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Ice cream social raises money for Ronald McDonald House

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Photo by [Sarah Wilson](#)

The Ronald McDonald House Ice Cream Social brings local celebrities to serve up ice cream and fun to raise money for charity.

- By Tim Briggs
- April 7, 2016 10:36 a.m.

Taylor Lee's heart started giving out on her 11 years ago. Last year, at age 17, doctors found a way to mend it.

While Florida Hospital doctors got to work fixing her ailing and enlarged heart, Lee's family found a home next door.

"It was really nice having my family there, because they could get to me faster," Taylor said.

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Standing three-stories high on the corner of Alden Road and East Princeton Street, the Ronald McDonald House at Florida Hospital is easy to distinguish. The building is a pale yellow, much dimmer than the famous McDonald's golden arches. The house has a nickname, carved on a concrete welcome mat beside beds of flowers on the front porch: The House That Love Built.



The Ronald McDonald House at Florida Hospital's main mission is to house, feed and support families whose children are enduring serious illness. For the Lee family, the house became a home away from home.

"This whole experience was the ups and downs of a stormy sea, but there was always light at the end of the tunnel because this is a home," Pamela Lee, Taylor's mother, said.

Taylor, now an 18-year-old woman, has suffered from a congenital heart defect since the age of 7. On Oct. 27, 2015, she underwent successful surgery to repair her enlarged heart, with Dr. Constantine Mavroudis at Florida Hospital fixing a leak that accumulated over the course of a decade of complications.

"I know some stories don't end as well as ours did, so we're very fortunate," Pamela said.

Making the house their temporary home was Dr. Mavroudis' idea. When they called for help, The Ronald McDonald House was happy to answer with a convenient solution.

"All that we raise goes to support the families," weekend manager Susan Roberts said. "It's \$60 to house one family for one night, but we never turn anyone away."

The Ronald McDonald House at Florida Hospital can fit as many as 45 guests in 22 rooms. In those rooms sit journals that the families can use to convey their emotions as a way of catharsis during a difficult struggle. The Lee family remembers these journals well, as not only Pamela, but Taylor's grandparents stayed at the house periodically for nine days in room 210.

"The rest of us were falling down around her," Pamela said. "But she's a trooper, she did great."

Linda Mayfield, a retired volunteer, currently serves as the Event Chair for the house, planning activities and fundraisers such as an ice cream social that has taken place each of the last five years in order to help raise funds to continue operations at the highest level and support the families in any way that they can.

"It's a truly wonderful place," Mayfield said. "I wouldn't have retired and come back if I didn't think so. And besides, who doesn't love ice cream and cake?"

The ice cream social this year will take place on April 17 at the Winter Park Civic Center from 1 to 5 p.m. and includes all-you-can-eat ice cream, face painting, balloon artists, a ventriloquist and more.

The Lee family, including Taylor and her twin brother Thomas, will be at the social, hoping to keep helping out. They also want to stay in touch with the managers and volunteers of the home that helped them through.

"To give me something is hard, to help me is hard," Pamela Lee said. "It's good to know that I'm not being a burden, that these people want to be here and do something for you. You have to pay it forward and give back to these people that have just done so much for us."

For Taylor these days, life is a bit more normal. She says that she wants to try to become a veterinarian and is looking at going to college to further herself, and go places that she might not have thought were possible only months ago.

"I want to try to get to where I want to go," Taylor said.

Going where she wants is now possible, but a faded pink vertical scar lingers over her heart as a reminder of the last 11 years.

"It's her badge of honor," Pamela said. "It really is."



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