



HOUSTON

Sharing the strength of our home

Celia

Five year old Celia and her family came to RMH Houston all the way from Calgary, Canada for proton therapy treatment for Celia's rare brain tumor. While they were here, the family became friends with the other families and RMH volunteers and staff, and found a support network to help them through the journey that comes along with struggling with a childhood illness.

One person in particular made a big impact on Celia. Meet Kara Moline, President-elect of our young professional volunteer group, Young Friends, and hear how Celia and the House have touched her life.

The experience of volunteering with Ronald McDonald House Houston reaffirmed something that I knew intellectually, but somehow along the way had forgotten to truly appreciate until I met Celia and her family. She has touched my heart, made me smile and given me many things to reflect upon.

The Young Friends of Ronald McDonald House Houston was hosting a chili cook off and this is when I met my favorite cowgirl, Celia. I will never forget how proud she was to show me her pink cowgirl boots. Celia loved my cowgirl hat and really enjoyed participating in the judging of each chili. And let me tell you, this little girl knows her chili and knows her fashion!

The next weekend I was out to lunch with some friends indulging in Houston's best BBQ. Out of the blue, I was pleasantly surprised to see Celia and her family. She had remembered me from serving dinner at the House and wanted to say hello. We talked more about her treasured pink boots and I asked her if she had a cowgirl hat like mine; she did not but expressed her desire to have a hat to match her boots. Her family also told me that she had completed her proton therapy and would be headed back home next week. Victory was hers!

That week I planned to present Celia with a pink cowgirl hat. I arrived at Ronald McDonald House Houston (cowgirl hat in tow) along with a Hello Kitty coloring book. For the next two hours, Celia and a few other kids staying at the House played and colored with me. We had the best time laughing, coloring and talking about her brother, Tanner, who was just about to turn three. We colored a birthday cake for him and she practiced her printing by spelling out his name. Celia also told me about her new trampoline that she was very excited to get back home and use. It was a moment where Celia got to experience just being a kid. And it was a moment where I remembered what it was like to be a kid. I will always be grateful for the spirit of life Celia and the other kids gave me from our coloring adventure.

I didn't realize the direct impact I had on Celia until I watched a video of her celebrating the completion of her treatment by banging a gong (a hospital tradition). With her parents, grandparents and brother beside her Celia was adorned in her cowgirl hat and cowgirl boots looking oh so fashionable, fabulous and proud! I felt I was right there with her celebrating in style! It was absolutely magical to give Celia hope and inspiration.

My experiences as a volunteer have made me grow into a woman of dedication, integrity, determination and compassion. I feel very blessed to be able to volunteer with an organization that puts such heart and energy into helping these children and families cope with the emotional burdens of serious illness but also the financial strains of treatment. Ronald McDonald House Houston works towards alleviating both. I have realized whatever energy I contribute, I get back so much more.

To help other families like Celia's, [donate now](#).