Ronald McDonald House® near Lurie Children’s

Activities Guide

30+ simple activities that create one-of-a-kind daily diversions for families staying at the House
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## Yearly Activities

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## Field Trips

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Welcome!

Thank you for volunteering to help bring care and comfort to the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House by donating your time, talent, and treasures to the House. Your help will be critical in creating a warm, inviting, “home-away-from-home” for the families of children receiving medical treatment at nearby hospitals.

This booklet focuses on activity and programming opportunities for the new House. Our programming mission is simple: **Engage the Chicagoland community in creative, one-of-a-kind daily diversions for families staying at the House through interactive learning, crafting or entertaining programming that is relevant, interesting and innovative. We hope to bring the best that Chicago has to offer to families staying at the House.**

You can turn just about anything into an activity with some creativity and resourceful thinking. The following pages contain examples of activities that have either proven successful at one of our current Houses or new ideas that we feel have potential. The “**ideal frequency**” is the amount of times during a given year that we think a particular program might be popular. Although the frequency might be high, the program does not always have to be led by the same person. Each activity also contains a “**brief description**” along with a few “**potential ideas**,” but we also encourage you to use your own creativity as you craft an activity or activities. We are also open to other programming ideas, so feel free to explore and share your thoughts with us.

Our programming is a critical part of the services we provide to our families and we are thrilled that you are interested in working with us to enhance the lives of our guests. If you are interested in a particular activity or have a connection to someone who might be able to help with the implementation of a particular activity, please contact our Director of Programming, Anne Czarnecki at aczarnecki@rmhcni.org or 773.348.5322. She can help you with the execution of an event for families staying at the House.

Thank you again!

_Ronald McDonald House Charities of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana_
Arts and Crafts Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a week

Brief Description: A staple in our current House, Arts & Crafts night has great. Are you a sculptor who would like to demonstrate basic sculpting? Would you like to teach families the simple techniques of drawing or painting? Do you know how to crochet or knit? Do you like to create your own greeting cards? A beginner’s class on any of these and other art and craft techniques would be perfect for our families! Try to have something for all ages ready for the activity so that all our guests can participate.

Potential Ideas:

- Create crafts for various holidays that are approaching. Many of our families do not have the resources, time or energy to acknowledge holidays, so your activity can help ease that burden.

- Ask the Director of Programming if there is any need for specific “kid’s art” for various special events in the future.

- Become a regular arts and crafts night volunteer. Host an “Art Fair” for the families that highlight projects crafted throughout the year.

Potential Resources: Make a list of the supplies you need, and check with the House to see if we have any surplus supplies on hand. Ask local yarn, craft or art supply stores to donate supplies as a tax-deduction.

Other Ideas/Resources

Glass and Paper Art Seminars
Jewelry Making
Mosaic Making
Painting 101- contact Bottles and Bodega on Lincoln
Quilting/Crochet/Knitting
Scrapbooking - contact Achievers
Sculpture Night
Astronomy Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month in the warmer months (May-September)

Brief Description: Using our beautiful rooftop garden as a venue, coordinate a “Starry Night” for families.

Potential Ideas:
- Identify constellations, planets, and key stars in the sky with telescope and invite families to look through the telescope.
- Create a flyer of constellations to hand out so that families can follow along.
- Create a “connect the dot” constellation worksheet for children.
- Create a craft project based on Van Gogh’s ‘Starry Night’ but include the city skyline to create ‘Chicago’s Starry Night.’

Potential Resources: Contact the Planetarium to see if they have traveling programming. Also contact Astronomy professors from Northwestern, DePaul, or Loyola to see if they would guide families using their telescopes and provide a lesson.
**Beauty Pageant Night**

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once or twice a year

**Brief Description:** If you have a connection to a local pageant, invite the winner to the House to meet with children.

**Potential Ideas:**
- Take plenty of pictures of the kids wearing a crown.
- Buy old prom dresses at the Salvation Army to bring to the House for kids to play “dress up” after visiting with pageant winners.
- Contact makeup counter employees at Nordstrom or Sephora and have them bring samples and supplies for applying makeup (keeping sanitation regulations in mind). Give adults and teens tutorials on the application of the product. Younger children can also participate on a smaller scale.

