

# Design Chronicles

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# MEMBER *Spotlight*

## Melinda Mandell, ASID

By Mary Ann McEwan, ASID, CID, MBA

"It feels very personal to me." When Melinda was a young girl, her world was turned upside down by a sudden and unexpected admittance to the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford. When the pediatrician told her parents, "go now, get checked in," they went. In order

to rush Melinda to the hospital, the family was in a moment uprooted, her Dad took time off work, and dinner plans with friends that evening were canceled. With two of her younger siblings in tow, her parents took turns sleeping in Melinda's room, and they juggled their schedules to accommodate caring for all of their children.

While this was very traumatic and hard on the family, they were fortunate to live in the area, which helped to soften the impact. For many families with children in the hospital, the situation can be even more stressful, with the added burden of pulling children out of school, flying in or sometimes driving for days from other parts of the country, and facing the possibility of paying top price for hotels in Silicon Valley. Some families have even resorted to sleeping in their cars in order to be near their children. The stress of the illness is difficult enough, including managing treatments, anticipating what each new day will bring, and finding the body's "new normal", so adding the logistics and dynamics of the family to the equation creates another challenge altogether.



Makelike wallpaper and drapery

Ronald McDonald House at Stanford has for many years helped to fill this need of providing a safe, comfortable and healing place for these families to rest, cook, and take care of the other siblings. Sometimes even the child taking treatments lives there, rather than staying in the hospital. In 1979, the Palo Alto House became the fifth facility in the national Ronald McDonald House system, with 13 rooms. In 1983 they were at almost 100% capacity. By 1984 they were turning people away. In 1992 they expanded to



Construction in progress for the Ronald McDonald House expansion

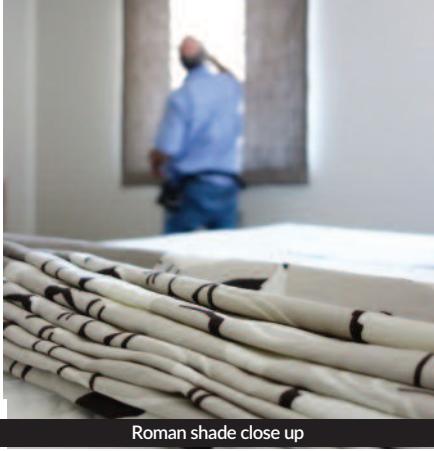
24 rooms total. A decision was made to create a bone marrow transplant wing specifically for children with severely compromised immune systems. That wing is still being maintained. In 2003 the house was again expanded, this time to a 47-room facility.

For the current 52,000-square-foot expansion project "Where Hope Has a Home," The San Francisco Design Center has partnered with Ronald McDonald House at Stanford, selecting a number of design firms to provide *pro bono* interior design services for the 67 new guest rooms. The facility will be showcased to the public from February 13th through February 28th only, for a unique and limited opportunity to see the space. After that they will start filling the rooms with families. There are currently forty to fifty family members on waiting lists every night. The completion of this addition means that Ronald McDonald House at Stanford will be able to house all those families.

Melinda has taken on three rooms: a sitting room serving a wing of the second floor, and two guest rooms. Each guest room accommodates one family, and includes a large bedroom with either two queen beds or one queen bed with a trundle, a dresser, one or two chairs, a closet, and an *en suite* bathroom. In certain cases cots can be provided for larger families (much like a typical hotel room). While there are no kitchenettes in the rooms themselves, there is a community kitchen on the main floor, with multiple cooktops, and a separate pantry space for each family.

As a designer, Melinda's goal was to create spaces that, "feel like home, but also a little bit of a retreat." She wanted to create an environment that would help families heal, both physically and emotionally, from the upheaval and

# dc Ronald McDonald House



Roman shade close up



Close up of door by Valet Custom Cabinets & Closets



Melinda Mandell, Riitta Herwitz of Riitta Herwitz Design Support and Anna Miller, volunteer



Custom watercolor wallpaper by Black Crow Studios

trauma of what was going on, and to help alleviate some of the fear: "a safe, comfortable, and nurturing space."

To this end, she chose a neutral palette with soft grassy greens, watery blues, and russet reds as accent colors. She wanted the space to feel familiar, but also elicit a sense of, "this is really cool!" She used natural textures, beautiful woods, and washes of color, including a large-scale mural that looks like a watercolor painting. For durability, she selected high quality furniture pieces, ones that would hold up over the long term and could withstand busy family lives.

Besides Melinda, several of our other ASID California Peninsula members are participating in the Ronald McDonald House expansion: Risë Krag, Allied ASID, Nicole Ghilarducci, Allied ASID, and Liberty Nuris all of RKI Interior Design; Pamela Pennington, ASID; Lisa Staprans, Allied ASID; Jana Magginetti, Allied ASID; and Sindhu Peruri, Associate ASID.

If you would like to help Melinda or any of the other designers to defray some of their costs, please contact them directly. Melinda reminds me that she is still raising funds to furnish the rooms. Designers are responsible for not only the design and procurement, but for covering the cost of all of the furnishings, as well. She is still looking for sponsors, for both large and small items. You can find a link to her donation page at [www.melindamandell.com](http://www.melindamandell.com).

As mentioned, the new facility will be open as a Design Tour from February 13th, through February 28th, 2016, Thursdays through Mondays from 10 to 3. Tickets are \$35 each for adults, \$10 suggested donation for children under 12. For tickets, please go to [www.ronaldhouse.net](http://www.ronaldhouse.net), then to "Where Hope Has a Home Design Tours", and hit "Click to Purchase Your Tickets".

The project has been quite an undertaking, and for Melinda especially, it's been a labor of love. We appreciate and commend Melinda and our other members for this example of interior designers giving back to the community!