



## About Building on Love

Building on Love, a 501(c) 3 charitable organization, is dedicated to supporting Ronald McDonald House Charities chapters and the families they serve.

Often times, families quickly fall behind as they support their child, spending day and night bedside; as well as making lifestyle changes for their families. Building on Love has been able to provide financial support and amenities to families in order to make their transitions easier. Though many wonderful charities support these families and their sick child by providing access to medical care, there are no "safety nets" for the additional needs beyond medical bills. Building on Love offers a grant program where families can apply for support in the

areas of transportation, groceries, gas cards, auto repairs, etc. In addition to financial support, Building on Love ensures families meet and adhere to the grant program guidelines set forth by the board of directors.

Building on Love, at times, provides direct financial support for the Ronald McDonald House programs. Priority is given to projects that enhance the quality of care provided to families at Ronald McDonald Houses and/or projects that expand the number of programs and/or services.

Building on Love is currently working with eleven houses to identify families in need of additional support. Future goals include expanding the number of houses that can be supported, as well

as, providing funding for new programs to be offered at the Ronald McDonald Houses.

Working in conjunction with the staff at the following Ronald McDonald Houses; Albany and Hudson Valley (NY), Springfield and Boston (MA), Bangor and Portland (ME), Burlington (VT), New Haven (CT), Providence (RI), Kansas City (MO), and San Francisco (CA) Building on Love provides financial support to families in financial need due to the impact of the serious illness of their child.

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To the Board of Building on Love,  
My son, Jacob Harris, is a 17 year old senior at Andover Central High School. He has spent the last 5 1/2 months at Saint Luke's hospital in Kansas City, MO waiting for a heart transplant. He is currently on VAD (ventricular assist devices) to keep him alive. Jacob has had what others may call set backs from his leg being amputated above the knee to plastic surgery on his rear end, but he has taken everything in stride, doing whatever has been asked of him. Jacob was in bed for 8 weeks after the surgery on his rear, but after those 8 weeks he is back walking with his prosthesis. His attitude is as good as could be expected. Jacob is even doing his school work online so if by the grace of God he gets his transplant he can walk across the stage and graduate in May 2012.

During this ordeal, Jacob's dad, Randy, and I had been staying at a hotel. Even with the hospital discount it was \$54.00 a night. A friend of Randy's got us into the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC). We were told by this friend to give our hotel bill to RMHC not even thinking it could or would get paid. Around the first part of November, April from RMHC told us she had some good news about our hotel bill. After an anonymous donation and getting the hotel to credit us a couple of days our bill was under \$2000.00 and an organization called Building on Love was going to pay the remainder of the hotel bill. That was such a relief knowing we didn't have to somehow come up with the monthly payment for that credit card.

Our family is usually on the giving end. We are not used to being the ones in need. With the kindness and generosity from Building on Love it has allowed our family to focus on Jacob and his recovery. We cannot thank you enough.

The Harris Family  
Randy, Rebecca, and Jacob Harris







## Diane & Jerry Abdelnour

J & J Service, Inc. / Building on Love, Inc.

**Success Magazine: How did you go from working for the McDonald's Corporation to starting J & J Service?**

**Jerry Abdelnour:** While working for McDonalds in 1983, I Incorporated J & J Service and worked part time repairing equipment for McDonald's operators in the Albany area.

**SM: What services does J & J Service provide?**

**JA:** In the early 80s we serviced all types of cooking and refrigeration equipment. Then in the early 90s we converted to a beverage only service company.

**SM: Why did you concentrate on beverages only?**

**JA:** By focusing our business on beverage work we were able to increase our installation and service area to multiple states.

**SM: What bonds J & J to so many McDonald's operators?**

**JA:** Over the years we have learned that while cost is important, the quality of your work and your willingness to stand behind it is what clients are looking for. We concentrate on the quality of our work, while at the same time striving to provide the best value.

**SM: What is the connection between the work you do for McDonald's restaurants and your association with the Ronald McDonald House?**

**JA:** In the early years of the RMH of Albany, one of the local McDonald's operators asked if we would volunteer our time to repair equipment. Debbie Ross, the house manager, would call us up if she had problems with equipment. I worked on the house board for a while, and Diane and I have stayed involved with the house ever since.

