also hard to watch your child go through all the tests, chemo-therapy and radiation. Hunter has to do all the work and all I can do is support him. We feel very helpless and that's hard for us to deal with. But Hunter has done so wonderful through all his treatments that it has made it a little easier for us and especially for him.”

Hunter has endured five long months of chemotherapy and has also completed his radiation treatments. Robyn and David are happy to say the long trek may soon be over. Hunter is now in remission and will be able to go home. But Hunter is determined to visit his second home, the Ronald McDonald House, as often as he can. ■

Thank You For Your Continued Support

With your generous donations we are able to help these and many other families through trying times. Please enclose your contribution in the provided envelope. Thank you!

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