**Potential Resources:** Contact Nordstrom, Sephora, or other makeup counters and stores and see if they would donate product and time, contact representatives at Miss Teen International, Miss International, Miss Illinois, and Mrs. Illinois to see if they will stop by the House with their crowns.
Bubble Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once month in the warmer months (May-September)

Brief Description: Bring all the supplies to create bubbles and let the fun begin!

Potential Ideas:

- Bring different sizes of wands to create different shapes of bubbles.
- Hand out small bubbles to give to children in the hospital.
- Put some music on and have the kids pretend to be bubbles.
- Have a contest for who can blow the biggest bubble, keep a bubble floating or lasting the longest, or “catch” a bubble on their finger.
- Get everyone standing in a circle with their bubble bottles and wands at hand. Choose one child as the first to be in the center of the bubble ring. The children have 30 seconds to blow bubbles at them while they twist, jump, roll and do everything possible to avoid touching the bubbles.
- Prepare a bucket-full of bubble solution and pour it into a baby pool (any form of tray will do, as long as it is approx 3’ in diameter). Place a hula hoop into the pool and a small step stool in the middle of the hula hoop. Set a child on the stool and then lift the hula hoop up over the child, as you do this a giant bubble will form around the child. Have your camera ready to take pictures of the child in the bubble!
- Have the children blow some bubbles onto a wet paper plate and before the bubbles pop, put them in the freezer. Children will enjoy the finished result.

Potential Resources:  
http://www.exploratorium.edu/ronh/bubbles/bubbles.html  
http://www.thebubbleshop.com/bubble_fun.ihtml#games
Book Club

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you like reading short stories or popular books followed by a robust discussion? Do you have a connection to a Publishing House or an author? Bring them or your discussion points to the House and host a Book Club!

Potential Ideas:

- Reading an entire book might not work at the House with people frequently coming and going so pick a short story. Drop off copies a couple days before the Book Club so that everyone has a chance to read the book.

- Pick a chapter in a self-help book, make copies, and use that as a topic for discussion.

- If you would really like to discuss an entire book, pick one that is currently popular, so that there is a greater chance of attendance success.

- Pick a story about Chicago, and if possible, bring snacks or food that is mentioned in the story (i.e. in The Time Traveler’s Wife, Niffenegger mentions Ann Sather’s).

- Get a popular local author to stop by the House to have a discussion or signing.


- If a children's author is leading the book club, have an activity based around the book to follow the reading. For instance, if the book is about butterflies, create tissue paper butterflies after the event- take pictures with children, author and butterflies!

- Invite an illustrator to the House to provide a “hands-on” demonstration of the steps s/he takes in creating a page of a book.

- Host a “Shel Silverstein Night” in honor of the beloved Chicago children’s author! Find resources, activity guides and other amazing programming surrounding this memorable poet by visiting http://www.shelsilverstein.com.
Cake Decorating

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once month or quarter

**Brief Description:** Are you the person your family turns to for special occasions that require a creative cake? Have you taken a Wilton’s class and are itching to use your supplies? Are you a cake decorator who’d like to share your talents? Teach our families how to decorate a cake!

**Potential Ideas:**
- Use cupcakes as a starting point. This option may be less intimidating than an entire cake and will allow younger siblings and patients to participate.
- Coordinate the class to coincide with the House’s birthday. Have everyone contribute one type of decoration to a big Ronald McDonald House birthday cake!
- Secure a donation of a cake decorating set for the House for families to use when celebrating milestones in their own lives.
- Have holiday themed cake classes for families on Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, etc.

**Potential Resources:** Contact local pastry chefs in Chicago who would like to spend time with the families at the House. Alekka Sweeny has done classes at the Southside House for a different organization so she might be willing to give instruction. [http://www.givesugar.com/staff.htm](http://www.givesugar.com/staff.htm)

Contact “Drop in and Decorate” [http://www.dropinanddecorate.org/](http://www.dropinanddecorate.org/) to see if they would be willing to come to the House.

Reach out to Wilton (based in Woodridge) to see if they would supply cake decorating supplies.
Candlelit Dinner

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Help us turn an everyday meal into something families will pleasantly remember by hosting a candlelit dinner.

