

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

FAMILIES RELY ON THE CARE WE PROVIDE



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
Alberta

"FAMILIES RELY ON THE CARE WE PROVIDE"



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VOLUME 1/ 2023



Kicking Off the New Year: Welcome Back and Updates

As we kick off 2023, we want to extend a warm welcome to all our dedicated volunteers at Ronald McDonald House Charities® Alberta. We are thrilled to have you on board as we continue our mission to provide a home away from home for families of seriously ill and injured children. Your hard work, dedication, and compassion are vital to the success of our organization, and we cannot thank you enough for your ongoing support.

In December, our volunteers worked diligently to ensure our families felt all the magic of the holiday season, going above and beyond their day-to-day roles to become Christmas Elves and Holiday Helpers. This special group of volunteers handled our gift wrapping, event fundraising, donor touring, and Christmas cookie baking! Thank you for making being away from home a little easier for our families during the holiday season.

As the new year kicks off, the air at RMHC Alberta feels full of energy and new beginnings. In that spirit, we are excited to share a new development coming to our volunteer program this year. We heard your feedback, and we are happy to offer an opportunity for our wonderful volunteers across the province to connect. Every month, RMHC Alberta will be hosting a virtual volunteer meeting where our volunteers can hear about what's happening at the Houses. These meetings will offer a chance to connect and to share up-to-date information about events and developments in our Houses.

Our volunteers work hard to help bring normalcy to families with sick children, and we want to remind you of the importance of taking care of yourself too. Being a volunteer takes great care and dedication, and it's essential that you make time for self-care and rest. We are here to support you and to provide a positive volunteer experience with RMHC Alberta.

Thank you for all you do for RMHC Alberta. We are grateful to have you as part of our team, and we look forward to working together this year to impact even more families in need.

- The RMHC Alberta Team

Urgent Volunteer Need: Home for Dinner

Home for Dinner is a special volunteer-led initiative that uses home-cooked meals to give families an opportunity to relax and connect. After spending long days at the hospital, families may find preparing food to be stressful and tiring. Home for Dinner volunteers bring RMHC Alberta families some of the normalcy and comforts of home by preparing a fresh brunch or dinner. That way, families staying at the House can spend more quality time together.



How Does Home for Dinner Work?

- Through Home for Dinner, a group of volunteers purchases groceries, then comes to the House to prepare and serve a delicious meal to families staying at the House. Each group is responsible for planning, cooking, and cleaning up the meal. Home for Dinner is a great opportunity for families, friends, and work groups to tangibly impact the families traveling from out of town to receive medical treatment for their children.
- If your group is interested in volunteering with Home for Dinner, please have one member create an account and submit an application through the VolunteerHub portal on our website. Please follow the Home for Dinner links to the House where you wish to volunteer. <https://rmhcalberta.org/home-for-dinner/>



Interview with Debbie

(House Baker, Medicine Hat)



How long have you been volunteering with RMHC Alberta?

I had my initial meeting around September 2020 and I was onboarding in October 2020.

What brought you to RMHC Alberta and why do you choose to stay?

I became interested in RMHC Alberta when the new House was built in Medicine Hat. I heard about an information session for volunteer opportunities at the Ronald McDonald House. I love baking and love being in the kitchen, so I thought, why not do that for families staying at the House? My daughter also loves to bake, and we would often volunteer and bake together. What a great way to share that love and help people staying at the House.

What keeps me at RMHC Alberta is it's such a wonderful place. The staff really welcome you there and are very supportive. It just feels like home when you are there and it's such a beautiful place to be, and the House Baker volunteer position is a great fit for me. I also enjoy my connection with a fellow baker who I communicate and do weekly inventory with.

Has your experience volunteering at RMHC Alberta matched your expectations from when you joined the organization? How?

I would say my expectations have been exceeded. I went in not fully knowing the expectations, just having this feeling of how rewarding it would be to support families dealing with all kinds of stressful situations. I really wanted to help make their time at Ronald McDonald House less stressful and more relaxed. I always look forward to being at the House and really miss it when I'm not there.