**SM: You were once on the board of Ronald McDonald Charities of the Capital Region. What did you gain from that experience?**

**JA:** I learned how the RMH worked and how important the support of both the public and McDonald's is to the day-to-day operations. Diane and I have both gained a greater appreciation for what the RMH provides from our interactions with families staying at the house, as well as board members and support staff that work there.

**SM: Your family founded a charity called Building on Love. How did you come up with the idea?**

**JA:** Through our relationship with Debbie Ross our family helped out families of ill children that stayed at the local RMH. Although the mission of the house is to provide rooms, many families that stay at the house need other forms of financial support. It could be as simple as a car repair or as complicated as needing medical equipment to take care of their child at home. Building on Love was a way for us to help out families while they

were attached to the RMH.

**SM: What members of your family are involved?**

**JA:** Since our daughter, Kristin, daughter-in-law, Allison, and son, Jeff, have joined Diane and me to run J & J Service, they also joined us on the board of Building on Love. They have all been involved in the operations of both J & J Service and Building on Love. Recently, Allison has taken on the job of director for the charity.

**SM: In what year was it founded? What is the mission of this organization?**

**JA:** Building on Love was founded in 2009. Our mission is to help support families of ill children that are attached to one of the Ronald McDonald Houses we support. When a family is forced to spend time away from their home for unseen emergencies, it sometimes brings about a financial burden. Building on Love tries to ease that burden by covering short-term financial needs.

**SM: What are some of the ways that Building on Love has been able to provide support to families with sick children?**

**JA:** We have provided things like medical equipment for home use, gas cards for extended treatment patients, car repairs, and short-term housing costs, just to name a few.

**SM: Where does the funding come from?**

**JA:** We at J & J donate a portion of our annual profits, and another big chunk of the money comes from two major fundraisers that we hold every year. We held our yearly fundraising picnic on June 10th this year and on August 24th our annual golf outing will be held. We are also supported by fundraisers held by outside individuals or groups. Recently, TODCO, a company from Kansas City, MO, held a rummage sale for Building on Love and the Kansas City RMH. They earned over \$7,000 which was divided 50/50 between the two charities.

**SM: How can our readers learn more and get involved?**

**JA:** There are several ways to get involved; they are as simple as going online to [www.buildingonlove.org](http://www.buildingonlove.org) and donating to help make the difference in a family's life. They can also contact us through the website or at 518-237-3778 to volunteer in some capacity or learn more about Building on Love. The ultimate way they can help us out is to hold some type of fundraiser and donate the proceeds to Building on Love.

**SM: What types of fundraisers can someone hold to raise money for the charity?**

**JA:** It can be as simple as holding

a fundraising party like a birthday, anniversary, or housewarming party where you request no gifts and instead ask for donations for Building on Love. Other ways are lemonade stands, garage sales, or even group outings where you collect money. These are all great ways to help us help others. People just need to remember that it does not have to be a big fundraiser to make a difference. First Niagara Bank held a dress down Friday where they collected donations from employees for us. It is a great way to hold a simple fundraiser and share information about Building on Love, while at the same time making a difference in a family's life. We recently helped a family whose seventeen-year-old son lost his lower leg to a blood infection. By the time the infection was stopped, Jacob needed a heart transplant and lower leg prosthetic. A few weeks ago his family shared the great news with us that Jacob was going home with his new heart and prosthetic. Stories like this should make us all compelled and happy to be a part of charities like Building on Love.

**SM: How many houses is Building on Love currently working with?**

**JA:** We currently touch families that are attached to eleven Ronald McDonald Houses. Albany and Hudson Valley (NY), Springfield and Boston (MA), Bangor and Portland (ME), Burlington (VT), New Haven (CT), Providence

(RI), Kansas City (MO), and San Francisco (CA).

**SM: What are your future goals for this organization?**

**JA:** Our goal is to slowly increase the number of families we touch in two different ways. First by increasing the amount of money we raise through fundraising efforts and secondly by increasing the number of Ronald McDonald Houses we touch. This will allow us to help more families with the funding needed for financial emergencies.

**SM: Yours is a true "rags to riches" story. How has that shaped your definition of success?**

**JA:** As a young man most people would have said that I was totally into myself and they would have been right. However, I have learned that in this life you either learn from your mistakes or you continue on the same path your entire life. Our family believes the more successful a year we have at J & J Service, the more it is our civic duty to give back. Building on Love is the Abdelnour family's and J & J Service's way of giving back to the community by making a difference in the lives of others. We consider our success to be a reflection of the families we help, not our bottom line.