Potential Ideas:
- Ask a party rental company to donate table linens, napkins and tea light candles and holders, and a florist to donate small centerpieces for each table. Set each table with glassware and silverware.
- Do you play or have a friend who plays an instrument? Have them stroll through the dining room playing romantic music.
- Have a hostess “seat” each family as they arrive.
- Assign a waiter to each table, have the waiters all wear something similar to resemble “uniforms.” It can be as simple as black pants and a white shirt. Create silly name tags for each waiter to wear.
- The night before, ask families to “pre-order” their meal if possible and have it ready for them.
- Create a fancy menu card and place at each place setting so families know what they will be served if meal hasn’t been “pre-ordered.”
- If the candlelit dinner falls near a holiday, create holiday themed “Specials” (i.e. a bottle of non-alcoholic champagne and chocolate covered strawberries for Valentine’s Day, corned beef and soda bread for St. Patrick’s Day, etc.).

Potential Resources: Kelly Evans, House Director of the Hope House, did this at the Hope House. Ask Chicago Party Rentals to donate linens and candles, ask a local florist to donate flowers, ask a fast food restaurant to donate food, and ask culinary students to act as chefs and servers.
Cooking Class

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Food universally brings comfort to everyone. Do you know a Chicago-land chef who would be willing to come to the House and give a class to both parents and children? Are you the “Master Chef” in your home willing to share your trade secrets? The kitchen on the third floor is an excellent space for a cooking class.

Potential Ideas:
- No menu is off limits - plan something that everyone can participate in. Children can help measure, stir, roll, etc. A cooking class is an excellent way to help children learn to count, take direction and bond with others.
- Make sure to bring copies of the recipe and step-by-step instructions so that families can recreate the meal once they get home.
- Demonstrate techniques and divide the group to prepare different segments of the meal. The group can enjoy the meal as a group.
- During the holidays, choose a “traditional” menu that incorporates your signature style.
- Teach a BBQ cooking class using the grills on the roof.
- Have ethnic themes like a Hawaiian Luau, Chinese New Year, or Bastille Day.

Potential Resources: Phil Stefani, the head chefs at the InterContinental, Palmer House, Sofitel, Market Place, or any hotel or restaurant in Chicagoland
Dance Lessons

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you like to dance and feel confident teaching others your steps? Do you know a dance instructor who would be willing to give lessons? Come to the House and teach others how to relieve stress in a choreographed way.

Potential Ideas:
- Ballroom, ballet, line, tap, hip hop and even belly dancing are great options for our House guests. Teaching the steps to these dances is fun and a great way to relieve stress.
- Bring props along for adults and children. Cowboy hats for line dancing, red roses for ballroom, tutus for ballet, etc. Props bring smiles to everyone, and children love to dress up.
- Invite a Zumba instructor to the House to teach the families a combo dance/exercise class.
- Host a “Dance Dance Revolution” (or other similar video game) night using the House Wii. Give prizes to the highest scorers.

Potential Resources: Contact the Joffrey Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance, The Chicago Human Rhythm Project, and other dance troupes to see if they would give a lesson. Contact local YMCAs and health clubs to see if any Zumba instructors would donate their time.
Field Day

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Spring, Summer and Fall

Brief Description: Host a Field Day on the rooftop.

Potential Ideas:

- Have several different activities for all ages and abilities (tag, spoon and egg race, water balloon toss, football or baseball throw, three legged race, potato sack race, bean bag toss, etc.). Separate adults from children and award prizes to the top winners.

- Break group into teams and have group games (red rover, tug-of-war, bocce ball, etc.), award prize to winners.

- Play the “Italian Picnic Game”. Find five boxes that fit within each other. In the smallest box, place a prize (a gift card, a small prize, $5, etc). Wrap the box with tape so that all seams are covered. Place that box inside the next size and seal as before. Repeat steps until biggest box is wrapped. Have everyone stand in a circle. Using a dice, go one by one around the circle and roll the dice. The first person to get a double gets to enter the circle and try and get the prize inside the box using any means necessary. While the person is in the middle, continue in the circle rolling the dice. The next person to roll a double gets to enter the circle and the first has to stop and go back with the others standing waiting to roll again. The first person to open all boxes and get the prize wins!

- Host a “Ronald McDonald House Olympics” with various games and give handmade gold, silver and bronze “medals” to the first, second and third prize. Have an option for children to color their own medals.

Potential Resources: Local businesses for prizes and art closet for medal supplies.
Food Truck Stop

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Monthly during the summer

**Brief Description:** Do you know someone that manages a Food Truck? Have Chicago’s newest hit in culinary expression stop by the Ronald McDonald House!

