

This makes me happy

By J. Michael Davis

What makes you happy? Can you answer that question quickly?

Here's a sampling of my happy list: playing ball with my twins, seeing a good report card or a positive note from the teacher, eating at my favorite restaurant, spending time with my family at the beach, working with the youth at church, volunteering with the Ronald McDonald House of Eastern North Carolina. The list could go on, and I feel fortunate to find happiness in so many ways.

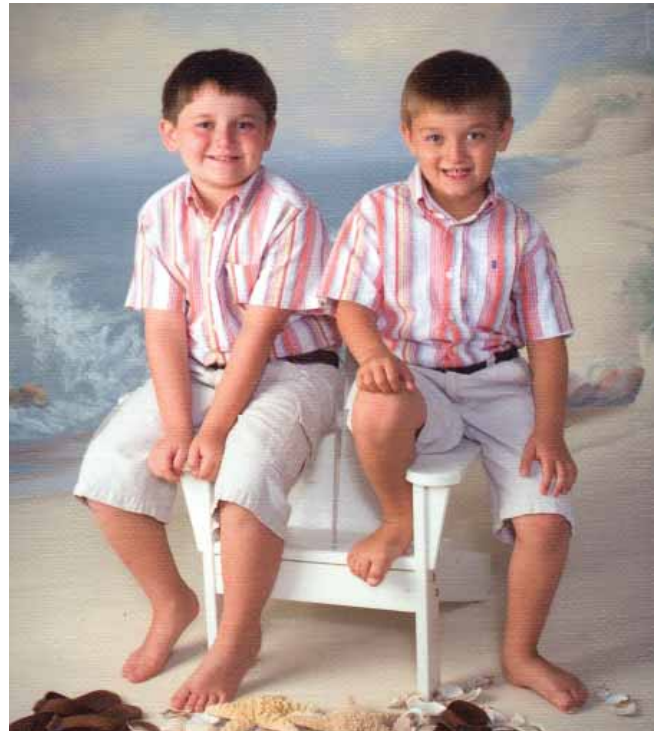
Today when we contemplate the concept, we try to capture the essence of happiness and understand what makes us feel content on a basic, psychological level. True happiness does not come from any single trait or success, but rather from a collection of life experiences. Each new meeting, program, event, interpersonal interaction or any general experience becomes a part of us and serves to enrich our lives.

One way that my life is rich and rewarding is through my association with the "home away from home" at the Ronald McDonald House of Eastern North Carolina. If "home is where the heart is," this wonderful facility represents home. Its banner mission or "heart" is to provide refuge and a shelter of hope and assurance to the loved ones of those under serious medical care at the hospital. The House has helped lift the weight off many heavy hearts so that families can meet their basic needs while awaiting the treatment and recovery of loved ones.

My association with the Ronald McDonald House began in a very personal way. I am the proud father of twin boys, Lance and Nolan. When Nolan was four days old, he had difficulty breathing. My wife, Bernice, son Lance and I stayed at the Ronald McDonald House for six nights. Being 60 miles from home, it was very convenient to be able to stay across from Pitt Memorial Hospital. At the House, we found a warm bed, a fully-stocked kitchen, and personal support, compassion and understanding. We truly were touched by the unconditional support we experienced. Our lives were changed forever.

Since 1998, my friends, co-workers and the community have supplied many items from the House's "wish list" and prepared meals for families. Imagine having a kitchen large enough for several families to cook in at once, two dishwashers, three washing machines, three dryers, 18 bedrooms and 20 bathrooms. Thousands of dollars have been raised through the "Share a Night" program. Families typically pay a nominal fee of \$10 per night to stay at the House, but less than half of them can afford to pay. We have sold T-shirts to help provide shelter, food and comfort for families. Our electric cooperatives of North Carolina and Touchstone Energy became the title sponsor of the Touchstone Energy Open golf tournament. Since 2004, we raised over \$100,000 for the House.


The unconditional love, endless compassion and tireless support provided by the Ronald McDonald house of Eastern



Nolan Davis (left) was treated at Pitt Memorial Hospital when he was four days old. His twin brother Lance, along with their parents Mike and Bernice Davis, stayed nearby at the Ronald McDonald House.

The Ronald McDonald House of Eastern North Carolina is a refuge and shelter for families awaiting hospital treatment of loved ones.

North Carolina form the essence of a great tradition, a tradition of hope and dedicated service. The heart and soul of the Ronald McDonald House rest in the purity of its purpose, to provide love and comfort to neighbors in need.

This home away from home that serves as a beacon in the darkness for so many families needs our support. Please consider allowing the Ronald McDonald House to touch your life in a similar manner by making a monetary donation, purchasing a "wish list" item or two, or preparing a warm-cooked meal for families. Your expression of love will return to you in many forms. May your happiness abound! 

Michael Davis has been a board member of the Ronald McDonald House since 2004. He is general manager of Tri-County EMC, a Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 20,400 members in Wayne, Duplin, Lenoir, Johnston, Jones, Sampson and Wilson counties.

North Carolina Ronald McDonald Houses serve families near hospitals in the Chapel Hill, Durham, Greenville and Winston-Salem areas. For more information: Ronald McDonald House of Eastern NC, 549 Moye Blvd., Greenville, NC 27834. Phone: (252) 830-0062.