

# heartstrings

Spring/Summer 2022



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**Celebrating 35**  
years



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
of Southern Colorado

Sara Correll holding a photo of herself & former Colorado Springs Mayor Bob Isaac

# Sara's Story



Sara at birth

"Don't get too attached. She won't make it through the night." The doctor's words hung heavy.

Sara was the first child born to Steve, a U.S. Army Captain and Nancy, a Labor and Delivery Nurse. The pregnancy had been unremarkable.

Shocked and dumbfounded, this young couple chose to hold onto hope as they cradled their Sara. They thought, "Doctors know much. And, God knows more." Pressing into their faith, they prayed. They waited. Sara DID make it through the night. Then the week, followed by months and now, years.

At birth, one of Sara's initial diagnoses was that all of the sutures of her skull were fused - meaning there was no "soft spot", no room for her brain to grow.

The impetus to open the first Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia in 1974 came from a young family with a sick daughter. Part of the impetus to open our Ronald McDonald House in 1987 was Sara Correll.



While Sara underwent life-saving surgery at Denver Children's Hospital, the care and compassion her family received staying at the Ronald McDonald House made a profound impact. "Why can't we have something like that in Colorado Springs?" her parents wondered.

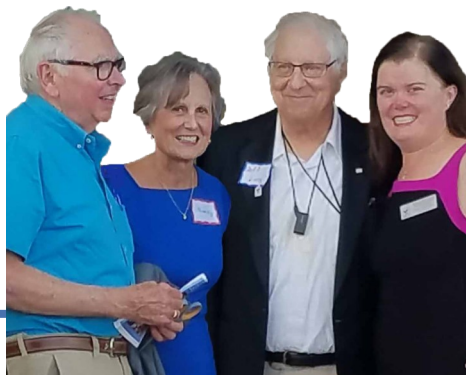
With their question, Sara's parents reached out to Dr. Genrich, Sara's Pediatrician. Dr. Genrich helped connect Sara's parents with others who were also pursuing the dream of having a Southern Colorado Ronald McDonald House that would serve as a temporary "home-away-from-home" for families of critically ill children.

Together, their dreams took root. With a cadre of supporters, the doors to the 101st Ronald McDonald House opened on Valentine's Day, 1987. **Center stage, cutting the ribbon for the "House-that-Love-Built" was two-year-old Sara.**

Fast forward to August of 2019. After a few years in a capital campaign, the day arrived to open the doors to the newly-built 25,000 square foot, ADA-compliant Ronald McDonald House. Alongside a group of passionate supporters, all of whom joined together, daring to dream big dreams, was **AGAIN Sara, helping cut the ribbon for the 4223 Royal Pine Drive Ronald McDonald House.**



**The years in between were full. Sara has undergone 33 surgeries; the first, at four months, helped her survive as one of three specialist surgeons in the world (at the time) opened her skull.**



The other surgeries have helped Sara thrive. Her last major surgery (in 2015) had surgeons again removing part of Sara's skull, this time, along with the top of her C-1 vertebrae to help relieve some of the pressure that comes with the Chiari malformation.

(Pictured Left) Some of RMHSC Founders: Dr. John Genrich, Nancy Parker Brummett, Jeff Long with Sara Correll





Through her teenage years, Sara's family chose to live deeply, even when much was unknown. Often, they would volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House, making meals and helping support families with critically ill children in other ways. Sara felt like she was giving back to a cause that provided much for her and her family.

Now, a Mom to four children, Sara and her husband, Kelly, take each day as a gift, knowing who it is that holds their days. "God's got me," Sara says. She and Kelly help instill faith in their kids that "God's got them, too."

When their son, Peter (now 9), was born sharing some of the same diagnoses as his Mom, Sara recalled Kelly saying, "You are the one best equipped to be his Mom. You've walked this road." Thankful for his words, Sara expressed gratitude for her husband. "Kelly is the calm and collected one. He is fully present, meeting everyone where they are, regardless of circumstance."