**Potential Ideas:**
- Recruit a specific Food Truck to stop by the House’s carport during lunch or dinner (or dessert time) and sponsor a treat for the families.
- If the Food Truck is unable to donate, ask a company or organization to underwrite the cost.
- Invite several Food Trucks to the House and have a competition for the best tasting creation. The winner will receive a drawing by a child staying at the House.
- Ask restaurants with mobile equipment to come to the House (i.e. American Dog’s “Hot Dog Cart”) and provide a sampling to the families.

**Potential Resources:** Contact the Gaztro-Wagon, Flirty Cupcakes, The Southern Mac & Cheese Truck, and The Meatballs Mobile to see if they would stop by the House and provide a meal for the families. (chicagofoodtrucks.com).
Game Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you like to play board, card games or bingo? Host a Game Night for various levels of skills and age ranges. Game nights create a fun and healthy distraction.

Potential Ideas:

- Bring a 1,000 piece puzzle to the House for everyone to put together.
- Host a bingo night for families and award prizes.
- Host a Texas Hold ‘Em tournament for beginners and give out a prize for the most chips collected.
- Host a “Family Favorites” game night complete with Monopoly, Scrabble, Chutes and Ladders, Candyland and Topple. Set up each game on various tables scattered throughout the living room and let people choose which game to play.
- Host a tournament of games by assigning points to each win and giving prizes to the top winners in each age group.

Potential Resources: Toy closet in House for the games and ask local businesses to donate small prizes for the winners.
“Girls Night In”

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Who doesn’t love to be pampered? Give the gift of relaxation to the women staying at the House by hosting a pamper party including massages, facials, and mini manicures and pedicures.

Potential Ideas:
- Do you know a beautician, esthetician, or massage therapist who would be willing to donate services (manicures, pedicures, facials, haircuts, spray tans, etc.)? Create a sign-up sheet to book “appointments”. While ladies are waiting, serve refreshing snacks, play soothing music and have cucumber slices to put on everyone’s tired eyes! Serve girly snacks, play fun music and set the tone for a Ronald McDonald House slumber party!

- Coordinate several types of pampering at once to provide a full range of services and have each service give “mini” treatments so that everyone has a chance to experience the pampering.

- Host a “Polish Party” for our young guests and coordinate with Polished Girlz to host the evening. Play uplifting “girl power” music and snacks for an evening dedicated to pre-teens and teens.

Potential Resources: Polished Girlz, Valerie Ragland [www.polishedgirlz.org](http://www.polishedgirlz.org), 937-559-9605
**Floral Arranging**

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once a month

**Brief Description:** Nothing brightens a room better than fresh cut flowers artfully arranged. Do you like to arrange flowers? Do you know a florist who would be willing to donate their services and resources? Bring the flowers to the House and host a floral arranging class!

**Potential Ideas:**
- Ask a local florist to donate his or her unused flowers at the end of the week and come to the House to provide a tutorial on basic floral arrangement.
- Once the class is over, invite the families to take their arrangement to the hospital or up to their rooms.
- Create festive arrangements during the holidays to spread holiday cheer.

**Potential Resources:** Ask local florists or event planners for their leftover flowers to help us decorate the House.
Ice Cream Social

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you love ice cream? Do you know an ice cream shop owner or supplier? Do you order Schwan’s? Bring ice cream over to the House and recreate a Soda Shop!

Potential Ideas:

- Turn the kitchen into a Soda Shop by bringing all the supplies needed for a Sundae Bar! Ice cream, sprinkles, hot fudge, caramel, whipped cream, and other delicious toppings can make the event complete.

- Incorporate fun games like coloring pages for kids, or “Guess How Many Cherries in the Jar.”

- Bring in an ice cream maker and demonstrate how to make ice cream from scratch and provide samples of the finished product.

- Ask an ice cream shop if they would donate the ingredients for a sundae bar.

- Ask the new probiotic yogurt companies to come and give samples to the families staying at the House.

Potential Resources: Yoberri, Schwan’s, Baskin Robbins, Rainbow Cone, etc.
Lakefront Walks

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a week, weather permitting

Brief Description: A brisk walk does a body good—as does any type of walk for that matter! Feel lucky to live near such a beautiful body of water? Take daily walks along the lakefront path? Why not swing by the Ronald McDonald House and pick up families needing a break from being cooped up inside and share a rejuvenating walk on the lakefront path!