Can you share one of your most memorable moments volunteering at RMHC Alberta?

One time I was baking and two moms were there having coffee, so I let them be my quality control. It made me feel good that they were so appreciative and they told me they really enjoyed the baking at the House. It's rewarding to know people appreciate our work.

What excites you about volunteering at RMHC Alberta?

Being able to do something I love to do and sharing it with others!

What advice would you give to encourage someone to volunteer with RMHC Alberta?

I would suggest contacting someone at the House. Ask for a tour and ask about the different volunteer opportunities, or see if there's an opportunity to speak to and observe a current volunteer at the House.

Is there anything else you want to discuss or share?

All I can say is my experience with RMHC Alberta has exceeded my expectations. If anyone is looking to volunteer, RMHC is a great organization and worth looking into!

Interview with Marga

(Front Host, Calgary)



How long have you been volunteering with RMHC Alberta?

I began in November 2021 as a Front Host.

What brought you to RMHC Alberta and why do you choose to stay?

I had been home with my kids for 14 years and did a lot of volunteer work in their schools. I was thinking about going back to work and my husband showed me an email about volunteering with RMHC Alberta. My friend had volunteered at the House and I knew she had a good experience, so I decided to give it a try and it has been great.

Why have you dedicated your volunteer time to RMHC Alberta?

RMHC Alberta is a great organization and I have enjoyed my time here. The staff and families are great to deal with and very welcoming. I enjoy my time so I try to never miss a shift, and I have even taken a few extra on.

Has your experience volunteering at RMHC Alberta matched your expectations from when you joined the organization? How?

Yes, my experience has definitely met and exceeded my expectations. I don't know what I really expected, but it has exceeded my expectations because I feel like I have gotten to appreciate what the organization does. All the volunteers and staff I meet are great. Everyone is helpful.

Can you share one of your most memorable moments volunteering at RMHC Alberta?

It's really exciting when you see families with their babies who get to go home. You can see the families are always so thankful for their time at the House and they're so happy when going home.

Can you share one of your most memorable moments volunteering at RMHC Alberta?

At Christmas when we brought the very first family through the North Pole for Christmas gifts, they burst into tears and gave me a hug. The mom told me she was so thankful for the services we had provided her family.

What advice would you give to encourage someone to volunteer with RMHC Alberta?

I would say I was a bit nervous to volunteer when I first started, but you have to just jump in and do it. It is very worthwhile for sure.

Is there anything else you want to discuss or share?

I would encourage people to think about volunteering. It is very rewarding being able to give your time to an organization that needs help.

Virtual Volunteer Meeting

We will host an online monthly meeting for all RMHC Alberta volunteers. This is an opportunity to meet other volunteers from across the province, learn more about the impact you have on families and receive updates happening throughout the organization. These meetings are not mandatory; however we do hope to see you there! A recording will be shared after the meeting.

Volunteer meeting dates:

February 28: 6:30–7:30pm

March 28: 6:30–7:30pm

May 2: 6:30–7:30pm

We love our events volunteers!

We rely on our volunteers to help us with events in the community and we're so grateful for those who gave their time to help us fundraise at the Giving Machine, Glow Fest YEG/YYC, and Cabela's wrapping event.



Thank you to all the volunteers who made Christmas at our Houses a success!

The holidays are a busy time of year and that is no different at the Houses. Our wonderful holiday volunteers lend an extra hand to bring seasonal cheer to our families. Volunteers with exceptional attention to detail start decorating the last week of November, and we need extra volunteer help throughout December as Houses accept and wrap donated items. We also call on volunteers to set up the "North Pole" at each House, which has all the gifts Santa and his team of elves have worked hard on all year for the families. Thank you to our December in-House volunteers for making the holiday season extra magical for our families!



Firefighters Support the Medicine Hat House



On the evening of December 9, 2022, the Medicine Hat Firefighters were dispatched to the Medicine Hat Ronald McDonald House due to a water pipe break. They worked to get the situation under control and ensure families were safe. RMHC Alberta staff were instructed to evacuate families and find alternate accommodations. As families packed up their belongings and prepared to evacuate, firefighters escorted them to and from their rooms and to their vehicles while they waited for accommodations, ensuring their utmost safety along the way. They also checked in periodically with families to ensure they were okay and to provide accommodation updates.

