



Situation Analysis

Description

Ronald McDonald House Charities is a non-profit organization dedicated to families of children who are hospitalized. It gives families a “home away from home” so they can stay close to their children at little or no cost. Three hundred houses are located worldwide with more than 30,000 volunteers dedicating their time. The organization serves 4.5 million families per year.

The Akron chapter celebrated its 27th anniversary in January. This chapter is self-funded. A team of three full-time staff members, three part-timers, a Board of Trustees and more than 100 volunteers run the house. With the staff working together, this chapter houses an average of 700 families per year.

Internal Issues

Volunteers contribute 12,000 hours of work per year. Most volunteers are women between the ages of 45 and 70 but nearly 15 percent are high school and college students. People usually volunteer twice a month for a total of eight hours each. A normal shift includes chores such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, decorating for holidays or office work.

One strength of the Akron chapter is the opportunity for volunteers to choose how and when time is spent. Volunteers are free to decide the chores they want to perform each shift and when they want to work. Beth Plazak, volunteer coordinator said, “the

Ronald McDonald House is strictly run on the goodness of other people's hearts so we want our volunteers to enjoy their time here."

Hard work is valued at the Akron Ronald McDonald House. According to Trent Bowden, volunteer and sophomore at Kent State University, volunteers that help out are treated as family rather than servants. The Akron chapter makes sure volunteers feel welcomed by greeting them with a smile and good attitude as soon as they walk into the door. The staff always offers to feed the volunteers. Plazak gives volunteers a break in the middle of a shift if they need one. To top it off, employees will always sit down with the helpers to talk about their day.

Even though volunteers are treated well, no structure is set for the volunteer process. No authority figures tell the volunteers exactly what to do when they arrive. This disorganization leads to unutilized time. When no one tells the volunteers what to do they just "mosey around, exploring the house," said Rebecca Saleet, a sophomore volunteer from the University of Akron.

Volunteers are not the only people who are treated as family. Residents staying at the house also play a part in keeping the organization successful. Families who stay at the Akron house are mostly Caucasian families between the ages of 28 to 36 with young children under the ages of 12. However, there can be a diverse group of families there at one time. For example, in February 2012, Amish people resided in most of the rooms. The Akron house has 20 rooms available for guests. A typical room has two beds, a closet and a full bathroom. It resembles a hotel room. Rent is \$10 a night, but no family is turned down if they can't afford it.

Not turning down families is also a weakness for the organization. Only 32 percent of residents contributed their room fees. Last year, the organization received \$20,217 of the \$63,310 rent charged. The lack of payments put a strain on the organization. The rent goes towards the upkeep of the house: electric, water, utilities and cable. The money the organization used to pay for these could have been used to purchase essentials, such as food, bedding or cleaning supplies.

Also, by turning no family away, the waiting list is extensive. The organization requires residents to make a prior to staying at the house. If a family knows that they will be unable to pay for the stay, they get put on the waiting list anyway. When a room becomes available, a staff member calls the family to let them know about the room.

The house is booked up to 340 days in advance with more than 800 families waiting to reserve a room for the time of the child's appointment. This does not mean the family has to wait a year for a room; it means that there is a name on the waiting list for every day for the next 340 days.

There is also no time limit on the length of stay. The longest a family resided in the house was 126 days. Forty-five families stayed for about a month, and more than 70 families stayed for 15 to 30 days. Since there is no specific time for residents to leave, it becomes difficult to tell the families on the waiting list when a room will be available.

External Issues

With so many families and volunteers involved in the Akron Ronald McDonald House, the organization has support of the community. Corporations such as Coca Cola Bottling Co. of Akron, Dunkin' Donuts, Sam's Club and Cintas are just a few companies that donate thousands to the Akron Ronald McDonald House.

Alpha Delta Pi sorority raises money for the charity and has donated \$5 million since 1979. Other fraternities and sororities in from the University of Akron support the Akron chapter, such as Zeta Tau Alpha and Beta Sigma Phi.

The largest corporate donor is the McDonald's franchise itself. McDonald's and local operators of McDonald's fund portions of annual operating costs for Ronald McDonald Houses. Franchises raise more than \$200 million for the charity per year. Customers of McDonald's restaurants help by putting money in RMHC donation boxes. Most local McDonald's sell *USA Today*, and in-restaurant sales of the paper are all donated to local chapters.

Many organizations hold events to raise money for the operating cost of the Akron chapter and awareness for the charity. The Akron Ronald McDonald House started the pop-tab recycling program in October 2009. The house recycles the tabs at P.S.C. Metals located on the east side of Akron. For every pound of pop tabs, P.S.C. Metals gives 60 to 75 cents to the Ronald McDonald House. The house recycles 400 pounds of tabs at a time, which equals \$240 to \$300.

