

# Committed to Caring

Will Koch and other business leaders demonstrate passionate involvement in the Ronald McDonald House

BY KRISTEN LUND

**WHEN WILL KOCH'S** school-aged niece, Marie George, was diagnosed with lymphoma and an immune deficiency disorder, her family traveled from their home in Indianapolis so Marie could receive specialized care at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Last summer, as the preteen underwent treatment, her family found solace at a nearby Ronald McDonald House, where they spent several nights free of charge and connected with others facing frightening medical challenges. "It's an outstanding service to provide to families at a time when they are least able to help themselves," says Koch, president and general manager of Holiday World and Splashin' Safari.

Kathy Scheller, executive director of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Ohio Valley, Inc., has called her organization "a charity about stories," and Koch's involvement is no exception. Despite his busy schedule, Koch's niece's harrowing ordeal compelled him to help raise capital funds to build a Ronald McDonald House in Evansville to serve Tri-State families.

Next year, this 10-bedroom "home away from home" (one of just 270 worldwide) will open to serve the region's families who travel to Evansville seeking medical care for critically ill children. The site (3540 Washington Ave.) has been cleared in preparation for construction, and along with providing overnight accommodations for family members of young patients, Evansville's Ronald McDonald House will include a Community Area for what Scheller calls "day-stayers," all families in need of a comfortable, welcoming retreat during daytime hours.

These days, Marie is faring well (she speaks publicly about her illness and helps raise money for cancer research), but her story is just one example of an all-too-common situation among families with critically ill children. In the Tri-State, families often travel up to 100



**GOING FOR A SPIN:** Holiday World and Splashin' Safari president and general manager Will Koch (at the park with his son William) is lending time and talents to Evansville's Ronald McDonald House project.

miles to Evansville for medical treatment, facing extensive transportation and lodging costs on top of medical bills. For this reason, a feasibility study found a significant need for a Ronald McDonald House here.

The capital campaign goal for this project is \$4 million; \$2.6 million has already been raised. Community groups ranging from rock band The Pits to roller derby team The Dynamite Dolls have hosted fundraising events as has Koch's own Holiday World and Splashin' Safari. "At Holiday World, we often have visitors who are facing major challenges, and these stories touch our hearts very deeply," says Koch. "The Ronald McDonald House will serve these same families."

Interested community members can get involved now by making a credit card donation at [rmhevansville.org](http://rmhevansville.org) or by participating in the Holiday Brick Campaign, where a \$100 donation entitles individuals to a personally engraved brick for the Ronald McDonald House. Visit [rmhevansville.org](http://rmhevansville.org) for additional information and continued updates. ●

## HOW TUCKER PUBLISHING GROUP IS INVOLVED

**TUCKER PUBLISHING GROUP** is proud to be a part of this heartwarming and important community project. From the outset, our own Tucker Publishing Group President Todd Tucker has played an active role in the project by serving on the board of directors of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Ohio Valley.

"Everyone knows Evansville is a caring, giving community," says Tucker. "I must say, though, that the level of support and enthusiasm for the Ronald McDonald House has exceeded my highest expectations."

In the coming months, we'll keep you posted on the house's progress by publishing updates in *Evansville Liv-*

*ing* and *Evansville Business*. For the house's grand opening, we'll publish a special *Home Away from Home Tour* magazine, produce the *Home Away from Home Tour*, and host a celebratory gala with proceeds going to the Ronald McDonald House Charities. We hope to see you there!