Reflecting back, Sara added, "One of the things my parents did beautifully well was to not borrow trouble. I learned to live without worry." Sara knows first-hand, that we can only do what we know to do, pressing in with our best abilities.



The Correll Family



Peter Correll

Peter has served as an ambassador for Children's Hospital, Colorado, Colorado Springs. Sharing his faith, his face and his story gives others hope. And, hope is for real.

Sara and Kelly's modern day life is vibrant, filled with the delight that comes with their three-ring circus - that of children, laughter, work, play, meals and enjoying Colorado's beauty.

Even when MUCH was going on, Sara felt a 'tug' in her spirit; a yearning to do "more". Responding to that 'tug', Sara joined the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado's Board of Directors, bringing years of knowledge and personal experience to her positions.

It is fitting that in this - Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado's 35th year of providing unduplicated care and services for those facing unforeseen medical crisis - Sara is our Board President.

Helping guide the charity and the decisions the board drives, Sara shared, "Serving in the capacity of President of the Board of Directors is such an honor. It's a privilege and a JOY!" She added, ""To give back to the House that has blessed my family and me so much -- and is now blessing my son... it's come full circle. Truly, it's the least I can do."

Sara pressed on. "I'm really focused on legacy; that which we leave behind, long after we're gone. I hope my impact will encourage others to get involved and do what they can to help those they love know they are loved; that they are seen. It's so important for all of us to not feel alone and to not be alone, especially when we need it most."

The Correll Family



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**Should you choose to help further the mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado, please indicate your interest on the enclosed envelope.**



# 2019/2020 Presidential Award Recipients

What does it mean to be honored as a Presidential Award winning volunteer?

In 2003, the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation founded the President's Volunteer Service Award to recognize the important role of volunteers in America's strength and national identity. This award honors individuals whose service positively impacts communities in every corner of the nation and inspires those around them to take action, too.

The Presidential Volunteer Service Awards have continued under each administration, honoring volunteers who are using their time and talents to solve some of the toughest challenges facing our nation. Congratulations to all and THANK YOU!



## Ways You Have Helped



Pop Tabs

You've cleaned, cooked, baked, collected, built, planted, pruned, donated. You've given of yourselves in so many ways and we are thankful!

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# A Note From Beth Alessio

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Executive Director, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern Colorado

The 35th anniversary is known as the "Coral Anniversary," which represents good fortune, wisdom and love. And the symbolic stone, Jade, is believed to have powers to heal and protect against harm, just like love can. How very fitting for our Charity.

35 years ago, a beautiful family along with their daughter, Sara, who was born with a life-threatening diagnosis, cut the ribbon to "The House That Love Built" on Logan Street. Sara's family had led the charge to open a Ronald McDonald House in Colorado Springs after their own personal experiences as they sought specialists in Denver and Texas to address the unique and critical needs Sara faced.

Fast forward 32 years later and Sara once again was cutting the ribbon, this time on the new 25,000 square foot Ronald McDonald House that quadrupled the capacity to support families in need. And now, 3 years later, during our 35th year of operations, Sara sits as Board President for our Charity.

It's a remarkable journey, for Sara and for the Southern Colorado RMHC Chapter. Both have worked diligently, achieving tremendous goals, with a passion of helping others found in the depths of their cores. Both have changed dramatically as they "grew up," overcoming numerous obstacles, and carrying forth an understanding and wisdom from both personal and professional experiences. Together, the two remain focused with like-minded visions, to leave a legacy and serve families to the best of their abilities, for decades to come.

We hope you will join us this celebratory year and come alongside us as a volunteer, a supporter, a guest to one of our many events, and as a healer and protector, helping in your own meaningful ways to support families just like Sara's, and helping us continue our unique and vital mission for another 35 years, and beyond.

Thank you for being involved, as you are part of the magic that happens here at RMHC of Southern Colorado, for which we are forever grateful.





