



the Fitzgerald family

Sara Fitzgerald knows what it's like to pull for the Ronald McDonald House of Mid-Missouri®. Even though she lives in Greentop, Missouri, almost a two-hour drive from Columbia, she's volunteered at the House for the last five years. Sara's a tab collector. She pulls tabs off aluminum cans and donates them to the House. She's wrapped presents and helped provide toys for House residents at Christmas. In addition, Sara's made Easter baskets and even conducted a cleaning supply drive to keep the House spic and span. As a volunteer, she's watched many families with sick children receive comfort from this home-away-from-home.... never imagining she'd need comforting herself.

Earlier this year, while pregnant with her first child, Sara's water broke. She started having intense contractions. What she didn't know was that her baby was breech. Sara's family rushed her to University of Missouri Health Care in Columbia where she delivered a baby girl. Emma Fitzgerald was three weeks early and had fluid on her lungs. While Sara could leave the hospital, Emma was too sick to go home. She had to stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.



"It's a terrible feeling to have to leave your baby. We didn't know what to do. We thought we'd have to stay at a hotel. Then, we remembered the Ronald House," Sara recalls.



The Ronald McDonald House® allowed Sara to leave the hospital but still be close to her baby. There, this new mother found a comfortable bed, a hot meal and staff who understand what it's like to have a sick child.

"It was a great feeling to have the House. It was close enough to the hospital that I didn't feel like I was leaving my baby," said Sara.

After a week in the NICU, Emma got better. Her mom got some much needed rest and they were both able to go home to Greentop. Sara says she'll continue to volunteer for the House. After all when you pull for the Ronald McDonald House, you never know when the House might pull for you.



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TO CALL HOME