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ECONOMY

Ronald McDonald House kicks off \$21 million expansion, renovation

By [LISA HORNUNG](#) | August 30, 2018 7:03 pm



Hal Hedley, CEO of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Kentuckiana, speaks to the crowd at the kickoff of the \$21 million expansion project. Mayor Greg Fischer and Norton Healthcare

President Russell Cox also pictured at right. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Kentuckiana

announced Thursday that it will begin the renovation of the Greater Louisville Medical Society Building at 101 W. Chestnut St., also known as the Old Medical School building, next week.

The \$21 million project will nearly double the capacity and improve facilities of the Ronald McDonald House in Louisville. The project will add 20 rooms, which will increase the number of families who can stay in the house from 1,500 to 3,000 per year.

Once the Greater Louisville Medical Society Building renovation is complete in December 2019, the adjacent Ronald McDonald House will undergo a renovation. It's the largest expansion the organization has taken on since it was founded in 1984.

"This expansion for Ronald McDonald House families is going to help us to serve more families and serve them in more ways," said Hal Hedley, CEO of the local Ronald McDonald House. "For the families that come to Louisville to seek healthcare for their child, we want to take away every other worry for their child. They've got enough worries with an ill child."

The nonprofit serves families who travel to Louisville from out of town for their children's medical care and need to stay near the hospital. They are asked to contribute \$20 per night, but no one is ever turned away for inability to pay, Hedley said. The Ronald McDonald House has had to turn families away, however, because of lack of space.



The University of Louisville Medical School in 1913. It housed the medical school until 1971. | Photo

“In the last two years, we have maintained an average of 90 percent occupancy and have turned families away over 500 times on nights where we were completely full and didn’t have room for them,” Hedley said.

courtesy the [University of Louisville Photographic Archives](#), Caufield & Shook Collection.

The expansions of [Norton Children’s Hospital](#) and pediatric care at Frazier Rehabilitation Center and the new [Novak Center for Children’s Health](#) at the University of Louisville is bringing more families to Louisville seeking pediatric medical care, causing even more need . When there’s no room at the Ronald McDonald House, families often sleep in hospital waiting rooms or even in their cars.

Norton Healthcare donated \$2 million to the expansion. Norton President Russ Cox said the organization considers it an investment.



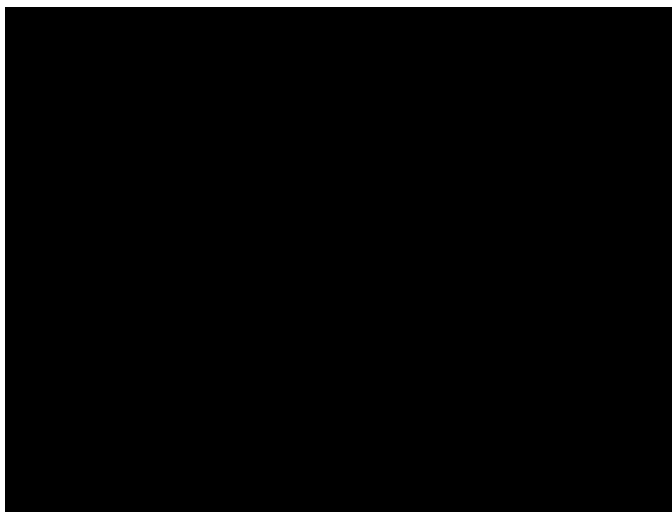
“Everything that’s important to us is about outcomes for children at Norton Children’s Hospital. We know that when families are involved, when they’re close, when they’re not strapped financially with travel, when they can get rest, that that support helps that child with a better outcome,” Cox said. “So this is not a contribution, this is not a donation, this is an investment in the children of our community. And we’re happy to be part of that.”

The project will be completed by Woodbine Construction and was designed by Studio Kremer Architects, both Louisville-based companies.

Ronald McDonald House volunteer Ann Burrice said she's excited about the expansion and hopes more volunteers will come work at the nonprofit.

"My youngest son was in and out of the hospital a lot until he was about 4 years old," Burrice said. "I know what it was like. I saw people in the same clothes for three or four days in a row because they didn't have any place to stay. I live in Louisville, and I would spend the night, but then someone would relieve me during the day so I could go home and shower and see my other child."

The project is nearly fully funded, but there is still \$2.4 million needed to finish the work.



Earlier this month, Ronald McDonald House Charities announced a \$100 million donation from biopharmaceutical company AbbVie, which will support 32 Ronald McDonald House expansions across the United States. Ronald McDonald House locally is receiving \$11.7 million from the AbbVie donation — the largest single gift toward the project.

Other major donors to the campaign include:

- [Norton Healthcare](#), \$2 million, \$1 million of which is a challenge grant;
- Local McDonald's Kentuckiana owner-operators, \$1 million;
- Clark Family Foundation, \$500,000, which is a matching grant;
- [Ogle Foundation](#), \$300,000;
- [Marshall Family Foundation](#), \$250,000;

- [Ronald McDonald House Charities Global](#), \$200,000;
- [Gheens Foundation](#), \$100,000; and
- Pete Rutledge, in memory of Betty Rutledge, \$100,000

The Louisville Ronald McDonald House also has been approved for about \$1.9 million in federal and state Historic Tax Credits, as the Ronald McDonald House building and the former Medical Society building are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

LISA HORNUNG

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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