# Family Engagement



The Family Engagement committee supports our Family Centered Care programs. Spawned by volunteers, this committee seeks to create moments and interactions that meet our families where they need us the most, while staying at the Ronald McDonald House or visiting one of our Ronald McDonald Family Rooms. The work of this committee is just one example of how volunteers remain engaged with RMHCSC while providing additional opportunities to serve our families. Examples of the committee's activities include brunches, tea packages, spa packages, game nights, art nights and scrapbooking.



## Celebrating Beth

There is much to celebrate this year, RMHCSC's 35th Anniversary and also the care, dedication and guidance of our Executive Director, Beth Alessio. This past December the Board of Directors recognized her twenty years of leadership at the helm of this charity. Thank you Beth, we are grateful!

## The best events of the season benefit...

Find more information and a link to sign up at <https://www.rmhcsontherncolorado.org/events/>



RMHC  
of Southern Colorado



**On Target For Fun!**  
The 4th Annual Kids & Clays Sporting Clays Shoot!  
**June 3rd at Pikes Peak Gun Club!**



**Kids & Clays**  
Benefiting RMHCSC

[Register Here](#)



It's Summer's Last Hurrah, Monday, October 3rd  
**The 30th Cameron Memorial Golf Tournament**  
at Perry Park Country Club benefiting



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# Our Programs

## Ronald McDonald House

In 2021, "The House That Love Built" served 553 families (1,500 adults and children) and provided 720 meals.

We are grateful for the many incredible volunteers who helped us serve our families - especially during an unprecedented pandemic. Your giving spirit, hard work and commitment helped keep families safe and healthy, allowing us to keep our doors open for families who needed us most.

We are now thrilled to have lifted COVID capacity restrictions, enabling us to keep even more families on site at our Ronald McDonald House, just steps away from their hospitalized children.

THANK YOU, friends and supporters. You have helped us do what we do best....serve our families by keeping them close to their hospitalized child and the care they need. Truly, your gifts of time, talent and treasure have blessed families in crisis; you've helped make this House their "home".

Our Ronald McDonald Family Rooms are again OPEN in Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs and St. Francis Medical Center. Shifts are from 9 am - 1 pm, 1 pm - 5 pm and 5 pm - 8 pm.

These private spaces - located just footsteps of where their hospitalized child is receiving the best possible medical care - are peaceful, intimate and comfortable. These Rooms invite family members to take a moment to rest and compose, allowing them to catch their breath during times of unforeseen medical crisis.

If you're so led, please join us. You can help serve these families by volunteering your time. Finding respite for weary spirits (where connections are often made with others who are facing similar circumstances) is a gift. Family Room volunteers provide a space where families can take care of themselves - by grabbing a bite to eat, doing their laundry and/or having a play space for the siblings of their hospitalized child. There are now even scrapbooking opportunities available. For more information, contact [mindy@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org](mailto:mindy@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org).



Ronald McDonald Family Rooms



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
of Southern Colorado

4223 Royal Pine Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Col. Springs, Co  
Permit #816

Planned  
Giving...  
is a Gift of  
Love!



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Appreciative of every gift, we are thankful for your support that helps families stay together - especially when they need it most.

After spending time at our Ronald McDonald House and meeting some of the children and families we serve, a generous donor chose to create a legacy gift, in memory of her son who unexpectedly passed.

"Seeing your mission in action, watching as children and their families are able to be together when they are struggling with their health, it means the world." She paused, then added, "My son would have loved this. I love this."

With a planned legacy gift, you can create a powerful, philanthropic gift that makes a direct impact on causes that are important to you. Sharing memories of the years she had with her beloved son, this donor is thankful to "pay it forward", ensuring other families can have the same. "What you provide for sick children and their families is a gift they will never forget. Thank you for this opportunity."

Should you be interested in learning more about planned giving and legacy gifts, please contact-

Sam Milam, 719.755.4066.  
Sam@rmhcsoutherncolorado.org