After finally getting families off to the hotel for the night and the situation was under control, Fire Captain Steve Thompson offered the department's help if we needed support with anything from demolition to moving furniture. We accepted their offer a few days later, and 18 off-duty firefighters volunteered their time to help us move furniture, appliances, and other items. Within an hour they had the job done.

We can't thank the Medicine Hat Firefighters enough for their immense display of support and compassion at a time of significant need for the Medicine Hat Ronald McDonald House.



"The firefighters' kindness and empathy during a stressful time was so appreciated and is a silver-lining moment I will always remember. I will forever be grateful for their immediate willingness to help us without hesitation and their utmost kindness toward our families." – Kayla, Family and Programs Services Coordinator, Medicine Hat House

"Since 1924, the Medicine Hat Firefighters Association has been committed to serving our community on and off duty. We are proud to work with organizations like Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta who provide support to local families—including our own members who have utilized RMHC facilities with their children." – Dylan, Medicine Hat Fire Department Volunteer Coordinator

"Medicine Hat has been extremely involved in supporting Ronald McDonald House. We are truly blessed to have such amazing individuals in our community, such as those at the Medicine Hat Fire Department, who go the extra mile to give back where they live. I am a strong believer in the philosophy that we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – Cassi, General Manager, Medicine Hat House



Volunteers Helping Volunteers

One of our Home for Dinner groups, Food for Peace, has been offering comfort in the form of meals to the Calgary House families for several years. They volunteered their time in January to put together this beautiful giant spread. Our shuttle driver Alan (right) did not hesitate to roll up his sleeves and help chop that mountain of fruit!

A Serendipitous Volunteer Moment



“I really enjoyed working with families there and I wanted to continue to be in an environment where I could assist and spend time with vulnerable families.”

“I have been volunteering at the Calgary Ronald McDonald House since the fall. It felt like a perfect fit for me as I had just retired a year ago as a dietitian at Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) after 35 years. I really enjoyed working with families there and I wanted to continue to be in an environment where I could assist and spend time with vulnerable families.

Today, I arrived for my “Christmas Elf” shift to help with the presents and wrapping in this busy season. A staff member told me there was a family checking out within an hour and asked if I could wrap the gifts to be ready for their departure. As I was heading out to find this family's bag of gifts, I recognized a mom as one of my favourite families from my career at ACH. I had worked very closely and frequently with her and her daughter for over 12 years! Her daughter came to the dining room and we

all hugged, cried, and visited over coffee. She was at the Calgary House for her very last time after numerous frequent and often very long hospital stays. Fortunately, she is doing very well now.

Oh, and that bag of gifts that needed to be wrapped within the hour? That was for them! I not only had the pleasure of wrapping gifts for a family I knew very well, but I also had the privilege of taking my long-time patient to the Magic Room to pick out her final gift and wear the crown for the last time.

I feel very fortunate that I signed up for this specific volunteer shift today. Spending time with this family was a gift for me!”