Potential Ideas:
- Walks can be scheduled in the morning or early evening (perhaps after dinner).
- While on the walk, point out some of our beautiful architecture that can be found in Chicago’s lakefront skyline to families that have never been to Chicago OR make it a point before the walk to find out little known facts about the lakefront and share during the walk.
- Pack a light snack to enjoy on the lake.
- Host a short warm up and warm down stretching session
- Map out distances of desired walk (www.mapmywalk.com) and give options to families on the path to choose. Majority wins!
- Have a partner ready at the turn around with water or Powerade.

Potential Resources: Get Dasani and Powerade from Coca-Cola donation from staff
Lego Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a quarter

Brief Description: Do you have a connection with Lego or Legoland? Do you like building things out of Legos? Unleash your inner child and help host a Lego Night at the House!

Potential Ideas:
- Ask Legoland to supply materials for a project for all ages and abilities.
- If Legoland is unable to donate materials, ask an architecture firm to underwrite the cost of Chicagoland landmark Lego sets. Invite the firm to come to the House to give a brief design lesson and a brief history on the building they will be replicating.
- Have a contest to see who can build the most realistic creation.
- Have the kids build the city skyline out of Legos.

Potential Resources: Legoland, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (and get Sears Tower Lego set?) or other big firms, FAO Schwarz.
Magicians

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once a month

**Brief Description:** Do you have magic tricks that fool friends at dinner parties or children at the holidays? Do you know a magician who can make a rabbit disappear? Bring them to the House for a Magic Show for all ages!

**Potential Ideas**
- Kids love being involved in the show so ask the magician to make part of the program interactive.
- While the art of being a magician is keeping a secret, have the magician explain one easy trick to the families to take back to the hospital with them.
- Bring a few black capes, top hats, wands, and fake mustaches and have the kids take turns performing the trick they just learned. Remember to take plenty of photos!
- Adults love magicians too! As long the tricks are appropriate for all ages, ask the magician to incorporate some tricks for adults into their act.
- If the magician has taught several tricks, have the children perform a magic show for the House.

**Potential Resources:** Contact Riley’s Trickshop in Alsip, or other trick shops for leads on Magicians
Museum & Zoo Programming

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a week

Brief Description: Do you sit on a Museum Board? Are you a member at a Museum or other cultural institution in Chicagoland? Do you know someone who develops programming for museums? Help us bring creative, interesting, fun and relevant educational programming to the House.

Potential Ideas:

- Contact Lincoln Park Zoo or Brookfield Zoo to see if they produce a “Zoo Baby” program and see if they can bring some of the babies on a field trip to the House [http://www.lpzoo.org/education/programs/zoo-babies](http://www.lpzoo.org/education/programs/zoo-babies).

- Ask a docent from the Art Institute to come to the House and give a lecture on current exhibits. Ask them to create an educational art project that reflects one of the current exhibits.

- If the museums are unable to come to the House for free, research different grants the House could apply for to gain program funding (i.e. Terra Foundation for American Art, 3Arts, Society for the Arts in Healthcare, Illinois Arts Council, etc.).
Photography Lessons

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you love photography? Are you or do you know a professional photographer? Everyone could use a few photographing tips. Help our families create beautiful memories that will last a lifetime by hosting photography lessons at the House!

Potential Ideas:

- Editing digital photos can be overwhelming, but basic step by step instructions can completely transform a photo. Host a basic editing class using cameras that families have brought to the House. Teach simple techniques like cropping and zooming in on the photo using a basic computer program like Microsoft Picture Manager.

- Teach parents how to upload photos and videos to Caring Bridge, Care Pages, Facebook and more so family back home can stay connected.

- Teach a beginner’s lesson on basic photographic technique so families can get the most out of their photos from the start. Include topics such as lighting, composition and the rule of thirds.

- Host a beginning photography session for children. Bring a few digital cameras to use and go through the House and take pictures using a few learned techniques.

- Spend an hour taking photos of the city. From the architecture of a single building to the city skyline to the lakefront, Chicago is a photographer’s playground.

