



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
Alberta

# VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

FAMILIES RELY ON THE CARE WE PROVIDE

RMHC Alberta Greeting	2
Upcoming Events	2
Traditional Shepherd's Pie Recipe	3
Home for Dinner and the Impact	4
Comfort Cart	5
Shuttle Services	6
Thank You to Our Holiday Volunteers	7
Provincial Volunteer Meetings	7
Word Search	8

*"FAMILIES RELY ON THE CARE WE PROVIDE"*



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VOLUME 1/ 2024



## Happy New Year!

As we ring in 2024, the air is buzzing with excitement and gratitude for each one of you returning to Ronald McDonald House Charities® Alberta. Your unwavering commitment and boundless enthusiasm are the bedrock of our mission, and we couldn't be more thrilled to embark on this new year's journey with such an incredible team. The role you play within our community is nothing short of extraordinary, bringing comfort, and support to our families.



2024 holds the promise of countless heartwarming moments, shared laughter, and the kind of compassion that transforms lives. Your presence at the House is a beacon of light for families navigating difficult times, offering them not just a place to stay but a sanctuary filled with warmth and understanding. The impact of your kindness resonates far beyond the walls of these Houses, creating ripples of positivity in the lives of those you touch.

Your dedication to making a difference is what makes our Houses homes, and as we step into 2024, we eagerly anticipate the invaluable contributions and incredible spirit each of you brings. This year is poised to be a tapestry of shared experiences, where your kindness and generosity will weave together to create beautiful moments for our families. Thank you for being the heart of RMHC Alberta, and let's make 2024 an unforgettable chapter in our journey together!

Team RMHC Alberta



## Where you can find us for events in 2024

**2024 Winterland Invitational:** February 16, 17, and 18 Cold Lake and Bonnyville Alberta

**Provincial Thankathon:** February 20-23

**Calgary Casino:** February 20 and 21

### 2024 Golf Event locations and dates:

**Grande Prairie:** June 3, the Dunes Golf & Winter Club

**Red Deer:** June 6, Alberta Springs Golf Resort

**Cold Lake:** June 15, Cold Lake Golf & Winter Club

**Canmore:** June 17, Silvertip Resort

**Medicine Hat:** June 20, Desert Blume Golf Club

**Edmonton:** June 26, The Quarry

**Shoot for the House:** September 7, Grande Prairie

# Traditional Shepherd's Pie

## Recipe

This recipe is for 60 servings and was provided by a local Edmonton Chef Shawn Hartwell. Shawn supports the Edmonton House by creating delicious meals by utilizing ingredients found in the pantry!



### Ingredients

6 pounds ground beef  
6 small onions, chopped  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup garlic cloves, minced  
6 teaspoons dried oregano  
6 cups tomato sauce  
1.5 cans (6-1 $\frac{1}{4}$  ounces) chopped ripe olives, drained (optional)  
8 pounds of hot mashed potatoes (prepared without milks and butter)  
8 large eggs, lightly beaten  
12 tablespoons butter, softened  
6 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro (optional)  
6 teaspoons salt  
Additional butter, melted  
5 bags of frozen peas, carrots, and corn (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain and set aside. In the same skillet, onion, garlic and oregano; drain. Stir in the tomato sauce, olives and beef. Simmer, uncovered, until heated through, about 20 minutes.  
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2. Meanwhile, combine the mashed potatoes, eggs, butter, cilantro and salt. Spread half of the potato mixture onto the bottom and up the side of a greased hotel pan. Layer with beef mixture and remaining potato mixture.  
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3. Bake 40 minutes. Brush the pie with melted butter. Bake until top is golden brown, about 15 minutes longer. If desired, garnish with additional cilantro.



## Reflections on Home for Dinner and the Impact

After spending 12-14 hours by their child's bedside, exhaustion hits hard. Parents have spent the day holding their child's hand, meeting with doctors, supporting through medical procedures... it's a lot to handle on any given day, let alone many days or weeks in a row.

Families staying at the Ronald McDonald House are experiencing the highest levels of stress, worry for their children, financial impacts, and emotional depletion. Spending time and money at the grocery store are just more burdens put upon an already challenging situation.