Collecting pop tabs has been a successful fundraiser because the house has recycled 9,000 pounds of pop tabs within the past two years. Volunteers and local schools save pop tabs and bring them to the Akron House. With \$6,075 raised, the Akron house bought items that directly benefit the residents. The chapter now has a house computer, a Bose Wave Radio for the dining room and a digital camera.

The Junior Women's Civic Club sponsors another successful fundraiser for the Akron Ronald McDonald House. The Annual Charity Golf Classic, which takes place at Silver Lake Country Club, has raised more than \$500,000 in the last 20 years. The

country club provides golf carts, lunch, promotional items, dinner, auction and prize money to each person for \$275. With increasing attention from media outlets, and golfers, attendance has been on the rise every year.

The Akron Ronald McDonald House has no direct competition. This is the only charity around that works directly with Akron Children's to help house families in need. However, it does compete with other local charities for funds, volunteers and awareness. This is huge in the nonprofit world because nonprofits run on the goodness of others; volunteers, donations. Since the Akron house is located right in the middle of the city, its competition includes; The Battered Women's Shelter, The Akron Zoo, Akron Civic Theater and Haven of Rest.

Best Practices

Ronald McDonald Houses around the nation have participated in events that serve as best practices. One House conducted the 2010 Day of Change, which was a social media campaign that encouraged people to donate their change to RMC boxes. This event raised \$25 million – 130 percent more donations than the previous year. E-newsletter subscriptions also increased to 748 percent during the promotion.

Another best practice was the Red Shoe Society – a young professionals' organization that helps increase funds and volunteering for Ronald McDonald Houses. Members of the Red Shoe Society network with other young professionals who want to volunteer. The Red Shoe Society also has a Ronald McDonald House Wish List posted on its website, which helps to fulfill the houses' needs.

A third best practice event was the 2011 Chicago Marathon. Mark Johnston dedicated the marathon to his 8-year-old son who has been battling cancer. More than 300 runners participated in the marathon. The event raised \$500,000 for the Ronald McDonald House.

A final best practice was the RMHC Family Golf Outing in 2011. This event raised \$1.4 million, which is going towards the construction of new houses around the nation. The Ronald McDonald Charities plans to open 27 new houses by 2015 by using the money raised from this event.

Opportunities and Threats

A threat for the organization is the locations of McDonald's donation boxes. Even though these boxes are an easy way to raise money, donations are lacking. People tend to steal the boxes from McDonald's restaurants. On average, three donation boxes are stolen per year from local restaurants. Each McDonalds has at least three boxes. There are more than ten McDonalds in the Akron/Canton area.

Akron nonprofits must compete for student volunteers. Many local high school students must fulfill community service requirements in order to pass their government classes. Akron non-profits, such as the Akron Civic Theatre and Haven of Rest, also welcome student volunteers. The number of nonprofits available to volunteer for allows students to choose among a variety of nonprofits to complete their community service hours.

As the Akron Ronald McDonald House grows, so does its need for funding to expand. The Akron chapter plans to expand by building an additional home two blocks

away. The new home will have more rooms, so the waiting list won't be as extensive.

The new house will require even more volunteers to keep it running. This need is difficult to fulfill because of the competition for volunteers in the nonprofits of Akron.

Key Publics

Primary

- Families with children at Akron Children's
- Families who have previously stayed at the RMH Akron
- Current sponsors
- Akron Community as a whole

Secondary

- Local media outlets
 - Akron Beacon Journal, Canton Repository, Kent Stater, 88.1, Black Squirrel Radio, 92.5, 105.1
- Local businesses in the Akron, Canton, Kent area.
 - Such as American Legion, Norchia's Bakery, Peanut Shoppe.
- Akron University sororities and fraternities
- Local college students
- Local high school students and teachers
- Bloggers

SWOT Analysis

This organization is successful at developing good media relations. There is a news article in the Akron Beacon Journal almost every month. There was no hesitation to cover previous fundraisers such as the golf outing.

The Akron House needs to keep better organization with the volunteers. When there are scattered schedules it makes it hard to better the organization.

There are plenty of opportunities to better this organization. They could make their website more interactive rather just full of information. They also have

the opportunity to expand their community support by recruiting volunteers from different geographic areas and add additional fundraisers to their schedules.

With the nonprofit community, there's always the threat of losing funds. Nonprofits constantly compete with each other and this could affect possible volunteers and money.

Problem Statement

The Akron Ronald McDonald House must raise more money to build a new house. Along with the funds, a significant number of new volunteers are needed in order to make the new house successful. With so many other nonprofits in the Akron area competing for volunteers and sponsors, the recruitment for funds and volunteers needed for the new is challenging.