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Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Greater Washington, D.C.

*When a family
is sure of little else...
they can count on
Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
of Greater
Washington, D.C.*



Brandon

Brandon



At 4 months old, Brandon was diagnosed with Schwackman Diamond Syndrome. Brandon's red blood cells were extremely depleted; he had bone marrow failure; and his growth would remain below normal. Through careful management, doctors were able to stabilize Brandon's condition and from 6 months to 12 years old he stayed healthy and happy... a calm before the storm. In September 2009, just after Brandon became a big brother for the third time, his illness returned.

At first it seemed that he just had a stomach virus, but it soon became clear that something was seriously wrong. Doctors said it was Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS) which, left untreated, becomes Leukemia. Brandon had his first bone marrow transplant to ward off the MDS, but when it came back, doctors had to pursue a more aggressive treatment.

In March of 2011, doctors told Brandon and his family that he needed another transplant, as well as chemotherapy treatment, as soon as possible. Hiding in the nooks and crannies of bones, MDS tends to evade even the most comprehensive chemotherapy treatments. In order to treat the resurgence of MDS, doctors performed a bone marrow transplant that they knew would result in Brandon developing Graft-versus-Host Disease (GVHD).

GVHD attacks unfamiliar cells. Although the GVHD would ultimately attack unaffected bone marrow, in addition to the MDS cells, introducing GVHD to Brandon's system was the best bet for eliminating the pre-cancerous MDS. And because his immune system was so fragile, he was kept in isolation for 4 months. Brandon is now fighting off GVHD of the gut and liver, meaning he can't eat solid foods.

With medical expenses mounting and limited resources to get them through, Brandon's parents were unable to take off from work and were unsure how they would keep their four children together. That's when his mother moved their family into the D.C. Ronald McDonald House® (RMH). RMH has isolation suites designed specially for families of children with delicate situations, like Brandon's. Brandon was able to have his family around him and his parents had their children under one roof and at one dinner table, and were still able to go to work.

This holiday season, please help us to continue our fight for children and families like Brandon's.

