



Wall-to-wall Color

As a “home-away-from-home” for outpatients at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, the Ronald McDonald House is always full of children and their families. So when it came time to renovate the 18-year-old facility, cheerful colors and functionality were key. TEXT Lindsey Phillips | PHOTOS courtesy of the Ronald McDonald House and SEE the Difference Interiors

Entering the newly renovated Ronald McDonald House in Memphis is like stepping into a box of crayons, which is exactly what designers at SEE the Difference Interiors and the RMH staff had hoped.

The once-beige walls are now painted with soft golds, greens and rusty reds—primary colors that go with just about anything, especially the eclectic mix of furniture that has been donated to the non-profit over the years.

“When you look around the house, the first concept that came to me was using the crayon colors from the original eight pack,” says Diane Gordon, owner and principal

designer of the award-winning SEE the Difference Interiors, the firm that headed RMH’s redesign and renovation. “We wanted to make it bright and cheerful and also be something the kids are familiar with.”

The renovations, which began in July 2008 and were completed in October, focused on the common areas in Building A, the original Ronald McDonald House facility that Executive Director Caron Byrd says has not been renovated since it opened in 1991.

Areas of Building B, which was added in 2000 and more than doubled the number of rooms the house offers to guests, were also included in the project.

“We wanted to update it, but it

still has to feel like home,” Byrd says. “We’re a house with kids, so we have to be realistic in everything we do, consider wear and tear and longevity. We wanted the house to be a place that looked hopeful and optimistic in terms of the colors and vibrancy.”

Gordon worked with SEE the Difference’s JoAnn Heath, design consultant, and Samantha Pass, junior designer on the project. Archer Custom Builders, an award-winning company that has been featured on HGTV’s show “Dream Builders,” headed the construction work.

Renovations covered the kitchen (which was expanded for convenience and now boasts all-new appliances) the dining room,



(opposite page) A rug from SEE the Difference's showroom decorates the lobby. (above, left) The renovated kitchen is wider and stocked with all-new appliances. (above, right) A brightened teen room offers a cheerful, private hangout.

the living room, foyer, front desk area, lobby and conference room in Building A.

Building B is now home to a colorful teen room, renovated meditation room and a bright television room located just off of the kitchen, which will also be equipped with new appliances soon.

"More or less if you see color, it's new," says RMH Communications Coordinator Luca Lindner. "We wanted to see the house design reflect the happiness that kids can have even in a hard situation."

And while the parents seem to enjoy the new kitchen the most, it is the teen room, a green hangout with a pool table, flatscreen televisions and video game consoles that's getting the most attention from the younger set.

Since St. Jude is primarily an outpatient hospital, the Ronald

McDonald House provides free housing for both the patients and their families for an average of about 35 days. It offers 51 hotel-style rooms.

The Memphis house, one of 286 Ronald McDonald House Charities® Houses in 30 countries, works with the Memphis Grizzlies House and the Target House to provide accommodations for St. Jude families, though RMH is independently funded.

For the renovations, St. Jude donated a gift that RMH matched through help from community members, businesses and through other fundraising methods.

In 2011, when the Ronald McDonald House celebrates its 20th birthday, Byrd says she hopes the entire facility will have been completely re-designed and renovated.

"When families come to us, we call it a 'home-away-from-home,'" Byrd says. "The way the house looks is just part of it, but the four walls that surround them we want to be as comfortable and as welcoming and warm and hopeful as we can possibly make them. That's always our goal."

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