The Home for Dinner program at RMHC Alberta changes the medical landscape for families. Instead of going without a meal, or struggling to put one together for themselves and the rest of their family – they are welcomed back to their home away from home after a hard day to the smells and warmth of a home cooked meal prepared by volunteers who truly see their experience and say “I am here to help”.

Many of our volunteers were introduced to RMHC through the Home for Dinner program. They cooked a meal, likely a comforting dish that was easy to scale for a big group, and through that experience they looked for more ways to get involved at the House. It is a wonderful one-time or ongoing volunteer experience with a very tangible impact.

That impact is seen at mealtime when families gather with volunteers to eat together. It is likely the most active and busy part of the day at a Ronald McDonald House. Children sit together having made friendships through their stay and parents and caregivers can support one another through conversation. What we hope volunteers know is that the impact is not reserved to just the dinner hour... in fact many families remain at the hospital until late hours, coming “home” to get a quick rest. Those weary families are able to immediately access the leftovers packed up for them by the volunteer group, ensuring a nutritious and important meal greets them before they lay down to sleep for the evening.

This past holiday season had our calendars filled up with many incredible volunteers! We are so grateful for the support for Home for Dinner.

As we enter 2024 the calendar has had a significant decrease in volunteer groups, and we hope our supporters will find it in their hearts to make a meal early in 2024! Your impact transcends the food on the plate – it's the love and community you have given families in their most challenging times. Thank you.



## Comfort Cart Laureen Grant

In partnership with Alberta Health Services, the Comfort Cart brings the comforts of the Ronald McDonald House to families in local hospitals. The Comfort Cart is currently operational at three locations: Red Deer General Hospital, Foothills Medical Centre, and Peter Lougheed Centre.

This volunteer-led initiative provides families with snacks, beverages, hygiene items, reading materials, activity books and more! The moments of comfort this program brings to families who often spend hours at local hospitals, are powered by amazing volunteers such as Laureen Grant. Laureen has been with RMHC Alberta in Red Deer since 2019, starting as a Baker and Front Host who jumped at the opportunity to become a Comfort Cart volunteer when the program was first introduced to the Red Deer General Hospital in March 2023.

Laureen now spends part of her Friday Front Host shifts preparing the supplies for her Wednesday Comfort Cart visits to the hospital.

"It's a two-part job, you always want to make sure the Comfort Cart is organized."



Her incredible efforts are not unnoticed, as each visit is received with many thank yous and smiles from families and staff. One particular moment that stays with Laureen was when she was visiting Unit 39 with the Comfort Cart. Staff informed her of a patient who was going through a difficult time and did not want to visit the cart that day. When asked if the cart could be brought to him instead, Laureen, without any hesitation, headed to his room. When she arrived, Laureen pulled out a smile on a stick, a friendly greeting, and offered to give the individual the smile. She received a resounding YES and an even bigger smile!

"It was amazing to see how the comfort of the cart turned around an individual that day!"

Laureen understands the impact the Comfort Cart provides. While her husband was receiving radiation at a local hospital, she was supported by a similar program. Her appreciation for the support resulted in wanting to give back to others in similar situations. She understands firsthand where individuals are coming from and what a difference the Comfort Cart makes.

**"Manning the Comfort Cart makes a difference to a lot of patients, a huge difference! Sometimes all they need is a smile, a pick me up or to know someone cares and that is what the Comfort Cart provides."**

## Shuttle Services

### Gord Serr

Did you know that RMHC Alberta has a dedicated team of volunteer Shuttle Drivers? They are responsible for ensuring families are provided with a safe and convenient transportation option to and from various hospitals. These volunteers fearlessly brave all sorts of driving challenges, ranging from snow and rain to traffic jams! One volunteer driver who started with 2-3 shifts per month in 2022 and concluded 2023 with an impressive 15 shifts in December is Calgary Shuttle Driver Gord Serr!

Gord retired in 2020 from a successful 42-year career in the oil industry. Throughout his professional life, he actively participated in his work's initiatives to give back to the community. Gord was first introduced to giving back while in high school where he donated blood. His altruistic endeavors continued in his personal life as he also volunteered coaching Special Olympics teams and supporting his local food bank.