- Melanie, Front Host, Calgary House

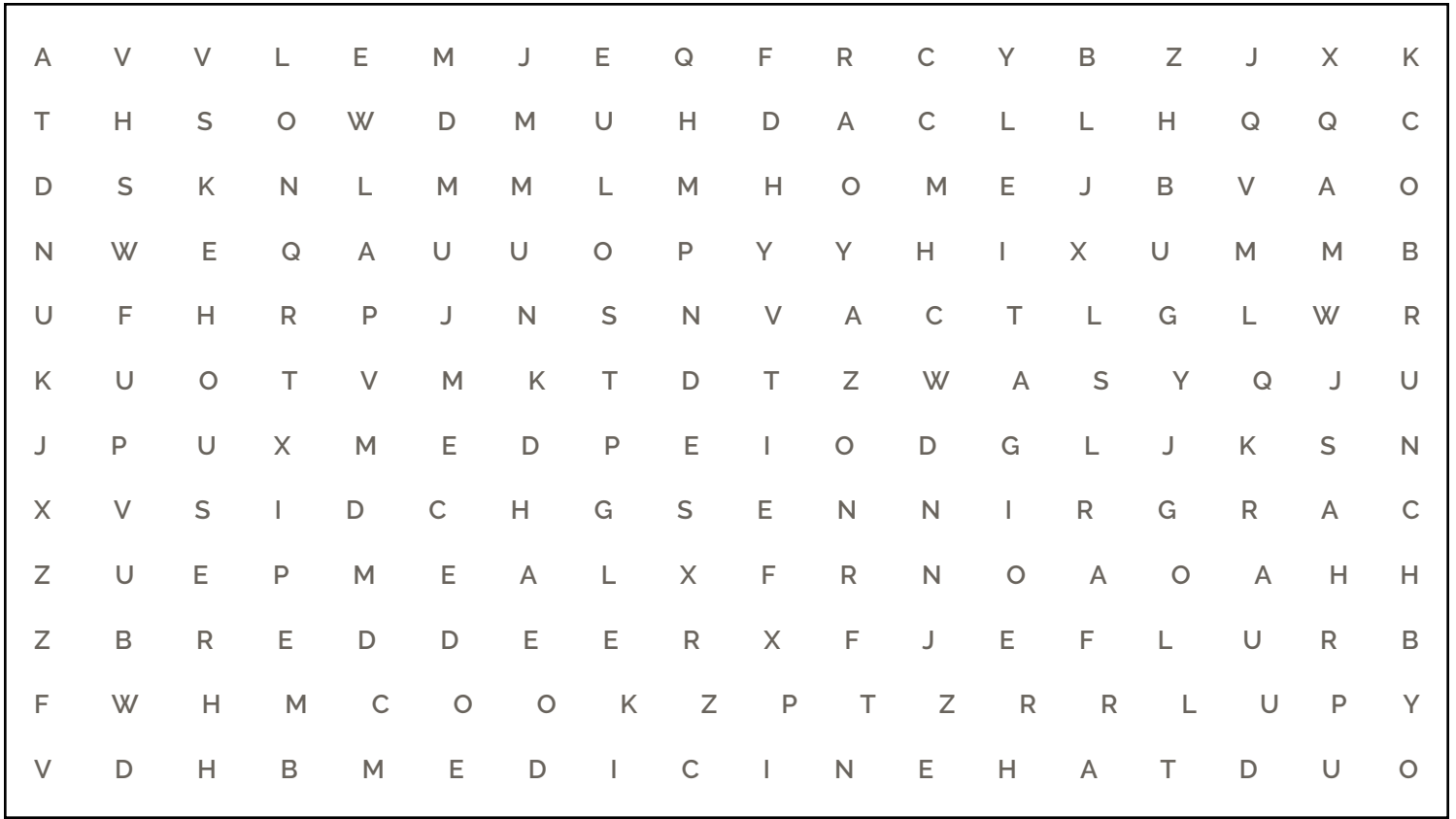
Christmas Eve Connections

Our Provincial Volunteer Manager, Ashley, spent her fifth Christmas Eve volunteering with her family at the Edmonton House. They served dinner, decorated gingerbread houses, made a wonderful hot chocolate bar, and wrapped then helped Santa deliver gifts after the kids were in bed.

That evening at 7:30pm, a family with newborn twins checked into the House. The mom, exhausted, expressed relief about having something to eat for dinner. Ashley's family made sure they got seconds of all their favourites, then invited them to pick out some gifts at our North Pole. Ashley asked her own mother—also a mom of twins—to join, and the two mothers had a beautiful moment of connection over the joys of parenting twins. The new parents were thrilled to get to choose their daughter's first Christmas presents. It was truly a magical evening that the families won't soon forget.



Word Search: Home For Dinner



Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden →, ↓ and ↘

BRUNCH
CALGARY
COOK
DINNER
EDMONTON

FAMILY
GROUP
HOME
HOUSE
MEAL

MEDICINE HAT
RED DEER
SERVE
VOLUNTEER



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