Potential Resources: Ask Calumet Photo or other photoshop to donate older model digital cameras for families to check out while staying at the House.
Ronald McDonald Night

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Team up with Ronald McDonald and host a Ronald McDonald night at the House to meet the families

Potential Ideas:
- Have Ronald stroll through dinner and meet with families during a *Meals from the Heart* dinner.
- Invite Ronald to a McDonald’s-sponsored Ice Cream Social and have Ronald make a McFlurry to order for a special child.
- Invite Ronald to perform his magic show. After the show, teach children a trick that they can use back at home or the hospital. Bring magic capes, wands and top hats. Take plenty of pictures!
- Invite Ronald to educate the House on the 3 R’s- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Invite “Thanks A Million” pop tab recyclers to the House for the program and host a dinner afterwards.
- Invite Ronald to educate House guests on healthy eating and provide a healthy dinner.

Potential Resources: Work with the Director of Programming to secure Ronald for the event.
Sandcastle Competition

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a quarter

Brief Description: Are you or do you know a professional sand castle builder? Come to the House and teach families the art of sand sculpting and bring a little bit of the beach to Grand Avenue!

Potential Ideas:

- Invite Sand Sculptors to the House to give a lesson on the various techniques of sand sculpting.
- Invite sculptor to create a larger sculpture to display at the House for the week after the event. Have space for families to try and recreate the sculpture.
- After the lesson, walk down to Ohio Street Beach and have a sandcastle building competition, complete with prizes for the winners. Have the sculptor judge the competition based on lessons s/he taught at the House.

Potential Resources: Brian Turnbough, The Sand Sculpture Company, 815.334.9101
Stress Management Workshops

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: The amount of stress on families with critically ill children is immeasurable. Do you or someone you know work as a Stress Management Counselor? Come to the House and lead a workshop on techniques, exercises and therapies for stress management.

Potential Ideas:
- Help families identify stress, and teach them how to deal with the pressure and tension in both adults and children.
- Host a peace breathing for beginners workshop and lead families through deep breathing exercises.
- Invite a nutritionist to speak about healthy eating habits during stressful situations.

Potential Resources: Mary Domke, certified instructor and volunteer 312.578.0023. Contact the Peace School about having a peace breathing instructor donate their time to the House. Ask a nutritionist to speak about healthy eating.
**Spirit Week**

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once a year

**Brief Description:** Recreate Spirit Week activities in conjunction with pre-existing programming at the House.

**Potential Ideas:**
- This is a great programming tool for a large company who would like to break down into smaller, more manageable groups, yet want to do something as a whole (each group could be responsible for one day of the week).
- Pick a week to host a Spirit Week. If there are groups preparing meals already on the schedule, contact the group leader to see if the group is interested in combining efforts (i.e. the meal group would cook breakfast for dinner, and the Spirit Week group would encourage everyone to wear their pajamas to dinner).
- Working in conjunction with the day’s theme, create programming highlighting the day. If it is “Crazy Hair Day” have families create their own “Chia Pet.”
- Host a final Spirit Week “Social” on Friday and crown a “Mr. and Miss Spirit Week” to the people that most embraced Spirit Week by coming and participating in events. Give each a crown and sash to wear and make sure to take pictures!

**Potential Resources:** Ask local businesses to donate prizes for best costumes throughout the week and a bigger prize to give to “Mr and Miss Spirit Week”.

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*Ronald McDonald House® near Lurie Children’s*
Tea Party

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Do you love finger foods and fancy hats? Host a tea party at the House suitable for all age groups.

Potential Ideas:
- Set the scene for a tea party by setting up intimate tables throughout the kitchen, complete with linen tablecloths, teapots and cups, and assorted sweets and savories on each table. Ask a local bakery to donate the sweets and a deli to donate sandwiches (which you can cut into 1/4ths to create finger sandwiches).
- Supply fancy hats for everyone to wear during the tea party and make sure to take pictures!
- Invite younger children to bring stuffed animals or dolls along as “guests.”
- Create an art project for the younger ladies while the older ladies have tea and mingle (i.e. paper fans, colorful paper flowered hats, etc.).
- Host a sing along to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot.”

Potential Resources: Ask a local bakery and deli to supply food, ask tea shop to borrow tea pots and donate tea, invite Red Hat Society to host event and bring their supplies and hats, ask local hotels who do teas to come to the House (InterContinental, Penninsula, Four Seasons, etc.)
Tournaments

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once a month

**Brief Description:** Bean Bag, Texas Hold ‘Em, Wii, really ANYTHING can be turned into a tournament. What competitive activity do you like to play with your friends and family? Come to the House and organize a tournament for the families.