After taking some time to himself when initially retired, Gord was eager to get involved in volunteering once again. By chance while Gord was deciding on where to get involved, a news segment highlighting the Shuttle Driver position came across the news. The timing was perfect! Gord has a personal connection to Alberta's Childrens Hospital, his grandson spent time in the hospital.

"We were lucky we resided in Calgary but when I saw the news, I was thinking about other people accessing the House and the support they need and felt the Shuttle Driver position was a role I could really be of help."

A highlight to being a Shuttle Driver for Gord is getting the chance to really get to know the families. Gord has many memorable moments driving families and being a part of their journeys.



One family that stands out, was a single mom who was staying alone at RMHC Alberta. Gord would often drive her to and from the hospital and noticed when she was having a difficult day. On this day, Gord took the time to give her encouragement and support, letting her know she was doing an amazing job and was a wonderful mom. To Gord's surprise, he was met with a big hug from the passenger seat as she was so thankful for the encouraging words.

**"You get so much back compared to what you put into it. You have made a big difference for the families. One trip can take a big burden off them not having to pay for a parking pass or removing the feeling of being unsure of how to get to the facility."**

In addition to being a part of families' journeys, Gord embraces the opportunity to learn about other cities, cultures, and regions. He even learned how to say thank you and you're welcome in Filipino - salamat and walang anuman!

If you are interested in becoming a Comfort Cart or Shuttle Driver volunteer, please email [volunteers@rmhcalberta.org](mailto:volunteers@rmhcalberta.org).

# Thank you to all the volunteers who helped make the Holidays special this season!

Every single day at the Ronald McDonald House and when we have events in our communities, our volunteers help us sprinkle some magic. Well, during the holiday season we turn it all the way up and have an incredible time. From holiday themed rec times in the Houses, meals being served in Santa hats, wrapping events and coat check fundraising events being attended by events volunteers to support our development team, and even some visits from Santa and Mrs. Claus themselves, the joy families feel during the holidays would not happen without your support. Thank you so much!



## Provincial Volunteer Meeting

These meetings are where our volunteers can come together and learn about the most recent and important happenings in the Houses as well as share in celebrations! These meetings are virtual on teams and you will be emailed a link to join!

**Upcoming volunteer meeting:**  
January 31, March 6, April 3

## Information Session for Prospective Volunteers

These meetings are for folks who are interested in learning more about volunteering with us. They are informal and give a great overview of opportunities with RMHC Alberta. Feel free to let your friends know! These meetings are virtual and your friends can sign up by heading to the volunteer page of the website.

**Upcoming volunteer meeting:**  
January 11, February 8, March 7



## Word Search: New Year

R	F	E	S	T	I	V	I	T	I	E	S	R	K	N
I	T	T	O	R	D	A	E	M	R	E	E	P	T	A
S	C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	E	S	L	A	O	G
A	P	E	Y	I	T	A	L	H	O	I	T	R	U	U
I	D	A	Y	T	T	I	C	L	H	E	U	O	O	Y
I	A	A	F	O	S	E	U	H	O	C	K	E	Y	R
Y	G	R	A	T	I	T	U	D	E	T	A	F	I	A
B	C	E	S	T	I	P	N	I	R	E	A	T	I	U
E	I	H	T	O	O	M	E	A	L	M	O	E	E	N
O	A	W	N	M	E	I	D	W	I	S	H	P	T	A
A	I	T	E	M	O	I	M	L	R	H	O	M	E	J
I	S	E	A	N	T	M	Y	R	C	H	B	W	O	L
M	A	G	I	I	W	I	N	T	E	R	L	A	N	D
S	I	R	O	E	E	T	Y	N	E	H	O	H	D	T
C	E	N	R	E	C	I	P	E	N	N	E	D	W	E

RESOLUTION

GRATITUDE

TRADITION

CELEBRATE

HOPE

RECIPE

JANUARY

HOME

FAMILY

FESTIVITIES

GOALS

WINTERLAND

MAGIC

HOCKEY

WISH

