



the Thibeault family

When Jacob Thibeault was three and a half weeks old, his parents noticed a quirk in the way he breathed. Jacob's chest would rise and fall but no air would be exchanged. Puzzled, Jennifer and Joshua Thibeault, both Captains in the Army at Fort Leonard Wood, took their son to the doctor. Several days of testing revealed a fast growing tumor at the base of Jacob's brain, extending down his neck and into his chest. Jacob couldn't breathe because the tumor was pressing on his airway.

Jacob was sent by ambulance from Pulaski County to University Hospital. The Thibeaults arrived in Columbia at four in the morning. "We had no clue we'd be here six weeks," said Jennifer. They checked in the Ronald McDonald House®, a home away from home for families with seriously ill children. Once there, they found a private room, hot meals, a place to do laundry, check their emails...and a private place to cry, as doctors had just diagnosed Jacob with neuroblastoma: cancer of the sympathetic nervous system. Surgeons were able to remove some of the cancer, but the portion on his brainstem was too tricky to remove...and Jacob was too young to undergo chemotherapy. "We can't make it go away so we just have to do everything we can to make him comfortable, no matter how inconvenient and stressful it is on us," said Jennifer.



Now a year old, Jacob is undergoing physical therapy to learn how to crawl. His motor skills developed slower than normal as he's spent most of his young life in a hospital bed. Jennifer and Joshua don't know what the future holds for their son. But they do know the House will be there for them. The Thibeault family is just one of the more than 20,000 who've called the Ronald McDonald House home over the last 23 years...families who peer out the windows each night, wondering if their child will make it another day.

In 2006, 250 families were unable to stay at the Ronald McDonald House in Mid-Missouri due to occupancy and structural issues. Building a new Ronald McDonald House would give more families just like the Thibeaults a place of comfort, a place of rest, a place to call home.



BUILDING A HOUSE
TO CALL HOME