**Potential Ideas:**
- Host a Bean Bag Tournament on the rooftop in the warmer months. The winner gets a paid entry into the following year’s Auxiliary Board’s Battle of the Bags tournament.
- Use the Wii or other gaming system to create a tournament-style event with a popular video game (i.e. Guitar Hero, Dance, Dance Revolution, Wii Bowling, etc.), with the winner taking home a donated gaming or handheld system.
- Host a Texas Hold ‘Em for beginners tournament and give basic lessons on how the game is played to novice players. The top three winners get to pick from a list of prizes.

**Potential Resources:** Contact local electronic stores to get gaming systems donated. Contact local businesses in the area for prizes.
Theatre Troupes

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a month

Brief Description: Chicagoans often take for granted the amazingly talented and diverse theatre troupes and performers who call Chicago home. Are you a theatre buff? Do you or a friend work with a theatre or have a connection to traveling shows? Help us make Ronald McDonald House the first stop on the Chicago tour!

Potential Ideas:
- Contact Broadway in Chicago and find out what shows will be coming to Chicago in the following season and ask if they would like to do a press stop at Ronald McDonald House and perform a selected scene at the House.
- Ask a local theatre troupe to host an “Acting Workshop” for families staying at the House.
- Contact Improv Olympic or Second City and ask if they could to send an instructor to teach improv at the House.
- Invite an opera singer to the House to give voice lessons and explain the art of operatic music.

Potential Resources: Broadway in Chicago, various theatre troupes within the city, Improv Olympic, Second City, Lyric Opera, Shakespeare Reperatory Theatre, and the Illinois Arts Council to pursue grants to fund programming.
**Yoga, Meditation and Laughter Therapy**

**Ideal Frequency of Activity:** Once a week

**Brief Description:** Yoga, meditation, peace breathing, and laughter therapy are all healthy ways of coping with stressful situations. Are you or do you know a yoga instructor? Do you practice meditation? Do you find peace breathing an effective tool for managing stress? Come to the House and share your methods of finding “inner peace”.

**Potential Ideas:**
- Laughter helps the immune system, increases your intellectual performance and boosts information retention. Host a Laughter Therapy session for the families at the House.
- Make yoga fun for the entire family by hosting a mom and baby yoga session.
- Ask instructors from the Peace School to present a beginners peace breathing class.
- Host yoga in the meditation room in the winter months. The rooftop will be ideal in the warmer months for both morning and evening.
- Bring a small tabletop fountain with you so families can hear the tranquil movement of the water as they meditate or stretch.

**Potential Resources:** Yoga studios within Streeterville, Peace School on Lincoln Park, Lulu Lemon, and local massage therapists.
“Where’s Ronald?”

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Twice a month

Brief Description: Do you like scavenger hunts? We have 14 floors to play with! A simple take on the “Where’s Waldo?” and “Flat Stanley” phenomena, hide pictures around the House of Ronald McDonald for families of all ages to find. Whoever finds the most wins a prize!

Potential Ideas:
- Print Ronald out on two different colored pages and use one color for teens and adults and one color for children. Make the teen and adult Ronalds harder to find than the children’s Ronalds.
- Use our entire House! Ask the overnight staff to hide Ronald all over the House while everyone is sleeping. In the morning, hold the contest (might work best on a Friday to Saturday). Hold a brunch and award prizes while everyone is eating.
- Create ‘Flat Ronalds” for families to take with them as they travel to the hospital and throughout Chicagoland. Have families take pictures of Ronald in the various places and post the pictures in a communal space.

Potential Resources: Ask staff to make copies of Ronald and have overnight staff hide the various colored Ronalds throughout the House. Ask McDonald’s to donate gift certificates to the winners of both age groups.
Yearly Activities
Academy Awards Party

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a year

Brief Description: On the night of the Academy Awards, host an Awards Viewing party, complete with snacks and programming that go along with the Awards.

Potential Ideas:
- For parents/guardians/older siblings, have an “Oscar Pool”, pre-designed and copied for distribution. Have everyone fill out the pool. At the end of the night, distribute prizes for the top three highest scores. Prize ideas include gift certificates to AMC to see a movie, a family “movie night” kit with popcorn, snacks, and DVDs.

