



NATIONAL HOUSING ENDOWMENT



2007 BUILDER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD for Outstanding Community Service

Above: Ronald McDonald shares a moment with Dan Rawls, who led the charge to renovate Greenville's Ronald McDonald House.



Left: The Dan Rawls Company completely renovated and currently maintains the Ronald MacDonal House in Greenville, S.C.

DAN RAWLS COMPANY::HONORABLE MENTION

Perhaps the biggest misconception about Ronald McDonald House Charities—homes where families stay at virtually no cost while their children are being treated for serious diseases—is that they're bankrolled by the fast food industry giant.

Not true. Support for each house is a local, grassroots effort. "A lot of people have the misconception that McDonald's funds the house," says Dan Rawls, the owner of Piedmont, S.C. home builder Dan Rawls Company and a driving force behind the Greenville, S.C., Ronald McDonald House. "They don't. We're a 501(c)(3)."

For years, Rawls has rehabilitated and maintained the Greenville house and is now involved in doubling its capacity to better serve the families whose kids are being treated at one of city's three hospital systems.

"All you need to do is go to the children's part of the hospital and see that little child with an IV in

her arm—a little, bald child," said Rawls. "It breaks your heart."

In honor of its efforts on behalf of the Ronald McDonald House, Dan Rawls Company received honorable mention in the National Housing Endowment's third annual Builder Achievement Award for Outstanding Community Service in a ceremony at the 2008 International Builders' Show in Orlando, Fla., in February.

"Even in challenging times, the generosity of home builders continues to shine. They understand that the communities in which they work consist not just of home buyers, but people who need help," said Gary Garczynski, chairman of the endowment, which is the philanthropic arm of the National Association of Home Builders. "Builders throughout the country have constructed much more than four walls and a roof. They've built structures that represent a bridge from a life of struggle to a life of hope. These awards honor that charity, and honor the fact that in tough economic times, this charity is all the more dear."

The newly-renovated Ronald McDonald House provides home-like accommodations for the parents of sick children.



DAN RAWLS COMPANY::HONORABLE MENTION

Like other Ronald McDonald house charity sites, the Greenville home had been serviced by volunteers since it was built almost 20 years ago. “The house had just relied on the goodness of our community,” said house CEO Bill Soroachak. “It sounds like a great thing to say you’re going to help until you actually get there.”

So while their intentions were good, the volunteers were simply not up to the task of maintaining a house that, by Soroachak’s estimate, hosted 4,000 “family night stays” in the last year.

The use had taken its toll. “The house was getting deteriorated,” said Rawls. “The paint was fading. The window seals were rotting—a lot.”

Using largely donated labor and materials, Rawls rehabbed the place inside and out. On the exterior, he installed new windows, put on a new roof and finished it off with a fresh coat of paint. He added two outdoor gardens and erected a smoker’s gazebo.

Inside, Rawls and company remodeled the living suites – Greenville’s house is one of the few that give its families private living areas with bathrooms, televisions and telephones—and went to town on the facility’s kitchens and laundry rooms, installing new appliances. Game and play rooms were also added.

But Rawls’ generosity continues on a daily basis, because he’s responsible for maintaining the building. And he’s been the prime mover behind plans to double the capacity of the house from 12 to 24 families, as well as build an adjacent

community center which could be converted into rooms for another dozen families. “As a builder, I always look to the future,” Rawls said.

Yet even if the capacity of the house were tripled today, it would barely meet demand. The house turns away between 35 and 50 families a month, said Soroachak.

Given that the house requires constant attention and maintenance, Soroachak said Rawls knows how get more bang for the buck. “He’s been able to stretch those dollars to give us things we’ve never had,” he said, adding that the roof was a dream come true, after years of patchwork maintenance. “Dan is not shy about asking for anything.”

“I begged for stuff and it was given to me,” said Rawls. Chuckling, he added that his approach sometimes involves “the twisting of an arm.” (Soroachak says he suspects Rawls dips into his personal funds when money comes up short.)

Rawls embodies Woody Allen’s dictum that 90 percent of life is just showing up. “When he says he’s going to do it, it’s a foregone conclusion that it’s going to get done,” said Soroachak.

For more information on the award, go to www.nahb.org/builderachievement.