- For younger guests, have a craft to “build your own Oscar” award. Using craft supplies, either create a three-dimensional Oscar or have the youngest guest color in an “Oscar” outline. Have each child give the “Oscar” to their ideal “winner”, a Mom, Dad, or sibling in the hospital.

- To keep children’s attention while parents watch the real Oscars, have the children watch a couple of Sesame Street episodes featuring their favorite “Oscar” - the Grouch! Create craft project around either Oscar including coloring sheets or hand held masks. Talk about the importance of recycling using Oscar the Grouch.

Potential Resources: AMC to donate gift certificates, Redbox, Netflix, Garrett’s popcorn to donate snack and potentially a prize gift assortment.
Cross-town Classic Party

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a year

Brief Description: Do you hate it when people say they are “Chicago” fans and refuse to pick a baseball team? The “Red Line Series” is one of the greatest rivalries in all of Chicago sports. Host a Cross-town Classic Party at the House and make sure to wear your team colors!

Potential Ideas:
- When planning the meal, go with a “Chicago Theme” and serve Chicago-produced food like Tootsie Roll, Vienna hot dogs, deep dish pizza, etc.
- Have each family choose a team and hand out ice cream bars to the families who picked the winning team.
- Teach the children watching “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” to do “The Wave” during the 7th inning stretch.

Potential Resources: Contact the Chicago Cubs and White Sox and see if a retired player might like to come to the House. Contact Minnie Minoso or other Chicagoland sports players who still live in the area and ask them to stop by the House. Ask local sports memorabilia stores to donate Cubs and Sox gear.
Holiday Themed Events

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a year

Brief Description: Do you start putting out your Christmas decorations the day after Thanksgiving? Do you still trick-or-treat? There are so many ways to celebrate the holidays at the House. Come to the House and participate in a holiday activity and spread cheer!

Potential Ideas:

- Host a Monster Bash complete with pumpkin carving, bobbing for apples, a costume contest, and candy corn crafting for Halloween.
- Invite the Navy Pier carolers over to the House and have a sing-along.
- Host an Easter Egg hunt.
- Host a Valentine’s Day Party, complete with a valentine making station.
- Make cards and plant a small plant with siblings and patients to give to their mothers on Mother’s Day.
- Ask a local chocolatier to donate chocolates to the House for St. Valentine’s Day.
- Celebrate quirky holidays like Groundhog Day and Sweetest Day.
- Help educate the House on other holidays such as Chanukah, Eid, Ramadan, etc.
- Do planting in the garden on Earth Day.

Potential Resources: Navy Pier, local chocolatiers, bakeries, and nurseries
Superbowl Party

Ideal Frequency of Activity: Once a year

Brief Description: Are you a football fanatic? Host a Superbowl Party at the House!

Potential Ideas:
- Create an indoor tailgate complete with mini-bags sets, BBQ (on the patio), face painting, and tossing the football (a soft, Nerf-like ball) around.
- Do Superbowl Squares and give prizes to winners each quarter with a big prize for the final score.
- Have someone in your group dress up as a referee.
- Play “Pin the Football on the Quarterback” like you would “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.”
- Play “Pass the Football” by dividing into two teams and have them line up. Place a smaller sized football under the chin of the first person in line on each team. The goal then becomes to pass the football down the line under each player’s chin without using their hands. The first team to pass the football to each player wins a prize.

Potential Resources: Ask restaurants in Streeterville to sponsor the party.
Field Trips

Sometimes it’s nice to get away from the House for an afternoon and explore the city. Below are a few suggestions of places and things our families might like to do in our beautiful city. We are always open to new ideas!

AMC Theatre Tickets

All-American Girl Field Shows— Get tickets to the American Girl show and a trip to the salon for girls who have brought their American Girls from home.

City Ambassadors— Host a weekly walking tour, pointing out important places and places of historical interest.

Bowling— Get passes from Lucky Strike

Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier Passes

Gym Passes to local gyms in the neighborhood

Museum and Zoo Memberships— While we currently have passes to some museums, it would be better to get them donated or underwritten.

Sight Seeing Boat Cruises—Work on a relationship with cruise lines, securing tickets for sightseeing cruises for families.

Sporting Tickets and Theatre tickets— Secure unused tickets for various sporting and theatrical events for families staying at the House.